

SUMMARY

The book, entitled *“I Have to Obey the Law...”. Legal Culture in Juliusz Słowacki’s Works*, is dedicated to an analysis of the legislative discourse present in the works of Juliusz Słowacki. It contains a reconstruction of the poet’s historical sources of inspiration and lists the poetic devices, literary genres and types of stylizations which he used to introduce motifs, subjects, phenomena and characters related to different legal traditions into his works. Using the concept of “legal culture” allowed for expanding the area of research beyond law defined simply as a totality of acts (texts), while reference research of the “law and literature” movement (Posner’s and Ball’s, among others) allowed for paying particular attention to the important role of law-related spaces in the poet’s literary works as well as of similarities between trials and theatre plays.

In Słowacki’s case, the predilection for incorporating legal issues into his works not only enriched their fictional universes, but also influenced the structure of his dramas and proved to be an important component of his historiosophic conception, put forward in the final years of his life. The poet’s works contain proofs of his knowledge of various legal publications and theories (Czacki’s, Rousseau’s, Beccaria’s, Filanghieri’s and others’), as well as references to historical legislative acts, political addresses and legislative proposals. He gained a basic understanding of law during his three-year studies in Vilnius (1825–1828) and continued the bureaucratic path by taking up employment in the Ministry of Revenues and Treasury in Warsaw.

Słowacki’s chief inspiration as far as regulations and legal customs were concerned appeared to be the historical legacy of the First Polish Republic. In his works legal issues were invariably tied with underlining the inner diversity of the gentry (supremacy of the magnates; the “swashbuckling nobleman” character type). They also featured many institutions hailing from civil law (marital law, inheritance law, property law) as well as criminal law. Some of the portrayals of these institutions

should be considered a continuation of literary traditions of the Enlightenment, others were transformed in accordance with the predominant stylistic features of the Romantic aesthetic. The poet also had knowledge of both Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment natural law theories, used specific law-originating genres (e.g. the testament) and populated his works with numerous legal practitioners: court ushers, chancellors, judges, clerks, and inquisitors. This last topic allowed for an intertextual polemic with the negative stereotype of a corruptible, dishonest lawyer. At the same time, he emphasised the moral dilemmas at play in passing judgement and following a literal interpretation of the law. Lawyers were often identified with the forces of hell, and the poet gave a special role to the Luciferic figure of the advocate, who – in the drama *Samuel Zborowski* – became the defence counsel for all of humanity.

An important aspect of Słowacki's political activity of the 1840s was putting forth an ideological proposition of reinstating distinctive institutions of noble Poland. In his literary works and open letters, the *liberum veto* and the confederacy as a political system and proclivity were both treated as metaphysical, inalienable, national features. Meanwhile his attitude towards constitutional monarchy (as it functioned during the reign of Louis Philippe) remained ambiguous, a sentiment expressed in its comparison to the mythological Mount Olympus.

Of all the motifs drawn by Słowacki from legal culture, the trial was one of the most important, as its very structure allowed for a direct confrontation of multiple characters, or even (like in *Beatryks Cenci*) marked the structure of the whole text. Trial scenes usually took place in the final acts of his dramas, and thereby became their apogees and moments of plot resolution. In *Balladyna*, *Sen srebrny Salomei* or *Samuel Zborowski* they were characterised by the implementation of a sense of dread, frenetic behaviour and grotesque events. Although the heroes of Słowacki's works frequently faced each other in court, the binding power of the issued verdicts, as well as the court's authority, were regularly challenged and undermined.