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**MICKIEWICZ AND TREMBECKI—ONCE AGAIN:
“JUŻ SIĘ Z POGODNYCH NIEBIOS...” (“NOW, FROM
THE BRIGHT SKY...”)**

Many relationships between the works of the young (and not only young) Mickiewicz with the great Trembecki are well known. Mickiewicz showed them himself. He did not hide his fascination. He eagerly wrote about Trembecki, analysed his perfect poetic articulation and quoted him. If we are scandalized that he was fascinated by the author of such texts as *Epitalame Dorantowi i Klimenie, czyli miłość złączona, Oda nie do druku, ale w rękopiśmie mająca być ofiarowana J. O. Ks. J. M. P. B. P., podczas wjazdu jego przeze mnie, Wojciecha Żółtowskiego, podsędka płockiego* (*Epitalame for Dorant and Klimena, or Love United, an Ode Not to Be Published, but Given in the Manuscript to J o Pr Ks J M. P. B. P.*), the translation of: “Ode to Priap”, or—which is even worse—fragments of *Sofijówka*, so full of political servility,¹ we should remember that for the society of Wilno which belonged to the generation of Mickiewicz’s parents, Trembecki did not cause umbrage, and if we are to believe reminiscences of Stanisław Morawski from Wilno, in the 1820s and 1830s, Trembecki could have learnt quite a lot (as far as servility is concerned).² It was in 1806, in the capital of Lithuania, that the first collected edition of Trembecki’s poetry was published “by the author’s

¹ Ryszard Przybylski, *Klasycyzm, czyli Prawdziwy koniec Królestwa Polskiego*, Warszawa 1983, 139; Alina Witkowska, Ryszard Przybylski, *Romantyzm*, Warszawa 1997, 72.

² Stanisław Morawski, *Kilka lat młodości mojej w Wilnie (1818–1825)*, ed. by Adam Czartkowski, Henryk Mościcki, and Maria Dernałowicz, Warszawa 1959, 264.

friends”³ In any case, the theme of Mickiewicz and Trembecki has been dealt with many times. Józef Tretiak back in 1887 published a study, which has been referred to many times. Later, these two names put together appear in every longer text on the literary beginnings (and not only beginnings) of Mickiewicz.⁴

The poem “Już się z pogodnych niebios” (“Now from the Bright Sky...”) is an early work of Mickiewicz; it was written before 14 September 1818. It is preserved in the copy of Onufry Pietraszkiewicz and in other copies. It was read for the first time at the meeting of Towarzystwo Filomatów (Society of Philomaths). This poem had the character of an opening speech of Mickiewicz “during the inauguration of the second year of the meeting of the Society of Philomaths”.⁵

Kleiner, following Józef Tretiak’s study, added that “vocabulary, rhythm and rhymes, the construction of the poem and its sentences again follow Trembecki, that the philosophical discussion from *Sofjówka* sounded in the ears of the Philomath, when he wrote [...] [here followed an adequate quotation from this poem of Mickiewicz—T Ch.]. The internal logic of imagery belongs to Mickiewicz”.⁶ Borowy confirmed grounding in the school of Trembecki.⁷ He showed a list of earlier poems by Mickiewicz (“Zima miejska” (“Winter in Town”) and his later poems (“Do Joachima Lelewela” (“To Joachim Lelewel”) which were written in the language of Trembecki. Kleiner’s remarks were supplemented by Zgorzelski in the book *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza*⁸ (*On Mickiewicz’s Art of Poetry*), where he used the language of poetics to analyse the early poetry of Mickiewicz.

³ *Dawni pisarze polscy od początków piśmiennictwa do Młodej Polski. Przewodnik biograficzny i bibliograficzny*, ed. by Roman Loth, vol. 4 : S–T, Warszawa 2003, 258. In Wilno in the period two different editions were published : Stanisław Trembecki, *Pisma rozmaite wierszem*, vol. 1–2, Lipsk [properly Wilno] 1806. Stanisław Trembecki, *Pisma rozmaite wierszem*, vol. 1–2, Wilno 1806.

⁴ Juliusz Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, vol. 1: *Dzieje Gustawa*, rev. ed. Lublin 1995, 121. Kleiner gives numerous references to early research on Mickiewicz.

⁵ Adam Mickiewicz, *Wybór poezyj*, ed. by Czesław Zgorzelski, Wrocław 1974, 11.

⁶ Juliusz Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, op. cit., vol. 1, 121.

⁷ Waław Borowy, *O poezji Mickiewicza*, vol. 1, Lublin 1999, 25.

⁸ Czesław Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza. Próby zbliżeń i uogólnień*, Warszawa 1976, 52–54.

A later list given by Zgorzelski is important for researchers of Mickiewicz's early poetry. In it, apart from "Now, When the Sky is Bright..." there appears a delicate and subtle sonnet "Przypomnienie" ("Remembering")—the third poem of Mickiewicz's debut—so different in tone and style. Zgorzelski showed how Mickiewicz, at the beginning of his poetic life, set three different ways for himself as a poet—'ideological' lyrics connected with Philomath, humorous poetry of 'manners' and "personal lyric poetry shaped by sentimental reliving of the past (poems personal and elegiac at the same time".⁹ If in the case of Mickiewicz's "Remembering" the ways of authorial associations run towards Kropiński's lyric poetry, his model of sonnets runs towards Petrarch. All these poems as such are closest to the pastoral poetry of Karpiński, so perfectly summarized in another remembering "Przypomnienie dawnej miłości" ("Remembering of Old Love") from 1787. The young writer at the beginning of his career speaks here not only in the language of writers who had come before him, but uses their whole stock of poetic knowledge—such as literary figures, semantics and its alterations; internal discussions unfolding in a world which had long ceased to exist. Signals, which he gives quite consciously, are still to be read, and it does not seem that they can be recognized exclusively in the internal space of the debate carried on by the so called Romantics with the so called Classicists (or, in other words, young writers with not so young writers), because neither the former nor the latter fully represent the [so called] traditions of the King Stanisław August period. Or, maybe both the former and the latter represent it, although simply in different ways. It seems that Mickiewicz very consciously returns to a past long (or not so long) gone, deeply rooted in the specific stylistic, representing the whole internal complexity of the former age.

And this seems to be the case with *Soffówka* palpably referred to by Mickiewicz in the last part of "Now, When the Sky is Bright". Researchers have agreed that the third and last part of this poem is clearly non-poetic (Kleiner called it "mowa rymowana" ("rhymed

⁹ Ibid., 57.

prose”), and that it was added to the first two parts as a set of instructions for the Philomaths).

Ale z takich początków wniósłby chyba tępy,
 Że trzeba wszystkim wolne zrobić do nas wstępy.
 Bo niedługo postoi gmach wolny od skazy,
 Jeśli doń budowniczy kładł bez braku głazy.
 I nam jeśli niemiło pracę podjąć marną,
 Sprawmy, niechaj się tylko godni do nas garną.
 [l. 69–74]¹⁰

Indeed Mickiewicz, in lines not poetic at all, instructs on the ways of initiating new members of the Society of the Philomaths. Researchers have indicated Freemason themes in this fragment. Mickiewicz selects some examples—Pythagoras with a group of initiated disciples, Thracian Orpheus and the sect of Orphics with Eleusinian mysteries. He chooses Greek examples, bringing to life—as Dariusz Seweryn wrote—the spirit of *Hellas*.¹¹

The formula of Mickiewicz directs us to line 425 of *Sofijówka* and to the lines which follow it. What did Trembecki write about? Well, the old poet, ill, bitter and burdened with negative experiences of the years of failures and misfortunes, in this part of the most perfect of the Enlightenment poems leads his readers to this moment in his masterpiece where all meanings have been entangled and connected in one knot; a knot which Trembecki did not want to solve, mostly because, in my opinion, he suddenly and at this very moment discovered that it cannot be solved. *Sofijówka*, thanks to its Ukrainian-Greek character (after all, it is not Roman!) allowed him to lead his readers through

¹⁰ Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, Wydanie Rocznicowe 1798–1998, vol. 1, *Wiersze*, ed. by Czesław Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1993, 37–40. The quotations are from this edition. “From such beginnings you would deduce, unless you are dumb/That everybody can come to us/Because a building will not last long/if the builder has not selected his stones properly/And if we don’t want to do a poor job/We should make sure that only worthy people join us”.

¹¹ Dariusz Seweryn, „*Jak tam zaszedłeś*”. *Mickiewicz w szkole klasycznej*, Lublin 1997, 34.

several places which he presented and analysed as concrete. He referred to them as "symbolic proposals"; proposals requiring understanding of the Greek past, which formed the basis of culture, but it did not concern descriptions as such, because Classicist descriptions were an intellectual, not emotional or impressionist proposals.¹²

Trembecki, having sung the praise of Russia once again—the society which is healthy and made happy by its rulers who bring education to the masses as well as general safety and wealth— returns to this key moment of his poem. Now he takes his readers to an Athenian school, where two sages have a lively debate about the future of the world and its order. Before he gives voice to the older of them—who, because of his seniority will start first with his historical and philosophical considerations based on the work of Lucretius and texts of La Mettrie and Paul Holbach—the narrator of the poem will utter significant formulae distancing him from any kind of responsibility for his words.

Nie rozumiem, co pierwszy, co wyrażał drugi,
choć ich głosy powtarzam, jak czynią papugi.
[l. 365–366]¹³

The old man reminds us about the perennial movement of the same elements of the world: from the foundations of political reality and social relations to various individual behaviours, which are repeated millions of times "with no alteration":

I póki potrwa Ziemia, póki starczy Słońca,
żyć, gasnąć, odradzać się będziemy bez końca.¹⁴
[l. 411–412]

¹² Alina Witkowska, *Poemat opisowy*, entry in: *Słownik literatury polskiego oświecenia*, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Wrocław 1991, 415, 418.

¹³ All quotations from Trembecki's poem come from this edition: Stanisław Trembecki, *Sofjówka*, ed. by Jerzy Snopek, Warszawa 2000, „Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskiego Oświecenia”, vol. 1. "I don't understand what the first and the second wanted to say/And I repeat their voices in the manner of parrots."

¹⁴ "And as long as the Earth will last, as the Sun will last/we will live, die and be re-born without an end."

The young sage gives an ethical proposal as his answer: this is the micro-ethics of everyday deeds, devoid of any eschatology, riddled with gnomic formulae of a moralistic character. It starts from formulae we have already heard, although in Mickiewicz's writings they are only similar.

Młodszy mówił, a starszy z odpowiedzią czeka:
 „Rozkosz być sędzę dobrem najwyższym człowieka.
 Lecz to za istną rozkosz wzięłby chyba tępy,
 co koniecznie szkodzące pociąga następny. [...]”¹⁵
 [l. 425–426]

The proposal of young Mickiewicz, so skilfully called by Kleiner “rhymed prose”, is only apparently an echo of Trembecki's stylistic. In fact the young Romantic, having distanced himself from the old forms of expression, is the sole author of “the internal logic of imagining”. On the contrary, Mickiewicz gives us a very concrete discussion about the future for which the starting point is the ethical proposal of Trembecki. This starting point is not accidental at all. It is shown with a series of clear signals, perhaps more clear to Mickiewicz's contemporaries than to us. Trembecki wrote:

Przez wyczyszczony rozum i cnotliwe życie
 zyskuje się prawdziwej rozkoszy nabycie.
 Ta jest ostatnim celem, ta naszą nagrodą,
 [...]
 Czym by się człowiek prawy miał kiedy zasmucić,
 gdy mu nic serca skrytość nie zdoła zarzucić?
 [...]
 Bo myśl i ciało będąc umięszane ścisło,
 od ich zdrowia zwiększenie rozkoszy zawisło.¹⁶
 [l. 435–437, 443–444, 451–452]

¹⁵ “The younger was speaking the older is waiting with an answer/”Bliss, I think, is the highest good for man./But only a dumb would take for bliss,/which necessarily leads to detrimental progress.”

¹⁶ “Thanks to the cleansed mind and a virtuous life/We achieve perfect bliss/Which is our final goal and reward//What could a just man feel sorrow about/if deep at

It should be added that the word "rozkosz" (bliss), the meaning of which was similar to what it is today, for Trembecki means first of all "szczęście" (happiness). There are more signs of similarity in poetic imagery, more similar elements of rational reasoning, so characteristic for Classicist poetry. Candidates whom Mickiewicz assesses negatively: "have been seduced by childish sweets", "will be discouraged by childish obstacles", etc. While Trembecki writes "we shouldn't appreciate things which make the mind merry for a while", "the careless are happy for a short time only/there are sweets for children and for old children", etc. And if we were not convinced that these two poets had a similar background of erudition: Mickiewicz, like those who are to decide about the choice of candidates for his Society, lists those heroes of Antiquity he had found in *Sofijówka*, with their very names and exactly in the same fragment of the poem which is being discussed here. The Samian, that is Pythagoras, and the Thracian king Orpheus. Trembecki pairs Pythagoras, the Samian, with the Greek philosopher Zalmoxis, who was a Thracian (as was Orpheus). Gotfryd Ernest Groddeck at this time was concerned with these philosophers, and he published his treatise of Zalmox and other Greek sages.

In this context, Mickiewicz's conclusion at the end of the poem "Now, When the Sky is Clear" seems to be unequivocal:

Zgadnę przyszłość, przeszłości zmierzając rachubą,
Że będziem wzorem innym, sobie samym chlubą,¹⁷
[l. 99–100]

From the perspective of a reader of late Enlightenment literature, the young and apparently inexpert Mickiewicz appears here as a conscious continuer of Trembecki. Interestingly, for Trembecki this final text was at the same time a summing up of his poetic

heart he finds no faults of his?//As mind and body are so strictly connected/It is their health that the growth of bliss depends upon."

¹⁷ Emphasis—T.Ch. I will learn about the future, *looking back at the ways of the past*/ That will be different/Glory to ourselves.

achievements and unprecedented erudition, and a new proposal (exactly in this fragment of the poem!) of new philosophy of history and new ethics, particularly interesting because of the lack of respect which Trembecki had shown for moral norms in previous years. The black legend of Trembecki is always a charming topic to be discussed in the context of the period of King Stanisław August.¹⁸ But this desperate attempt to reverse the course of history in some special way gave hope to the old poet that he would yet see more than once the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania—noble and great, entangled in the Gordian knot of treachery and meanness leading to unavoidable disaster. All this in order to take part in a humble way—out of respect for one’s own everyday life and one’s own person—to stay in good health and shape, which would allow him to part with the world “as if one got up from the table after a big feast” (line 456), so that one might, once again, in some inscrutable future, in which we will not remember our earlier avatars anyway, return again. And in this way, this attempt at micro-ethics, libertarian in nature, of a decadent and corrupt old man slowly passing away in the Ukrainian seclusion, through the mastery of the philosophical and historical project of *Sofijówka* becomes a consciously selected point of departure to formulate rules of initiation to the Society of the Philomaths; rules to select righteous and trustworthy people who would not take fright in front of adversities and would resist a variety of pressures. Trembecki’s poem, however, also contained a yearning for a foreseeable future and nostalgia for what had been lost.

¹⁸ Jerzy Snopek, *Stanisław Trembecki (1739–1812)*, in *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa and Zbigniew Goliński, vol. 1, Warszawa 1992, 537–566.