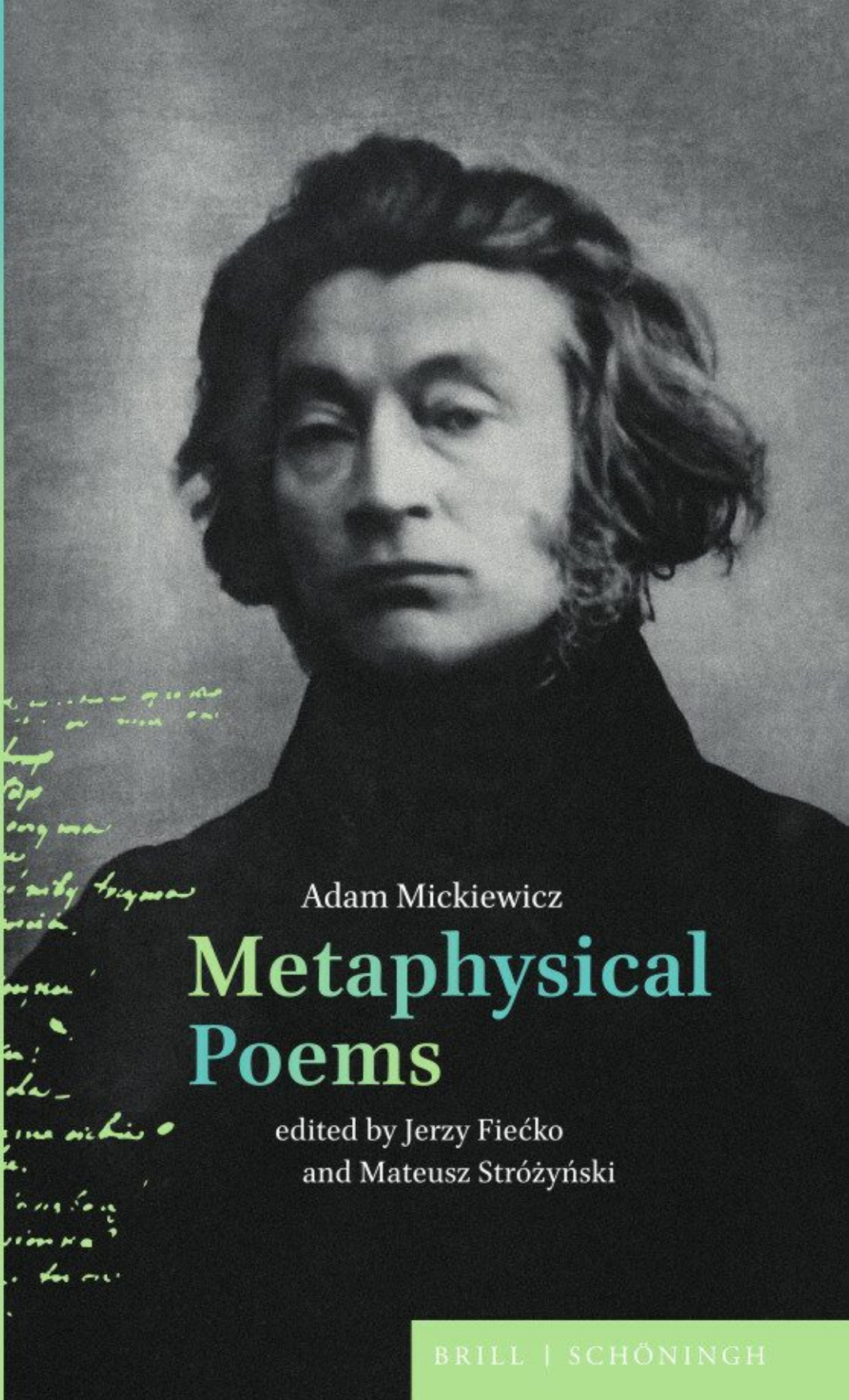

Adam Mickiewicz

Metaphysical Poems

edited by Jerzy Fiećko
and Mateusz Stróżyński

BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

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Polen in Europa

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Preface

"We are all of him," said of Adam Mickiewicz the Polish Romantic author Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859).[1] It is hard to overestimate the significance of Mickiewicz, not only for Polish literature and language, but also for Polish culture and national identity as they have developed over the past two centuries – centuries painfully marked by oppression and enslavement under the menacing shadow of Russian imperialism. "He was at once the Homer and the Dante of the Polish nation," said the poet Jan Lechoń (1899–1956) about Mickiewicz; it was not an exaggeration, but a statement of fact.

Paradoxically, Mickiewicz's status as the voice of the "Polish cause", both at home and abroad, when the very survival of his nation was threatened, may have prevented him from entering the greater European consciousness, and winning the admiration his talent deserves. Mickiewicz is at once the very essence of Polishness and a poet whose poetry makes universal, transnational claims. Perhaps this is not a paradox, since Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Pushkin all seem as intensely national as they are universal.

What we would like to demonstrate in this commented anthology of Mickiewicz's metaphysical poems is not the poet's national, Polish character, but his European spirit and stature, his rightful claim to citizenship in the *Repubblica delle lettere* of the European tradition. This selection of poems shows Mickiewicz as part of the diverse culture of European Romanticism, as well as the great metaphysical and mystical tradition extending from the classical culture of Greece and Rome, through mediaeval Christendom, to the early-modern Reformation and Enlightenment. In these poems Mickiewicz testifies to a spiritual longing for God and the meaning of human existence, a longing which transcends not only national, ethnic and linguistic boundaries, but also religious denominations. The greatest poet of Poland, who spent the most of his adult life in bitter exile, shows himself to be at home at the very heart of Europe.

1 Krasiński is considered the third of the greatest Polish Romantic poets, next to Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849).

The origin and centre of the book are twenty-seven poems by Mickiewicz, translated into English by Mateusz Stróżyński and Jaspreet Singh Boparai, who cooperated closely to try to bring across Mickiewicz's spiritual and intellectual stature and his unique literary voice into contemporary English.[2] We also include Polish texts for the poems for those who are willing and able to consult the originals and compare them with our translations. For this we have used the standard text, edited by Czesław Zgorzelski;[3] this was reproduced in the later, anniversary edition of Mickiewicz's complete works.[4]

Our anthology is preceded by a substantial Introductory Study, which introduces the reader to the life and work of Mickiewicz in general, and to the metaphysical currents that are alive throughout his poetry in particular. The authors of the *Introductory Study* are Jerzy Fiećko and Mateusz Stróżyński. In his interdisciplinary essay, Fiećko focusses on the literary and philological aspects of Mickiewicz's poetry, and the vast body of literature surrounding his oeuvre, while Stróżyński's contribution centres round the metaphysical and mystical tradition in Mickiewicz, from the classical sources to their Christian reception and transformation, with some further discussion on poetry, translation, and the reception of Mickiewicz in world literature. The third part of the book, consisting of ample commentaries on the poems, has been put together by Fiećko and Stróżyński in accordance with the same divisions of interest and expertise.

We would like to thank Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University, Bogumiła Kaniewska, for the possibility to publish this volume in open access. We are also grateful to all our colleagues who supported this project. In particular, we want to thank Jerzy Danielewicz for his meticulous reading of the English translations and for his suggestions, many of which we have accepted.

2 All the translations from languages other than English in this volume, if not indicated otherwise, are by Stróżyński/Boparai.

3 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, t. I, p. 1: *Wiersze 1818–1824*, ed. Cz. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1971.

4 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. I: *Wiersze*, Warszawa 1998.

We completed this book in year 2022, the 200th anniversary of the publication of the *Ballads and Romances*, Mickiewicz's first poetic volume, which inaugurated Romanticism in Poland. This was also an anxious period, when the shadow of Russian imperialism, which haunted Mickiewicz's poetry and life, began again to lengthen, in face of heroic defiance from patriots willing to fight for their nation's freedom. We hope this book helps others find sources of strength and consolation that are accessible to anyone, regardless of national or religious background.

Introductory Study

1. Metaphysical Currents in the Lyric Poetry of Adam Mickiewicz

'Metaphysical poetry' is a problematic term: it is broad and the phenomenon it denotes has blurred borderlines. In the eyes of some of the leading figures within classicist aesthetics, this description seemed pejorative, suggesting poems that were too detached from the rules of rationalised discourse, and often invoked contradictory ideas. T.S. Eliot pointed this out in his essay *The Metaphysical Poets*, commenting on the volume *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler*, edited by Herbert Grierson.[1] Eliot didn't suggest his own definition of the term; but he defended the value and originality of the seventeenth-century English 'metaphysical poets' and their intellectual diversity, emphasising in particular the work of John Donne, George Herbert, Edward (Lord) Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and Henry King (to name the most prominent).

The intellectual polyphony of those poets didn't escape the notice of a poet and Harvard professor, Stanisław Barańczak, whose introduction to his own Polish anthology of seventeenth-century English metaphysical poetry highlighted some elements common to the poetical praxis of those authors.[2] Barańczak followed the convention of pointing out two "lines" uniting seventeenth-century metaphysical lyric poetry: the "strong lines" of style and – in particular – "the line of wit" (wherein he saw not only "grace and reasoning", but, most importantly, a fundamental spiritual category allowing for expression of "grand existential drama"). From the perspective of

1 T.S. Eliot, *The Metaphysical Poets*, in: *Selected Essays*, London 1932.

2 See S. Barańczak, *Wstęp*, in: *Antologia angielskiej poezji metafizycznej XVII stulecia*, wybór, przekład i wstęp S. Barańczak, Kraków 2009 (3rd edition), pp. 5–29. Barańczak in his discussion refers, among others, to T.S. Eliot, Helen Gardner (especially her *Introduction* to *The Metaphysical poets*, London 1961), F.R. Leavis (*Revolution: Tradition and Development in English Poetry*, London 1936), and Ch. M. Coffin (*John Donne and the New Philosophy*, London 1958).

seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry, what is especially interesting is not only the art of *concetto* (or 'conceit') and paradox, which enables expression of the "greatness and misery of the human being", but also complications and problems which recur in the experience of seventeenth-century poets, such as: the co-existence of the religious and the secular; the aspect of "absence" or the "anxiety of insatiety" in the life of Man and his relationship with Nature and God (mutual interpenetration of the vertical and the horizontal orders); the search for the 'hidden God'; and the experience of tragic and spiritual restlessness. All these phenomena will also be found in Adam Mickiewicz's poems. In attempting to describe the abovementioned restlessness, it is worthwhile to bear in mind the notion of 'inner experience' developed by Georges Bataille: "By inner experience I understand that which one usually calls mystical experience: the states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of meditated emotion. But I am thinking less of confessional experience, to which one has had to adhere up to now, than of an experience laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, of any confession whatever."[3] Another helpful concept is ineffability, the most significant aspect of mystical experience, in William James's view: "The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect."[4].

The term 'metaphysical poetry' is difficult to define – unsurprisingly, given how the fundamental concept in this phrase, 'metaphysics', is itself far from simple. As a term and a concept, 'metaphysics' is traditionally thought to derive from Aristotle, and his work which is commonly known as the *Metaphysics*, even though neither its title, nor the term itself, turns out to have been invented by the founder of the Lycaeum. Andronicus of Rhodes (1st century BC), the editor

3 G. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, tr. L.A. Boldt, New York 1988, p. 3.

4 W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, London – New York 2002, p. 295.

of Aristotle's writings, gave the title *Ta Meta Ta Physika* to a collection of the philosopher's essays. The Greek title can mean "what comes after the physical books" (now known as *The Physics*). The works which 'come after the physical ones' concern the highest part of philosophy which Aristotle described as "first philosophy", "first science", "theology" or "wisdom", and whose objects include: being as such, the first principles of reality, and that which is immutable (in contrast to the natural world, whose main feature is mutability).

A traditional interpretation claims that the name 'metaphysics', which was given to the noblest part of philosophy, should be understood as denoting that which transcends physics and the sensible world. This understanding was accepted in the Latin West during the Middle Ages. Many scholars claim it was merely a result of widespread ignorance of the history of how Aristotle's writings were edited and published. According to this interpretation, Andronicus was merely trying to give some name to those books which are supposed to follow Aristotle's *Physics*, when placed on a library shelf. It seems, however, that little evidence can be produced to support this popular theory: Andronicus, as well as later authors who used the term 'metaphysics', realised the semantic ambiguity of the Greek prefix *meta*. The object of Aristotelian wisdom is indeed what comes after the physical, but in the sense of transcending it.[5]

We can assume that Mickiewicz was familiar with Aristotle's philosophy, including his *Metaphysics*. He received a solid education

5 See H. Reiner, "Die Entstehung und ursprüngliche Bedeutung des Namens Metaphysik," *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 8, 2 (1954), pp. 210–237; A.-H. Chroust, "The Origin of 'Metaphysics'", *The Review of Metaphysics* 14, 4 (1961), pp. 601–616; T. Ando, *Metaphysics: a Critical Survey of Its Meaning*, The Hague 1963, pp. 3–6. The first author who uses *Ta Meta Ta Physika* as a title of Aristotle's work is Nicolaus of Damascus (1st century BC), while the great Peripatetic commentators such as Alexander of Aphrodisias (2nd century AD) and Themistios (4th century AD) explicitly wrote that metaphysics as a discipline refers to what comes after physics, not in an editorial or bibliographical sense, but because it is through the sensible world that a human being can reach eternal and immutable reality, which comes 'later' in the order of human knowledge. On the other hand, they pointed out that in the objective, ontological order, the 'metaphysical' world is primary, while the physical world is logically posterior, because it derives from and depends on it.

in ancient thought at Vilnius University[6] between 1815 and 1819, where he studied under Gottfried Ernst Groddeck (1762–1825).[7] He frequently referred to Aristotelian political theory and aesthetics, as well as to 'Aristotelianism' in general, in the political pieces he wrote as an *émigré* in the early 1830s, and later in his lectures on Latin literature delivered at the Academy of Lausanne (1839–1840) as well as in his courses on Slavic literature at the Collège de France in Paris (1840–1844).[8]

In his Paris courses, Mickiewicz contrasted Aristotle with Plato, claiming that the two main currents of philosophy that are perpetually at war with each other derive from each of these two ancient thinkers. This was congruent with the general view that emerged in the nineteenth century, in opposition to the earlier *opinio communis*, according to which the philosophical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle are complementary, and harmonise with one another, because Platonism primarily studies the eternal, spiritual realm, while Aristotelianism deals with the temporal, sensible world. Such a view is exemplified in the famous depiction of Plato and Aristotle at the centre of Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509–1511), where the older philosopher points his index finger upwards, while the younger one's hand directs attention downwards. Mickiewicz on the other hand, claimed Plato as the main representative of an inspired and intuitive philosophy, whilst asserting Aristotle to be a father of "scholasticism", that is, an abstract, dry and cerebral philosophy. Curiously enough, Mickiewicz counted G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), whom he disliked, among the 'scholastics' and disciples of Aristotle.

Mickiewicz's early classical education, and his subsequent incredible erudition (which led to his appointments, first to the chair of Latin literature at Lausanne, then to the chair of Slavic literature in Paris), allow us to assume that he was more than familiar

6 We use contemporary Lithuanian names for the two main cities of Mickiewicz's youth: Wilno (Vilnius) and Kowno (Kaunas).

7 On Classics in Vilnius and Groddeck, see the recent work of Maciej Junkiert (*Nowi Grecy. Historyzm polskich romantyków wobec narodzin "Altertumswissenschaft"*, Poznań 2017, pp. 99–157).

8 See T. Sinko, *Mickiewicz i antyk*, Wrocław 1957, pp. 267–269, 381–383, 500–502.

with the Western metaphysical tradition, from the ancient thought of Plato and Aristotle through the Platonic Church Fathers to the mature scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages. As was noted above, he must have first encountered ancient philosophy as a student in Vilnius, but, as Tadeusz Sinko notes, the only surviving fragment of Mickiewicz's M.A. dissertation *De criticae usu atque praestantia* (devoted to the then-developing discipline of systematic textual criticism of Latin and Greek manuscripts) focusses on Origen of Alexandria (AD 185–253), St Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 329–390 AD), St Basil the Great (329–379), and St Jerome of Stridon (342/347–420).[9] Knowledge of the first three of those four Fathers must have given Mickiewicz insight into the tradition of Christian Platonism, since St Gregory of Nazianzus (revered later as 'the Theologian') and his friend St Basil of Caesarea, along with his younger brother St Gregory of Nyssa, are usually referred to as the Cappadocian Fathers. Their was a great synthesis of Pagan philosophy (Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic) with Biblical revelation; they laid the foundations for mediaeval metaphysics and mysticism, not only in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, but in the Western, Latin Church as well.[10]

In the 1830s Mickiewicz returned with great enthusiasm to these sources of Western metaphysics: in a letter to Bohdan and Józef Zaleski from 1838 he mentions his plans to translate the *Confessions* by St Augustine and the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite as well as "one of the Church Fathers".[11] The writings of Augustine, that synthesise Christian revelation with the Platonism of Plotinus (204–270 AD) and Porphyry (234–305 AD), exerted an overwhelming

9 Sinko, *Mickiewicz i antyk*, p. 87–90.

10 In his lectures delivered in 1840–1844 at the Collège de France, Mickiewicz mentions, in various contexts, Origen and Clement of Alexandria (Course I, Lecture XL, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. VIII: *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs pierwszy*, Warszawa 1997, p. 570; Course II, Lecture XX, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. IX: *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs drugi*, Warszawa 1997, p. 260).

11 See the letter to Bohdan and Józef Zaleski, ca. 14th May 1838 (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. XV: *Listy. Część druga 1830–1841*, oprac. Maria Dernałowicz, Elżbieta Jaworska, Marta Zielińska, Warszawa 2003, p. 397).

influence on mediaeval metaphysics up to St Thomas Aquinas's thirteenth-century *Summa Theologiae*. The *Corpus Dionysiacum*, on the other hand, is a collection of treatises which enjoyed an immense authority both in the East and in the West, because, until the end of the fifteenth century, they were attributed to St Dionysius the Areopagite, purportedly a Greek philosopher who was converted by St Paul during his famous Areopagus speech (Acts 17:16–34). Humanists including Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) and Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/69–1536) demonstrated beyond doubt that the author of the Dionysian *corpus* couldn't have been a contemporary of St Paul, because the work is cited nowhere before the sixth century. More recent studies have shown that the treatises attributed to St Dionysius are essentially a creative transformation of a metaphysical system of Proclus, the head of the Platonic Academy in Athens until the year 485 AD.

It was unanimously believed that the works in question were written by this disciple of St Paul's; thus they enjoyed a decisive impact on mediaeval metaphysics and mysticism. These texts' influence shaped Christian philosophy, first in the Byzantine Empire, then in the Latin West, when they were translated into Latin in 858 by an Irish monk John Scotus Eriugena (800–877) – especially since it was (wrongly) assumed that St Dionysius the Areopagite later became the first bishop of Paris and the patron of the famous Abbey of Saint-Denis. The authority of Augustine and that of the Pseudo-Areopagite converge, along with Aristotle, Plotinus,[12] Proclus, and their Arabic commentators, in the thirteenth-century grand metaphysical system of Aquinas.

Mickiewicz's desire to translate St Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius demonstrate his profound interest in the Western metaphysical and mystical tradition. In a 1839 letter to a Polish philosopher, Bronisław Trentowski (1808–1869), Mickiewicz accuses him of neglecting not only his favourite theosophists, Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) and Franz

12 Plotinus wasn't known in the mediaeval Arabic philosophy nor in the Latin West by his own name, but the paraphrase of his *Enneads* was influential under the title *Theology of Aristotle*.

von Baader (1765–1841),[13] but also the works of the Church Fathers and St Thomas Aquinas.[14] Andrzej Lam points out Mickiewicz's fascination with Christian mysticism, as testified by his letter to Jan Skrzynecki (1787–1860), where he says that he read Joseph Görres (1776–1848) and "many similar works".[15] Görres' *Die Christliche Mystik* is a monumental four-volume work featuring extensive

13 Franz von Baader was an influential Catholic philosopher who was inspired by the tradition of German mysticism, as well as the theosophy of Jakob Böhme and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. It is largely thanks to him that the academic world became interested in the writings of Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) and so-called Rhineland mysticism, in which the mystical unity of the depth of the human soul and God is emphasised. Baader was a friend of many eminent philosophers of his time, including F.H. Jacobi and F. Schelling. His most important work is a collection of aphorisms, *Fermenta cognitionis*, which was in all likelihood known to Mickiewicz, and a four-volume *Spekulative Dogmatik* (1827–1836). He was fascinated by the *St. Petersburg Dialogues* of the Savoyard diplomat and writer, Joseph de Maistre. Baader tried to enter Russia in 1822, convinced that the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church could prove an antidote to Western materialism and atheism, against which both the Catholic and the Protestant churches seemed to be helpless. After arriving at Riga he was disappointingly not allowed to travel further into Russia, so returned to Munich where, after a university was established (1826), he became a professor of philosophy and theology.

14 Mickiewicz, in a letter to Trentowski of the 9th of September 1839, commenting on his work *Grundlage der universellen Philosophie* (Karlsruhe 1837), writes: "My dear Colleague, you skipped over everything from ancient Greece to Kant and you claim that Schelling follows Socrates. According to you, the whole of the Middle Ages, which so moved the world, has no philosophy worthy of attention, or even worthy of comparing with the theories of Socrates and Schelling! (…) Even though you mention Jakob Böhme with approval, he is there in your book like a stone in a kidney, not as a proper part of the organism. This is also the reason that you disposed of Baader with a brief note and threw him among the rabble of the Schellingians and Hegelians. It seems to me that Baader deserves the attention even of his adversaries and cannot be pushed off the battleground easily. I won't say a word about St Thomas, not to mention the Church Fathers! Here I definitely have to stop, because otherwise I will surely begin to enthuse and ramble …" (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. XV, p. 488).

15 A. Lam, *Anioł Ślązak Mickiewicza*, Kraków 2015, p. 12, note 4. Cf. Mickiewicz's letter to Jan Skrzynecki from the 7th of April 1842 (*Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. XVI, p. 68–69).

material on the Christian mystics as well as a discussion of key mystical terms such as visions or ecstasies.[16] In light of all this, we can safely assume that Mickiewicz was familiar with the most important representatives of mediaeval and early modern mysticism. Yet the most prominent influences on him were such mystics and theosophists as Jakob Böhme and Angelus Silesius (1624–1677)[17] as well as their later followers and popularizers, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803)[18] and Franz von Baader.

The term 'metaphysics' was rarely used by Mickiewicz. The *Lexicon of Adam Mickiewicz's Language* notes only a couple of instances, where he uses the terms 'metaphysics' and 'metaphysician'.[19] He used words such as 'mysticism', 'mystic' and 'mystical' (which he treated as partly synonymous with 'metaphysics'-related vocabulary) far more

16 Joseph Görres sympathized in his youth with revolutionary ideas, but later converted to Catholicism and became a professor of the University of Munich (where Franz von Baader was also involved). Apart from political writings, he was the author of a Catholic apologetic *Die Christliche Mystik*, published in four volumes in 1836–1842 and republished in 1870s.

17 His proper name was Johannes Scheffler; he was a Protestant born in Silesia, who studied medicine and law in Strasburg, Leiden, and Padova. He met Abraham von Franckenberg, the disciple of Jakob Böhme, and was inspired by the doctrine of the cobbler from Görlitz. In 1653 he converted to Catholicism and became a priest in 1661.

18 Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was a Catholic French mystic and theosophist who tried to propagate Böhme's ideas, and also translated his work into French. Saint-Martin became popular in Russia in the early 19th century; Mickiewicz became familiar with his work during his Russian exile, and continued reading it after settling in Paris.

19 See *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza*, eds. K. Górski, S. Hrabec, Wrocław 1965, t. IV, p. 241. Mickiewicz occasionally used this term also ironically, to refer to the philosophy of Hegel and his followers, of which he disapproved. In June of 1829 he wrote from Berlin to his close friend Franciszek Malewski, still in exile in Petersburg: "Philosophy has gone to many heads here, I'm afraid that I'm so bored with the Hegelians that I could being to support Śniadecki. I attend Hegel's lectures. It took him two classes to distinguish between *Vernunft* and *Verstand*. I can see I truly belong to an earlier generation and as a *stationnaire* [old-fashioned] I simply can't reach any understanding with those metaphysicians" (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe*, t. 14: *Listy. Część pierwsza 1815–1829*, ed. M. Dernałowicz, E. Jaworska, M. Zielińska, Warszawa 1998, pp. 601–2).

frequently, emphasising them, for instance, in his most important drama, *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III.[20] The understanding of 'metaphysics' that became standard in classical philosophy grew increasingly widespread in European culture from the late Middle Ages. Today, lexicons and encyclopedias define this term usually as a philosophical science (or perhaps, more precisely, a discipline) concerning the causes and essence of being or what is mysterious, unknown to the senses, and, therefore, beyond everyday experience and the cognitive capacities of human reason. It may be claimed that Mickiewicz's own understanding of metaphysics (and mysticism) was, for all intents and purposes, identical to this.

1.1 *Early Poems: the Vilnius-Kaunas Period*

Romantic metaphysical and religious tropes recur frequently in the work of Adam Mickiewicz, a Polish poet born on the 24th of December 1798, right after the definitive fall of his fatherland (the third Partition of Poland took place in 1795). They can be found at every stage of his creative life. In the first phase, usually called the Vilnius-Kaunas period, which encompasses his studies at the Vilnius University (1815–1819) and his work in Kaunas as a teacher (1819–1823), his poetic practice seemed strongly classicist, not only in terms of rhetoric and style, but also his preferred literary forms, not least in 'high' genres as the hymn, the ode and the narrative poem.[21] Yet these Romantic tropes can be seen particularly in the occasional poems he addressed to his friends from the Philomath circle.[22] Czesław Zgorzelski, by far the most prominent expert on

20 See *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza*, t. IV, p. 373.

21 See W. Borowy, *Mickiewicz w szkole klasycystycznej*, in: idem, *O poezji Mickiewicza*, Lublin 1958, t. I, pp. 39–51. The first poem Mickiewicz published, *Zima miejska* ("*Winter in the City*," in "Tygodnik Wileński", 1818) borrows from the style of epic narrative, whilst transforming its classicist form into something more ironic, seeming to praise the carefree life of 'golden youth' who spend winters entertaining themselves in big cities while, in fact, he distanced himself from this lifestyle and fashioned his poem into a kind of clandestine satire.

22 During his studies, and also after graduation, Mickiewicz helped create and develop the students' movements of the Philomaths ('lovers of science') and the Philareths ('lovers of virtue'), which were secret societies associated with

Mickiewicz's lyrical poetry, has acutely observed that at this time he began to transform and overturn his classicist tendencies, introducing a more lyrical, personal perspective, thus emphasising a Romantic subjectivity of the authorial voice.[23]

When he was writing *The Ode to Youth* (December 1820), Mickiewicz gave this classicising form a Romantic colour through its emotional tone, and the dynamism of its unbalanced poetic form (every stanza featured a different verse layout and metre, and the length of the verses extended from 3 to 13 metrical feet). Rhetorically too the ode was 'Romanticising': it was composed in the form of an ethical address in the voice of a candidate aspiring toward leadership of a community. As the ruling idea the poet considered freedom and youth (that is, all people who are young in spirit) to be capable of radically transforming the world. *The Ode to Youth* can be considered the first fully Romantic poem in Polish literature, not only in terms of form, but also in its political ideas focused on liberty.

Mickiewicz planned to include this ode in his first poetic volume alongside his ballad *The Romantic*, an equally programmatic expression of his worldview. Tsarist censorship, however, prevented the publication of *The Ode to Youth* on political grounds. Mickiewicz's first poetic volume, *Ballads and Romances*, published in 1822, consists of a cycle of Romantic ballads. This groundbreaking book inaugurated Romanticism in Poland, and also helped shape the Romantic metaphysical imagination. In our anthology we include two, very different poems from the 1822 volume: *The Romantic*, and the *Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation.*

Vilnius University, and active between 1817 and 1823. These societies blended the Enlightenment worship of science and education with a Romantic belief in youth as a significant force for good in the process of transforming a world then subject to tyranny into a freer one. This movement evolved into a conspiracy to regain Polish independence. In these circles poetry was a universal practice, as was literary criticism. For their Philomathic activism, Mickiewicz and his friends, including Tomasz Zan, Jan Czeczot, Onufry Pietraszkiewicz and Franciszek Malewski, were arrested by the Russian authorities in 1823. After a year-long investigation, twenty of them, including Mickiewicz, were exiled into the interior of Russia.

23 See Cz. Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza. Próby zbliżeń i uogólnień*, Warszawa 1976, pp. 25–32, 48–229.

The Romantic stands out among the other *Ballads and Romances*, because the fantastic, folk-like style essential to the other poems has been replaced here by a metaphysical and eschatological perspective. Other structural features of this genre, which was hitherto unprecedented in Polish literature, were maintained by Mickiewicz. Ireneusz Opacki, a noted expert in the aesthetics of the ballad, emphasises Mickiewicz's generic syncretism in this ballad, with its skillful blending of epic and dramatic elements alongside an element of lyrical sensitivity.[24] Dramatic verse was a particular influence on *The Romantic*, since all that is of the utmost importance (that is, ideas and impressions) was voiced by the protagonists in direct speech. In this way the poem acquired a polyphonic character and lost the attributes of a didactic manifesto, while the marketplace in a provincial town became the first *agora* in Polish culture, where an ancient Greek *agon*, dispute between the Enlightenment and the Romantic sensibilities takes place.

Apart from the polemicising characters in the poem, we encounter the Old Man, who represents the Enlightenment worldview,[25] and the young Poet, who promotes a Romantic sensibility, and has the final lines, which end both the argument and the whole event. A special role is given to Karusia, a common girl with a name uncommon for contemporary Polish folk characters ('Karusia' being a diminutive for 'Karolina'). Her status in the world depicted in the narrative remains ambiguous: it is never clear whether she is insane, or a 'seer' who can communicate with the dead (or, perhaps, both). The history of a personal tragedy emerges from the suffering girl's fragmentary monologue. We see an orphan, oppressed by her stepmother, who lost a man she loved (he is tenderly addressed with the diminutive "*Jasieńku*!"), but who also acquired, in her own view, the

24 See I. Opacki, *Odwrócona elegia. O przenikaniu się postaci gatunkowych w poezji*, Katowice 1999, pp. 191–312 (chapter "Ballada literacka – opis gatunku"); idem, *"W środku niebokręga". Poezja romantycznych przełomów*, pp. 15–34 (chapter "'W środku niebokręga'. O "Balladach i romansach" Mickiewicza').

25 The figure of the Old Man is universally considered to be an allusive portrayal of Jan Śniadecki, a professor of Vilnius University (and its former rector) as well as a vocal critic of Romantic culture (see more on this in the commentary to the poem).

special gift of being able to cross the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead ("I see – they cannot see you!"). She is convinced that she can maintain intimacy with her lost lover as she lives from one visionary encounter to another, maintaining her fidelity in the face of death's destructive power. The cost of this choice is a weakened connection to the world, and a feeling of loneliness among the living.

The speech she delivers to the ghost of her beloved (who is neither introduced as a being in his own right nor seen publicly) is received with empathy by the crowd gathered at midday in the town's marketplace. They are confident that this is not an hallucination:

> Come, say your prayers! – The commoners cry:
> Surely his soul must be here.
> Those two young lovers belong together:
> He loved her when he was alive!

It is precisely this reaction of the crowd that provokes a rant by the Old Man, who is a rational empiricist and a social educator, and tries to educate the crowd by laying out his point of view, and indeed the foundations of the Enlightenment worldview: scientism ("my eye and my lens"), rationalism, and empiricism ("There's nothing here I can see!"). The learned sage treats belief in ghosts as an anti-intellectual barbarism; he seems to understand the girl as raving mad, and scrupulously maintains his distance from her suffering. This is meant to associate Enlightenment learning with a lack of empathy towards human suffering.

The closing lines of the ballad, spoken by the young Poet in response to the Old Man's speech, sets the boundaries for this epistemological dispute concerning how appropriate 'Enlightened' instruments of knowledge are in this situation. The young Poet shares the crowd's compassion for the girl, and their faith in the possibility of crossing between the temporal and the preternatural realms. He doesn't deny the usefulness of reason and sense-experience when it comes to knowing the world, but he makes a powerful point that "feeling and faith" (that is, intuition, inner sensitivity, spirituality

and the Shakespearean "mind's eyes", as mentioned in the poem's epigraph), play a more important role where suffering and the mystery of being ("the living truths") are concerned, particularly when the nature of the connection between the visible and the invisible worlds is involved. The closing metaphor of 'the heart' is crucial here. Of course this has always been a preeminent symbol, both in folklore and high culture, of the source of love, passion, and powerful feelings. It also enjoys this prominence on a religious-metaphysical plane, since the heart takes on multiple mystical meanings in the Bible, as a symbol of the divine and supernatural realms.[26]

Karusia, an unenlightened girl from the world of the common people, opens up in the Polish Romanticism a whole gallery of figures who strive at cultivating the bond between the living and the dead and who abide in the circle of memory, the memory of those who passed away. Those figures are convinced that they enjoy a privilege of crossing the boundary between "here" and "there", this world and the other world. From this point of view, it is a secondary matter as to whether Karusia is clairvoyant or insane. As Zofia Stefanowska pointed out in her exquisite discussion of this ballad, for the Romantics

> insanity is an ambiguous, borderline state. Is it merely a disease or such a disease that can empower the spiritual faculties of man, or a state of communing with the supernatural world and thus wrongly qualified as pathological by the wise? (…) It was a girl in small town marketplace that revealed for the first time to a Polish Romantic this great temptation of knowing the mystery inaccessible to the senses and reason. The girl who saw and the crowd who believed that she saw. And even if the object of the popular faith, those superstitions and old wives' tales, remained for the poet something external and alien, the very attitude of faith was the value which connected him to the common people and enabled him to fulfil the function of the interpreter, translating the resources of folk fantasy into the system of universal concepts.[27]

26 See the commentary on the poem.

27 Z. Stefanowska, *O "Romantyczności"*, in: idem, *Próba zdrowego rozumu. Studia o Mickiewiczu*, Warszawa 2001 [2nd ed.], pp. 36–37.

The theme of the bond between the living and the dead became the main axis of the so-called Vilnius-Kaunas *Forefathers' Eve* (consisting of Part II and IV of the play), the most important section of Mickiewicz's second poetic volume, published in 1823. This play begins the history of Romantic drama in Polish culture. Some scholars claim, not without good reason, that the ballad cycle was to become a kind of an introduction to the early parts of *Forefathers' Eve*, because what in *The Romantic* was a mere conjecture or a question of belief (i.e. the supernatural contact between a living human being and the ghosts of the dead) here becomes a fully-developed basis of the world depicted in the play.[28] In *Forefathers' Eve*, Part II Mickiewicz focuses on the religiously unorthodox folk ritual of '*dziady*' (the 'forefathers') which consists of intercessory prayers for the deceased recited in cemeteries on All Souls' Eve.

Mickiewicz transforms this ritual into a supernatural spectacle, during which the souls in Purgatory appear to a crowd gathered in a cemetery chapel, telling their life stories, which are all marked by some form of moral evil or existential deficiency. They submit themselves to the commands of Guślarz, a mystagogue and a leader of the mystery ritual. In Part IV of the play, Gustaw appears. Gustaw is the first fully-formed Romantic character in Polish literature; yet his ontological status is difficult to judge. He is alive, but heading towards death by suicide: this young man suffers from a lost love. Here love is perhaps understood in Werther-like terms, as the only element that grants a full meaning to existence. It is possible, however, that Gustaw is already the wraith of a man who has killed himself, a returning ghost. In this section, the situation of *The Romantic* is repeated in the form of a great confrontation between, on the one hand, the Romantic world of 'forefathers', and a belief in the mysterious bond between this world and the other world (as represented by Gustaw), and on the other hand, the rationalist figure of the Priest, who is attached to orthodoxy, but empathises with the suffering youth, who is his former pupil. This time, however, the rebellious Romantic openly denies everyday experience and destroys the

28 See J. Maciejewski, *Trzy szkice romantyczne. O "Dziadach", "Balladynie", Epilogu "Pana Tadeusza"*, Poznań 1967, pp. 7–151.

redoubt of 'common sense' (as represented by the Priest), thus symbolically closing the dispute from the end of *The Romantic*.

The second poem from Mickiewicz's first volume that appears in our anthology has a very different character indeed. *The Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation* fits uneasily into a classicist view of the conventions of the form which is explicitly mentioned in its title. This 'hymn' is composed in an irregular verse form which emphasises the emotional stance of the lyrical subject, by which it resembles Mickiewicz's *Ode to Youth*, composed at a similar time. Stefania Skwarczyńska has demonstrated that only the first six lines of the poem conform to the established conventions of the 'hymn' form.[29] She also accepted an assumption that the hymn is being sung by a crowd gathered at church, which later, struck by the temerity of its request for the Blessed Virgin to appear here and now, humbles itself by prostrating (as the distanced narrator of the poem informs us, lines 7–9).

Skwarczyńska divides further parts of the poem into two additional sections: the speech of the prophet (lines 10–23) and a mystical vision of the narrator who experiences a religious transformation and, by virtue of that, becomes a figure distinct, yet also included in the event space of the poem (lines 24–40). By suggesting this tripartite division into various dimensions of action, Skwarczyńska reached a conclusion that the poem, in its structural character, becomes a syncretic hybrid "within the boundaries of a dramatic-epic-lyrical genre", while "its generic structure consists of a so-called dramatic scene, mingled in its certain aspects with a ballad and, at another

29 "Those six first lines of the poem indeed form, in their generic structure, a hymn of a religious (ritual) sort. (…) What is found at the beginning of Mickiewicz's poem is, indeed, we reiterate, a hymn: all its structural features indicate this; the lyrical subject is a collective one; there is an appropriate emotional and ideational content; all of its linguistic-stylistic features, including the imperative invocation of the Mother of God, have a rich tradition in Christian hymnody." (S. Skwarczyńska, "Rozważania genologiczne nad dwoma utworami Mickiewicza ("Hymn na dzień Zwiastowania N. P. Maryi" i "Słowa Panny")," in: *Mickiewicz. Sympozjum w Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim*, ed. Andrzej Podgórski, Lublin 1979, p. 140).

moment, linked to a hymn."[30] We may object to this nuanced interpretation by pointing out that one could just as easily claim that, from line ten onwards, a single figure dominates: the prophet who, first, proclaims the power of his words (which he desires to offer as a means of praising the glory of God and Mary), and, then, who experiences a mystical vision associated with the Annunciation. We are inclined here to accept the latter line of interpretation.

The Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation has traditionally been considered a religious poem; this makes it stand out among Mickiewicz's early lyric verse. However, it is atypical among Marian devotions in verse.[31] In Polish literary tradition, Marian devotions focus on praise and idealisation of the Mother of God. By contrast, in Mickiewicz's poem, the main theme, as indicated in the title, is the Annunciation itself, namely, the communication to a young Jewish girl, by the archangel Gabriel, that she has been chosen by Jahweh ('Jehovah' in Mickiewicz) to be the mother of the Son of God. In other words, the poem seems to be a kind of apocryphal interpretation of the events described in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke (1:26–38).[32] We say 'apparently', since a dominant figure here is the protagonist, referred to by the poet as "a prophet", who speaks among a circle of the crowd who are possessed by religious fear. His exclamation could potentially extend to include the rest of the poem, which, in strictly generic terms, comes after the genuinely hymnic section (which amounts to thirty lines in total).

It is precisely because of this prophetic speech, as Stefania Skwarczyńska observed in another paper, that the poem turns into a spectacular "declaration of poetic self-knowledge and creative

30 Ibidem, p. 148.

31 The history of poetic Marian devotions in Polish literature, Romantic and otherwise, has been documented in *Matka Boska w poezji polskiej*, ed. M. Jasińska et al., Lublin 1959.

32 In the Gospel of Matthew, the angel tells Joseph about Mary in a dream – "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" – and tells him what to do next. The moment of Annunciation itself is not narrated (see Mt 1:18–25). In the other Gospels, Joseph's dream is omitted.

powers":[33] this is the second key theme of the hymn, besides the Annunciation indicated in its title. Not only is the prophet concerned with attempts to receive a revelation of Godhead within the church, whilst pleading to strengthen his own prophetic voice; also he emphasises, not without a touch of pride, his own alleged powers and significance ("Though only the godlike can the godlike praise"). Those powers and this significance are manifest not merely in his capacity to arouse spiritual enthusiasm (presumably, among the gathered people): the prophet attributes to himself a voice so powerful (similar to the voice of the Cherubs who will proclaim the end of history, and raise the dead from their ashes), that the glory proclaimed by this voice (the glory of both Jehovah and Mary?) will spread throughout the whole infinite universe and last for ever. In Mickiewicz's work this fragment initiates an incredibly important current, namely, his reflections on the subject of genius, and the power and pride of an artist, whose climax is going to be Konrad's virtuoso monologue in the so-called Great Improvisation of *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III (1832), where Konrad will present himself as equal to God in his creative powers.

In the *Hymn*, a mystical vision acts as a response to the prophet's ambiguous self-presentation. At first it reveals the moment just before the Annunciation itself – that is, the delight of Jehovah in the Virgin's perfect beauty (which obviously symbolises her spiritual and moral impeccability). Later, in the last, exquisitely dynamic and condensed stanza (with its five- and four-feet long lines), the climax of the Annunciation scene – the conception of the Son of God – is rendered by a *sui generis* mystical paradox ("Virgin – Mother,/God – flesh!"). This section of the poem is the first attempt in Polish Romantic literature to express a mystical experience. The narrative of the first chapter of Luke has been replaced by two images: the beauty of Mary, and the reaction of Jehovah to this beauty. The substitution of a white dove representing the Holy Spirit (by whose power Mary becomes with child), for the archangel Gabriel in this

33 S. Skwarczyńska, "'Hymn na dzień Zwiastowania N. P. Maryi' (Próba nowego odczytania utworu)," in: eadem, *Mickiewiczowskie "powinowactwa z wyboru"*, Warszawa 1957, p. 201.

scene, returns our attention to the Gospel of Matthew (1:18–25), where the role of the angel was also omitted, thus emphasising the significance of the Holy Spirit in bringing Jesus to the human world.

Who is describing the mystical vision in the poem? If we agree with the interpretation proposed by Skwarczyńska, namely, that it is the voice of the narrator who became a *dramatis persona*, we must accept that the figure of the prophet has been diminished by this move, or even reduced to a kind of a "false prophet". The latter reading seems to be supported by the fact that, in the conclusion of *The Romantic* as well, the narrator becomes embodied as a protagonist of the poem, and spells out the last, most portentous lines in the whole work, thus devaluing his Enlightenment-worshipping predecessor. On the other hand, if we accept that it is the prophet who experienced the vision, it will mean that the supernatural powers within the depicted world of the *Hymn* grant access to such an illumination, and a glimpse of truth, even to those for whom the sin of pride is not entirely alien. This would be a *sui generis* preview of the forgiveness granted by Providence to the rebellious Konrad in Mickiewicz's most famous play, *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III.

Another aspect which has hitherto been neglected in the critical literature on Mickiewicz is the potential connection of the *Hymn* to the Book of Revelation, especially in the way the first appearance of the "the Maid coming to Zion" with her radiant face ("It is Mary's face:/ The morning star"). This image resembles the "Woman clothed with the sun" from the vision of John (Rev 12:1),[34] identified exegetically with Mary since the sixth century.[35] In the further part of chapter twelve, the Woman struggles with evil represented by the figure of Dragon (or Snake) who wants to devour the child that she

34 All biblical quotations are given according to the *King James Version*.

35 It has been usually assumed by biblical scholars that chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation depicts a fight of Satan with the Church throughout history. According to some interpretations, the Woman bears some features of the Mother of the Messiah, but she is also a collective symbol of Israel and Zion (following Isaiah). The tradition of interpreting the Woman as Mary can be dated back to Oecumenius' commentary in the sixth century (see Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, tr. J. Suggit, Washington, DC, 2006).

is to bear. This Woman who is "with child" can be associated with the scene of Annunciation, so crucial to Mickiewicz's *Hymn*. Perhaps, this dramatic vision of the heroic, pregnant Woman led Mickiewicz to transform the gospel account of Annunciation into a something much more dynamic?

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In our anthology we have declined to include any of the poems written by Mickiewicz during his exile in Russia (1824–1829), in part because they lack any significant metaphysical elements. Certain scholars point to the presence of religious imagination and motifs in various poems of this period, including *The Crimean Sonnets*, the most famous lyric cycle of Mickiewicz's period in exile.[36] This cycle revolutionised the sonnet form in its depiction of a Romantic wayfarer and exile who penetrates the mysteries of Nature and Oriental spirituality, while missing his "homely fatherland". Mickiewicz became popular at the time thanks also to his *Odessa Sonnets*, which introduced a number of original innovations to Polish erotic poetry. Both cycles were published together in Moscow in 1826 as a single volume and initiated a sort of a 'sonnetomania' in the Polish literature of the time. This phase of Mickiewicz's life was marked by intimate friendships with the young members of the literary and intellectual elite in Russia, including the Decembrists, who tried (and failed) to overthrow the autocratic, Tsarist regime in December 1825.

This Russian period affected Mickiewicz's later metaphysical works in at least two ways. His poetic craftsmanship matured as his poetry developed in multiple genres, including his innovative elegiac works no less than his Romanticised sonnets. Those works hover somewhere between dramatic, epic, and lyric forms, according to principles of generic fusion. Mickiewicz's poems of this time

36 See D. Seweryn, *O wyobraźni lirycznej Adama Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 20–63. In part I, entitled "O wyobraźni religijnej Mickiewicza", the author pointed to the existence, in different sonnets, of either motifs or images of a religious-metaphysical character (for example, those associated with ruins and graves) with the topoi of *vanitas* or death.

begin to relax their high rhetorical tone, moving towards "direct, natural speech, developed freely, without any restraints from artificial, preordained rigors,"[37] which are evident mostly in the elegiac current of his work.

The second important impulse to deepen the metaphysical themes in his later poetry came from Mickiewicz's study of the thought and religious imagination of Christian neo-Gnostics or theosophists such as Jakob Böhme, Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin.[38] Among them, only Saint-Martin was a Roman Catholic;[39] the fact soon led Mickiewicz to try to work out his own version of an unorthodox, Christian, religious syncretism. These mystics were popular among the young Russian elite, though at this time a particularly significant role in shaping Mickiewicz's mystical and religious interests was played by his friend and (perhaps) spiritual mentor Józef Oleszkiewicz (1777–1830), a Polish painter and mystical philosopher who had long been resident in Petersburg, when Mickiewicz arrived. Unfortunately, all

37 Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza*, p. 35.

38 Czesław Miłosz writes: "'Jakob Boehme was a divine prophet and seer of today's Christianity no less than Isaiah was for the Hebrew. Swedenborg was another, though' – says Mickiewicz – 'he was not as strictly and as thoroughly initiated into the world of the spirit. A man of occasionally profound but more often ordinary visions.' That is, Mickiewicz revered as prophets two highly unorthodox Lutherans. Not to mention one Catholic of dubious orthodoxy: 'Saint-Martin understood Boehme well; he lived among skeptics – Voltaire, Rousseau – in what was a hard time for believers, and he is the third prophet.' A prophet foresees the future. Were Christian prophets born only to foretell the end of Christianity, indeed, of all religion? Not so. They bear witness to the decline, the decadence, the breakdown, and herald the beginning of a new era. Common to all three of Mickiewicz's is a perception of the crisis of the age provoked by the alternative elected by science." (Cz. Miłosz, *The Land of Ulro*, tr. L. Iribarne, New York 1984, pp. 108–9).

39 On Mickiewicz's interest in the thought of Böhme and Swedenborg see, among others, R.M. Blüth, "'Chrześcijański Prometeusz". Wpływ Böhmego na koncepcję III części "Dziadów"', in: idem, *Pisma literackie*, ed. P. Nowaczyński, Kraków 1987, pp. 133–187; Miłosz, *The Land of Ulro*, pp. 97–135; W. Weintraub, *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o profetyzmie Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1998 [2nd ed.]; Z. Kępiński, *Mickiewicz hermetyczny*, Warszawa 2019 [2nd ed.]; Bogusław Dopart, *Poemat profetyczny. O "Dziadach" drezdeńskich Adama Mickiewicza*, Kraków 2002; Jerzy Fiećko, *Przypisy do "Dziadów"*, Poznań 2020.

of his writings are lost, so there is no way to determine the degree of kinship between these men's mystical and visionary attitudes.[40] Mickiewicz was fascinated with the works of these religious thinkers, as well as Franz von Baader and Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), and continued to cultivate these interests after leaving Russia in 1829, as his works will demonstrate.[41]

1.2 *Metaphysical Perspective in the Rome-Dresden Poems*

The beginning of Mickiewicz's stay in the West, usually referred to as his Rome-Dresden period (1830–1832), plays a significant part in the development of his metaphysical poetry. In our anthology we have included several poems from this phase. Generally speaking, we may distinguish two currents within the Rome-Dresden period: a patriotic and a metaphysical one. The expansion of the patriotic strand of Mickiewicz's work was a consequence of contemporary political events, not least the November Uprising (1830–1831).[42] The most

40 Contemporary testimonies confirm the influence of this artist on the spiritual evolution of Mickiewicz, including his interest in the mysticism of Böhme and Swedenborg, copies of whose writings were available in Oleszkiewicz' private library and were used by Mickiewicz (among them were the most famous work of Swedenborg's: *De Coelo et eius mirabilibus et de inferno ex auditis et visis*; the most recent English translation is: E. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, tr. G.F. Dole, West Chester, PA, 2020).

41 Mickiewicz left Russia, with the approval of the regime, in 1829. Officially, it was to recover his health. He never returned again either to Russia or his native land (the region that was a part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania within Poland-Lithuania). Thereafter he travelled across Europe, visiting Goethe in Weimar, seeing Switzerland and Italy, and staying for some time in Rome (1830–1831). During his sojourn in the Eternal City, the poet had important religious experiences which were reflected in his lyrics of that time.

42 The November Uprising was started on the 29th of November 1830 by Polish officers staying in Warsaw, which was occupied by the Russians. At the beginning of December of the same year, the Russian Tsar was dethroned by the parliament ("Sejm") of the Kingdom of Poland, an abbreviated state which covered roughly 1/6 of Poland-Lithuania before the Partitions, and boasted its own constitution and army. The so-called 'Congress Kingdom' was created by the agreement of European powers in the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and joined to the Russian Empire by the fact that the Tsar was, at the same time, a king of Poland. A National Government was created, and a Polish-Russian

celebrated poem of this kind is *Ordon's Redoubt* (*Reduta Ordona*), a historiosophic-prophetic, short narrative poem (rhapsody). *Ordon's Redoubt* closes on a catastrophic note: it narrates an obscure episode from the siege of Warsaw in 1831, raising it to the level of a universal metaphor, in which the fight between the Poles and the Muscovites becomes a significant element in the perpetual war between the forces of light and darkness. This metaphor, as well as the whole theme of the struggle between Good and Evil, found frequent expression in Mickiewicz's metaphysical poems at the same time. Other recurring preoccupations include: the relationship between the human being and Providence; a confrontation between pride and humility in the human soul; and the opposition of reason and faith in the realm of epistemology. Both the metaphysical-religious current (which is also prophetic) and the one oriented towards the philosophy of history and political freedom, political freedom-oriented one were synthesised by Mickiewicz in a masterly way in *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, which he wrote in Dresden in the spring of 1832, and which crowns this phase of his work.

Mickiewicz's stay in Rome in 1830 and 1831 clearly contributed to the development of the metaphysical current in his poetry. This period featured renewed spiritual searching, further religious readings and close relationships with people who focused on their religious and spiritual inner lives. Prominent among such new acquaintances were two young girls, Marcelina Łempicka and

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war soon began; it was to last for a couple of months. Mickiewicz heard about the Uprising when he was in Rome in December 1830. Initially, he planned to get to his fatherland by the sea. When this proved impossible, he headed towards Warsaw, but reached Greater Poland (which was under Prussian rule at the time) only in August of 1831, when the Uprising was already at its end (Warsaw was taken by Russian troops in September 1831). The Prussian-Russian border was heavily guarded. Soon a great wave of emigrants began to flow through Greater Poland to the West of Europe, consisting mainly of former Polish soldiers. Mickiewicz left Greater Poland and arrived in Dresden in March 1832. He stayed there for three months; the fruit of this was an incredible collection of poetic works, including the *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, which was published in the same year in Paris. Mickiewicz settled down in Paris, where he stayed, with some interruptions, for the remainder of his life.

Countess Henrietta Ewa Ankwicz. Mickiewicz himself emphasised the role in the growth of his religious self-knowledge played by Fr Stanisław Chołoniewski (1791–1846) who persuaded him to reread *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis,[43] and familiarise himself with the thought of a Catholic priest, Félicité de Lamennais (1782–1854), editor of the journal *L'Avenir*, whose religious and social views were soon to be criticised by Pope Gregory XVI himself.[44] Mickiewicz became a friend of Lamennais in later years and influenced his *Paroles d'un croyant*, a famous work published in 1834.[45]

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43 *The Imitation of Christ* (*De imitatione Christi*), attributed to Thomas à Kempis, was written in Latin at the beginning of the fifteenth century. This compendium of late mediaeval spirituality remains one of the most popular spiritual texts both in the Catholic and Protestant tradition. It originated in a movement called *devotio moderna*, which opposed both the dry scholastic theological speculation and the metaphysical mysticism of the fourteenth century (with its sometimes problematic descriptions of the experience of oneness between the depth of the soul and God). *Devotio moderna* promoted instead an ascetical-moral ideal of everyday, ordinary spirituality, focused on meditation on, and imitation of, the life and figure of Jesus. *The Imitation of Christ* proclaims humility as the foundation of spiritual life, and the most important virtue, from which all other major virtues derive, including obedience, self-renunciation, the knowledge of one's sinfulness, and the acceptance of suffering. The work of Thomas à Kempis emphasises the importance of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and personal reading of the Scripture (see B. McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism 1350–1550, vol. 5 of The Presence of God: a History of Western Christian Mysticism*, New York 2012, pp. 96–124). In the poems Mickiewicz wrote in the early 1830s, we may discern the influence of *The Imitation of Christ*, not least in the poet's distrust of philosophical speculation, and his glorification of humility, the simplicity of the heart and an awareness of one's own sinfulness.

44 Hugues-Félicité-Robert de Lamennais, a clergyman and philosopher with left-wing views (sometimes described as "Christian socialism") who fell into disfavour with the ecclesiastic hierarchy thanks to his criticism of Rome's silence in the face of social inequality and the oppression of lower classes. He also supported Polish aspirations to independence, and refused to accept the Papal anathema cast on the November Uprising by Pope Gregory XVI. The pope condemned Lamennais' views explicitly in the encyclical *Singulari nos* (1834). A few years later Lamennais broke his external ties with the Catholic Church.

45 Lamennais wrote this under the influence of the French translation of Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrimage* (*Księgi narodu i*

No-one has hitherto suggested that Mickiewicz planned to bring the religious poems of this period into some sort of cyclical structure. Despite their existing thematic connections and associations, we ought to treat them as essentially autonomous, even autotelic entities. We should begin our discussion of those poems from *To M.Ł. on the Day of Taking Holy Communion*, which was written in the first months of 1830. The protagonist and addressee (it was written in her album),[46] was a girl of twenty-one; everyone she knew assumed she was going to choose to become a nun. For Mickiewicz she became a living example of spiritual religion – a person who is searching a direct bond with God through prayer. The narrator and co-protagonist of the poem, who undoubtedly expresses the voice of the author, delineates his attitude towards a life of total religious faith in a rather inconspicuous way. On the one hand, the narrator has been called a 'bystander' (by Czesław Zgorzelski); on the other hand, it is often assumed that the middle part of the poem, which describes the vigil of an angel over a saintly-seeming sleeping girl, has a sort of an autonomous character. It is a sublime depiction of the "angelic idyll",[47] which is realised autonomously and is metaphysically real.

In our opinion, the poem consists entirely and solely of the impressions of the lyrical subject, who becomes the primary character of the poem by virtue of this. *To M.Ł. on the Day of Taking Holy Communion* describes his impressions of how the supernatural

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pielgrzymstwa polskiego, 1832). The French priest, like Mickiewicz in his *Books*, promoted the ideas of "Christian socialism" and democratic republicanism in a biblical, prophetic style.

46 "The album – Polish '*sztambuch*' or '*imionnik*', Russian '*al'bom*' – is an important yet little-studied artifact of early nineteenth-century Polish and Russian culture, the concept of which was imported from Western Europe along with other cultural and literary fashions of the time. Albums were ornate 'scrapbooks' in which poets and other famous figures of the day, and/or the album owner's family and friends (these two groups could overlap, as in the albums of aristocrats), would write short pieces in verse or prose that were usually addressed or dedicated to the album's owner." (J. Beinek, "Cultural Texts: Polish and Russian Albums in the Age of Romanticism", *Anthropology of History Yearbook* 1–2, 1 (2011), pp. 173–192).

47 J. Kleiner, *Mickiewicz*, t. II: *Dzieje Konrada*, Lublin 1948, part I, p. 211.

world must respond to this girl's attitude of humility and religious faith that fulfils itself in the act of *communio*. In the poem, little is said about the girl; yet we are told everything we need to know. We know her sex, but not her age or appearance. For a moment we converse with her eyes that "are blazing with the Godhead". We know little, in the sense that we can only conjecture that little or nothing exists for her beyond her spiritual life of religious contemplation, or at least little or nothing holds a comparable significance in her eyes. She belongs completely to the Godhead, thus rendering her fleshly life a mere addition to her spirituality.[48] Because of this she is not to be subjected to an analytical description, or the inquisitive observation of a 'bystander'. Yet for the 'bystander', this range of experiences, though comprehensible, and even admirable, is not accessible.

This is how we should, perhaps, read the enigmatically paradoxical: "How terrifying are your humble looks!" This is not fear of a palpable threat, so much as a sort of incredulity that such an immense humility and devotion can be genuinely even possible. The narrator concludes that the reward for such a total devotion to the divine must be a thoughtful vigil of an Angel, the messenger of God, who watches over the sleep (that is, the whole of the existence of) one who is "so holy and so modest", by radiating heavenly brightness. The speaking subject believes that this must be so: such is the response of Heaven to her complete devotion, and her free, willing bondage. Her bond with God exists, as far as the speaking subject is concerned, as is confirmed by another paradox: the Angel is a 'nurse' – a caregiver, a symbolic parent of the faithful one; but also, the girl is the angel's 'nurse', because with her faith and inner disposition she renders the angelic being fulfilled, and makes him flourish. Such an image of a happy Angel (as opposed to a worried or angry one) is the predominant feature of communication with Heaven and Earth in this poem. Despite all this, a metaphorical discourse of the speaking subject might also be understood to mean that Marcelina, thanks to the Angel's care has become a nurse for her own soul, and faith, both

48 More on this in the commentary to the poem.

of which she is supposed to cultivate and cherish. In fact, these two perspectives can harmonise with one another.

In the figure of the Messenger, only his eyes stand out, when they cast "the ray of the immortal grace". Reducing the angelic figure to this one element prevents the reader from determining which of the numerous biblical depictions of angels might be the antecedent for this artistic creation. In this narrative, eyes become the most powerful symbol: one pair of eyes radiates humility, the other one radiates grace, thus forging a link between a human attitude of humility and the divine reward of grace. One involves the other. This is, perhaps, the way in which the speaking protagonist envisages the mystery of the bond between the human being who approaches the threshold of holiness through his humility, and God, who repays this radical faithfulness with an immortal, that is, eternal, grace. The 'bystander' includes himself in the number of "the callous sinners" who enjoy ephemeral pleasures. He is not falsely modest here, not practicing any *minauderie*.

Who is he then? He is a believer, but of 'little faith', who is hungry (or perhaps would like to be hungry) for a great faith, equal to that experienced by the female protagonist. Would he, though? The final two lines – ostentatious, gnomic, radically declarative – throw the reader off balance with their easy rhetoric and barely-concealed ambiguity. The 'bystander' doesn't speak of any need to give himself over to God in obedience, or any decision fully to 'imitate Christ' (a reference to Christ appears in the very first verse of the poem!). The speaking subject shares only his desire to experience spiritual states akin to those of the girl, just once, to 'dream' like her for one night only, that is, to become the subject of supernatural communication and the object of the care of a Messenger. We speak here of an 'easy' rhetoric, because the 'bystander' wants to declare (of course) that even a single day of humble holiness is worth more than the "pleasures of all days" devoid of spiritual submission to God. He wants to exalt the faithful girl and pay homage to her, just as he wants to diminish and accuse himself as a sinner living in the day rather than the night. But he says nothing about imitating the girl; perhaps because her radical humility makes an unholy man 'fearful'?

We find no such ambiguity in the poem *Ahriman and Ormusd*, written in the same year (1830). Here the main subject is a confrontation between two divinities representing Good and Light on one side, and Evil and Darkness on the other. The outcome of this peculiar battle is unambiguous. Scholars agree that Mickiewicz could have read a French translation of the Avesta scriptures: at least he alluded, in very general terms, to the foundational religious myth of Zoroastrianism.[49] Kleiner believed that

> both the concept of the poem and its vocabulary, so charged with meaning as well as powerful concreteness, independent from any excessive imposition of earthly shapes on infernal powers, is so deeply Mickiewiczian that we have to include this strange, but also simple and almost natural picture of cosmic struggle among one of the most prominent poems of the poet.[50]

At the centre of this picture there is Ahriman, "the evil one", who climbs upwards in order to replace his enemy; but the very sight of a luminous Ormusd, and the insight into the phenomenon of the "bliss which never ends" that radiates from him, causes the final fall of Ahriman into the core of the "the deepest core of the abyss", at "the black germ of the thickest dark". A strange battle it is, in which only the evil one is active (he climbs and falls), while the good one triumphs by a mere fact of his existence, without any need for force.

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49 See the commentary on this poem. Kleiner, having studied the German edition of the *Zend Avesta*, indicated the passages which could have inspired Mickiewicz. However, those passages only speak about the fall of Ahriman, but not about his ascent from the abyss to the realm of light: "In one of the passages from the *Zend Avesta*, containing prayers and incantations, Zoroaster addresses the god of light and law, Ahura Mazda, asking him about the powerful words that he used, when he was creating the shining regions of light and the dwelling places of the sun. Further on, after the incantations against diseases, fevers, liars, witches, and words capable of killing evil spirits (Daevas), it is said that the greatest liar of all Daevas, Angra Mainyu, the bringer of destruction, has fallen headlong from the heavens. At the end: 'the bringer of destruction, Angra Mainyu, said: Woe is me, woe!'." (Kleiner, *Dzieje Konrada*, p. 213).

50 Ibidem.

We can see here a striking contrast to Iranian mythology, where the two brothers, Ahriman and Ormusd, wage endless wars against each other. Over the course of those wars the good God creates the world, while the evil one tries to spoil and destroy it. In Manichaeism, a form of Iranian Gnosticism, the forces of Light and Darkness are similarly engaged in mutual conflict. This begins when the King of Darkness (identified with the Zoroastrian Ahriman) assaults the realm of Light, which is ruled by the Father of Greatness. In response to this attack, the Father sends an army led by the First Man and his five sons against the forces of Darkness. The Father's sons end up being devoured by the five sons of Ahriman, while the First Man falls into sleep. In this way the particles of Light become imprisoned by Darkness, and the creation of the material universe (the Second Creation) is seen as an intervention aimed at releasing the particles so that they might return to the Father. The creation of Adam and Eve occurs only during the Third Creation, by the power of demonic beings born of Lust.

Did Mickiewicz borrow the image of "climbing" Ahriman, which has little to do with his Iranian or Manichean prototype, from another text, literary or religious? The question is difficult to determine without better knowledge of the poet's sources and intentions. Ahriman, for obvious reasons, brings to mind the biblical Satan, Lucifer. Christian images of the fall of the first angel derive from a scriptural depiction of the fall of one of the Assyrian or Babylonian kings (Sargon II, Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar) in the Book of Isaiah:

> How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
> For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
> Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Is 14: 12–15).

The Greek *phosphoros* and Latin *lucifer*, which appear in the prophetic text, refer to the Morning Star (that is, Venus, the brightest of planets), and were subsequently taken to signify proper names of the fallen angel. In the biblical passage, which presumably was well-known to Mickiewicz, the protagonist attempts to ascend to heaven in order to become equal to God and like Him, for which he is being punished by being thrown down on earth (verse 12) or to Sheol (verse 15).

The poet may have expected his version of the fall of the evil spirit to be compared to famous literary portraits of Satan, not least those encountered in Dante's *Comedy* (which Mickiewicz admired so much he translated fragments of it) and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Whilst he did not directly reproduce the image of the fall from either poem, we may assume the possibility of an allusive dialogue with these masterpieces. If we compare his work with Dante's, we will notice that Mickiewicz set his 'prince of darkness' in motion, allowing him to climb up towards the boundaries of "the purest light"; whereas in the Florentine poet's depiction, the fallen Lucifer has been transformed from a beautiful angel into a specimen of unsurpassed ugliness, stuck frozen forever in the lowest ring of Hell. We might find closer analogies in the final scene of the *Comedy*, where a vision of the ineffable God is associated with luminosity and all-embracing love, while the protagonist in the Empyrean experiences the highest spiritual ecstasy, akin to the "bliss which never ends" in Mickiewicz's poem that is the object of Ahriman's lust. The Polish poet endowed Ormusd with similar attributes to those which Dante ascribes to God, while "the bright germ of the purest light" may be treated as an equivalent of the highest sphere of Heaven in Dante's narrative.

A close analogy can be found in Milton's great epic, mentioned above, where (in Book IV) Satan, motivated (like Ahriman) by envy, travels from the abyss of Hell to the earthly paradise, after the first humans have been created; in accordance with the biblical myth, he enjoys some successes: he brings evil to Eden, followed immediately by Sin and Death. At the beginning of Book IV of *Paradise Lost*,

Lucifer contemplates the sun, and expresses his hatred of its light, as well as a similar hatred and envy towards the Garden where Adam and Eve dwell. These feelings stem from the fact that Satan himself used to live 'on high' and was only thrown down as a punishment for his audacious rebellion. This is why Georges Minois called *Paradise Lost* a "great allegorical epic in which earth and heaven are definitely joined to each other".[51]

Mickiewicz declined to grant his own Ahriman such a power, refusing to allow him to sow in Ormusd's domain any seeds of evil. Quite on the contrary, he threw him (a second time?), irrevocably down to the very bottom of the abyss. One of St Augustine's main criticisms against Manichaeism (in which he believed for many years) was that it suggested that God can be attacked by Darkness, dragged into some sort of fight with it and even damaged in some way, by imprisoning some of his particles in matter.[52] By contrast, the true God, according to the Bishop of Hippo, can never be touched by evil, so Mickiewicz's vision seems to come much closer to Christian than to Manichean theology.

Other possible sources of inspiration for Mickiewicz's Ahriman might be found in the writings of the neo-Gnostics, not least Böhme and Swedenborg,[53] by whom the poet was so fascinated; yet we find nothing like it in there. Both mystics were inspired by the *Second*

51 G. Minois, *Histoire des Enfers*, Paris 1991.

52 "The Manichees postulate a race of darkness in opposition to you. What could that have done to you, if you had refused to fight against it? If they were to reply that you would have suffered injury, that would make you open to violation and destruction. But if nothing could harm you, that removes any ground for combat, and indeed for combat under such conditions that some portion of you, one of your members, or an offspring of your very substance, is mingled with hostile powers and with natures not created by you, and is corrupted by them and so changed for the worse that it is altered from beatitude to misery and heeds help to deliver and purify it." (*Confessions* VII.2.3; English translation by H. Chadwick: St Augustine, *Confessions*, Oxford 2011).

53 Aleksander Chodźko, Mickiewicz's friend, wrote down his saying that "from all the more modern mystics Böhme is the greatest, it is the soul burning with pure fire (…) the second after Böhme is Swedenborg", while Saint-Martin "understood Böhme well; he is the third prophet" (*Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli*, ed. S. Pigoń, Warszawa 1958, pp. 214–5).

Letter to the Corinthians (12:1–6), where God is said to dwell in the Third Heaven (Mickiewicz used this image also in his *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III);[54] in their visions, Satan was never able to reach those regions. Swedenborg, in his main work *De coelo et eius mirabilibus et de inferno ex auditis et visis*, questioned the biblical myth of the fall of Lucifer and his angels, claiming that Hell is in fact populated only by fallen human souls, which were transformed after death in diabolical entities.[55] Böhme respected the Luciferian myth and assumed as obvious that the forces of Darkness are in a constant war with God, claiming (like Swedenborg later) that the Most High fully controls the activity of Hell.[56]

Mickiewicz's story of the fall of Ahriman, where Ormusd uses no particular power, reflects this point of view in some way. Böhme attributed to Satan such features as pride, greed, envy, and anger: we can find a certain analogy to that in our poem, but only in very general terms. Ahriman is motivated by anger, cunning, and envy: "An angry lion and a poisonous snake." This expression also indicates a Judeo-Christianisation of Ahriman by Mickiewicz. The Tempter appears in the Book of Genesis in the form of a snake in Paradise; in the Book of Revelation, which closes Christian Scripture, he is the Dragon thrown down from Heaven who stands "before the Woman which was ready to be delivered", clothed with the sun (Rev 12:3–4). The phrase "lion and snake" (or "dragon": in Latin *leo et draco*, which appears notably in Augustine's *Confessions* IX.13.36) is derived in the Christian tradition from Psalm 91, where we read: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." (Ps. 91:13). Also in the *First Letter of Peter* we have an image of a lion: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 P 5:8). This is echoed by Dante in his image of the lion

54 See K. Fedorowicz, "Ksiądz Piotr w trzecim niebie. W stronę (neo)gnozy w "Dziadach" drezdeńskich Mickiewicza," *Ruch Literacki* 3 (2015), 247–258.

55 See E. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*. On the thought of Swedenborg see: E. Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg. Naturforscher und Seher*, München 1948.

56 See A. Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Böhme. Étude sur les origines de la métaphysique allemande*, Paris 1929; G. Wehr, *Jakob Böhme*, Reinbok bei Hamburg 1998.

"enraged with hunger" from the first canto of the *Comedy*, where it stands for pride or vainglory and violence.[57]

Mickiewicz's essay on Böhme, dictated twenty years later (1853),[58] demonstrates his deep familiarity with the system of the *Philosophus Teutonicus*; here he devotes considerable attention to the figure of a rebellious angel (whom he refers to as both Lucifer and Satan). However, he says nothing about the attempt of this archangel, who preferred to retain his "dark centre" and refused to ascend to the gentle light of God, to try to invade the Lord's domain for the second time.[59] We may assume, then, that Ahriman, the god of darkness, trying to break into the realm of light, was his original creation and not an imitation of some other author.

We have devoted so much space to this poem, because in *Ahriman and Ormusd* Mickiewicz introduces his most spectacular spatial perspective, in delineating the confrontation between the highest Light and the lowest Darkness. This perspective is exclusively otherworldly and cosmic; from the temporal point of view, as is characteristic of religious myths, it seems to predate the origin of Man. Other metaphysical poems from this period are not quite so spectacular in their

57 As Giuseppe Ledda writes, the lion in Dante seems to be associated either with the sinful and demonic wrath and violence (as it is already in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* IV.3), or with pride (*superbia*) and vainglory (*ambitio saeculi*), one of the three principal sins of 1 John 2:16 (the others being the lust of the flesh, symbolised in Dante by the leopard, and the lust of the eyes, represented by the she-wolf). See G. Ledda, "An Ethical and Political Bestiary in the First Canto of Dante's *Comedy*", in: *Ethics, Politics and Justice in Dante*, ed. G. Gaimari, C. Keen, London – Chicago 2019, pp. 46–62.

58 See A. Mickiewicz, *Jacob Böhme*, in: *Dzieła*, t. XIII: *Pisma towianistyczne. Przemówienia. Szkice filozoficzne*, ed. Z. Trojanowicz, Warszawa 2001, pp. 465–85.

59 Mickiewicz summarised the fallen archangel's condition (according to Böhme) thus: "God as Light didn't suffer in the least [i.e. by the refusal of the rebellious angel to ascend to the divine light]; the spirit who didn't want to ascend, and desired stubbornly to dominate light through fire and heat – that is, to dominate love through force – this backward spirit returned to the abyss of this darkness, these seeds of creation, where he remains active, without violating the luminous nature of God; (…) the backward spirit of Satan, falling again into his primordial state by his own choosing, suffers, seeing himself in a position from which he could have and should have got out of." (*Dzieła*, t. XIII. p. 470).

vision; even if they occasionally introduce such a cosmic dimension, the foreground features an individual (or collective) relationship of Man to God and Christ. Those poems are usually considered to be the highest achievements of Polish religious poetry, even though their orthodoxy, which is beyond the scope of this discussion, seems at least debatable.

In 1830 Mickiewicz also wrote the poem *The Grand Master*. Scholars point to "the tone of solemn gravity", its monumental and transparent metaphors, as well as the clear architectural design of the poem and its equally measured layout of the crucial ideas throughout all four sestets. Three invoke images of *Deus Artifex*, God-the-Artist, the creator of the cosmic and earthly order, and of Christ who expresses eternal truths; the fourth and final one features admonitions addressed to a human artist who is misunderstood by his neighbours. The motifs encoded in the poem seems to be, at the first glance, easily recognizable. The theme of God-the-Artist was inaugurated in Polish literature by the eminent poet Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584) whose hymn *What Do You Want from Us, Lord?* is considered the most important expression of Renaissance religious humanism in Polish culture. In his thanksgiving ode, Kochanowski used the motif of God-the-Artist, the "invisible Creator of the visible beauty of the world" (as Jerzy Ziomek put it)[60] to construct an optimistic vision of the harmony between God, the universe, and Man.

The motif is derived from Plato's *Timaeus*, the only Platonic dialogue which continued to be read in Catholic Europe throughout the Middle Ages (in an incomplete late-antique Latin translation by Calcidius). We find there a cosmogonic myth in which the "Father of all things" makes this world in the image of the eternal archetype, called the Living Being (an organism consisting of the Ideas). The Platonic God is referred to as a *demiourgos* which in Greek means a maker, craftsman or artisan. He works with existing, chaotic material, rendering it beautiful and good through "shapes and numbers".[61] In this way the sensible world comes to resemble the Living Being and

60 J. Ziomek, *Literatura Odrodzenia*, Warszawa 1987, p. 149.

61 Gr. *eidesi te kai arithmois*: Plato, *Timaeus* 53b. It was easily associated by Christian philosophers with the idea that God created everything by measure, number, and weight (*mensura, numerus, pondus*: Wis 11:20).

God Himself. This Platonic motif of *Deus Artifex*, fundamental to Dante's *Comedy*,[62] acquires even more significance in Renaissance Platonism and later, during the Romantic period.

Mickiewicz repeated the popular motif, but changed his optimistic meaning. It is precisely this aspect, which might be termed "humanistic pessimism", that has been ill-appreciated in existing interpretations of the poem. But the poet speaks at the conclusion of every single stanza about the catastrophe of not understanding God and Christ by humanity, about a disruption between the world and its Creator, Earth and Heaven. Man, says Mickiewicz, has failed to understand God's song, or His speech, which is equated with the structure of the universe, in the joint harmony of spirits and elements (the first stanza), and in the monumental beauty of the sky, water, and mountain (the second stanza).[63] The section devoted to the Creator-Artist is concluded with the radical point: "The world for ages could not comprehend/ A single thought of those wonderful works." It could not comprehend even one of His thoughts: does this mean His main thought, or none of His thoughts? The image of

62 "The transition is so immense that it both heightens Vergil, the only poet who is an *autore* and whose book is a *volume*, and shrinks him by comparison with that other *autore*, Who is God, and that other *volume*, which is God's book (*volume* is used variously in the last canticle, but always with relation to texts 'written by' God, for instance the book of the future, the book of justice, the universe gathered into one *volume*). Moreover, when God is termed an author, He is not *'l mio autore* (*Inf.* 1.85), but the *verace autore* (*Par.* 26.40). (T. Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the* Comedy, Princeton, NJ, 1984, p. 268).

63 Already St. Augustine compared the universe to speech or story (*sermo*) of God, expressing by the multitude of words the single eternal Word (*Confessions* IV.10.15; *Epistula* 137.7). A Greek Platonist Sallustios (4th century AD) says in his work *On the Gods* that the world is a myth in which what is visible hides the invisible meaning which we have to decipher (*De deis* 3). In the Middle Ages it was universally held that God reveals himself through two books, the Book of Scripture and the Book of Creation. Both of them should be read symbolically or allegorically, if one is to find their meaning and, ultimately, their Author. Also Alan of Lille expresses it in his popular poem: *Omnis mundi creatura/quasi liber et pictura/nobis est in speculum* ("On earth dwelling every creature,/Like a poem or a picture,/Mirrors forth our mortal sphere": tr. J. Hayes, in: *Corolla Hymnorum Sacrorum*, Boston 1887).

catastrophe is completed by the disruption between another Master (of eloquence), Christ, who reveals the essence of God's plan "in voice, in deed, in miracle", and the "people" who treated the assumption of humanity by God as the reason to despise Him (the third stanza). The chain of thought binding those three stanzas consist of the following pessimistic associations: the world/humanity fails; from the origin of its existence humanity is immature, because it cannot see the essence of its Creator's plan; and God in Christ experiences suffering of rejection by the people He first made and then, saved. Why has Man not understood his Father and Lord? This is not fully explained (the alleged clarity and unambiguity of the poem, as praised by scholars, requires reassessment). The poet indeed speaks clearly, but without finishing his thoughts.[64]

The last stanza, which contains an admonition, does nothing to eliminate the pessimistic character of the poem; it can hardly by seen as pivotal, let alone as introducing hope into the picture. The poet shows the "worldly artist", who is disappointed by his contemporaries' lack of understanding, how deficient his art really is in comparison to the works of God-the-Artist. At the same time, he recommends that this artist imitate God in His suffering, which did not make Him turn His back on His people. The inspiration for such a moralizing stance may be sought in what Mickiewicz was reading at the time, namely, *De imitatione Christi* by Thomas à Kempis, a book which he pressed on his loved ones for years to come. Mickiewicz was drawn to this ascetic handbook by something later emphasised by a Polish poet (and translator of *De imitatione*) Anna Kamieńska: "it is not a theory nor a speculation, nor an ideological construct. It is knowledge, but of a different kind: spiritual knowledge, which shines on man independently of his intellectual knowledge."[65]

64 We could also read this poem as a polemic against the Enlightenment, nineteenth-century scientism, and materialism, which would resonate well with Mickiewicz's critiques of those phenomena that are present even in his early work (for example, *The Romantic*, included in this anthology, and the *Forefathers' Eve*, Part IV) as well as later, in the 1830s (*Forefathers' Eve*, Part III). Yet it seems that the universalist perspective dominates this poem.

65 A. Kamieńska, "Przekładając *Naśladowanie*," in: Tomasz à Kempis, *O naśladowaniu Chrystusa*, tr. A. Kamieńska, Warszawa 1984, p. 249.

The Wise Men, which was written in Dresden (1832), expresses a pessimistic judgment of the faith of learned men similar to that of *The Grand Master*. The poem was written during an incredible explosion of poetic inspiration while Mickiewicz was staying in the capital of Saxony. It features a dramatized description of the Parousia of God-Christ in the here and now, in an unspecified town. This Second Coming is discrete, not triumphant, unlike what is prophesized in the Gospel of Luke (17:22–35). Against St Paul's expectations (1 Cor 15:20–28) and the conclusion of the *Book of Revelation* (Rev 20–22 and the Epilogue), it brings about neither the ultimate destruction of evil nor the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. The poet describes a coming which is not the last, but turns out to be a sort of a private coming of Christ, not mentioned anywhere in the Bible – a visitation whose purpose is to examine the quality of faith in the world. And here comes the key difference. The common people, just as during the first coming of Christ, are drawn to him, but the wise men decide to get rid of the unwelcome guest who disturbs their peace. They want to murder him clandestinely, without the crowd's knowledge.

Mickiewicz alludes to the Passion sections of the Gospels and creates a micro-parable, formally between a narrative poem and a drama,[66] where action, dialogue and the final judgments of the omniscient narrator cohere into a story. Zgorzelski, in his profound analysis of this poem,[67] lucidly describes its dramatic structure, invoking classical Greek tragedy and, we might add, re-actualization of the Biblical story of seizing, interrogating and crucifying of Jesus. In the first sestet, we have the beginning of the plot: the wise men's sleep is interrupted by the news of Christ's appearance, followed by their decision to kill the Guest. In the second stanza we have their preparations to capture Christ and their search for him. In the third stanza we have the actual capture, and in the following one "the criminal

66 Ignacy Chrzanowski called this poem "a symbolic poem, with its plot taking place in space" (*Na szczytach polskiej liryki religijnej*, in: idem, *Literatura a naród. Odczyty, przemówienia, szkice literackie*, Lwów 1936, p. 162).

67 Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza*, pp. 282–295.

act and catastrophe as well as the concluding stage of the plot"[68] and its (illusory) conclusion: the second passion and deposition. In the last and only four-line stanza in the poem, we have an epilogue, where the narrator, like a chorus in ancient tragedy, formulates the primary moral message. Zgorzelski was precise in his analysis of the structure of the poem, and in his exposition of the allegories and metaphors used by Mickiewicz, yet he omitted a question which we deem to be the most significant of all: who are the wise men? Who is hiding behind this image? With whom is Mickiewicz reckoning here? The poet left some traces which allow us to form hypotheses.

It is quite certain that the wise men are philosophers (as well as authors of literature), but do not denote all philosophers (or writers). Generally speaking, these represent writers and thinkers who try to rationalise the supernatural ("on their books they sharpened Reason's blade"), who attempt to understand God with their conceptual intellect and describe his nature systematically, thus stripping him of all mystery ("they tore off mysterious clothes of God"). They are those whom Friedrich Jacobi (1743–1819), in his famous 1799 letter to Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), called 'nihilists'.[69] Mickiewicz in the early 1830s was probably already familiar with the dispute between Jacobi and Fichte as well as the later conflict between Jacobi and F. Schelling (1775–1854). He will analyse those disputes during his third course of Paris lectures (9th May 1843), explicitly favouring Jacobi, who condemned those speculative philosophers (from Kant through Fichte to Schelling) who tried to depict a "God of knowledge", thus limiting the role of faith and mystery.

Mickiewicz didn't approve of the God of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century metaphysicians, and presumably saw them among the "wise men" persecuting God-Christ. But he is specifically criticising Hegel, whose lectures he heard in Berlin in 1829; thereafter he contended with Hegel's Polish (and German and Russian) followers, even though we are uncertain how well he knew the actual writings of Hegel himself when accusing him of leaving his audience

68 Ibidem, p. 285.

69 *Jacobi to Fichte*, in: F.H. Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, tr. G. di Giovanni, Montreal 1995, p. 519.

"in doubt whether he [i.e. Hegel] believed in the personality of God, the immortality of the soul and whether he believed in the existence of the invisible world".[70] By the time he voiced this accusation (1843), Mickiewicz considered Hegel, because of the works of his disciples, such as David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach, to be complicit in the rise of philosophical atheism. In the early 1830s he must have had a similar view of Hegel, so we should assume that the Berlin professor, along with the flock of his admirers, was included among the "wise men" who went to capture Christ ("They called for their disciples – blind as they –/ To hunt for God").

Another clue that allows us to speculate on the membership of the persecuting elite can be found in Mickiewicz's allusions to the Gospel accounts of the interrogation of Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:57–68, Mk 14:53–65, Lk 22:66–71), where Jesus is asked by the high priests and scholars whether he is the Messiah, and he responds in the affirmative. The Sanhedrin functioned in Jesus' time (and, according to Jewish tradition, from the time of Moses) as the highest religious and judiciary institution of the Jewish world (in some periods it also played a political role).[71] Christ in Mickiewicz's parable comes to the Christian, not Jewish world, where the Great Council (Sanhedrin) consists of the ecclesiastic hierarchy and theologians of different Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, who (as the poet says clearly) try to imprison the mystery of the Godhead inside dogmatic systems, and thus close the roads of a living faith by condemning independent prophets. Mickiewicz was aware not only of the anathemas cast in various periods on Catholic theologians independent of the Church's magisterium, but also of the persecutions of Protestant theologians, including Böhme.

The poem is written in the time when Pope Gregory XVI officially condemned the November Uprising and the Poles rebelling against the Tsarist regime. At this time, Mickiewicz wasn't yet openly criticising the Catholic Church, but ten years later, during the third and

70 Course III, Lecture XVII, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, p. 227.

71 See *Neues Lexikon des Judentums*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 2000, *s.v.* "Sanhedrin".

fourth courses of his lectures at the Collège de France, he declared war against "the official church" and called the ecclesiastic hierarchy of this time the "travelling salesmen of Catholicism". He also accused the hierarchy of intellectual crisis and betrayal of the traditional martyrdom of Christ himself and his martyrs. In this poem we may already find a premonition of Mickiewicz's personal search for his own way to God, based on the inner struggle, where the idea of mercy was key.[72]

The narrator's final point is about the mercy of God and Christ: he is moved by the fact that the Saviour still loves his persecutors ("But God still loves them and he prays for them!"), those criminals, wise men who "drank the chalice of their pride/During God's funeral" and decided to bury him in the darkness of ignorance and forgetfulness. To no avail, as the last line testifies, manifesting the faith of the poet himself: "God lives. He's dead only within the wise." Mickiewicz mixes what seem to be fire and water by associating speculative, atheistic philosophers (the pride of intellect) with dogmatic theologians (the pride of infallibility) alongside the hierarchs preserving dead rituals (the pride of office and power). For all of these men, the living God-Man, "revealing himself" to the people and "preaching eternity to them", would be a liability. Mickiewicz here anticipated the parable told by Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's last novel about Great Inquisitor who tells Christ he is going to burn him at the stake

72 Mickiewicz, just as Baader, believed that both Catholicism and Protestantism are in deep crisis and are unable to respond to the challenges of the Enlightenment. He shared this view with Novalis who wrote: "Shouldn't Protestantism be ended and cede it's place to a new, more permanent church … Christianity must once again become a living and effective force". As Thomas Pfau notes, this idea of returning to original, authentic, and vivid Christianity was quite common among the Romantics (he quotes a famous saying by Coleridge: "Christianity is not a theory or speculation, but a life; not a philosophy of life, but a living presence"). See T. Pfau, "Religion," in: *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. P. Hamilton, Oxford 2015, pp. 730–751, on p. 749.

with the help of the faithful crowd[73] as well as the cry of Friedrich Nietzsche's madman that God has been killed by us.[74]

It was most likely in Dresden as well that Mickiewicz wrote another poem confronting the pride of reason with the humility of faith. *Reason and Faith* earns little praise from scholars, who wince at its supposed dry intellectualism, and the vagueness of certain metaphors. Kleiner concluded his analysis of this poem with a sarcastic remark: "A poetic treatise about the weakness of reason and the splendor of faith turned out to have been overly reasoned."[75] Zgorzelski added to it: "Mickiewicz's discourse is full of contradictions and contrasts, methodically weaving metaphors together into allegorical pictures (not always internally coherent) focused on the paradoxes of pride and humility, God and Man. His discourse is directed against reason, and it is rather cerebral. "[76] However, Jacek Łukasiewicz addresses this critique by reminding of an important context: "In his *Reason and Faith*, Mickiewicz retreats to his classicist beginnings, intending to objectivise his experiences, explaining them to himself and to others in a familiar and acceptable style."[77] The classicising form of a poetic treatise which he decided to use in

73 "'What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, tomorrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if any one has ever deserved our fire, it is Thou. Tomorrow I shall burn Thee. *Dixi*.'" (F. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, tr. C. Garnett, New York 1900, p. 309).

74 "Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers." (F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. W. Kaufmann, New York 1974, III, §125, p. 181).

75 Kleiner, *Dzieje Konrada*, p. 467.

76 Cz. Zgorzelski, *Wstęp*, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Wybór poezyj*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1986 [3rd ed.], p. LVIII.

77 J. Łukasiewicz, *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza*, Wrocław 2003, p. 136.

order to formulate his Romantic thought concerning superiority of faith over reason, indeed, distinguishes this poem from others of the same period.

Mickiewicz includes what are perhaps the poem's most intriguing paradoxes and enigmas in the first stanzas, within an intertextual play with the scriptural story of Noah. The narrator of the poem begins his discourse by revealing how he came to faith; a decisive stage on his path involved taming his conviction of the power of his own intellect and humbling it before faith, properly understood, that is, reliance on the Lord of creation ("When I have bowed proud reason and my head/ Before the Lord like clouds before the sun").[78] He was generously rewarded for his choice, being forgiven by God and reestablishing a relationship with Him, as expressed by the allegory of a rainbow, which represents in Genesis the sign of a renewed covenant between the Creator and man after the disaster of the flood (Gen 9:12–17). He was also lifted up by the Lord to the rank of a prophet who will ease the anxiety of his people in the face of another (political) flood of history. But even in this attitude there is danger, since humility can become a source of pride, and the boundary between the two can too easily be crossed. One must be vigilant ("Oh, Lord! Humility has made me proud" – is the most enigmatic and paradoxical line in the whole of the poem)[79].

He ends with a peaceful conscience and the certitude of truth, since: "To reason they appeared large and confused,/ But to the eyes of faith, they're small, and clear." From the point of view of his renewed faith, the prophet condemns the idea of determinism (where we can see, for instance, a critical allusion to deism and the Hegelian conception of the historical process, in which everything

78 In the literature it is often assumed that Mickiewicz, in the first stanzas, allusively criticises the metaphysical rebellion of Konrad against God, in the second and third scenes of the Dresden part of the *Forefathers' Eve*.

79 Mickiewicz could have been inspired here by St Augustine who, in his *Confessions*, discusses the false humility which boasts of itself: "This is a temptation to me even when I reject it [i.e. pride], because of the very fact that I am rejecting it. Often the contempt of vainglory becomes a source of even more vainglory. For it is not being scorned when the contempt is something one is proud of." (X.38.63, p. 217).

that happens is rational and necessary). He also rejects the philosophy of randomness (where some recognise a polemic against Epicureanism). In the second part of the discourse, the speaking subject engages in dialogue with "human reason"; the limited possibilities of which are depicted through an allegory of the ocean, a mighty element, but still incapable of dominating over land and the sky, forced to function within the boundaries set by the Creator of "heaven and earth". However, the point to which this discourse is heading is puzzling: the poet disparages neither reason nor its creative potency; nor does he reject it in the least. Rather, he demands of it something more, namely, that reason reconciles itself with a mightier power, the "ray of faith", because only in this way may it help us to penetrate the mysteries of being, both of this world and the other world ("O, without Faith you would be wholly blind!").

A question arises, then, whether Mickiewicz might perhaps have been seeking a way to synthesise faith and rationalism or, to go a bit further, rationalism and Romanticism. Surely he could have been trying to find a way to Romanticise the Enlightenment legacy like earlier some figures within English Romanticism (for instance, the Lake Poets, especially William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge), who shied away from rejecting Enlightenment philosophy outright.[80] This would be a means of explaining the mystery of the 'intellectualisation' of poetic discourse in this poem, which so puzzled its readers. But here we will only suggest this hypothesis.

80 We are not suggesting any direct inspiration. Byron and his literary circle were much closer to Mickiewicz. There is no evidence suggesting that Mickiewicz read the Lake Poets, but he would have disapproved of their evolution from early revolutionary sympathies to political and religious conservatism, as seen in Wordsworth's late poetry, such as *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822), which manifest his allegiance to Anglicanism, and scant tolerance towards other denominations, or his *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order* (1830), which embrace profoundly conservative political and social views, and make clear the poet's hostility to any revolutionary or even reformist movements. Wordsworth was also notorious for his criticism of Napoleon. Mickiewicz's political views were very different at the time: in his own metaphysical-religious works there are few elements similar to those in Wordsworth's poetry (excluding, perhaps, his poems describing the presence of the divine in Nature).

Another poem of this period, *Evening Conversation*, has, on the other hand, been lavished with praise by scholars, who emphasise the simplicity and naturalness of its language, its intimate tone of religious confession, and the lucidity of its composition that Wacław Borowy thought "incredible". He wrote:

> The division of the poem into three parts underlines the distinctions between various themes (God – neighbour – the self). All the parts are stanzaic, but the number of stanzas becomes, *pari passu,* less in every part of the poem. The stanzas devoted to God are longer, as if the intent was not only to distinguish them from the rest, but also to show the hierarchical importance of each section.[81]

We must insert an objection here. In every part, the confessing self remains in the foreground; in none of the parts the figure of God is absent; thus a more appropriate division would be: the self *vis-à-vis* God, the neighbour and God-the-Judge *vis-à-vis* the self and the self *vis-à-vis* the listening God.

Three themes, as it seems, which the speaking subject deems to be the most important. First, mercy, the unfathomable abyss of God's love for man; then, human sinfulness, a drama of 'bad conscience'. Most of the poet's invention, of sublime mystical paradoxes and scriptural allusion to the Passion, is dedicated to the subject which fascinated and worried Mickiewicz for years: the problem of the partial power that Man has over God by his capability of inflicting suffering on Him, and the resulting problem of human responsibility for God's condition. A theologically complex identification of the Old Testament God with Christ can be seen in many poems, including this one. This whole phenomenon was most effectively expressed by Mickiewicz in the stanza which spectacularly employs analogies to the Passion on Golgotha, invoking a parable-like universality:

> You are the king! O wonders: but you serve!
> And every wicked thought pierces your heart,
> And opens all your burning wounds anew.
> Each evil thought is like a vinegar sponge
> That in my malice I raise to your mouth,

81 Borowy, *Mickiewicz w szkole klasycystycznej*, p. 15.

Till my depravity sends you gravewards:
You suffer like a slave sold out to me.
Make me, your master and your child, love thus
And suffer thus as you did on the cross.

The image of a God-friend, as delineated in this poem, contradicts the view given voice by the most important of Mickiewicz's Romantic heroes, Konrad, in *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III. There, in a gesture of protestation against the indifference and silence of God in the face of all the evils of history that seem to prevail over Good, Konrad denies God the attribute of mercy towards the suffering, and accuses Him of failure to respect human freedom of the will. Finally, at the conclusion of his tirade, he almost calls God "a Tsar", that is, an absolute, totalitarian autocrat, which, in effect, would amount to calling God Satan – the main propagator of evil in the universe.

Yet Konrad's diagnosis was mistaken, as Mickiewicz demonstrates structurally through the world depicted in his play, where God is ultimately the patron of the freedom of nations, and remains in complete control of the plans that Satan has for the world. Nonetheless, the Improvisation of Konrad is considered in Polish culture to be a stellar instance of metaphysical rebellion, and an attempt to define theodicy in a wholly novel manner. In the *Evening Conversation*, God is incomprehensible, and His omnipresence is supported by absolute compassion for Man, because His mercy knows no boundaries, even in the face of His human creatures, and the evil they commit. One further element, so important to the Romantics who always searched for ideal communication: God has unlimited insight into the depths of the human soul, and is never mistaken in reading human thoughts and feelings. For this reason, He is a perfect and irreplaceable partner in conversation.[82]

None of this means that the pessimism so pervasive in Mickiewicz's other works of this period has entirely evaporated from the poem. The picture of Man, and the speaking subject himself, are contrasted

82 St Augustine writes: "Indeed, Lord, to your eyes, the abyss of human consciousness is naked (Heb 4:13). What could be hidden within me, even if I were unwilling to confess it to you? I would be hiding you from myself, not myself from you." (*Confessions* X.2.2, p. 122).

against the Lord. The neighbour, even the good one, is incapable of healing the "sickly thoughts" and "cancerous doubts" in someone who is suffering (and perhaps even experiencing a crisis of faith) while the "evil one" simply runs away without paying any attention.[83] Further on, the speaking self, the protagonist who is hungry for the intimacy with God, neglects to hide his spiritual deficiencies, which are numerous: experiences of 'bad conscience', and vulnerability to demonic temptations, which are vague, but undoubtedly fundamental, since they arouse in the subject this "dreadful voice, worse than painful moans:/ Infernal torture!" This is, perhaps, a voice of metaphysical rebellion, resonating with the "infernal choirs" (if there is such a thing), possibly even resounding forever within the halls of Hell. The protagonist is that of a morality play, because he is psychologically torn apart, internally conflicted, yet heading towards spiritual rebirth. The tears that appear in the last line symbolise, as it seems, the purification process.

While Mickiewicz was working on his *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, he also wrote a beautiful sonnet *To Solitude*, thematically akin to the poems analysed above, but also further enriched by a more existential perspective. A key role in the narrative is played by the aquatic element, which is friendly and dangerous at the same time – just like solitude, which it metaphorically represents. Solitude is a desirable state, refreshing like a cool bath on a hot day; but in the long term it can become dangerous, like sinking into some cold abyss that renders us unable to breathe. Jakob Böhme compares the seventh of the spirits of God (that is, eternal, creative qualities of the Divine Nature) to a crystalline sea, luminous and transparent, in which angels, supple and quick by virtue of their participation in God's nature, unceasingly move up and down.[84] The poet, however, is no angel. The narrative of the sonnet has a gyrational rhythm. The

83 There is a similar thought in the *Confessions* as well: "Why then should I be concerned for human readers to hear my confessions? It is not they who are going to 'heal my sickness' (Ps. 103:3)." (X.3.3, p. 179).

84 "Now their foot does stay upon the seventh spirit of God, which is solid like a cloud, and clear and bright as a crystalline sea, wherein they walk upward and downward, which way soever they please. For their agility or nimbleness is as swift as the divine power itself, yet one angel is more swift than another,

subject of the poem escapes the turmoil and whirlwind of daily life (from "the heat of daily life") towards silence and solitude, where he first finds (again?) his freedom of thought and imagination. Łukasiewicz, not unreasonably, assumed that the speaking subject is an artisan of the word, a poet who, let us add to that, can work on his own, personal "Song of songs" only in solitude ("I dive and I leap up to the thoughts above my thoughts"; the phrase "*w myślach nad myślami*" could be also understood as "the thoughts of thoughts", which invokes associations with the "Song of songs").

But in this existential parable, solitude has another, more bitter side to it. It leads, sooner or later, to numbness, it brings the poet sleep, but not a prophetic one; instead, it brings the sleep which is a brother of death – a spiritual death, we may think. In many of his works, an especially in the Dresden part of the *Forefathers' Eve* (which was written at the same time as *To Solitude*), Mickiewicz understands sleeping and dreaming in a biblical way: that is, as a state in which a supernatural communication between Man and God (or Satan) may take place. In his poetic practice there is sometimes an opposite meaning as well, as in his epic masterpiece *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), where Mickiewicz will speak of "sleep, the brother of death", invoking the Greek mythological figures of the twin brothers Hypnos and Thanatos.[85] It is such a sleep, submerging and submitting to non-existence, that he also expounds in *To Solitude*. The only help seems to be an escape back to "the heat of daily life" and then again into the element of solitude. That is the gyrational rhythm of this sonnet. May we therefore understand the speaking subject as an eternal fugitive, and the poem itself as a sign of despair?[86]

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and that according to the quality of each." (*Aurora, the Day-Spring* 12.113, tr. J. Sparrow, Nashville, AR, 2013; a reprint of the 1656 English translation).

85 The last line of Book Eight of *Pan Tadeusz*.

86 St Teresa of Ávila describes in a somewhat similar way a restlessness of the soul, transformed from a caterpillar into a butterfly, which cannot live fully in God, but is dissatisfied with her earthly life: "No wonder this pretty butterfly, estranged from earthly things, seeks repose elsewhere. Where can the poor little creature go? It cannot return to whence it came, for as I told you, that is not in the soul's power, do what it will, but depends upon God's pleasure. Alas, what fresh trials begin to afflict the mind! Who would expect this

The subject himself describes his condition as that of an 'exile', and feels like one both in his life shared with others and in solitude. The word '*wygnaniec*' ('exile') in the Polish of this period was charged with moral and political meaning, at once suggesting a political refugee or *émigré* (as the best-case scenario), and a convict sent maliciously into the interior of the Russian Empire – a prisoner, an enslaved worker thrown into a world both alien and hostile. The poet, of course, was fully aware of the semantic range of the term 'exile', because he himself propagated such meanings in many of his works. But here, in this sonnet, he allows it yet another shade of meaning, a more existential and universal one, suggesting a state of separation, a sense of incompleteness and lack of being, an impossibility of fulfilment. Is it despair? Rather, a manly acceptance of fate. Those scholars who see here a premonition of the later Lausanne lyrics are quite right. But there is no facile consolation in this poem.

Perhaps, the strangest of the poems written in the Dresden-Rome period is the one beginning with "*I dreamt of winter …*", even though we know only its later version, which was transcribed by the poet in 1840. This poem, a pearl of Romantic oneiric imagination, has received countless readings, not surprisingly, also by those inclined to psychoanalytic interpretation.[87] The note by Mickiewicz suggests that this is a poetic transcription of an actual dream he had, made immediately after waking up, without any interruption or revision. Was it really how the poem was written, we can't be sure, because we don't possess the original manuscript. Rafał Marceli Blüth, referring to Freudian psychoanalysis, tries to demonstrate that in this poem "the main thought is an examination of conscience in terms of both

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after such a sublime grace? In fact in one way or another we must carry the cross all our lives." (*Interior Castle, Fifth Mansion*, II.8; English translation: *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, Washington 1976, p. 134).

87 See, among others, important studies in an multi-author monograph *Mickiewicz. Sen i widzenie*, ed. Z. Majchrowski, W. Owczarski, Gdańsk 2000 (especially: Z. Majchrowski, "Miałem sen w Dreźnie", pp. 19–27; W. Owczarski, "Pisać snem. O wyobraźni Adama Mickiewicza", pp. 35–48; L. Zwierzyński, "Fenomenologia snu: wyobrażenia oniryczne w poezji Mickiewicza," pp. 49–78).

national and personal sins"[88]. The national ones appear in the first ("winter") part of the poem, where we have a scene of a "charity auction" of sorts, which was supposedly intended to hide the poet's anguish over his failure to join the November Uprising.

On this reading, the second section (the "Roman/summer" part) seemingly invokes memories of transgressions committed in Mickiewicz's earlier life. Kleiner saw the poem in a similar way ("it is a peculiar dream of a patriot-Christian and a lover, a dream about Poland and the salvation of Europe, a dream about love irretrievably lost, a dream about pangs of conscience, both general and personal, and a dream of atonement."[89]). Jean-Charles Gille-Maisani, reading the poem in the light of the analytic psychology of Carl Gustav Jung,[90] devotes attention principally to the second part, reaching a conclusion that the visionary, heavenly Ewa "has almost all the attributes of Anima", that is, she constitutes a missing element in the personality of the dreaming Adam (Animus) that is indispensable for harmonious completion of his self.[91] Many scholars and poets, admiring the highest literary skill displayed in this poem, have refrained from any kind of analysis, assuming that its elusive mystery escapes any rational interpretation. Yet the metaphysical-religious dimension of this poem merits discussion.

In the first, 'winter' part of the dream, Mickiewicz depicts a mysterious procession of the people to the "bank of Jordan", that is, on the Feast of Jordan (or Epiphany, which in Polish tradition is called the Feast of Three Kings). Here the commentators see a certain "completion of the Epiphany in the orthodox liturgy"[92], not without good reason, since the poet had plenty of opportunity to familiarise himself with the rituals of Eastern Orthodox Christianity from childhood onwards; also, his stay in Russia was engraved deep in his

88 R. Blüth, "Psychogeneza "Snu w Dreźnie"", in: idem, *Pisma literackie*, p. 34.

89 Kleiner, *Dzieje Konrada*, p. 260.

90 See J. Ch. Gille-Maisani, *Adam Mickiewicz człowiek. Studium psychologiczne*, tr. A. Kuryś, K. Rytel, Warszawa 1987, pp. 186–197.

91 Gille-Maisani writes: "The Anima encourages Adam to reflect on his past life and to realise his mistakes. She plays a part of a guide in the individuation process" (ibidem, p. 196).

92 Zgorzelski, *Wstęp*, p. LXXVIII.

memory). The procession has funereal and otherworldly features: for example, those on the left side of the procession wear funeral clothes, and hold burning candles turned upside-down; their faces look "as hard as stone", thus imitating death masks. It makes the reader wonder whether they are living or dead. There are numerous scriptural connotations with the motif of almsgiving, notably in this ambiguous auction that takes place between the unknown woman who covers her face behind a veil and the protagonist of the oneiric vision (who undoubtedly signifies the author himself: autobiographical elements in the text are of the utmost importance). Indeed, lines 1–29 form a sequence of images and events, that can hardly be interpreted decisively.

The second part of the poem or, indeed the second dream, takes place simultaneously in Rome (the "Palatine hill" with its scent of roses) and outside the city (the mountains and the Alban Lake are to the south of the city). This is much clearer, in every sense of the term, both in terms of its biographical meaning, and of the presence of light in the oneiric images. Mickiewicz invokes here the figure of Henrietta Ewa Ankwicz (whom he met in Rome) and their unconsummated love affair.[93] The sacred, ethereal figure of Ewa, at once unreal and devoid of any erotic aspect, is transmuted into a swallow, which powerfully evokes the mystical-metaphysical element. Leszek Zwierzyński includes the figure of Ewa among Mickiewicz's "transcendent ladies", because the heroine reminds us of the pictures of saints and may even be associated with the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, as somehow fused with an image of the Transfiguration of Christ ("while she hovered there/ Among them, barely standing on the ground./ Her face was fair like the transfigured Christ"). This

93 More on this is in the commentary to the poem. The figure of Ewa Ankwicz was introduced, in allusion, by Mickiewicz also to his two most important works: *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III (she is the protagonist of scene IV) and *Pan Tadeusz* (Ewa, the beloved of Jacek Soplica, has her features and he invokes her in his pre-death general confession, when he exists in the depicted world as a monk named "*Robak*", i.e. "Bug" or "Worm"). See the analyses of those three appearances of Ewa in J. Fiećko, "Przemiany Ewy w opowieści Adama," in: *Podróżować, mieszkać, odejść ... Pamięci Ewy Guderian-Czaplińskiej*, ed. B. Kocewicz, K. Krzak-Weiss, K. Kurek, A. Mądry, Poznań 2021, pp. 43–64).

reading seems to be supported by the mystical, ecstatic quality of the lyrical subject's experience of the beauty of Ewa, that is quite probably meant to remind the reader of the figure of Beatrice from the *Comedy*.[94]

Despite all of this, the double conclusion of the narrative (both in the dream and after waking up) focusses on the religious phenomenon of the examination of conscience, a severe judgment passed on the poet's past, without any facile absolution ("For I remembered suddenly my sins,/ Moments of folly and of vanity,/ I felt my heart as torn and of her love/ Unworthy–and of joy and paradise."). In fact, we find no such facile self-absolution in any work of Mickiewicz's of that period, including the Dresden *Forefathers' Eve*. The play weaves together all these metaphysical tropes and themes, and adds others. There is no place here for a more detailed analysis of this masterpiece, which has been exhaustively studied by scholars; yet some of the play's themes are worth mentioning here. The metaphysical rebellion of Konrad manifests the themes of: theodicy; prophetism; questions of the origins of God and Man (inspired by Böhme); the dilemma between pride and humility; the image of divine power as absolute (and even totalitarian); the human lust to dominate souls; the idea of suicide as a protest in the face of God's silence; and the fall of Man, and his subsequent vulnerability to the temptations of the Evil One. Because in the *Forefathers' Eve* there are true prophets such as Fr Piotr, and true "female angels", like Ewa, there is a counterweight to the proud attitude of Konrad. In the supernatural sphere of the depicted world, Mickiewicz introduces the images of the structure and hierarchy of Heaven (including the Third Heaven) and Hell, inspired by the Bible, but perhaps even more by the neo-Gnostic visions of Böhme and Swedenborg that influence the poet's depictions of the angelic and demonic legions. History and politics

94 According to this line of interpretation, the first part of the dream represents Hell and Purgatory, where Vergil is Dante's guide, while the second part of the dream, with Ewa as the central figure, corresponds to the highest regions of Purgatory's mountain, where Beatrice appears to the poet (*Purgatorio* 30), and leads him across the boundary between the earth and the heavenly spheres. See the commentary of the poem.

are represented in this play as an element of the eternal war between Good and Evil; the universal roles of God (as the patron of Freedom and the protector of the oppressed) and Satan (as the active instigator of evil in history) are clearly delineated from this point of view. This view is further associated with the messianic and sacrificial role of Poland as the most important representative of freedom in human history, as well as the satanic role of the Russian Empire, with particular respect to the Tsarist regime, which Mickiewicz saw as the main instrument of Hell's intervention in global politics (where the Tsar seemed to him the earthly Satan).

1.3 *Parisian Poems and Metaphysics*

The metaphysical dimension is also prominent in several poems written by Mickiewicz during his first stay in Paris (1832–1838).[95] Here we enter the realm of poems which remained unpublished during Mickiewicz's life: the versions we have were never finally approved by him, and remain somewhat in the shadow of the other works he wrote and published in these Parisian years, of which the most important is *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), which in Polish culture enjoys the status of a national epic. It describes the life and customs of Polish nobility in the regions of what was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before the Partitions. International politics remains part of the background (the story takes place in 1811–1812; the poem's two books include an episode from Napoleon's Russian campaign) and for a long time *Pan Tadeusz* was considered to be an excellent example of blending the aesthetics of realism with Romantic imagination. Yet

95 Mickiewicz settled in Paris as a political emigrant in June 1832 and lived there, apart from his sojourn in Lausanne (1839–1840), until the end of his life, though he died in Constantinople in 1855, in the middle of a political mission in the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War. In Paris he published his most important literary works, and married Celina Szymanowska, daughter of the eminent pianist Maria Agata Szymanowska, who came from a family of Polish Frankists with whom Mickiewicz became acquainted during his exile in Russia (where he also met young Celina). They had six children. The poet was publicly active, and edited journals, but tried to play a role of a non-partisan authority, and stood aloof from the various Polish political factions in Paris. In 1840–1844 he was appointed the first professor of the newly created Chair of Slavic Literatures in Collège de France.

in recent decades critics have emphasised the metaphysical dimension of this narrative poem, in the wake of the suggestions made by Czesław Miłosz.[96]

Metaphysical poems of this period explore the biblical tradition whilst often entering into dialogue with theosophical thought more obviously than in earlier works. In 1836 Mickiewicz published a collection of epigrams and aphorisms, entitled *Sentences and Remarks from the Works of Jakob Böhme, Angelus Silesius, and Saint-Martin*.[97] It features paraphrases of various statements with particular regard to the relationship between Man and God, as well as human actions and attitudes which leads him either to salvation or its opposite. Dozens of themes and motifs recur in this cycle.[98] As far as metaphysical poems are concerned, apart from the abovementioned collection of often-unfinished fragments, we should pay particular attention to the "three fragments" which were jotted down on one sheet of paper. They begin with the words: [*Defend Me from Myself ...*], [*You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Bit of Fame ...*] and [*Gobs Who Yell in the People's Name ...*] We add to these two other poems, which were written on a separate sheet and bear the titles: *Vision* and *Profligate's Regrets*.

The "three fragments" differ significantly in their form and thematic range. Scholars have been most keenly interested in the first of these. It begins with a liberal paraphrase of the words of Saint-Martin, which Mickiewicz translated into Polish, and with which he entered into dialogue.[99] Scholars have compiled a longer

96 Such reading was suggested by Miłosz in his *Land of Ulro* (p. 122). An important example of this kind of interpretation is a monograph by Jan Tomkowski: *"Pan Tadeusz" – poemat metafizyczny*, Wrocław 2018.

97 *Zdania i uwagi z dzieł Jakuba Bema, Anioła Ślązaka* (*Angelus Silesius*) *i Sę-Martena*. The collection features over 160 epigrams and testifies to Mickiewicz's spiritual search of the time. It seems that Mickiewicz read Scheffler's *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* in the 1830s and was inspired by its form in writing his *Zdania i uwagi*.

98 A solid analysis of this poet cycle can be found in a monograph by Małgorzata Burta: *Reszta prawd. "Zdania i uwagi" Adama Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 2005.

99 Here is the fragment that Mickiewicz translated from Saint-Martin and which he discusses in his poem: "The prayer of a Spaniard: 'My God, defend me from myself', concerns a sentiment which proves to be salutary, if we are

list of philosophical allusions which they claim to have noticed in this fragment. Kleiner wrote: "The ideas of Saint-Martin, Böhme and the Kabbalah are mixed with the speculations of Schelling and Hegel that were known to Mickiewicz both from his Petersburg conversations and from the reports given to him by Garczyński".[100] It seems, however, that Irena Jokiel is right, when she points out that [*Defend me from myself* ...] betrays especially deep bonds with Böhme's thought,[101] although we should add that Mickiewicz transforms the German mystic's assertions into unanswered questions. The poem is a monologue, addressed to God, that resembles the Improvisation of Konrad from the *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, in its form and emotional tenor. The question remains as to whether the poem wasn't a fragment of this very play – whether it was later excised by the poet or (as is more likely) survives part of some additional scenes from an unfinished play.[102]

The point of departure is a request to Providence in which the poet asks it to defend him from himself. It expressed, most probably, a thought akin to the one cited earlier from Saint-Martin, that the

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able to feel it in ourselves, that is, if we feel that we are the only enemy on this earth that we should fear; then, God fears only what is not Himself. To the prayer quoted above we could add the following: 'My God, deign to assist me in preventing me from murdering you" (A. Mickiewicz, "[*Przekład myśli Saint-Martina*]," in: idem, *Dzieła*, t. XIII, p. 341). The quotation comes from Saint-Martin's *Oeuvres posthumes* I, p. 80 (see a collection of aphorisms in A. E. Waite, *The Life of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the Unknown Philosopher and the Substance of His Transcendental Doctrine*, London 1901, p. 375).

100 Stefan Garczyński (1805–1833) was Mickiewicz's friend and also a poet, who used to attend Hegel's lectures and was familiar with his views. Quotation comes from: J. Kleiner, *Studia inedita*, ed. J. Starnawski, Lublin 1964, p. 293.

101 See I. Jokiel, "Na obraz i podobieństwo ("Broń mnie przed sobą samym")," in: eadem, *Lornety i kapota. Studia o Mickiewiczu*, Opole 2006, pp. 209–226.

102 In 1832 Mickiewicz published the first act of *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, to which he later added a poem called *Ustęp* ("Passages" in Charles Kraszewski's translation: see A. Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve*, tr. C.S. Kraszewski, London 2016), describing the exile to Russia and a pessimistic vision of the Russian Empire. He worked on further parts of the play in next years, but never finished it. The fragments that he showed to his friends were never published and he, probably, destroyed them before leaving for Turkey in 1855.

greatest peril to Man is Man himself, including his pride and the lust for absolute knowledge (as in the case of Konrad). A while later the speaking subject gives proof that his fear was justified, and introduces a mystical dissonance, demanding that God reveal the truth about His essence. Because (again, like Konrad) the poet hears only silence, he tries to investigate the truth by himself, developing in the process his vision of Man and human nature in an entirely different manner of talking to God from that which we see in the *Evening Conversation*. 'You' and 'me' are the most important pronouns in this tirade; the 'me' suggests that the speaking subject views himself as Everyman, a representative of the whole mankind.

The speculations of the speaking subject concerning God's nature undoubtedly display strong similarities to the vision of Böhme, though they also indirectly invoke the Book of Genesis (particularly the creation of Man "in the image and likeness of God": Gen 1:26–27) and the Gospel accounts of Incarnation. He forcefully wants to take these mysteries away from God, pressuring Him, like Konrad, first by shouting, then with provocative questions loaded with implicit assertions ("by the hands/ I hold you and I cry: 'Reveal yourself!'"). The speaking subject wants to know whether divine power is absolute or limited (like that of Man). He also asks about the origin of the Creator, suggesting by it that He does not know His own origins ("Your own beginning is unknown to you"). He asks about the rules of the divine 'play' of seeking self-knowledge ("You play self-searching from eternity"), about the end of His existence ("When will you end?"), and about the unity of the Three Persons. He speaks of the presence of God in heaven and in the sea in almost pantheistic (or rather panentheistic) terms and speaks about His war with "the devil in heaven, and on earth".

Mickiewicz concludes with the most important question, first, about the meaning of the Incarnation of the Son of God and then, even about the inherent humanity of God (the last two lines run: "You took the form of Man. Just for a while?/ Or did you have it since all time began?"). As we can see, most of the hypotheses formulated in the poem can be linked to the ideas of Böhme. It seems that his theosophy provides the main framework for the Everyman posing

questions. Böhme's God also doesn't know His origin[103] and is, at least in the late thought of the *Philosophus Teutonicus*, born out of the *Ungrund*, an indefinite primordial abyss which is one of the key notions in his system. God, as conceived by Böhme, is subject to a process of evolution, losing His primeval element of wrath and developing infinite love (in which way He comes to know Himself). Creating the world and revealing Himself in Nature, God feels a great joy (which seems to be the aspect of 'play', underlined by Mickiewicz). Those analogies confirm the hypothesis of the influence of Böhme on this poem, although the poet could also introduce elements found in other theosophists (particularly Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and von Baader). The vision of God in his monologue is tightly bound to the image of Man as a being akin to God. Is Man to some degree equal to the Creator? The subject emphasises the immortality of the soul, which makes it closer to the divine. He speaks about the lack of self-knowledge in Man, when it comes to his origin and end,[104] but he also emphasises the unstoppable human urge to fathom the mysteries of the universe.

Mickiewicz draws a parallel between the struggle of God with Satan and our fight with the Enemy (both in ourselves and in the world). This view implicitly contains the possibility of spiritual perfection and the deification of Man. Does it mean becoming equal to God? The idea that in the mystical union the human soul is deified and by grace becomes equal to God can be found in the Christian mystical tradition, for instance, in St John of the Cross.[105] However, Mickiewicz's imagination may also be inspired here by Gnostic

103 Cf. what Böhme writes about the lack of self-knowledge in God: "God himself knoweth not what he is: For he knoweth no beginning of himself, also he knoweth not anything that is like himself as also he knoweth no end of himself." (*Aurora* 23.17).

104 The idea that the essence of the human soul is unknowable, because it is made in the image of God whose essence is infinitely unknowable can be found already in St Gregory of Nyssa (*On the Making of Man* XI.1–4; English translation by H.A. Wilson in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 5, Buffalo 1893).

105 See, for instance, his *Living Flame of Love* III.6 (English translation in: *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. K. Kavanagh, O. Rodriguez, London

thought, where Man has no need to become divine by grace, being already divine by nature (as in the myth of Anthropos, the God-Man, suggesting, as Kurt Rudolph points out, "the close relation or kinship of nature between the highest God and the inner core of man"[106]). Does the request, expressed in the *incipit* of the poem, mean that the speaker wants to protect himself from his attempt to find answers by his own effort to the questions that bother him? The answers that may lead him, in the wake of the Gnostics, to consider himself equal or maybe even superior to God?

We will not encounter such problems of interpretation in the second poem from the same sheet of paper, with the *incipit:* [*You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Bit of Fame ...*] It features a poetic meditation on the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3–12) and especially verse 5 of chapter 5, when Jesus blesses the meek. The poem in question, containing a speech of the poet given "a little fame", is structured as an answer to an implicit question about the sources of this worldly success. The poet downplays his own fame, emphasising its flimsiness and inevitable transience, calling it a reward for his thought and desires, not for his deeds. ("For what I thought and wanted, not for what I've done"). The essence of this poem involves praise of a discrete action, of pious deeds flowing from pure intentions that are hidden from public view, and bring fruit after some time (this alludes to further sections of the Sermon on the Mount: Mt 6:1–2). Merciful action is praised and considered more noble than literature and the fame which comes with it. Mickiewicz weaves into his discourse, as the main message, a paraphrase of the verse: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the world" (Mt 5:5). We can guess that

1964). The idea of raising the soul to a level equal to its Creator's can be found all over St John's mystical writings.

106 K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, New York 1987, p. 92. He adds: "Behind this idea of the divine 'Man', who dwells both above and in the world, there is an entirely new conception of anthropology. This becomes clear above all in the higher estimate of man in comparison with the Demiurge: it is not only that the (first) man, i.e. the unknown God, exists before him – the earthly man also, who is his product, is superior to him by reason of his supramundane divine relationship and substance." (p. 93). Cf. also H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston 1963.

it is not about "possession" in the sense of dominating other people, but of some hidden and unmeasurable possession, which contributes gradually to the moral quality of the world.

This sort of message is usually seen by scholars also in the third fragment, with the *incipit* [*Gobs Who Yell in the People's Name …*]. Kleiner and Zgorzelski see in those six lines a development and modernization of the same verse from the Beatitudes. Kleiner speaks even about a "worship of common Man", while Zgorzelski points to a puzzling set of adjectives in the last line ("the meek, the dim and the small"), claiming that they mean, essentially, "unenlightened, uneducated people, common folk, modest in its ambitions".[107] In truth, the matter seems more complicated than has been suggested by these scholars. We are dealing here with a provocative, pessimistic transformation of the Third Beatitude. A political perspective, oriented by the philosophy of history, dominates this poem.

In first line we glimpse what seems to be Mickiewicz's dislike of popular tribunes, and parliamentary orators' demagogy. But in the following lines we read about some unspecified shock, and a great historical effort (a revolution? The November Uprising?), whose leaders will have their hands cut off by the people in the name of whom and for whose sake they acted in the first place. They were admired ("their favourite names") by the same people who will cut out their hands and forget them shortly afterwards. This is rather an anti-Gospel perspective, to say the least, since in the Beatitudes Christ speaks of acting, suffering, and being persecuted for the sake of justice; (and of course He encourages us not to cut off any hands, but to love our enemies). Christ praises the meek, who do good and will "inherit the earth", but it does not follow that they are also "small" and "dim". In the language of Mickiewicz's time, those words bore no unequivocally positive meaning. The poet's knowledge of history was exceptional; he knew countless examples of beheadings, not only from Polish history, but also from recent events in France, as when the leaders of the Revolution who had been all but worshipped were later killed (Danton and Robespierre being the most obvious example). In this context the last line seems less a message

107 Zgorzelski, *Wstęp*, p. XCIV.

of Gospel hope than a warning to those who are sensitive to the evils present in the political and historical realm.

On a separate sheet of paper Mickiewicz wrote down two more poems, which are usually dated to the mid-1830s, and were not published during his life, but remain very important for his poetic metaphysics: *Vision* and *Profligate's Regrets*. The first poem describes the soul's mystical (perhaps posthumous?) journey beyond the body into another space or universe. In Polish literature this is unprecedented. The poet Julian Przyboś considers it to be "poetry conveying joy and freedom not found in any other poem by the poet [i.e. Mickiewicz]".[108] Marian Maciejewski sees in this poem "a mystical, programmatic Romanticism"[109], while Zdzisław Kępiński judges it to be "the fullest and purest poetic manifestation of Böhmianism in the whole of European literature",[110] while Adam Sikora finds here mysticism wherein "all historical definiteness is omitted".[111] Marta Piwińska writes about a vision in which "the world becomes so lucid and intelligible that it seems almost physically transparent".[112] We might cite many more such comments.[113]

Perhaps, the best way to describe the essence of this poem is Georges Bataille's abovementioned concept of "the inner experience", which enables us not to determine whether this poem

108 J. Przyboś, *Czytając Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1998 [4th ed.], p. 239.

109 M. Maciejewski, *Poetyka – gatunek – obraz. W kręgu poezji romantycznej*, Wrocław 1977, p. 105.

110 Kępiński, *Mickiewicz hermetyczny*, p. 127.

111 A. Sikora, *Posłannicy słowa. Hoene-Wroński, Towiański, Mickiewicz*, Warszawa 1967, p. 257.

112 M. Piwińska, *Juliusz Słowacki od duchów*, Warszawa 1992, p. 22.

113 This is one of the most often commented poems of Mickiewicz. There were important studies of it, which appeared in multi-author monographs: *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza. Analizy, komentarze, interpretacje*, ed. J. Brzozowski, Łódź 1998 (esp. J. Duk, "Widzenie"; I. Jokiel, "O funkcji symbolicznej wizji przestrzennych w "Widzeniu"", pp. 175–184); *Mickiewicz. Sen i widzenie* (esp. a paper by Mirosława Bukowska-Schielmann: ""Widzenie" – alchemia człowieka," pp. 97–112); *Mickiewicz mistyczny*, ed. A. Fabianowski, E. Hoffmann-Piotrowska, Warszawa 2005 (esp. M. Cieśla-Korytowska, "Co mnie dziwi w "Widzeniu" Mickiewicza," pp. 208–216; J. Fiećko, ""Druga przestrzeń" według Mickiewicza. Kilka uwag o "Widzeniu"", pp. 217–228 – here I reiterate some of the findings presented in this paper).

amounts to a description of an actual experience that the poet had, or merely an attempt to work out a mystical style in poetry (and they are not mutually exclusive). The most important poetic device in creating the depicted world of the poem becomes a mystical paradox which serves to express the inexpressible. Jan Tomkowski, like many other authors, points out the significance of paradoxes in mystical language, quoting Simone Weil who called a logical contradiction "the lever of transcendence", and Carl Gustav Jung, who believed paradoxes were one of the greatest treasures of mankind; Tomkowski observes that "a mystical paradox testifies to the helplessness of reason, and has its origins in the feeling of wonder."[114] We might add that for Plato and Aristotle, and, subsequently, for all the metaphysical tradition of the West, wonder is the beginning of true philosophy.[115]

In his *Vision*, Mickiewicz tries to grasp the phenomenon of the inner, mystical experience and, at the same time, overcome the problem of ineffability (later strongly emphasised by William James). Mickiewicz's mystical journey has three stages; its rhythm is orderly. First, the naked "soul's seed" leaves the body and the world (lines 1–10),[116] then, in the second and central part (lines 11–46) we have a description of the other world's structure and the phenomenon of

114 J. Tomkowski, *Dom chińskiego mędrca. Eseje o samotności*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 33–34.

115 Plato considered wonder was to be the beginning of philosophy: "For this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy, and he who said that Iris was the child of Thaumas made a good genealogy." (*Theaetetus* 155d; English translation by H.N. Fowler in: *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, Cambridge, MA – London 1921). Iris, the goddess of rainbow, symbolises the connection between Heaven and Earth, while her father, Thaumas, means simply "Wonder" in Greek. At the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says: "It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize" (*Metaphysics*, I, 982b; English translation by H. Tredennick, in: *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Cambridge, MA – London 1933).

116 Böhme writes about this spiritual seed on multiple occasions, for instance: "And in this manner it is with the angels, they also are all composed, framed or figured out of the divine seed, but every one has its own body to itself." (*Aurora* 4, 73). I. Jokiel links the seed of the soul with the "spark" in Meister Eckhart (that is, to what is "uncreated and uncreatable" in the soul)

God's omnipresence and the existence of the soul in the metaphysical, otherworldly space. At this stage, a key mystical symbol appears: a circle. Here a fundamental paradox emerges: pancosmic experience of simultaneous existence of the soul at the very centre of reality, and at its circumference, where it moves around the whole space of the universe "along the Ray/ Of God's own Wisdom".[117]

The soul encompasses the whole in a single moment, and enjoys insight into all the mysteries, which were opaque to it during its life. This section of the poem is especially charged with mystical paradoxes (usually quite subtle, as in the case of describing the mystical perception: "I was both an eye / And light in this strange vision"). At the first stage of the poem, the soul returns to the human world, although it is not yet within the confines of its body (hence the conjecture that it may well be a description of death – that is, the irrevocable parting with the flesh). The soul returns, having acquired the ability to see through good and evil (which each have their seeds in every person) but retains no ability to influence the decisions of the living. The poet maintained perhaps the most important element of his metaphysical anthropology: the free will of Man, who is fully responsible for all the good and evil that he does. That is why, in the last scene, the "black demons and white angels" accompany Man in his choices ("they must obey").[118]

The vision of God's nature described in the poem inspired scholars to seek analogies, especially with the thought of Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) and Jakob Böhme, though we must also keep

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as well as to the spatial centre of the circle or the sphere (I. Jokiel, "O funkcji symbolicznej wizji przestrzennych …", pp. 176 and 183).

117 An image of the Holy Trinity as an infinite sphere at whose centre there is the sun, symbolising the Son of God, while the world flowing out of Him like rays of light represents the activity of the Holy Spirit, covers the most of chapter three of Böhme's *Aurora*.

118 Mickiewicz may have been here inspired by St Gregory of Nyssa, who wrote that after the fall of Man, God gave everyone a good angel who encourages him to do good, and a malicious demon who tempts him (*Vita Moysi* II.45–47; English translation by S. House, A.J. Malherbe, E. Ferguson, in: St Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, San Francisco 2006, p. 43). Gregory says that this doctrine comes "from the tradition of our fathers". See the commentary on the poem for the full quotation.

Swedenborg in mind. We may assume that the vision experienced by the poem's protagonist corresponds to the highest form of insight in the Swedenborgian hierarchy, where a mystic communes with the other world in the state of fully awakened consciousness.[119] The primary attribute of God here is this all-embracing, absolute love for His human creations, who are illuminated by a soothing luminosity, giving supernatural knowledge. God exists as a luminous, omnipresent being, which is how He was traditionally seen in Western metaphysics; indeed, Meister Eckhart saw him as a formless, superessential being,[120] while Böhme emphasised God's spiritual nature. It is, then, safe to say that Mickiewicz's syncretic image of the Creator and the other world is an original synthesis of various metaphysical and mystical currents with which he was acquainted.

The Profligate's Regrets, written down on the same sheet, has a less sophisticated structure. We might risk a hypothesis that the poem fails to rise to the intellectual standards of its author. The climax of the poem gives it a form of metaphysical-religious confession, but earlier an existential dimension dominates, in which the poet summarises his relationships with other people at different stages of his life. This is the summary of a mature man who is undoubtedly entering the phase of the "shadow line", to use Joseph Conrad's famous expression. The speaking subject declares: "Old age is coming soon". His summary is both bitter and pessimistic, since the protagonist, formerly 'profligate' with cordial feelings and friendly deeds, concludes that he never experienced any reciprocity. Even worse, he suggests that he never experienced full openness or deep

119 Swedenborg distinguished five hierarchically ordered types of mystical visions, the highest of which concerned a supernatural contact in the state of unimpeded consciousness. The image of the other world in Mickiewicz's poem recalls the visions of Heaven in Swedenborg, although the poet was obviously unable to contain the entire system of three Heavens that he knew from the Swedish mystic's writings. Nonetheless, we can assume that the Swedenborgian vision of the Third Heaven inspired Mickiewicz's image of the centre, and the source from which divine light flows and all the spirits spring.

120 "the naked, formless essence of divine unity, which is superessential being" (Meister Eckhart, *Sermon 96* [*83*], in *Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, tr. M. O'Connell Walshe, New York 2009, p. 462).

communication with his neighbours, and not through his own fault ("My heart? It never talked from heart to heart").

His answer to this sense of lack in human relationships is to turn away from them entirely and choose God as his ultimate and only refuge, since He is the one who repays "on time/with interest". The speaking subject refers to the biblical parable of talents (here: "treasures" which were not given back to others), but decides to go against its moral message. He wants neither to multiply his riches nor share them; on the contrary, he plans to bury them in the ground. At least two elements may puzzle the reader here. First, the lack of self-criticism, and the self-justification of the speaking subject who is one-sidedly critical of other people with whom he had patiently shared his life. Secondly, this justification for his choice of Providence as his only partner for the future seems like an escape, given his dislike for other people. In this peculiarly "mercantile" attitude to God ("interest" is mentioned, while usury is condemned in the Bible!) there is a problematic ambiguity. Perhaps this poem should be read, against the existing interpretations, as a deliberate attempt to embarrass the speaking subject of the poem?

In any case, we have to agree with those scholars who argue that this poem is a precursor to the Lausanne lyrics and at many levels.

1.4 *The Lausanne Lyrics and Later Fragments*

During his stay in Lausanne, where he was lecturing on Latin literature between June 1839 and October 1840, Mickiewicz composed six poems. He never published any of them nor did he give them a shape which we could assume to be final.[121] Those poems were gradually published after his death; in the nineteenth century they were considered to be a phenomenon of little importance in the poet's body of work. However, their reception changed significantly over the course of the twentieth century, when scholars as

121 In the so-called Lausanne canon we include the poems which seem to be at least tentatively finished ([*Spin Love* ...], [*Above the Water Great and Clear* ...], [*My Corpse Is Sitting Here* ...], [*I Shed Pure Springs of Tears* ...]) as well as those that were barely started ([*To Escape with the Soul* ...]) and probably unfinished ([*Already as a Child in Our House* ...]).

well as poets of various sort deemed these to be among the outstanding achievements of Polish poetry of all time.[122] The Lausanne lyrics are still considered iconic in Polish culture: it would be hard to enumerate all the poetic references, allusions, and hidden citations in the twentieth-century Polish poetry and its most prominent luminaries (in chronological order): Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Julian Tuwim, Julian Przyboś, Aleksander Wat, Czesław Miłosz, Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, Wisława Szymborska, Ryszard Krynicki, Adam Zagajewski.

Can we speak of a poetic cycle when it comes to the Lausanne lyrics? There is no evidence that the author himself saw them in this way. We are not sure about their chronology or the specific context of their origin. They are, undoubtedly, linked by the place and time in which they were written, and by something much more important – a profound shift in Mickiewicz's poetic diction, strikingly different from what we see in his earlier works. The difference was articulated with precision by Zgorzelski:

> What remains from the earlier period's tendencies is both the effort to close a poem with a clear conclusion, and his care for simplicity of expression and a direct naturalness of diction. However, features hitherto absent begin to emerge at the same time, sometimes even characteristics that are utterly different from those which constantly occurred in Mickiewicz's previous work. These are strongly marked by a change in the poet's attitude towards the word. Earlier the artist's attention was focused primarily on the sentence as a whole, while the word usually had a clear, concrete and unequivocal character. What now begins to grow is the weight of each single word, which will perform a more autonomous, even dominant role in the linguistic structure of a poem, whilst simultaneously acquiring deep allegorical meanings. The word itself loses, as it were, its power to invoke concrete representations, but acquires a new ideational and emotional expressiveness. The allegorisation of style follows, as distinct from the allegorical tendencies of the earlier period, in that it suggests no clear, unambiguous interpretation. In the previous phase we dealt with allegorisation which would lend itself to be read clearly

122 The most important twentieth-century interpretations of the Lausanne lyrics are collected in: *Strona Lemanu. Liryki lozańskie Adama Mickiewicza. Antologia*, ed. Marian Stala, Kraków 1998.

> and without hesitation, while here everything is veiled by a fog of polyvalent suggestions. The author here speaks more often between the lines than straightforwardly or explicitly. More often he bases his speech on a specifically lyric technique of omissions and hints.[123]

Marian Stala, while accepting this interpretation of Zgorzelski, aptly pointed out that this change in style, paradoxically, runs into two opposite directions at the same time. First, towards a classicist discipline, with its rigorous form, and, second, towards an anticipation of modern literary Symbolism, with its reliance on semantic polyvalence.[124] By virtue of this, the constructive position blends with a destructive one. In the existing literature there are two main modes of reading the Lausanne lyrics: either by a biographical context (through the lens of a *sui generis* reckoning of Mickiewicz with his past life, a turn towards the future and towards spiritual transformation), or by a more universalising, existential-philosophical dimension (the futility of pursuit and desire; transience; metaphysical homelessness and loneliness; but also knowledge leading to spiritual purification). In our interpretation the second path will be taken, with the addition of elements from the metaphysical-religious dimension.

It undoubtedly dominates in the poem *Spin Love …*, which enters into dialogue with the Christian doctrine of love (gr. *agape*, lat. *caritas*, but also gr. *eros*).[125] It is based on the message that God Himself is love (1 Jn 4:7–12), the author and giver of love and that out of love He created all beings. That is why man should love not only God, but also his neighbours, including his enemies, which may lead to the integration of mankind into a single community. Mickiewicz seems to prepare here his gloss to the Pauline *Hymn of Love* (1 Cor 13:1–13) and its conclusion that love is greater than faith and hope.

123 Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza*, p. 43.

124 See M. Stala, "Kłopoty z lozańskimi wierszami Mickiewicza. Wstęp," in: *Strona Lemanu*, pp. 5–23.

125 See the commentary on the poem.

Marian Maciejewski, in his excellent commentary on this poem,[126] argues that it is built according to the principle of parallelism, and a sort of open-ended hyperbole. The dominant mode is a "mystical didactic", showing the way in which man, through the unfolding ("spinning") of love in himself, may enter the eternal dimension, since the poem, in its conclusion, opens up a perspective of becoming equal not only to the power of angels, but even of the Creator Himself. Jacek Brzozowski also sees this work as a symbolic "image of the human path to ultimate, divine spiritualization", running from the first, primordial, insect-like stage (line 1) towards God (the last line). Brzozowski claimed that the poet must have been aware that divinity is unreachable and that the threshold of divinisation cannot be crossed.[127] Indeed, in modern times the very idea of divinisation (gr. *theosis*, lat. *deificatio*) has been seen as suspicious in the Christian West, whilst remaining a standard doctrine in Eastern Orthodox spirituality. The ancient Church Fathers whose writings Mickiewicz knew had no problem speaking about Man becoming God, unless it were claimed that He is divine, not by grace, but by nature.[128]

The insect in question is a silkworm; scholars have focussed on the potential role of this symbol, which eludes simple interpretation. It may become clearer if we read what Mickiewicz said in his Collège de France lectures a few years later, when he pointed out that the image of a caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly is the most appropriate image of the mystical transformation of the human soul, from its animalistic stage to full liberation and spiritual perfection.[129] The image of the spring, on the other hand, which occurs

126 Zob. M. Maciejewski, "Mickiewiczowskie "czucia wieczności"," in: *Strona Lemanu*, pp. 203–256.

127 J. Brzozowski, "Fragment lozański. Próba komentarza do wierszy ostatnich Mickiewicza," in: *Strona Lemanu*, p. 336.

128 A motif of human ascending to the angelic level (the ideal of *isangelos*, "equal to angels") and then being divinised is omnipresent in ancient and mediaeval Christian monastic and mystical literature, especially in the Greek Fathers. For more on this see the commentary to the poem.

129 In the thirtieth lecture of the second course of his Parisian lectures (delivered on the 17th June 1842), Mickiewicz expounds this analogy at greater

twice in the poem, undoubtedly connotes inexhaustibility, immutability and "ongoing birth" (Maciejewski). Golden brass, which has been forged out of golden seeds, seems to represent indestructibility and perpetuity; wind in the Christian tradition symbolises an epiphany of the Holy Spirit, but also a symbol of the truth; seed and corn, which often appear in Christ's parables, signify, in ancient pagan traditions, the process of rebirth. Of course the mother-nurse is one of the most enduring images of a nurturing love, constant and imperishable. Certain scholars suggested that this poem also oscillates between pride and humility, but it seems that Mickiewicz above all, also through a sophisticated chain of symbolic similes, wanted to affirm the voice of St Paul: "the greatest of these [i.e. virtues] is charity" (1 Cor 13:13).

In the poem [*Above the Water Great and Clear …*], the philosophical-existential dimension seems to predominate. Maciejewski wrote about Mickiewicz's use of the structure of a philosophical discourse, whilst also claiming that a Romantic descriptive technique is transformed into "mystical lyric poetry". The key poetic devices are

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length: "If we, for instance, look at caterpillars, those caterpillars to which all the philosophers and poets of antiquity have always compared human souls, some of them still look for leaves in order to enclose themselves, others already sleep in its cocoon and seem immobile and dead, while others already manifest the vibration of their wings and are almost butterflies, still others fly towards the sky. The case is similar with human souls. Some of them continue to exist in an animal state, because they haven't worked hard enough on their liberation, and haven't acquired the essential skill of freeing themselves from the body, ripping off the insect-like cover in order to let the butterfly out. There are other souls which are so free that they pass among us with their words and deeds like meteoroids, like true butterflies. The ancients expressed this truth in images, placing on Psyche's (that is, the soul's) brow, a butterfly as a symbol of her freedom" (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, p. 394). It is hard to tell whether Mickiewicz was familiar with St Teresa of Ávila's famous simile in which mystical transformation of the soul is compared to the transformation of a silkworm, but Marian Maciejewski is certain that this is the case: "it seems almost impossible that Mickiewicz didn't deliberately refer to this mystical tradition" ("Mickiewiczowski 'domek mego ducha'", in: *Mickiewicz mistyczny*, p. 235). A more cautious assumption would be that the poet might have come across this motif in Joseph Görres' mystical anthology. See the commentary on the poem.

parallelism and repetition ("water", the most important metaphor, is mentioned eight times); they give the poem its consistency. Another important feature is the change of the speaking voice's grammatical subject: in lines 1–14, based on lyric description, the narrative is in the third person, while in the last eight lines the personal narrative dominates ('I'), transforming the description into a philosophical-existential confession. Verb tense ends up being another significant device at the verbal level: what the author considers to be a transient phenomenon, fleeting in the face of eternity, is discussed in the past tense, while the present tense is used to denote what is eternal and immutable.

Mickiewicz introduces another radical correction into the fundamental elements of European Romanticism (and his own previous Romanticism from a couple of years earlier), by diminishing the significance of those symbols which were considered the most powerful and expressive. Take his approach to mountains, which the Romantics conventionally associated with sublimity, as the setting of spiritual flights of Byron's Manfred, Goethe's Faust, Juliusz Słowacki's Kordian, and the protagonist of Mickiewicz's own *Crimean Sonnets*. Or his use of "dark clouds", lightnings and storms – stock symbols of rebellion, revolution and any such radical action. Mickiewicz attributes a transient, secondary significance to these symbols (which together represent the power of Nature), in contrast to water, which is not a turbulent, menacing element in the poem, but remains calm, "clear" and "transparent", eternally existing.[130] Romanticism has been replaced here by … what exactly?

Jan Prokop has ingeniously argued that the superiority of water "is not the superiority associated with pride, but with patient endurance. (…) It is acceptance, without dramatic struggle, of the whole passing world, an acceptance which turns, at the same time, into the overcoming of this world. It is an attitude of an observer rather than

130 The context and place, in which this poem was written (Lausanne) makes us see in this "water" the Alpine lake Léman or Lake Geneva, while the "rocks" must be the Alps, the sacred mountains of European Romantics, including Mickiewicz.

an active participant."[131] He also emphasises that the protagonist of the poem introduces into this apparent passivity an element of motion, of eternal journey:

> This entry into the unperturbable current of timeless abiding doesn't mean motionlessness. Just as the image of water, in opposition to the passing clouds and thunders, underlined immutability ("Abides in peace, so great and clear"), there is now another aspect which is being revealed. With regard to the lyrical subject, the verb "to flow" is repeated three times, and signifies infinite motion, pilgrimage which is, at the same time, ascent. It is a true motion, contrary to the apparent motion of the passing things of this world.[132]

While we accept this argument, we want also to try to answer a question we posed earlier. It seems that Mickiewicz is using here the motif of soul as a mirror, taken from the tradition of Christian Platonism. For the founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus, the soul is like a mirror between the two worlds, the sensible and the spiritual one, which has the inherent capacity to turn either to the material things, or to God.[133] Later authors, such as St Gregory of Nyssa in the East and St Augustine in the West developed this Plotinian thought with regard to the Pauline *Hymn of Love*, in which, just before love is declared to be greater than faith and hope, St Paul says: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12).[134] The Church Fathers understood this Pauline mirror through which we see God now as the human soul. It meant to them that in this life, even though it is impossible to see God face to face, it is quite

131 J. Prokop, "Adam Mickiewicz. "Nad wodą wielką i czystą"," in: *Strona Lemanu*, pp. 180–181.

132 Ibidem, p. 181.

133 *Enneads* I.4.10, IV.3.30.

134 In fact, mirrors in antiquity, with which St Paul was familiar, were not made of glass, but of polished metal, and they produced rather distorted reflections. On the history of the mirror metaphor see e.g. M. Pendergrast, *Mirror Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection*, New York 2003; S. Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self- Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire*, Chicago 2006; S.R.L. Clark, *Plotinus: Myth, Metaphor, and Philosophical Practice*, Chicago 2016, pp. 83–90.

possible to contemplate His reflection in the mirror of our own soul, because it is the image of God (Genesis 1:26). However, in order to be able to see God in ourselves, we first have to purify the mirror of our soul from passions and sensible phantasms through moral asceticism and the exercise of meditation.

St Gregory refers to Plotinus' image of the mirror of the soul, asserting that it is able to turn 'downwards' to the material world and then it falls and sins, reflecting in itself the sensible objects, or to turn 'upwards' and convert to God, reflecting His light and becoming like Him.[135] Gregory suggests that the beauty of the purified soul reflects the true Beauty, which is God, like a mirror. In his treatise *On Virginity* he writes: "We see this even here, in the case of a mirror, or a sheet of water, or any smooth surface that can reflect the light; when they receive the sunbeam they beam themselves; but they would not do this if any stain marred their pure and shining surface."[136] Like the other Church Fathers, St Gregory here integrates the Stoic ideal of freedom from passions (gr. *apatheia*), with the Platonic ideal of the purification of the soul – with cleansing the inner mirror and the eye of the soul through ascetic practices and meditation.[137] This purification from passions makes the peaceful surface of the soul to become light which reflects the divine Light.

This Platonic "mirror metaphysics" became extremely popular in the Middle Ages. Not only was the soul a mirror, but also the whole of Nature and every creature. Mediaeval learned books were usually called "mirrors" (*specula*) and, as Ritamary Bradly points out, this became so widespread a metaphor from the twelfth century onward

135 St Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* XII.10.

136 St Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 11 (English translation by W. Moore, H.A. Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series II, vol. 5).

137 In Evagrius of Pontus (4th century AD) we find a thought, later reiterated in the ascetic literature of the Middle Ages, that the goal of ascetic purification is *apatheia* or freedom from passions, and it is *apatheia* that gives birth to love (*agape*) and the vision of God (*Praktikos* 81; English translation: *The Praktikos. Chapters on Prayer*, tr. J.E. Bamberger, Massachussets 1970). The Western monastic tradition accepted John Cassian's (5th century) proposition to translate the Greek term *apatheia* as the Biblical *puritas cordis* ("the purity of the heart", cf. Mt 5:8).

that scholars for a long time were not even interested in its provenance.[138] The metaphor of mirror and mirroring is also ever-present in Dante's *Comedy*, which was well known by Mickiewicz. If there is nothing particularly surprising in the fact that Mickiewicz compares Nature and his own soul to a mirroring surface, it is interesting that he is transforming this motif in an original way. As we already pointed out, at the climactic moment of the poem, the subject himself becomes water: "I see this water everywhere,/ I mirror all things faithfully". But the subject doesn't reflect God in himself (as in the Church Fathers' writings), but His creation. The soul, purified and freed from passions, mirrors the world without any of the distortions caused by selfish desires and emotions; it thus participates in some way in the Godhead (if we can thus read the peaceful water, which, indeed, as scholars have noticed, possesses the divine attributes of immutability and eternity). The subject first sees this water everywhere (like the omnipresent light of God in the *Vision*); then, suddenly, he becomes one with it in a mystical experience (a transition from "I see this water" to "I mirror all things faithfully").[139]

Another Lausanne poem, [*My Corpse is Sitting Here …*], is equally moving, but it boasts a different message. The poem unfolds, as Jacek Brzozowski writes, "according to the rule of increasing what is general and ideal. At the beginning, we are confronted with a shocking, concrete image, while the conclusion is ethereally beautiful, but impalpable and phenomenal."[140] The subject depicts himself at the beginning as a 'living corpse', which means not that he grants himself a status of a wraith or a returning ghost, but that he uses this metaphor, significant in the context of Romantic culture, in order to suggest that in the present moment real life doesn't exist for him, that he is merely an actor, playing his part as a member of

138 R. Bradley, "Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum* in Mediaeval Literature", *Speculum* 29, 1 (1954) 100–115. We note that the article was published in a journal whose title is the Latin word for 'mirror', and happens to be one of the most prestigious English-language journals of Mediaeval Studies.

139 The image of the soul as flowing water can be found in classical mystical literature as early as in St. Augustine (*Confessions* IV.8.13) and St Gregory of Nyssa (*On Virginity* 7).

140 Brzozowski, "Fragment lozański", p. 335.

a community (a family? a social meeting? a group of friends?). The space of 'here' does not harmonise with the realm of the soul; the present moment recedes under the pressure of memory and dreams about the world of the past. The true life exists only in the "fatherland of thought", which is interpreted by Marian Maciejewski as a psychic space, eternal and demanding moral reckoning. We can have doubts about the second part of Maciejewski's point, since in this poem the eschatological dimension doesn't seem to occupy the primary place. It is also hard to agree that the most important meaning of the 'she' from the last stanza, from all possibilities, must be 'the soul'. We should, however, follow those commentators who refer to Mickiewicz's biography and suggest that it must be a memory of the most important, first love of the poet (that is, Maryla, *née* Wereszczak, Puttkamer, a girl from the Tuhanowicze estate which the poet had always remembered with gratitude), even though we generally avoid here reading the Lausanne lyrics through the lens of Mickiewicz's personal history.

The two themes, interwoven with one another, seem to be of key importance in the poem: dream and memory are, of course, pillars of Romantic culture in general. A mature man, immersed in his everyday life (he mentions his work, cares, and entertainment), escapes in spirit into another space, abandoned and remote. By virtue of this, he partly realises a Romantic paradigm of 'the dreamer' who "is where he isn't and he isn't where he is" (according to a beautiful phrase by Maria Janion).[141] This dream, however, results not from the free play of imagination; rather it stems directly from memory, from the past, from the poet's youth, and even (perhaps) from now-idealised (but still important) memories of persons and places that are inaccessible to the dreamer in reality, but remain poignantly vivid in the imagination. This discreetly reminds the reader about the fact that the poet is an exile.

141 See M. Janion, *Marzący: jest tam, gdzie go nie ma, a nie ma go tu, gdzie jest*, in: *Style zachowań romantycznych. Propozycje i dyskusje*, ed. M. Janion, M. Zielińska, Warszawa 1986, pp. 303–337. The notion of 'the dreamer' is a paraphrase of an expression from a letter of Zygmunt Krasiński to Delfina Potocka.

These memories fail to annihilate the dreamer; on the contrary, they have a saving power, by reminding him of his roots and the sources of his identity, thanks to which he can protect himself from despair and, paradoxically, is able to persist through "worries or toil,/ Or even fun" – that is, here and now, in the company of other people. Maybe the dawn shining down at him from the mountains (shining also, it seems, over his actual, real life?) is also a metaphor of a beautiful and salutary existential memory?[142] Thanks to this, the protagonist is more a living person than a dead one, and even looks the others in the eye, talking to them, and interacting with them, even though his soul is "lamenting".

The most famous poem of Mickiewicz's, the five-line [*I Shed Pure Springs of Tears* ...], vividly corresponds to the poem analysed above. It is usually (and not without a reason) interpreted through a biographical lens. We are encouraged to do so by the poet's use of pronouns ('I', 'my') which direct our gaze to the fate of the speaking subject and by the fact that old age is omitted from the stages of life enumerated here (we know that Mickiewicz was not yet close to experiencing that stage, when he was writing the poem). The now forty-year-old poet, staying in Switzerland, examines his life, idealising his childhood (not for the first time, since a similar move can be found at the beginning and end of his grand epic poem, *Pan Tadeusz*) and describing his youth in ambivalent terms. His youth is 'aloof', because it was marked with great dreams, dramatic love affairs, conspiracies, imprisonment and exile, and seems 'foolish', because it gave birth to his self-concept as a genius, supported by others, while he was somewhat feckless in his personal life.

Lastly, he is critical of his coming of age or maturity: a lost fatherland, difficult marriage, children whom he could barely support

142 The theme of memory within Polish Romanticism is elucidated by Krzysztof Trybuś in his *Pamięć romantyzmu. Studia nie tylko z przeszłości*, Poznań 2011. He refers mostly to: A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München 1999 and J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München 2005. A classic work about the phenomenon of memory and time in the European culture is P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris 2000.

financially. We may compare all of this to what he enjoyed at the time: fame, as the greatest Polish poet; the role of a national prophet; the status of an internationally-celebrated intellectual and a professorship at the Academy of Lausanne. Mickiewicz's personal and professional successes make one suspect that something might be wrong with the autobiographical character of this poem, if construed too narrowly. Perhaps, the author's suffering is after all an act, which fits ill with his public status, since Mickiewicz usually refrained from *minauderie*.

This makes a strictly autobiographical reading of the poem difficult (even if none of it wholly subverts such a reading). Rather, it leads into more universal regions, towards an interpretation in which the poem is seen as a micro-parable about the human fate, including Mickiewicz's own. From this perspective, the symbol of childhood is happiness and carelessness, while youth is represented by rebelliousness, sacrifice, and irrational behaviour. But why is the dominant feature of his coming of age failure? The poem does not suggest that failures are the only experience of this stage of life; rather, it emphasises how they are an inevitable part of it, regardless of successes or glory. This point is quite clear, and we understand it, because this is indeed a stage of life when we lose our loved ones, often irrevocably (and Mickiewicz lost many of them). We realise that every coin has two sides, and one can often be bitter. We come to see that we often mean well, but still do wrong, and that what we gain beyond all doubt is the awareness of our limits, of the coming of old age, behind which the last boundary of human existence awaits us.

'Tears' which open and close the poem were interpreted in various ways and it couldn't be otherwise, given their symbolic polyvalence. Jacek Brzozowski is inclined to see pessimism here, and considers the protagonist "merely a wreck, not a sailor, a wreck lost in the empty and sad ocean of his own tears."[143] Stefan Sawicki, on the other hand, emphasises the aspect of recalling what was lost, longing for the past, and argues that the tears are not a moment of weakness, but a "sign of the painful realization of the truth about himself"

143 Brzozowski, "Fragment lozański," p. 338.

and also a sign of "the purification which is always the beginning of a change".[144] This optimistic interpretation may be closer to the truth, even though we think that it is worth considering also the way of thinking which we found in another lyric, [*Above the Water Great and Clear* ...], namely, the acceptance of the passing reality. From this point of view, tears would be a sign of regret concerning what had passed away and, at the same time, the peaceful acceptance of the tragic transiency of life.

The two last Lausanne lyrics are no less intriguing, because they are unfinished and elude any unequivocal reading. [*Already as a Child in Our House* ...] may be interpreted in opposition to the idealised vision of "angelic, bucolic" childhood of the previously discussed poem. What is in the foreground here is an image of a "bad child". At the same time, it is a negative paraphrase of a nursery Polish prayer, "Angel of God, My Guardian".[145] Negative in the sense that, according to the speaking subject, he could never do for his family what he asked of his guardian angel in the popular nursery prayer, when he was a child. Especially, the Polish phrase which could be translated "always be my help" is transformed here into (literally): "I couldn't (ever) help (...) anyone". And it was not so, because he had malicious intentions ("I didn't want to bother anyone") or some emotional defects ("Although I loved them all"), but because of some indefinable fatalism. According to an interesting interpretation of Jacek Brzozowski, there is a certain Pascal-like tragic quality in this confession, because the poet reaches out to his "roots of disinheritance and loneliness" and he shows that

> from his childhood, that is, from the beginning and by nature, whether we want it or not, without our fault or even without our part, even against our intentions and efforts in the opposite direction, we are strangers among our own [that is, our neighbours], we

144 S. Sawicki, "'Wiersz-płacz'?," in: *Strona Lemanu*, p. 386.

145 "*Aniele Boży, stróżu mój*": "The angel of God, my guardian,/ Stand always by me./ Morning, evening, day, and night/Be always my help./ Protect my soul and my flesh,/ And lead me to the eternal life./ Amen."

> are trespassers in our own home [=in human family], and we are dispensable and useless.[146]

From such a perspective, Brzozowski also interprets another interrupted fragment, as a coherent Romantic fragment, put together of a few words, whose symbolic meaning is ambiguous:

> To fly away with the soul to a little leaf, like a butterfly, to look for a little house and a little nest there –

Why fly away? And why to a leaf, which is such a brittle foundation for any house, even a little one? Why those childlike diminutives in the Polish original, which bear such tremendous symbolic meaning ("*domku*": "a little house", "*gniazdeczka*": "a little nest")? Why this fairy-tale, sentimental tone? To escape and look for – but where from and where to? Zgorzelski finds in this fragment a complaint of loneliness and homelessness. Brzozowski, in a long and sophisticated discourse suggests that the fragment conceals an intellectual *summa* of the Lausanne lyrics, which tell a story of disinheritance, the fall of all things, of whatever "was a synonym of permanence and meaning". But it is also a story of the need to find a new place for a new beginning (hence the choice of a butterfly as a metaphor of a brittle, fleeting entity, but also pointing to the "primordial stage of life", its new beginning, and hence the childlike diminutives, alluding to the first stage of human life).

> On the other hand – writes Brzozowski – here we have, although in its traditional ('sentimental') form, the beginning of metaphysical valorization of the peripheral and little, which (...) is one of the most fundamental reactions of poets to the crisis of the world and the crisis of consciousness. We have to observe here that both the butterfly, and the house, are almost completely transient and only transiency, as we remember, is eternal and permanent, what means, among other things, that only this is true.[147]

146 Brzozowski, "Fragment lozański," p. 334. Parentheses are in the original text.
147 Ibidem, p. 340.

However, we can recall also the thought expressed by Mickiewicz in his Paris lecture and referred to earlier, namely, that the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly is the best of the ancient metaphors describing the transformation of the human soul from its primordial state to absolute perfection, which is impossible to reach without "liberation from the flesh", from the dominance of what is material and earthly. In light of this idea, we can treat the poetic fragment in question as a dream about the beginning of a new spiritual journey, leading towards the full perfection of the soul. We don't know what the second half of this sentence would sound like, let alone in the next sentences. The Lausanne lyrics are a micro-collection of a casually jotted down poems, more or less unfinished, intellectually ambiguous, but always intriguing and moving, and undoubtedly betraying a project of a poetic aesthetics different from that which we find in Polish Romanticism, including Mickiewicz himself. The last fragment is the least finished.

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The last of the poems in this anthology were written after Mickiewicz moved back from Lausanne to Paris (the autumn of 1840), in the first half of the 1840s and they are closely linked to a new phase of his life. This new phase is marked not only by his lectures in the Collège de France, but also in his engagement with developing a religious movement, which was started by Andrzej Towiański (1799–1878), who came from Lithuania to France and in whom Mickiewicz saw "the Master", a prophet of the new era. During the first half of the 1840s, Towiański's followers in Paris included eminent poets such as Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849) and Seweryn Goszczyński (1801–1876).[148] The majority of Polish emigrants in Paris considered them

148 There are numerous studies on Towiański, Towianism and the metaphysical-religious views of this group, as well as on Mickiewicz's involvement in it. See Sikora, *Posłannicy słowa*; idem, *Towiański i rozterki romantyzmu*, Warszawa 1984; Konrad Górski, *Mickiewicz – Towiański,* Warszawa 1986; Alina Witkowska, *Towiańczycy*, Warszawa 1989; Dorota Siwicka, *Ton i bicz. Mickiewicz wśród towiańczyków*, Wrocław 1990; Ewa Hoffmann-Piotrowska, *Mickiewicz – towiańczyk. Studium myśli*, Warszawa 2004.

a cult on the margins of the Catholic Church, and organised campaigns against them – especially against Mickiewicz. He gave up poetry almost completely at this time. After his death only a couple of fragments were found in his personal papers. Some of them were closer to *Sentences and Remarks*, while some to the Lausanne lyrics.

One of the preserved sheets of paper contained two fragments which Mickiewicz transcribed from an original manuscript and he was unable to decipher them in their entirety. Those are [*Tree*] and [*To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …*] Łukasiewicz had perhaps the deepest insight into those two fragments: he argues, quite rightly, that they should be read together, despite their differences, in the context of the Towiański circle's religious project. Łukasiewicz observes that the motif of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, which was popular in this circle, and allegedly corresponds to constant changes in Nature, is present in both of those fragments.[149]

Indeed, this is one way to read a hidden meaning in the description of a (presumably) old tree moved by the wind that is depicted in one of the fragments, in a lyric-symbolic fashion. Someone who endorses transmigration can ask himself what form that tree will take after its transformation, because the 'bug', present in the first line, is seen in certain cultures as a symbol of regeneration and recovery. Perhaps, from the point of view of the narrator, the tree will become a bug, to transform into something new and better in the chain of being. Jacek Soplica, one of the protagonists of *Pan Tadeusz*, was a nobleman who converted from an anarchist and a killer into a friar who anonymously and with great devotion served his fatherland; the name he took was "Robak" ("Bug" or "Worm"). What the tree is to become we do not know, just as we are not sure whether this is the best path to take in interpreting this fragment. Perhaps, we can see in this poetic particle merely a chain of associations, provoked by the sight of a tree moving in the wind with the whole rich profusion of its leaves, which reminds the witness variously of a baby in a

149 "This is a piece on a moment just before reincarnation, before embodiment. (…) The whole tree is to be transformed into a bug. There is a potentiality of that in the contemplated tree. And it is seen by the trained bodily-spiritual eye of the poet." (Łukasiewicz, *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza*, pp. 163–4).

crib, a caterpillar in motion, and a snake. That is true that all those associations have something to do with the symbol of beginning or transformation.

In the second fragment, the narrator is no longer a passive witness, but an active explorer of the cosmic order of Nature, whose task is to understand the mystery hidden in the monotonous, seemingly constant sound of water, and wind, but he wants to come close to the essence of those archetypal elements, in the most direct way possible ("To give myself to wind" – "To dive in the womb of a river"). Hearing and sight, the ability to look and to listen perform the important role in this experience ("He that hath ears to hear, let him hear": Mk 4:9). The reflections of Łukasiewicz conclude the reading of those strangely mysterious fragments:

> The poem *Tree* concerns a reincarnation of someone else, seen from without by the eye of the soul, that is, by vision that is different, deeper than the physical sight. The subject remains outside and can only suspect, feel, sympathise. *To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …* on the other hand, speaks, as it seems, about the inner work of self-transformation. "To listen", "to learn", "to give myself to wind", "counting every sound", all those infinitives can be understood (just like those in *Above the Water Great and Clear …*) as postulates, a chain of commandments, referring to the future, not far from the present. We should, to use an image preferred by Towiański's followers, "climb the ladder" with our senses in order to enter the depth of our soul and the depth of water, where we encounter the eye of a fish. It is the eye of another, but also our own eye, a transcendental eye, reduced in the phenomenological sense of reduction. Our own inside and the inside of water are bound by a link stronger than a metaphor. They are true unity.[150]

150 Ibidem, p. 166. With similar sophistication the scholar explains the meaning of the metaphor of the wind: "Mickiewicz has been a lover and admirer of flying for a long time. He postulates, commands, asserts: 'To give myself to wind, which flies through unknown paths', which means accidental winds, whose force and direction can neither be predicted nor controlled. However, it's not enough to be 'carried', it is, as it were, only a precondition. This also requires concentration, and deep listening. Without such attentive listening one would not be able to 'count every sound', and thanks to that, to know the truth about them, and the truth expressed by them. To learn that it is not accident that rules them, that they are not a part of some chaos, but, on the

The couplet [*Just Like a Tree ...*] is similar to the *Sentences and Remarks* in its gnomic character and its picturesque intellectual synthesis, which is based on a simile:

> Just like a tree before it gives its fruit to seeds,
> My whole life gathers at the centre: in my breast.

When does the whole (past?) life concentrate in the breast, or in the heart? This seems to be a moment of powerful inner recollection, as experienced by someone who searches for spiritual fullness and examines his whole past existence (his "whole life") while standing on the threshold of regeneration, rebirth, great transformation. This transformation, like a tree that is going to bear fruit, will also bear fruit in terms of new life, and the fullness of knowledge, which is the seed from which a new tree will grow and a new fruit. The theme of a great inner transformation, leading to the fullness of spiritual knowledge, strongly connects the Lausanne lyrics to the later fragments.[151]

The two last works of our anthology were written in the autumn of 1842 and their first audience were the Towiański circle in Paris, whose leader became Mickiewicz himself, after Towiański was exiled from France. Both pieces have a prose form, but have been traditionally placed among Mickiewicz's lyrics, being rooted in the biblical tradition by their linguistic form and their grave, scriptural style. In both of these the poet used a daring device (from a doctrinal point of view at least) in granting them the form of a monologue by the most important figures of Christianity: Christ and his Mother. What is more, the second piece, *The Words of the Virgin*, is considered one of Mickiewicz's finest renderings of a mystical vision. *The Words of Christ*, on the other hand, seems somewhat less appreciated by scholars, who see in it a kind of a speech addressed to "a collective Man, mankind", where straightforward admonitions predominate

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contrary, that their motion is regular, like a gyre. Submitting to those winds, we submit only seemingly to accident, but in fact we are in the service of the highest cosmic order. We need to feel into the 'thought' of the wind and learn its grammar in order to serve consciously and beneficially." (ibidem, p. 167).

151 It is worth noticing that the motif of the tree developing out of the divine seed was one of the favourite of Böhme (e.g. *Aurora* 3, 111; 4, 30–33; 7, 16).

and have little to do with the visionary genre. What is significant, however, is the attempt to imitate the Gospel parables stylistically. The image of Christ which emerges from the piece is doctrinally coherent and more or less in accord with Christian orthodoxy. Its main feature is the fatherly love of Christ towards mankind (His 'people-child'). We are reminded of His blood sacrifice and His suffering for the salvation of the world.

A 'Towianistic' element here is the language of warfare, and even a certain militarization of style. Christ is a "comrade in arms", "the old warrior", and he leads his army to war with evil, desiring to arm his faithful spiritually in order to enable them to reveal the truths of the Gospel to the world anew. According to the poet Julian Przyboś,

> *The Words of Christ* are not far, both in terms of their content and their style, from the parables of *The Books of the Nation and Pilgrimage*; thus they add little to Mickiewicz's work. *The Words of the Virgin*, however, is an extraordinary prose poem, a vision revealing one of the most powerful expressions of feeling and will in Mickiewicz's poetry. It is about the same impulse which make the Improvisation rise on high.[152]

The Words of the Virgin open with a reminder of the Jewish origin of Mary, her love for Israel and her participation in the pain of her whole nation ("I lived with Israel, and in Israel with my entire being, with my bridegroom and in my bridegroom"). Without her love for Israel, there would be no Annunciation, or the birth of her Son and her love for the whole world ("And I have told the whole world my entire love with the single Word of the Lord which became flesh. Since then I have lived in my Son and by my Son"). This line of thought has too often been overlooked by scholars, and deserves closer attention. There is no charge of betrayal on the part of Israel against her Son and God; therefore, the Chosen People lose nothing of their chosen status in the eyes of the Virgin (and we know that the charge of betraying Jesus remained popular among anti-Judaists). Mickiewicz, both in his Paris lectures of that time, and in his Towianistic debates, claimed that the chosen status of Israel

152 Przyboś, *Czytając Mickiewicza*, p. 242.

remains intact, and that the Israelites are still the People of the Book; he emphasised the necessity of the covenant between the national spirits of Israel, Poland, and France. This covenant was to be a key element in restoring moral order to the world, and the political domain.[153] *The Words of the Virgin* cohere with this way of thinking. The essence of the poem has been described (not without a certain pathos) by Zgorzelski:

> Those concise, laconic sentences astound us with their absolutely extraordinary wealth of imagery, on the global scale, when it comes to inspired visions. The rhythmical gravity of those solemn lines, as if in a mystical enthusiasm flying up to the heavens, speaks about a reality extended between Heaven and the Earth, in the spheres of Eternity beyond all space. The verses speak with images of sublime metaphors and symbols about the mystery of Incarnation. They introduce the symbol of flames, sparks, summer nights, lightning, darkness dazzled with rays of light, the splendor of the morning star. (…) Let us notice the restraint of diction, maintained in the tone of calm report, avoiding any pathetic raising of the voice.[154]

Let us add to that that there are also warfare metaphors here, so characteristic to Towianism, because evil in this narrative is fought with determination and full resolve, albeit by means of a loving assent to the good ("But lightnings began to cut through my breast like through a hot day, and my heart became full of power, full of thunders; my brilliance scourges malicious darkness; carried by love I stamp on evil and I crush it at the bottom of Hell").

The metaphysical current in Mickiewicz's poetry was inaugurated by the *Hymn on the Feast of Annunciation* (December 1820). Twenty years later, the poet who barely practised his Catholic faith, in one of his last (if not the last) visions recorded on paper, invoked once more the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the mystery of the

153 The question of Jews in the thought and work of Mickiewicz, also in his Parisian lectures, has been studied exhaustively. One may particularly recommend Maria Janion, *Bohater, spisek, śmierć. Wykłady żydowskie*, Warszawa 2009 and Andrzej Fabianowski, *Mickiewicz i świat żydowski. Studium z aneksami*, Warszawa 2018.

154 Zgorzelski, *Wstęp*, p. CXVII.

Incarnation (in a double way, because with his voice he willfully incarnated the speech of the Mother of Christ in his words). Thus he comes full, mystical circle in terms of his own poetic work.

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Metaphysical themes permeate the whole of Mickiewicz's work, and also play an important role at every stage of the development of his lyric poetry. The beginning of this development is marked by an attempt to investigate elusive eschatological questions about the relationships between the living and the dead, as well as the phenomenon of Annunciation. Both of those keep recurring in Mickiewicz's later poems. With the passage of time, the range of themes expands. Throughout the emigration period the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil moves to the foreground along, with an oscillation between pride and humility, faith and reason, and the incapacity (or reluctance) to comprehend the divine plan of creation and the meaning of mercy, with respect to God's love for Man, and the sacrifice of the Cross. The power of God's love is present at all stages of Mickiewicz's creative work. There is also the attempt to fathom the phenomenon of an absolute devotion and self-giving to God, to the point of immersing oneself in the mystical, contemplative life, which both fascinates the poet and makes him tremble with fear. Also, an issue long puzzling to Mickiewicz, namely, the partial power of Man over his God and the responsibility for the suffering inflicted on Him, even though it mingles with more rebellious tones, as with the desire to wrest from God the mystery of His being.

Man, the protagonist of those poems, is often torn between soul and body, good and the lack thereof, loneliness (or the incompleteness of human relations) and the memory of the past, which brings some kind of consolation. He demands from himself recurring examinations of conscience, which always result in harsh and painful judgments as opposed to self-serving ones, aimed at facile justifications. He is aware of his pride and lack of humility, but, at the same time, he tries to overcome those vices in himself. Imperfect, he increasingly strives for spiritual perfection. He attains it only once,

in an extraordinary journey of the soul to the other world and to God where, in symbiosis with Him, he becomes a radiant ray and, at the same time, the all-seeing pupil of an eye. The price for this journey seems to be leaving the flesh behind and moving beyond the temporal realm.

In this last period of his work, the Lausanne phase, Mickiewicz depicts his protagonist as someone who increasingly feels the need to find spiritual order, detachment from the turmoil of the world, an inner rebirth, a great transformation, and the acceptance of the transient nature of life. Those aspects still remain vivid, as it seems, in the preserved fragments from the Towianist period (after 1841), even though we can hear a new tone in them, a call for active, metaphorically war-like fight with the forces of evil. In those poems, Mickiewicz uses grand images of time and space, from otherworldly and cosmic vistas, placed in everlasting time, to the present moment, the here and now, and a tiny leaf to which he wants to escape with his soul. With typical mastery he employs, especially in visionary poems, the mystical paradox, through which he tries to express the inexpressible, as the mystics of different denominations and religions have been trying to do for centuries. We ought to remember that in the last phase of his creative life the poet changed his methods of depiction, moving the centre of gravity away from an elaborate, visually rich, associative sentence towards a more economical language, and towards the use of single, key, symbolically ambiguous words, which lend the possibility of reaching some existential-metaphysical message only through laborious interpretation.

This is a poetry steeped in cultural and religious dialogue: the poet looks for inspiration in the Bible (of course), but also in highly diverse realms of thought, from Plato and Aristotle, through St Augustine, the Cappadocian Fathers, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Dante and the mystical and theosophic tradition of Christianity, not to mention contemporary philosophy, which he judges very harshly (positioning himself as the opponent of Hegel and his speculative metaphysics). In his mature period, Mickiewicz converses increasingly with Christian mystics, especially, with Böhme, but also Angelus Silesius, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, and Baader, allowing

hints of his critical attitude towards theological dogmatism and the contemporary ecclesiastic guardians of doctrinal purity.

This counts as further proof that Mickiewicz was looking for spiritual knowledge (or *gnosis*) in various religious sources, among diverse denominations and philosophical schools, and that he was favourably inclined towards the idea of a *sui generis* religious syncretism within the Christian tradition, whilst remaining open to various sources of faith. The protagonists of his poems, just like the author himself, look above all things for a personal, intimate, living relationship with God, beyond doctrinal rigors. In the mature period of his development, Mickiewicz, like the protagonists of his lyric verses, searches tirelessly, thus betraying a spiritual restlessness and metaphysical hunger, along with the need to either satisfy it or, at least, soothe it.

2. Translating Mickiewicz: Inspiration, Poetry, Philosophy

2.1 *What is Poetry?*

In reflecting on translation, two fundamental questions emerge. First, what are we translating: what is the nature of the text? Second, for whom is the translation intended, and what therefore is its purpose? Let us begin with some thoughts on the enormous issue of what Mickiewicz's poetry is in general, as well as what his metaphysical poetry might be in particular. Let us begin from how he and his contemporaries understood these questions.

Alexander Pushkin, the greatest Russian poet of the nineteenth century, met Mickiewicz during his stay in Russia (1824–1829). Three years before the end of his short life, he composed a poem about Mickiewicz and their friendship, where he says:[155]

155 A poem with the *incipit On mezhdu nami zhil …* (1834). "*On vdokhnoven byl svyshe /I s vysoka vziral na zhizn'*". English translation by Wacław Lednicki (Preface to *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, ed. W. Lednicki, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1956, p. vii).

> He was inspired from above
> And looked upon life from on high.

A key notion here is, of course, that of inspiration. It is an old idea, as old as poetry itself perhaps (or the recorded poetry of Western civilisation at least). The *Iliad,* composed in the eighth century BC, but testifying to a preexisting tradition of oral epic poetry that is hidden in the dark for us (or in silence, rather), begins with a prayer to a goddess ("Goddess, sing of the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus …"). In this first line of Western poetry, the goddess (gr. *thea*) is not named; in the second, later epic poem, the *Odyssey*, it is called upon as a "Muse" (gr. *mousa*), also in the first line.

Hesiod (c. 750–650 BC) was the first poet in the Western literature who openly claimed that his poetry begins with a visitation with the Muses in a long, beautiful introduction to his *Theogony*:

> From the Heliconian Muses let us begin to sing, who hold the great and holy mount of Helicon, and dance on soft feet about the deep-blue spring and the altar of the almighty son of Cronos, and, when they have washed their tender bodies in Permessus or in the Horse's Spring or Olmeius, make their fair, lovely dances upon highest Helicon and move with vigorous feet. (…) And one day they taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me – the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis: "Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things." So said the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy laurel, a marvellous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things that were aforetime; and they bade me sing of the race of the blessed gods that are eternally, but ever to sing of themselves both first and last.[156]

Poetry is inspired, and it is clearly inspired "from above", since the Muses represent the sources of human creativity, which are beyond

156 Hesiod, *Theogonia* 1–34. English translation by H.G. Evelyn-White in: *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, Cambridge, MA – London 1914.

ordinary faculties and capacities. The earliest poets of our tradition acknowledge that their songs come from something higher and more powerful than their own self.

Pushkin, talking about Mickiewicz, refrains from naming this source, even though he curiously refers to it twice in the quoted two lines synonymously as: "*svyshe*" and "*s vysoka*". The Russian genius was certain that Mickiewicz's poetry came from some higher realm, that it wasn't just the creation of Mickiewicz's ordinary self. The third key element that appears in those two lines is that Pushkin seems to suggest that Mickiewicz was capable of writing poetry which was "from above" somehow (only?) because he looked on life "from on high", from that place, whence his poetry also came to him. He was capable of some kind of vision, and that is why he could create.

Mickiewicz reciprocates what Pushkin said about him in his own lectures at the Collège de France, six years after his friend died. In the interim, history had separated them: Pushkin wrote three poems glorifying Russian imperialism and the defeat of Poland in the November Uprising;[157] Mickiewicz responded to these in the *Passages* to *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, by suggesting (without naming any names) that Pushkin had sold his soul to the Tsar in the pursuit of his worldly career. But two years after that, Pushkin wrote the poem quoted above, *He lived among us …*, and in the meantime continued his dialogue with his (former?) friend by working on one of his greatest masterpieces, the *Bronze Horseman*, which was published only after his death.[158] After Pushkin was shot by d'Anthès and died of his wounds in 1837, Mickiewicz wrote an obituary for *Le Globe*, entitled *Pushkin and the Literary Movement in Russia*, and signed it: "A Friend of Pushkin".[159] In the obituary, Mickiewicz rises

157 Those three poems were called by Wacław Lednicki Pushkin's "anti-Polish trilogy" (W. Lednicki, *Aleksander Puszkin. Studia*, Kraków 1926, p. 36).

158 See the exquisite study by Lednicki contained in A. Puszkin, *Jeździec miedziany. Opowieść petersburska*, tr. J. Tuwim, Warszawa 1931.

159 The original title was *Pouchkine et le mouvement litteraire en Russie*. The article appeared on 25 May 1837, in the first issue of *Le Globe, Revue des arts, des sciences et des lettres*. For the English translation see: Megan Dixon, "A Translation of a Primary Text on Alexander Pushkin by Adam Mickiewicz", *Pushkin Review* 4 (2001) 133–42.

above the national hostilities and Pushkin's support of the oppressive, imperialistic regime, and returns the favour, to a certain extent, by saying about his friend: "what was good in him came from the depths of his heart".

Are the depths of the heart the same realm as "the above" which Pushkin writes about three years earlier? Not entirely, perhaps. Six years later, Mickiewicz will return to the question of Pushkin, inspiration, and the nature of poetry in the third course of his lectures in Paris on Slavic literatures. He will grant Pushkin inspiration and vision from above, but only in a limited way. In a highly instructive interpretation of Pushkin's poem *Prophet* (*Prorok*, 1826), Mickiewicz claims:

> only there he rises to the same heights as the anonymous poet whose introduction we have just cited.[160] Pushkin took all the expressions used in this beautiful poem from Sacred Scripture. He believes that in order to sing properly (and it is universally accepted that the work of a poet should be described as *singing*), in order to be a poet, one has to experience inner transformation. He declares – in the words of Hebrew poets – that an angel ripped his heart from his breast, that he cleansed his mouth by laying upon it a burning coal, and that only then he had the power to read in the clouds and to hear the steps of a creature living at the bottom of the sea. It is a beginning of a new era in Pushkin's life. However, he didn't have the strength to realise that premonition. He lacked courage to adjust all his inner life and literary work to those sublime ideas. Thus, this poem wanders among his other works as something entirely distinct, something, indeed, higher whose fates are unknown. He composed it after the conspiracy of 1825 was discovered.[161] The extraordinary spiritual state in which he composed the poem lasted only for a couple of days, and from this moment his moral fall begins. He will, undoubtedly, remain an unequalled artist, but will never again create anything equal to this poem. He even seems to have moved backwards after this.[162]

Here we have a fundamental distinction, to which we will return later, between great, excellent, unequalled poetry (or art in general)

160 Mickiewicz speaks here about Zygmunt Krasiński and his play *Undivine Comedy*, published anonymously in 1835.

161 Mickiewicz means here the Decembrists' revolt.

162 Course III, Lecture III (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła, t. X*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 30–31).

on the one hand, and a truly inspired poetry which Mickiewicz calls (shockingly in fact, when we think about it) "singing properly" or simply "being a poet". It almost seems as if there were for him two kinds of poetry, co-existing with each other, bearing the same name, but being essentially different in nature. According to Mickiewicz, true poetry, if we may refer to it thus, or true singing, has to stem from a particular inner experience, from some extraordinary state of consciousness or spiritual disposition. It seems to be what Pushkin meant by saying that Mickiewicz was not only inspired "from above" as a poet, but also looking at life "from on high". For Mickiewicz, there is no first without the latter; he pronounces this astonishing, almost arrogant judgment on his dear friend – one of the geniuses of poetry – concluding that Pushkin had this experience only once, and that only one of his poems was born of it. The rest is just brilliant, outstanding, unequalled poetry.

In the same lecture, Mickiewicz clearly indicates the ancient sources of his understanding of poetry. He says that we should follow Plato whose philosophy was based on revelation and inspiration, and links this to Plato's doctrine of the eternal Forms, or Ideas (or "innate ideas" as Mickiewicz calls them, following the fashion of his time).[163] He refers to Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, saying that when the soul sees sensible beauty, it awakens to the vision of eternal beauty by remembering what it saw before entering the body.[164] In his short early dialogue *Ion*, Plato claimed that poets don't create poetry, but rather are possessed by a deity, and what they say in this state of consciousness doesn't come from them, but from the deity. As a result, in their ordinary state of mind, they don't really know what they are talking about and we should treat them as experts neither on their own poetry, nor on any other subject, for that matter. In *Phaedrus*, Plato is less ironic in a famous passage where Socrates claims that madness (gr. *mania*) is the best gift that we receive from

163 See e.g. J. de Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues. Or Conversations on the Temporal Government of Providence*, tr. R.A. Lebrun, Montreal – London 1993, pp. 59, 233; Jacobi, *David Hume on Faith*, in: *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 317–18.

164 Ibidem, p. 26.

the gods, and that is better than reason.[165] He then discusses four kinds of divine madness: the prophetic madness of Apollo; the religious, purificatory madness of Dionysus; the poetic madness of the Muses; and the love madness of Eros.

The context here suggests, quite unambiguously, that Plato believed true poetry to flow from a special state of consciousness, which is akin to typical religious phenomena of his culture such as the prophetic trances of the Pythia (Apollo's priestess at the Delphi Oracle) or the spiritual frenzy of the Maenads during Dionysian mysteries. Further, the poetic state is in fact a possession in the sense of the Greek *enthousiasmos* (literally: "having a god inside"), where a divine being takes complete control over human faculties and expresses himself through a living human. Mickiewicz claims in his lectures not only that poetry (or art in general) can come from those two completely different sources (divine or purely human, that is), but also that philosophy too may originate from experience of the divine, or else from the exercise of merely human faculties of reason and imagination. He makes a distinction between the original, revealed, inspired philosophy which comes from Pythagoras and Plato[166] on the one hand, and scholastic philosophy, which comes from Aristotle, and finds its most recent and significant expression in Hegel.[167] Placing himself in the intellectual current which was opposed to the speculative character of German Idealism, whose greatest proponent was Jacobi, Mickiewicz scorns those philosophers

165 See *Phaedrus* 244a–245c.

166 Course IV, Lecture II and VI; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła, t. XI*, p. 22 and 64.

167 Course, IV, Lecture XXII; ibidem, p. 280. The kinship between the philosophy of the Pythagoreans and that of Plato had been already emphasised by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*. In Mickiewicz's day, when Neoplatonism was still largely seen in a disparaging light (the very term, invented in the eighteenth century, was pejorative), Pythagoras and Plato were still seen as the greatest of the religious or mystical ancient philosophers. S. Coleridge often juxtaposes them in his philosophical lectures, for instance: "Plato, with Pythagoras before him, had conceived that the phenomenon or outward appearance, all that we call things or matter, is but as it were a language by which the invisible (that which is not the object of our sense) communicates its existence to our finite beings." (S.T. Coleridge, *The Philosophical Lectures*, ed. K. Coburn, London 1949, p. 187).

"who suppose that it is enough to reason and debate in order to find the truth; philosophy done in such a way is merely, we repeat, an imitation or rather a falsification of revelation."[168]

He also refers to a contemporary Polish thinker, Count August Cieszkowski, who had a mystical experience whilst on board a boat in Venice, in which he intuitively saw his entire philosophical system; Mickiewicz observes that it would prove beneficial for Cieszkowski's philosophical output if he could manage to remain in that spiritual state.[169] Then his philosophy would have clearly remained 'inspired'. Mickiewicz's appreciation of Schelling over Hegel seems to be closely connected to the first's emphasis on *die intellektuelle Anschaung* ("intellectual intuition"), which the Polish poet identifies with a sort of contemplative vision or mystical intuition. And rightly so, when it comes to the later phases of Schelling's ever-evolving thought, since he himself says in his Erlangen lectures about *die intellektuelle Anschaung*: "More appropriately, we could use the term ecstasy for this relation."[170] Already in his famous 1809 preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which destroyed the close friendship between Hegel and Schelling, the former had mocked the latter, alongside all those who, instead of using reason and its concepts, advocated some kind of "intuition" or "feeling" as the way to the truth of reality.[171] But when Schelling speaks of intuition as ecstasy, he is already much more of a Christian theosophist than a classical German idealist, thanks to the influence of Franz von Baader, who introduced him to Meister Eckhart and Jacob Böhme. Schelling certainly seemed to Mickiewicz to be a Christian, unlike Hegel who, according to the Polish poet, only pretended to be one.[172]

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168 Course III, Lecture II; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła, t. X*, p. 19.

169 Course III, Lecture XXII; ibidem, p. 280.

170 F. Schelling, *Initia philosophiae universe. Erlangen Vorslesungen 1820–1821*. English translation: *On the Nature of Philosophy as Science*, tr. M. Weigelt, in: *German Idealist Philosophy*, ed. R. Bubner, London 1997, pp. 209–243. Quotation on p. 228.

171 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller, Oxford 1977, p. 4. See the commentary on *The Romantic*.

172 Course III, Lecture XVII; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła, t. X*, p. 227.

For Mickiewicz, this intuition or vision is not only about having a brief flash of inspiration, which he calls "a gift, which is nothing but revelation",[173] but about learning to live in that state all the time. If the experience of inspiration is a kind of intuitive, direct vision which is the only way to create true poetry, true art and true philosophy – and, as Mickiewicz increasingly believed from the 1830s, the only way to live a true, meaningful and creative life, even if one is not an artist in the typical sense – we should ask what it is a vision of: what is being envisioned? What is experienced in that state, without which we may only aspire to become an unequalled artist, like Pushkin or (perhaps) an unequalled academic philosopher like Hegel – unequalled, but still lacking something which, in Mickiewicz's eyes, was the only thing worth living for?

When he comments on Pushkin's poem *Chern'*,[174] which begins with a characteristic Latin expression *procul este, profani!* ("away, profaners!"), Mickiewicz claims, not that it reached the heights of *Prophecy*, but that it was nearly there, because it ascends towards becoming a prayer. That is an interesting comment in itself, since Mickiewicz implicitly suggests that true poetry is prayer. Or not so implicitly, since he quotes two of his compatriots: one, his late friend, the philosopher-poet Stefan Garczyński, claimed that "our soul is a prayer"; the other, Zygmunt Krasiński concluded that "prayer is the realisation of divine inspiration".[175] Mickiewicz is, of course, speaking about prayer in a somewhat mystical sense, that is, not about "prayers" as external, verbal utterances, but as a spiritual state which (at least ideally) should be the source of those utterances or rituals. His understanding follows a classical definition by St John of Damascus: "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God".[176]

Mickiewicz is speaking here from the tradition of Christian Platonism and, more specifically, St Augustine, according to whom

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173 Course III, Lecture II; ibidem, p. 21.

174 The *Mob* or the *Crowd*, first published in 1828. Later (1836) published with a changed title: *The Poet and the crowd* (*Poet i tolpa*).

175 Course III, Lecture III; ibidem, p. 33.

176 St John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* III.24. English translation by E.W. Watson and L. Pullan: *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 9.

the knowledge of the truth and of the moral good can be achieved only by the contemplation of God, because it is in God's light that the eternal Ideas may be seen. Mickiewicz gives an etymology of the Latin *intuitio*, by saying that it comes from *intus itio*, "going within": "The more deeply a man enters in his own essence, the more truths he can take from there, because he approaches that centre by means of which we experience God."[177] This is a variant of Augustine's famous "Don't go outside of yourself, return to yourself: the truth dwells in the interior man".[178] In another lecture Mickiewicz asserts that in order to achieve the level of the certain knowledge of the truth and the moral law it is necessary to experience a lifting up of our spirit to God.[179]

But Mickiewicz is also much more specific with respect to how this experience of God's light – the light in which we contemplate the eternal Platonic Ideas – is the source of true poetry or art, and not of, for example, philosophy or practical life. The first aspect of that poetic experience, if we may call it so, is that of Nature. Commenting on Derzhavin's *Ode to God*, Mickiewicz says:

> He is not a national poet here at all, since the Slavic people have a much more direct feeling of God. For this people the whole world is alive: these people make trees, rocks, and elements speak, attributing to them some kind of immortal soul; and they believe that they are united to the Godhead, unceasingly, always moved by the hand of God.[180]

Mickiewicz here provides a rather interesting interpretation of what was considered a Pagan worldview in the early nineteenth century. This view was profoundly influenced by a famous poem of Friedrich Schiller, *The Gods of Greece* (*Die Götter Griechenlands*), whose twelfth stanza[181] reads:

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177 Course III, Lecture XXII; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, p. 279.

178 Augustine, *De vera religione* 39.72.

179 Course III, Lecture XXII; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, p. 291.

180 Course II, Lecture XII, Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, p. 166.

181 This is the twelfth stanza in the shorter 1788 version. In the unabridged version of the poem it is the nineteenth one.

Art thou, fair world, no more?
Return, thou virgin-bloom on Nature's face;
Ah, only on the minstrel's magic shore,
Can we the footstep of sweet fable trace!
The meadows mourn for the old hallowing life;
Vainly we search the earth of gods bereft;
Where once the warm and living shapes were rife,
Shadows alone are left![182]

Later, Novalis (F. von Hardenberg, 1772–1801) will also nostalgically describe that primeval state of human consciousness: "Ocean's dusky, green abyss was the lap of a goddess. In the crystal grottos revelled a wanton folk. Rivers, trees, flowers, and beasts had human wits. Sweeter tasted the wine, poured out by Youth impersonated; a god was in the grape-clusters; a loving, motherly goddess upgrew in the full golden sheaves." The advent of modernity and the Enlightenment killed the life of the world and imprisoned it: "The gods vanished with their retinue. Nature stood alone and lifeless. Dry Number and rigid Measure bound her with iron chains. As into dust and air the priceless blossoms of life fell away in words obscure. Gone was wonder-working Faith, and its all-transforming, all-uniting angel-comrade, the Imagination."[183]

Mickiewicz also speaks about an experience of the whole world as alive and "full of gods", to use the phrase first attributed to the sixth-century BC Greek philosopher, Thales of Miletus,[184] but unlike Schiller he does not mourn its irretrievable loss. Rather, he emphasises that this is how the world still looks like to the one who is inspired. However, unlike Schiller or Hölderlin, Mickiewicz is not really inclined towards a Pagan, polytheistic understanding of this experience, in which trees or rocks are, in some sense, gods or divine powers. He develops a metaphysical interpretation, according to which they are perceived as being alive and possessing a soul,

182 See *The Poems of Schiller*, tr. E.A. Bowring, London 1874.

183 Novalis, *Hymns to the Night* V, tr. G. MacDonald, published in: G. MacDonald, *Rampolli*, London 1897. On the importance of *Die Götter Griechenlands* for Novalis see Pfau, "Religion," p. 749. As Pfau puts it, the Enlightenment for Novalis is an interregnum between the Pagan gods and the return of Christ.

184 Fr. A22.

because they are united with God and moved by Him. God is present in the world, and the Pagan mistake was precisely to interpret His presence as the presence of many gods rather than the One. The experience, however, is virtually the same.

For Mickiewicz God is present in the things of this world and moves them through the mediation of various spirits, which is a traditional Christian Platonic view,[185] which he also found in his contemporary readings of Baader or Maistre, where the order of the visible world is merely an image of the deeper, invisible order of the kingdom of spirits.[186] Maistre points out that "I have read millions of witticisms about the ignorance of the ancients *who saw spirits everywhere*: it seems to me that we are much more foolish in never seeing them anywhere."[187] He finds a remedy not in the return to Paganism, as with some of the early German Romantics, but in a Platonic interpretation of a saying from the *Letter to Hebrews*, which in the Vulgate reads: "we understand through faith that the world was prepared by the Word of God in such a way that the visible things might be made from the invisible ones" (Heb 11:3).[188]

185 St Gregory of Nazianzus describes this mediating function and the presence of spirits in the world beautifully: "So strongly do they bear the shape and imprint of God's beauty, that they become in their turn lights, able to give light to others by transmitting the stream that flows from the primal light of God. As ministers of the divine will, powerful with inborn and acquired strength, they range over the universe." (*Second Theological Oration* [*Oratio* 28] 31; English translation by F. Williams, L. Wickham in: St Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, New York 2002). And St Augustine: "For it is blasphemy to believe or to say (even before it can be understood) that any other than God is creator of any nature, be it never so small and mortal. And as for the angels, whom those Platonists prefer to call gods, although they do, so far as they are permitted and commissioned, aid in the production of the things around us, yet not on that account are we to call them creators, any more than we call gardeners the creators of fruits and trees." (*On the City of God* XII.24; English translation by Marcus Dods, in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series I, Vol. 2.)

186 F. von Baader, *Fermenta cognitionis* I.34, Berlin 1822–1825, pp. 69–79; J. de Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, p. 135, n. v, pp. 147 and 296.

187 Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, p. 133.

188 In the Vulgate: *fide intellegimus aptata esse saecula verbo Dei ut ex invisibilibus visibilia fierent.* Maistre turns this into a great, ancient maxim: "This world is a system of invisible things visibly manifested" (ibidem, p. 296).

In quite a similar vein, Gustaw says in *Forefathers' Eve*, Part IV, protesting against the Priest's rational, "enlightened" attempt to ban the ancient ritual of Forefathers' Eve:

> So are there no spirits? Is this world without a soul?
> It lives, but it lives only like a naked skeleton
> Which a physician can set in motion through some hidden motor spring?
> Or is it something like an enormous clock which moves by the impetus of gravity?
> But you have no clue who hung the pendula!
> Reason teaches you about springs and circles,
> But you cannot see the hand and the key!
> If the earthly veil fell for a while from your eyes,
> You would see around you more than one life,
> Setting in motion the dead bulk of the world.[189]

Unlike Baader, who avoids references to ancient and mediaeval sources, emphasising instead the modern theosophy of Böhme and Saint-Martin, Maistre is at pains to place his Platonism within a long metaphysical tradition. That is why he suggests that it is the angels who move the material world, and not dead, mechanical laws; in a footnote, he quotes St Thomas Aquinas: "Every moving thing [comes] from an unmoving principle".[190] In fact, this traditional belief that inside and behind all the things of this world there are not Pagan gods, but God's angels, was summarised by Aquinas in a much more explicit way in his *Summa Theologiae*, where he says: "in this way, all corporeal things are governed [by God] through the angels; this position is held not only by the saintly Doctors, but also by all philosophers who have claimed that incorporeal substances exist."[191] This thought is depicted in detail in Dante's *Comedy*, where

189 Here we are not following Kraszewski's translation, which omits metaphysically significant details of this passage for the sake of metre and rhyme. See Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve*).

190 *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 44, no. 2 and 47, no. 6. Maistre identifies this teaching with that of Nicolas Malebranche whom he considers as "the Christian Plato" (see Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, p. 296, note 16).

191 *ita omnia corporalia reguntur per Angelos et hoc non solum a sanctis doctoribus ponitur, sed etiam ab omnibus philosophis qui incorporeas substantias posuerunt* (*Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 110, a. 1, co.).

the choirs of angels are assigned to move the heavenly spheres and, by virtue of that, govern the movement of all the universe, including the earth which is influenced by the stars.

For Mickiewicz, poetry is an expression of this experience of the kingdom of spirits through which God is present in Nature; moreover, it can lead readers to the very same experience:

> A man who feels inspired, when he sees great marvels of Nature, when he sings a hymn to the sun, to the moon, to the trees, is pouring his own feelings into his audience or readers. His audience or readers, however, instead of going and admiring this sun, or looking at this moon and those trees which inspired the poet, rest content with rereading and admiring his work, or even adding commentaries to it.[192]

Poetry for the poet is thus not only an expression of his experience, but also a finger pointing at the spiritual world and God. For his readers it may become a path to the same experience, only if they will look where the finger is pointing, instead of contemplating the finger.

There is also another aspect of this experience for Mickiewicz. He says: "An inspired artist creates a divine form; he embodies a feeling that makes him alive. In turn, this form inspires his people". The temptation arises when he masters his art and is able to create new forms, which are divorced from this metaphysical experience. "He doesn't wait anymore for new inspiration, but creates gods and goddesses with his spirit cooled down."[193] The result is that his poems are in fact lifeless toys. Mickiewicz identifies this "divine form", which is born out of true inspiration, to the beauty which is created when the Idea of Beauty is seen and remembered (according to Plato). In another lecture he calls it "an organic and unexplained life" of a poetic work and "this mysterious element, called, in academic language, the wonderful, which increases with the scope of the work. In small poems it shows itself as a breath from a higher realm, a vague memory or premonition of the supernatural world,

192 Course III, Lecture XII; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, p. 152.
193 Ibidem.

while in an epic poem or drama it takes the visible form of a divine being."[194] Schelling, in his Erlangen lectures, identifies this sense of wonder with philosophical 'ecstasy', quoting Plato where he said that wonder is the beginning of philosophy.[195]

Whether poetry "embodies" a peculiar spiritual way of God's presence in natural beings, or an eternal Idea and an invisible spirit in itself (as manifest to the poet in his inner vision), the result, for Mickiewicz, is that true art doesn't imitate physical, sensible reality. This was also the basis of Schelling's philosophy of art.[196] It is not, as Socrates says in Plato's *Republic*, a copy of a copy, twice removed from the true world of Ideas,[197] but rather, as Plotinus claims, something parallel to Nature, in the sense that art imitates the invisible, eternal archetype, which is also imitated by natural phenomena, which are shadows of the invisible essences.[198]

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194 Course III, Lecture XVI, Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, pp. 193–4.

195 F. Schelling, *On the Nature of Philosophy as Science*, p. 228. See Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 982b.

196 Schelling was delivering his lectures on the philosophy of art in the first years of the 19th century, but they were published only in his collected works in 1859. "§23 Art, however, is the representation of the archetypes, hence God himself is the immediate cause and the final possibility of all art; he himself is the source of all beauty." And "§24 The true construction of art is a presentation of its forms as forms of things as those things are in themselves, or as they are within the absolute, for according to §21 the universe is formed within God as eternal beauty and as an absolute work of art. Similarly, all things as they are in themselves or within God are just as absolutely beautiful as they are absolutely true. Accordingly, the forms of art, since they are the forms of beautiful things, are also forms of things as they are within God or in themselves." (F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. D.W. Stott, Minneapolis 1989, p. 32). "§38 The creations of art must have the same reality as, indeed an even higher reality than, those of nature." (ibidem, p. 45). The same view can be found in Baader: "wie denn auch das Thus des Genie's ist, sein Gebilde von den Banden und der Finsterniss einer niedrigern, entstellten Natur zu befreien, und zu erlösen, und durch selbes hiermit als einem geöffneten Auge eine höhere Welt freundlich oder furchtbar durchblicken zu lassen …" (*Fermenta cognitionis* II.15, p. 36).

197 Plato, *Republic* X, 596a–599b.

198 Plotinus, *Enneads* V.8.1.

> Where, therefore, shall we find this archetype, this ideal of a masterpiece? This ideal exists only in the realm of spirits. Some ancient philosophers, like Pythagoras and Plato, knew that. All great artists have always felt that. Theorists of this day and age begin to have some clue about it. Art should embody the ideal in a visible form: it should make us feel and see the spirit of a person that is depicted, by liberating it from the earthly shell which enveils it, and restoring to it the shape that expresses its inner essence, the shape which he could and should have on the earth. In order to depict a spirit in its natural shape however, one has to see it first. Yes indeed, one needs to see it first! Art is, in a sense, the act of summoning ghosts. It is a mysterious and sacred activity.[199]

So strongly for Mickiewicz is poetry connected to the spiritual and divine dimension of reality, which he usually calls the supernatural, so metaphysical it is in its nature, that in his lectures at the Collège he tends towards the claim that the highest poetry created by humanity is the religious poetry born of prophetic inspiration, and, in particular, the sacred scriptures of various traditions. He says: "the greatest and the only true literary works are: Homer's poems, *The Song of the Nibelungs, Quran*, and even the verses of the Gospels."[200] Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) was even more radical in his claim of the religious nature of poetry, mockingly challenging his contemporaries to "try to read the *Iliad* after filtering out, with your abstractions, the two vowels α and ω [the alpha and the omega], and then give me your opinion of the poet's sense and melody!"[201]

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199 Course IV, Lecture VI; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XI, p. 64.

200 Course IV, Lecture XI; ibidem, p. 141. The "even" preceding the Gospels is not disparaging, since Mickiewicz believed that religions form a hierarchy, from Paganism, through the religions of India and Judaism to Christianity which is the highest and fullest revelation. Probably, he refers to the fact that, unlike the other works, the Gospels are not written in any poetic genre and, at the first glance, seem to be much less poetic than other sacred scriptures.

201 A mutilated, "Christ-less" first hexameter of Homer that Hamann produces is: Μῆνιν· ειδε· Θε·Πηληι·δε·χιλῆος. J.G. Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, in: J.G. Hamann, *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. K. Haynes, Cambridge 2007, p. 80. On Hamann see the introductions to: G.G. Dickson, *Johann Georg Hamann's Relational Metacriticism*, Berlin – New York 1995 and J.G. Hamann, *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. K. Haynes, Cambridge 2007.

That is also why he praises Pushkin's *Prophet* for the fact that the Russian bard used phrases taken from the Old Testament ("the Hebrew poets") to speak about his experience of inspiration. The praise of the Psalms as the highest form of poetry, inspired by God and displaying astounding human poetic skill as well, can be found also in other critics of Enlightenment, such as Hamann or Joseph de Maistre.[202] In fact, already Milton made that claim.[203] Hamann laments the spirit of his age, unable "to renew the mission of the spirit which inspired God's holy men (εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως)[204] to speak and write".[205] Maistre praises the Psalms of David over the classical poetry of Pindar, by claiming that the prophetic poetry of David makes us experience the presence of God and his holy city of angels, Jerusalem: "He sang only of God and his immortal truths. Jerusalem has not disappeared for us: *it is everywhere we are*; and it is David especially who makes it present to us."[206] Towards the end of his meditation on the poetry of the psalms he adds: "Because he sang only of the Eternal, his hymns participated in eternity."[207] Hamann's "newest aesthetic, which is the oldest", is summarised in a quotation from the Book of Revelation in the conclusion of his essay: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters!"[208]

Mickiewicz's attitude towards sacred scriptures and religious poetry in general as a form of art is important to consider, not only

202 Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, pp. 226–33.

203 "But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy, to be incomparable. These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestow'd, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation" (*Reason of Church Government*, preface to Book II, in: J. Milton, *The Portable Milton*, ed. D. Bush, New York 1977, p. 126). Cf. also C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, London – New York – Toronto 1942, p. 4.

204 *Eukairos akairos*: "In season, out of season" (2 Tim 4:2).

205 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 86.

206 Maistre, St. *Petersburg Dialogues*, p. 227. The italics are Maistre's.

207 Ibidem, p. 233.

208 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 95.

because he imitated the Biblical style in his *Books of the Polish Nation* and in the last prose poems included in this anthology: he also alludes to the Bible through his metaphysical poems and his *Forefathers' Eve*. In his last period of poetic evolution, Mickiewicz seems to treat religious sacred scriptures as a sort of Platonic ideal of poetry, or a standard measure of a literary work which is born of the experience of God and speaks about God and the way He manifests in creation.

Mickiewicz, however, was by no means primarily a religious poet. The present anthology results from this fact, in that it collects those of his lyrics which more or less explicitly speak about the world of the spirits and God. His cycle *Ballad and Romances* contains folk stories about ghosts; and *Forefathers' Eve* is a spiritual, perhaps, even a religious play. But many of Mickiewicz's poems seem to have nothing to do with God, angels, demons, spirits or anything religious or metaphysical. We already know this not to mean, according to his own views, that they are not born of true inspiration, which is always an experience of God in some sense. Yet if there is a metaphysical dimension in those poems, it is implicit, hidden, and mysterious, as may be the case with his *Pan Tadeusz*.[209]

2.2 *What is Translation?*

Now let us take a look at Mickiewicz as a translator of poetry.[210] Already as a young man he engaged in translation and paraphrase. As a student of Classics he translated Horace, Ovid, and Pindar, and he frequently discusses those translations in his letters to some

209 See note 94.

210 See S. Windakiewicz, "Mickiewicz i Byron", *Pamiętnik Literacki* 31 (1934), pp. 127–132; Z. Szmydtowa, *Mickiewicz jako tłumacz z literatur zachodnioeuropejskich*, Warszawa 1955; H. Zbierski, "Mickiewiczowskie przekłady drobnych utworów Byrona i Moore'a," *Przegląd Zachodni* 12, 1 (1956), pp. 71–141; Z. Dokurno, "O Mickiewiczowskich przekładach z Byrona," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 47 (1956), pp. 317–348; K.A. Zakrzewski, "Ciemność (Mickiewiczowski przekład 'Darkness' Byrona)," *Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza* 11 (1976), pp. 125–138; M. Bąk, "Warsztat Mickiewicza tłumacza," in: *Od oświecenia ku romantyzmowi i dalej ...: autorzy, dzieła, czytelnicy*, ed. M. Piechota, J. Ryba, Katowice 2004, pp. 72–88.

of his friends. Later, he works on the translations of Dante and Petrarch and, among his contemporaries, Schiller, Goethe, Byron, and Pushkin. Still later, when he becomes more interested in religious authors, he thinks of translating prose works: St Augustine's *Confessions*, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and some other Church Fathers (none of which he ever managed to accomplish).

In the first phase of his evolution as a translator, Mickiewicz follows the classicist tradition. As Dokurno points out:

> The imitation of great masters is a necessary school from which a poet has to graduate in his pursuit of artistic perfection. And Mickiewicz did so, since he began his poetic career with paraphrases and translations. The attitude of this poet-beginner to the matter accords with the contemporary view of classicists for whom paraphrases were on a par with original poetry. The most popular English classicist, Alexander Pope, became famous by virtue of his translations of Homer.[211]

However, Dokurno claims that Mickiewicz's early period, during which translations dominated his oeuvre, over Mickiewicz's own work, and in which he stuck to a single pattern in his translations, was over by 1818. As he became an original poet himself, he translated less, but in a more experimental manner, whilst continuing to choose the greatest poets as the basis for this kind of work.[212] In translating Schiller (*Der Handschuh, Licht und Wärme, Amalia*) and Byron (*Euthanasia, Dream, Darkness*, the first canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, The Giaour*) Mickiewicz engaged in poetic paraphrases, strongly coloured by his own views and poetic ideas. Scholars differ in their assessment of the value of those poetic translations or paraphrases,[213] but what seems to be universally agreed on is that for Mickiewicz his work as a translator served the purpose

211 Dokurno, "O Mickiewiczowskich przekładach z Byrona", p. 318.

212 Ibidem, p. 320.

213 Windakiewicz believes Mickiewicz's translations of Byron's *Darkness* and *Euthanasia* to be rather weak (Windakiewicz, "Mickiewicz i Byron", p. 128). In a similar way, although less radically, Zbierski ("Mickiewiczowskie przekłady drobnych utworów Byrona i Moore'a," p. 112).

of developing and polishing his own poetic craftsmanship, and this was to serve his own poetic purposes.[214]

As a young poet he wrote in a letter to his friend, Józef Jeżowski: "This morning, when I was lying in my bed, I was translating a little poem by Schiller, which I attach to the letter. (…) Do write to me, whether you understood a beautiful thought of the author in this translation. If so, I would win a lot, because translating Schiller is extremely difficult."[215] It suggests that Mickiewicz was aware of the difficulties of translating poetry, but also that the most important thing for him was to enable the reader of his translation to understand "a beautiful thought of the author". He was by no means an advocate of literal translation:[216] in an earlier letter to Jan Czeczot he criticised any attempts to make a translation as close to the original as possible, and paraphrased what Jacques Delille wrote in the introduction to his translation of Vergil's *Georgics*: "A translator borrows beauties; he should return them in the same amount, but in a different currency".[217] Whether this is a beautiful thought behind the poem, or other forms of beauty displayed in it (beautiful metaphors, style or a captivating story), Mickiewicz thinks that the essential thing is to create an equally beautiful translation. But, as is often pointed out, this is possible only for a poet of equal or almost equal talent to the author of the original work.

When it comes to various strategies of translation, it seems that already in his early phase, Mickiewicz may have relied on French prose translations of Byron by Pichot (as Pushkin did all his life), before he became sufficiently acquainted with the English language to read these works in the original.[218] When he was in Weimar in the summer 1829 with his friend Antoni Edward Odyniec, a French

214 Ibidem, p. 113; Bąk, "Warsztat Mickiewicza tłumacza", p. 88.

215 A letter to Józef Jeżowski from June 1820, in: Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XIV, pp. 129–130.

216 Dokurno, "O Mickiewiczowskich przekładach z Byrona," p. 328; Zakrzewski, "Ciemność (Mickiewiczowski przekład 'Darkness' Byrona)," p. 127.

217 A letter to Jan Czeczot from October 1819, in: Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XIV, pp. 57.

218 Zakrzewski, "Ciemność (Mickiewiczowski przekład 'Darkness' Byrona)," pp. 125–6.

sculptor and medalist, Pierre-Jean David d'Angers wanted to make a medallion and a bust of Mickiewicz. David asked Mickiewicz to recite some of his poems in a French translation. The Polish poet chose his poem *Farys*, in which he depicted a Polish nobleman, Wacław Rzewuski, who travelled throughout the Middle East and was granted the title of *emir* by the Arabs. According to Odyniec, Mickiewicz "translated in a strangely smooth and fluent way, even with a kind of rhythm".[219]

Here we also have a case of prose translation and an improvised one. It is hardly possible that Mickiewicz who never felt entirely comfortable with French, even after years of lecturing in Lausanne and at the Collège de France, was able or willing to render every detail of his exquisite poetic language and imagery in an improvised French translation of the sort that might have been witnessed here. It seems that, again, he was trying to convey to the French artist some of the beauty of his poem. Mickiewicz also saw and accepted the translations of his own poetry into the Western European languages in the 1830s. Some of those translations were in prose, some in verse.

In the 1830s Mickiewicz's interests became much more metaphysical and mystical. This is clearly reflected in his attitude to translation. He worked on his *Sentences and Remarks*, a poetic cycle consisting of spiritual epigrams which, as the title declares, were based on quotations from spiritual authors he was reading at the time: Böhme, Saint-Martin, Angelus Silesius (some of them also bear a note "from Baader"). As Andrzej Lam has demonstrated, several of those epigrams are in fact poetic translations of Angelus Silesius' couplets, featured in a monumental six-volume cycle *The Cherubinic Wanderer*.[220] It is almost impossible to identify other epigrams that might have been inspired by the material collected within the enormous volumes of Böhme, Saint-Martin or von Baader, even if we ignore that Saint-Martin translated Böhme, or that Baader wrote commentaries on both: a given thought or sentiment could often be easily attributed to any one of these three.

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219 Quoted after: J. M. Rymkiewicz, "Temat Mickiewicza," in: Adam Mickiewicz, *Wiersze i powieści poetyckie*, ed. idem, Warszawa 2004, pp. 401–402.

220 Lam, *Anioł Ślązak Mickiewicza*.

Also, what Mickiewicz was trying to do here was not to give what we would call a faithful literary translation, but rather to express thoughts he experienced as spiritually nourishing in a poetic form that he found in Angelus Silesius. Böhme, Saint-Martin, and Baader were not poets, but theosophists or philosophers, so Mickiewicz "translated" the "beautiful thoughts" of their prose into metrically rigorous, rhymed poetry. When the poetry in which Mickiewicz became interested was more metaphysical and religious, it seems that the spiritual or philosophical content became more important, in addition to the beauty of the literary form.

Is it the same with his translations of religious, devotional poetry? In the 1830s Mickiewicz translated the Latin hymn, *Veni Creator* (ascribed to the ninth-century poet Rabanus Maurus) for a devotional booklet. The translation is strikingly "unpoetic", without metre or rhyme. It looks like an exercise in Latin translation rather than poetry. In fact, Mickiewicz suggested that his friend Stefan Witwicki (who commissioned the translation) work further on it; Witwicki published it as a prose translation, without any division into stanzas. The only moment this strategy of literal translation (which Mickiewicz so strongly condemns in his 1819 letter to Czeczot) really breaks down is the last stanza, containing the 'doxology', where Mickiewicz adds two lines which are not in the Latin original at all and have little to do with the mediaeval intellectual and spiritual world of this hymn.[221] Why Mickiewicz decided to produce such a radically philological translation of the Latin hymn rather than demonstrating his usual effortless brilliance in producing a more congenial rhymed poem? Or simply a prose translation?

It seems that we can find hints in his lectures given at Lausanne and then in Paris. Mickiewicz speaks about his understanding of *Veni Creator*, five years after he translated it, in the lecture he delivered at the Lausanne Academy. In talking about Prudentius, a Latin poet living in the fourth century, he begins by saying: "Goethe admired above all the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. He composed a small commentary to this text. He used to say that an artist should begin his day by meditating on one of the verses of that song; he used to call

221 For a more detailed discussion of this translation see the commentary.

it 'the Lord's Prayer' of art."[222] Here Mickiewicz finds in Goethe the same attitude that he expresses in such detail in his Paris lectures. True poetry is prayer. It shouldn't be read, but meditated on, internalised, experienced. What about: translated?

Mickiewicz continues: "But those hymns [including *Te Deum laudamus*, which he mentions earlier] are too august for anyone to dare to subject them to a scalpel of purely literary criticism. Let us move to another school, where we will feel more free. We will find ourselves among poets, philosophers, and orators." So there are poems which are "too august" to be the subject of university lectures or literary criticism. And Mickiewicz, identifies two mediaeval hymns as such poems, just as he will later say that the only great poetry is Homer, along with the *Song of the Nibelungs*, the *Quran*, and the Gospels. If he considers *Veni Creator* to be a poem so charged with the divine presence that he would desecrate it by dissecting it with "the scalpel of purely literary criticism", perhaps the translation of such an extraordinary poem requires extraordinary means as well?

Over the course of the lecture, Mickiewicz is satisfied to leave *Te Deum* and *Veni Creator* and "move to another school", that is, "poets, philosophers, and orators." He does something that he will do a few times at the Collège de France as well: he draws distinctions between kinds of poetry (and other spiritual activities), according to their relationship to the experience of inspiration. For example: Hegel and Schelling are two competing philosophers, but the first is a fake philosopher, while the second is, to some extent, inspired. Pushkin's *Prophet* is true poetry, because for a couple of days its author saw the eternal Truth; but his *The Poet and the Crowd* only aspires to the condition of a prayer; while his *Onegin* is, apparently, unequalled, but may be, in some radical, fundamental sense, the uninspired poetry of a morally fallen genius. Here Mickiewicz descends from the heights of *Veni Creator* to Prudentius, whom he then praises in very high terms indeed: "In order to create Christian art there had to be a poet who would combine the holy inspiration of a confessor with a philologist's learning. This fame belongs to Prudentius Clemens, a

222 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie rocznicowe*, t. VII: *Pisma historyczne. Wykłady lozańskie*, Warszawa 1999, p. 243.

poet of the fourth century AD."[223] Prudentius, in Mickiewicz's view, is both skilled and inspired, because he is a Christian poet and his *Carmina* are religious poetry in the deepest sense of the word.

A year later, during the first course of his lectures at the Collège, Mickiewicz spoke about Polish folk devotional songs in terms similar to the way he discussed Latin hymns such as *Te Deum* or *Veni Creator*. In referring to those religious songs, used by the Polish people during various liturgical periods and feasts (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter) he says: "I regret that I can give you nothing of those poems in translation, because they cannot be translated by their very nature." And he continues:

> The feelings which are expressed in them, maternal feelings, or the feelings of a zealous devotion of the Blessed Virgin to the Divine Child, are so tender and holy that a prose translation would render them vulgar. It is hard to find in any other kind of poetry expressions so pure, so sweet and delicate. Although, to be honest, those simple poets sometimes allowed themselves to use common expressions, to the effect that people, incapable of appreciating them, occasionally mocked those songs.[224]

Here Mickiewicz is convinced that in some cases prose translations are forbidden, because they don't fit the peculiar quality of the "feeling" that is expressed in a poem; but again, he is focused on the essence of the poem rather than its external, verbal form. He seems to follow the old Stoic idea of the "inner word" (gr. *logos endiathetos*) and the "expressed word" (gr. *logos prophorikos*), eagerly adopted by Plotinus and the Church Fathers for their purposes.

However, the form chosen by the Polish folk poets seems to Mickiewicz perfect and difficult to reproduce in another language. He wonders whether anything in world literature can be compared to the sublimity of those devotional songs and gives examples of some unidentified "Italian songs", of Novalis' poems (referring to his *Geistliche Lieder* or *Spiritual songs*, published posthumously in 1802) and of some of Victor Hugo's poems, like the one in which a sleeping

223 Ibidem, p. 244.

224 Course I, Lecture XXX; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. VIII, pp. 424–5.

child talks to an angel.[225] This is a poem beginning with *Dans l'alcôve sombre*; this poem is characterised by very short verses and a simple, song-like rhythm. Mickiewicz adds an important remark that this poem is "better composed, in every way more highly accomplished from an artistic point of view" (inspired poetry and poetry artistically perfect may coincide, but they are not always identical). This is also why he gives an example of Novalis' *Spiritual Songs* and not his profoundly mystical and metaphysical *Hymns to the Night*, in either a verse or a prose version; *Spiritual Songs* are fashioned to resemble simple devotional poetry and appear to lack the philosophical depth of the *Hymns*.

Mickiewicz claims about the Polish devotional songs what he has said about *Veni Creator* in his last Lausanne lecture, namely: "There are hymns among those songs, which could be considered as the finest in our national poetry, but they are completely ignored by theorists. Their genre, by virtue of its sublimity, escapes all literary criticism." Again, this is something which not only translation, but also scholarly analysis can only spoil and drag down from Heaven to the earth. However, it does nothing to stop Mickiewicz from commenting on a given poem (unlike in the case of *Te Deum* and *Veni Creator*, where he simply chose to remain silent). And he has something to say, curiously, on their literary form: "In those stanzas, the poet obeys no metre; he abandons rhyme as something too closely linked to epigrams and too trivial. He composes his verses according to internal rhythm, a rhythm of sublime music and rhymes turn into assonances. Undoubtedly, it is very hard to grasp the rules of such poetry."[226]

At this point he quotes a song in which Christ and his Mother talk to each other, pointing out that even Dante himself wouldn't dare to write something like that. Mickiewicz says that he wishes he could read this poem in Polish. As it happens, he speaks about a further part of a long Easter devotional song *Wesoły nam dzień dziś*

225 *Les Slaves. Cours professé au Collège de France*, Paris 1849, t. 2, p. 78. He refers to the twentieth poem in the collection *Les Feuilles d'automne*, published in 1831.

226 Course I, Lecture XXX; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. VIII, p. 425.

nastał, which probably originated in the late sixteenth or the early seventeenth century. This song is still in use today in Poland, being traditionally sung during a procession after the "resurrection mass" ("*rezurekcja*"), which is the early morning Easter liturgy. He earlier said that to translate the poem into prose would render it vulgar, but now he suddenly decides to do it, because "if someone tried to translate those verses into a modern poem, with rhymes, he would destroy all of its elevated and sublime character." The need to convey the meaning, the "beautiful thought" or the sublime feelings expressed in the poem is greater even than a possibility of cheapening the poem and desecrating it.

When we read the poem in Polish, what immediately strikes us is the simplicity, naivety, and naturalness of it. It is not "poetic" at all. Factual statements: "Christ the Lord has risen", "showed himself to those who loved him", "he comforted his Mother, having saluted her" and suchlike alternate with indeed tender, delicate expressions of the mutual love by Christ and Mary. Mickiewicz's brief commentary on the poem ends with another strange remark: "I summarised [*raconter* in the French edition][227] for you only a couple of verses, which could perhaps be translated well into Latin, but which a modern language could only disfigure." Here we return, symbolically, to *Veni Creator*. Mickiewicz suddenly decides that modernity is the problem – the evolution of language into something unable to express what could be expressed in a Slavic language of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and which could be expressed in Latin – presumably because this is a sacred language of the Church.[228]

In light of all this it seems that Mickiewicz decided to translate *Veni Creator* without any metre or rhyme into Polish, because it could somehow trivialise or cheapen the hymn. But all this remains a matter of conjecture, whether his peculiar rendering of this poem is a means of "summarising it" ("*raconter*", as with his prose translation

227 Mickiewicz, *Les Slaves*, t. II, p. 80.

228 While discussing the Psalms, Maistre is speaking of the three languages consecrated on the Calvary (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin), of which the last one received a special status of the language of the Church (Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, p. 226).

of a few stanzas of *Wesoły nam dzień dziś nastał* at the Collège de France a couple of years later) or of trying to convey at least some of the sublime thoughts and feelings of that poem.

Even though Mickiewicz always recognised the translation of poetry of any kind to be difficult, and despite the fact that towards the end of his career he seemed increasingly preoccupied by the idea of inspiration and its metaphysical and religious meaning, he did not in fact seem to believe that translations, even bad ones, could prevent readers from experiencing the essential beauty or wisdom of poetry which they could not read in the original. As Donald Davie observes in his essay on translating *Pan Tadeusz*, the common experience of humanity is reading translations.[229] A great many people read Homer, Dante or Goethe without an ounce of ancient Greek, mediaeval Tuscan dialect or eighteenth-century German. Davie even moves towards claiming that prose translations of poetry might in some cases be better than verse translations. However, the main point seems to be that great poetry shines through its translations.

A similar case might be made about metaphysical or mystical writings (especially, since for Mickiewicz true poetry is a mystical poetry). Henri Bergson wrote:

> It is not by chance, then, it is by reason of its very essence that true mysticism is exceptional. But when it does call, there is in the innermost being of most men the whisper of an echo. Mysticism reveals, or rather would reveal to us, if we actually willed it, a marvellous prospect: we do not, and in most cases we could not, will it; we should collapse under the strain.[230]

He meant that, while we are reading a description of mystical experience, it is quite likely that something of it will be conveyed to us regardless of language, since the majority of mystics that Bergson talks about in his work didn't speak or write in French. He quotes William James who "used to say he had never experienced mystic

229 D. Davie, "Pan Tadeusz in English verse," in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 318–29, on p. 319.

230 H. Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, tr. R.A. Audra, C. Brereton, Westport, CO, 1975, p. 202–3.

states; but he added that if he heard them spoken of by a man who had experienced them 'something within him echoed the call'."[231]

In his lectures at the Collège, as we have seen, Mickiewicz is convinced that true poetry is akin to inspired philosophy and to religion. And we can assume that he was forming this conviction on the basis of his spiritual and poetic experiences in the 1830s. In this view, Mickiewicz may come surprisingly close to Aristotle (whom he associated with the fake philosophy of "scholasticism"), who said in his *Poetics*:

> The difference between a historian and a poet is not that one writes in prose and the other in verse – indeed the writings of Herodotus could be put into verse and yet would still be a kind of history, whether written in metre or not. The real difference is this, that one tells what happened and the other what might happen. For this reason poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts.[232]

Of course, the difference is that for Mickiewicz poetry is a much higher activity than it was for Aristotle. As for Plato, Aristotle's teacher, poetry is for Mickiewicz an experience of the spiritual and the divine, such that both poetry and philosophy, if they are inspired, express the same Truth, but in different ways. Otherwise, they become a mere exercise of human faculties, of linguistic skill (in the case of poetry) or the capacity for conceptual discourse (in the case of philosophy). And Mickiewicz had much better things to say about uninspired poetry than uninspired philosophy (if we compare the cases of Pushkin and Hegel). What he says in his Paris lectures about contemporary Polish poetry seemingly applies as well to his own work (perhaps he is in fact primarily discussing his own poetry, even though he never says a word about his own work at the Collège de France):

> That is why, just like ancient Latin and Greek poetry, Polish poetry, whose history moves in a direction contrary to that of the poetry

231 Ibidem, 234.

232 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a-b, English translation by W.H. Fyfe in: *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Cambridge, MA – London 1932.

> of other modern nations, contains in its works, as we have already noticed, the seeds of higher philosophy. That is why it gives its hand to philosophy, so that they may walk together, hand in hand. Thus in order to understand this poetry, we will often have to discuss philosophical issues.[233]

He does not go as far as the famous claim of Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829): "Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric."[234] Together with his friend Novalis, Schlegel postulated blending poetry with all disciplines and sciences. But what Mickiewicz certainly has in common with those figures of the German *Frühromantik*, is his belief of the deep kinship between poetry, philosophy, and religion. Schlegel, again, put it concisely, saying: "The poetizing philosopher, the philosophizing poet, is a prophet."[235] And also: "Poetry and philosophy are, depending on one's point of view, different spheres, different forms, or simply the component parts of religion. For only try really to combine the two and you will find yourself with nothing but religion."[236]

It would be counterproductive to try to draw any clear conclusions from all Mickiewicz's confrontations with the problems of translating inspired poetry, which is intertwined with philosophy and religion. At times he suggests that precise wording is not the most important element, that the thought or feeling behind the poem is crucial. At other times, he pays special attention to minute details not only of linguistic expression, but of the musical aspect of poetry, saying that if those cannot be translated, it might be best not to translate at all. But he does translate, after all. Sometimes, he says that prose makes poetry sound vulgar, but, at the same time, practises prose translation himself. He claims that we should avoid even distant associations with epigrams, when dealing with sublime religious poetry, despite having published himself a book of spiritual

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233 Course III, Lecture I; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, pp. 10–11.

234 *Athenaeum fragments* 116, in: F. Schlegel, *Philosophical fragments*, tr. P. Firchow, Minneapolis – London 1991, p. 31.

235 *Athenaeum fragments* 249, ibidem, p. 52.

236 *Ideas* 46, ibidem, p. 98.

epigrams, based on the mystics he believed were the most inspired in modern times.

All of this should be considered against the background of his deep conviction and experience that poetry is really not about words at all – or images, or sounds, for that matter; instead, poetry is first about having a direct, intuitive, contemplative experience of supernatural reality; second, expressing this experience through the means of poetry (being aware that other means are available as well, including philosophy, political action or simply "living a day well");[237] and third, about helping others (readers) to use this inspired expression to attain the same spiritual experience. An unfortunate but likely conclusion is that strategies of translation (including the choice of genre, form, metre, rhyme, style, words and other literary devices) are secondary with regard to the primary objective of reaching inspiration and revelation. Mickiewicz would also agree with Hamann who said: "To speak is to translate – from an angelic language into a human language, that is, to translate thoughts into words, – things into names – images into signs, which can be poetic or curiological, historic or symbolic or hieroglyphic – and philosophical or characteristic."[238]

2.3 *The Approach to Translation in this Anthology*

Luckily, however, Mickiewicz seems not to have followed his own ideals entirely, since, as we could see, he believed that it is better to translate the untranslatable than not to translate it at all, and it is better to say something about a beautiful and sublime poem than to remain completely silent. Mickiewicz's views on the nature of poetry and translation should be seen, it seems, as guiding principles, as an (almost always?) asymptotic ideal, which translators should bear in mind, while trying their best. He welcomed translations of his own poems into Russian, French, and German. He accepted the tension between the heavenly ideal and the earthly, "fallen" practice.

In our approach to Mickiewicz's metaphysical poems, we have decided to focus on their metaphysical, mystical and religious

237 As indicated by one of the epigrams in Mickiewicz's *Sentences and Remarks*.
238 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 66.

content as their primary feature. In some poems in this collection other aspects become equally important, or even more so (as in the Lausanne lyrics); all the same, the main framework for this translation is the idea of philosophical poetry or poetry, which walks hand in hand with philosophy: both need to be inspired from above, if they are to enjoy any relationship with the Truth. As Aleksander Chodźko wrote in the preface to the Paris edition of Mickiewicz's collected works: "The highest poetry is the highest truth: both flow from the same source, from inspiration".[239] This is why we decided to use metre, but not rhyme, in order to render the metaphysical and religious content of those poems (the "beautiful thoughts") as close to the original as possible.

Another problem involves how the metaphysical content of those poems might be expressed. The Christian Platonic tradition, within which we may count Mickiewicz as a thinker, follows Plato in believing that there are two ways of expressing the Truth which can be grasped in contemplation: *logos* (conceptual discourse) and *muthos* (a pictorial story). Scholars are still debating whether Plato recounted his exquisite myths (for example, the story of the cave at the beginning of the seventh book of the *Republic*; the image of the chariot of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, and its cosmic journey; or the travels into the other world in the *Gorgias, Phaedo* or *Republic*) in order to reach out to those who are incapable of rational thought, or else because he believed that those myths express certain things better than concepts and logical arguments. Perhaps he thought of them as equal strategies of expression.[240] Plotinus seems to have been inclined to a belief that images convey the spiritual truth better

239 "Introduction", in: *Pisma Adama Mickiewicza*, t. I–IV, Paris 1844, p. vi.

240 Luc Brisson claims that for Plato *muthos* is opposed to *logos*, since it is aimed at the irrational part of the soul (L. Brisson, *Plato: The Myth Maker*, tr. G. Naddaf, Chicago 1998, pp. 7–11, 116–21). On the other hand, Kathryn Morgan claimed that some elements of Plato's myths express "metalogical", mystical intuitions and can be considered to be higher than *logos*, while, in general, both ways of writing are dynamically intertwined and impossible to separate (K.A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 1–5, 185–7).

than conceptual discourse.[241] As Johann Georg Hamann observed: "Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction; barter, than commerce. (…) All the wealth of human knowledge and happiness consists in images."[242]

There are different types of metaphysicians: some are more poetic and imaginary; others are more conceptual and discursive. We would seek in vain for poetry in the magnificent system of Proclus, but a Christian adaptation of this system may be seen in one of the most original and innovative forms of philosophical writing, the exquisitely beautiful, spiritually entrancing work of the Pseudo-Areopagite. St Thomas Aquinas' conceptual and logical clarity in his *Summa Theologiae* is overwhelming, but he was also a very good poet, as his eucharistic hymns show. St Augustine's *Confessions* are an experiment in philosophical writing which is one of a kind – as inspired and as innovative as the Pseudo-Areopagite's writings in adapting Plotinus to the needs of a Christian philosopher. The question continues to haunt Western metaphysics and its professional commentators: what is more accurate, a definition or a metaphor? Some Plotinian scholars lamented the popularity of the metaphor of "emanation" or "flowing" of created reality out of the Good, because it can be philosophically misleading.[243] Indeed, it can, but even Aquinas could not restrain himself from asserting that creatures have flown from God; not to mention Böhme or Mickiewicz who were clearly as enamoured with this traditional image as the Pseudo-Areopagite. If we apply the distinction into *logos* and *muthos*, defined as concept and image, to Mickiewicz's metaphysical poetry, it may be helpful to a certain degree, because, being both a Classicist and a Romantic, he sometimes prefers to use philosophical terms or even arguments, while at other times he gives his readers complex, intricate metaphors or similes.

241 Plotinus, *Enneads* V.8.6.

242 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 63.

243 E.g. L.P. Gerson, "Plotinus's Metaphysics: Emanation or Creation?," *The Review of Metaphysics* 46, 3 (1993), pp. 559–574.

This is, perhaps, what it means that philosophy and poetry walk hand in hand in Mickiewicz's metaphysical poems. We have cautiously tried to translate words or terms which have philosophical significance in the Western tradition, being aware that Mickiewicz may have chosen these terms to express his meaning and to allude to the enormous literature that he was familiar with. In the commentaries, we try to explain some of the choices or point out the difficulties in translating those philosophical terms or expressions. On the other hand, we also try to reproduce what might be called philosophical metaphors or similes, with the intention of conveying their metaphysical meaning rather than other aspects. Here as well we try to comment on how those often-complex images might be understood, and what those interpretations imply for the understanding of Mickiewicz's thought.

Since Mickiewicz himself says that philosophical poetry requires some kind of philosophical explanation or contextualization, we have tried to provide this in the commentaries, primarily to elucidate the use of certain expressions or images and to explain our decisions. It seems that we may apply to Mickiewicz's poetry what he said about Prudentius:

> However, a Christian poet doesn't satisfy himself with sketching an image, describing a morning or evening, but he strives to penetrate deeper into Nature. He strives to grasp a moral sense of every natural phenomenon. According to his system, the material world is merely a reflection of the moral world, which, in turn, is a reflection of the supernatural world.[244]

This brief remark demonstrates that Mickiewicz knew the traditional doctrine of the three levels of meaning found in the Scripture (literal, moral, and allegorical) that was developed by Origen and standardised in the Middle Ages. Mickiewicz knows that according to this traditional viewpoint, not only the Book of Scripture, but the Book of Nature is to be read in such a way. It seems that his own poetry was also written in the same fashion, woven out of layers of meaning – at least sometimes.

244 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. VII, p. 247.

The commentaries provide a more detailed context than this *Introductory Study*, hinting at the layers of meaning and showing further possibilities of interpretation. We refrain from suggesting that Mickiewicz read or even heard of every author that is referred to in the commentaries; instead we want to show that he was generally familiar with the great tradition of the Western metaphysics and mysticism, and that he was, in many ways, a product of it, even if he emphatically rejected Enlightenment scientism, materialism, empiricism or speculative rationalism, believing that we need to reconnect with the spiritual sources of the West, often by means of those few who (like Böhme, Angelus Silesius, Saint-Martin, Maistre, Jacobi or von Baader) remained, according to Mickiewicz, faithful to that tradition and to the divine inspiration which it assumes.

When it comes to the question of language and style, it has been pointed out, mostly by the Polish authors, how impossible to imitate or translate Mickiewicz's diction is. Jan Lechoń, a twentieth-century Polish poet, wrote about the power of his poetry which

> converted aesthetic experience and poetic rapture into a vital event equal to the intoxication of love. No one equaled Mickiewicz in that genius for simplicity which conceals evangelical depths and the experiences of humanity's aeons beneath ordinary words accessible to every child. (…) No one expressed himself with such intellectual power, which exerted, as it were, a magnetic force upon those who read or heard his poetry.[245]

Czesław Miłosz repeated what T.S. Eliot said about the author of the *Comedy* ("the language of Dante is the perfection of a common language")[246] and added: "The style of Mickiewicz is manly and simple. He knew how to use conventional phrasing and, without straying beyond its limits, how to transform it into something completely new. (…) Through a slight retouching of words, a genuine poet is

245 J. Lechoń, "Mickiewicz in Polish Poetry", in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 1–12, on p. 6.

246 T.S. Eliot, *Dante*, in: *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot. The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief*, eds. F. Dickey, J. Formichelli, Baltimore 2015, pp. 700–745, on p. 713.

able to invest a commonplace sentence with charm."[247] Zakrzewski, in the introduction to his translation of the *Crimean Sonnets*, drew attention to three important elements of Mickiewicz's style. First, its simplicity or, as he puts it, 'purity':

> The hallmark of Mickiewicz's poetic art is the stark purity of his language. It is in many ways the culmination of the Neo-Classical ideal of "*simplicité avec l'art*" – the art of producing profound poetic statement under the guise of simplicity and ease. It is, what's more, a simplicity that has from the very beginning been susceptible to much misunderstanding – a misunderstanding that prompted even Mickiewicz's great contemporary, Juliusz Słowacki, to temper his high praise of Pan Tadeusz with comments about its "swinishness" (*wieprzowatość*).[248]

Another feature of Mickiewicz's style is its 'density' (the term, '*jędrność*', borrowed from a Polish 19th century novelist, Bolesław Prus):

> one encounters in Mickiewicz entire passages where individual words, the discrete vehicles of metaphorical expression, rarely draw attention to themselves. To catch the magic of his words one must look to the whole, indivisible statement. It is here where his seamless garment is seen to be even more tightly woven than Pushkin's, where individual words, by virtue of their sheer felicity, often sparkle with stunning effect.[249]

Finally, as Zakrzewski points out,

> Mickiewicz's simplicity is great simplicity because it blurs the conventional distinctions between the "form" and "content", the "idea" and "style" of a poem. It constitutes an ideal dynamic fusion, a mutual straining of elements in which the form becomes the content and the content becomes the form. Along with his sublime

247 C. Miłosz, "Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry", in: *Adam Mickiewicz, Poet of Poland*, ed. M. Kridl, New York 1951, quoted after Davie, "*Pan Tadeusz* in English verse," p. 322.

248 C. Adam, "The 'Crimean Sonnets' of Adam Mickiewicz – A New Translation," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 40, 3–4 (1998), pp. 401–432, on p. 405.

249 Ibidem, p. 410.

> metaphorical flights and unerring sense of the innate strength of the word, Mickiewicz achieves effects that close the gap between poetry and prose in an incomparable generic synthesis.[250]

This "ideal dynamic fusion" or "synthesis" of content and form, of prose and poetry, is certainly the greatest challenge for a translator and we cannot claim to have succeeded in our work. Rather, we have tried to follow the internal logic of Mickiewicz's metaphors and images, arguments and conceptual choices; but whether this "ideal dynamic fusion" and "synthesis" has been achieved anywhere in our versions of his poems is obviously left to the reader to judge. We hope that those who just want to enjoy those poems will find them beautiful and moving, not because the translation is beautiful, but because the original is so; we hope that this light may shine through the English version, with all its limitations. We have avoided archaisms as far as possible and used contemporary English, even though, of course, Mickiewicz's language sounds to contemporary Poles more or less archaic, despite being itself surprisingly contemporary when compared to the expression of other poets of his time.

Our attempt to allow priority to the intellectual and spiritual content of those poems over their stylistic and linguistic dimension is also due to the fact that we have in mind a reader, who wants to familiarise himself with the intellectual stature of Mickiewicz as a European Romantic. Those with at least some Polish will use the translation to understand the original: in most cases they will be able to follow the thought and syntax of the Polish poem alongside its English version. We hope that scholars who are unable to read Polish, but are interested in studying the metaphysics and mysticism of Mickiewicz's poems, will find themselves enabled to study his thought on the basis of these translations, and compare it to that of his other great contemporaries who were also interested in metaphysics and mysticism, including Coleridge, Novalis and Hölderlin.

250 Ibidem, p. 411.

2.4 *Mickiewicz in Translation: a Brief History*

The works of this Polish poet were translated even in his lifetime. Most of them appeared in France,[251] where *Konrad Wallenrod* was published in 1830; in the same year, a collection of poems also including this narrative poem (*Konrad Wallenrod, récit historique tiré des annales de Lithuanie et de Prusse. Le faris. Sonnets de Crimée*, 1830) was printed. French readers could also read *Le Livre des Pèlerins polonais* (1833), his dramatic masterpiece *Forefathers' Eve* (*Dziady, ou La fête des morts, poème traduit du polonais*, 1834) as well as a prose translation of *Pan Tadeusz* (1834). Also, a complete edition of his poetry was available (*Oeuvres poétiques complètes d'A. Mickiewicz*, 1841, with further editions in 1845, 1848, 1859). When he came to Paris in 1832, Mickiewicz was able to make the acquaintance of many of the important figures of the French literary world. His *Books of the Polish Nation*, translated by Charles de Montalembert, had a great impact on French Catholic intellectuals, such as Montalembert and Lamennais. Its enormous (if brief) success was associated with the compassion of the French public for the suffering of the Poles in the aftermath of the catastrophe of the November Uprising in 1831.

Mickiewicz met Victor Hugo, who expressed his love for the *Books of the Polish Nation* and for Poland, but was not particularly interested in Mickiewicz himself; the poet was taken aback by Hugo's vanity and the circle of his worshippers. He knew Honoré de Balzac, but during one evening Mickiewicz said, when the novelist was present at the dinner table, that there would be nothing to regret if two-thirds of modern literature were burned. He found a much more congenial spirit in Alfred de Vigny, whom he asked to read a drama Mickiewicz wrote in French (*Les Confédérés de Bar*), on the Polish insurrection preceding the First Partition in 1772, in order to help bring the text to the stage. Later, during his professorship at the Collège, Mickiewicz became close friends with the historians Edgar Quinet and Jules Michelet, who also taught there, and were

251 An excellent study of Mickiewicz's relationship with France can be found in J. Bourilly, "Mickiewicz and France," in: *Adam Mickiewicz and World Literature*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1956, pp. 243–79.

also dismissed from their chairs after Mickiewicz was fired in 1844 (in 1846 and 1848, respectively).

Mickiewicz's greatest admirer among the French literary élite was George Sand, whom he met in 1836, shortly before the beginning of her relationship with Chopin. She was fascinated by his *Forefathers' Eve*; in her criticism she compared it to Goethe's *Faust* and Byron's *Manfred*. Sand was drawn to the metaphysical and religious dimension of those plays, of which she believed *Forefathers' Eve* to be the most exemplary, and to the quality she called "the fantastic". In a piece she wrote about it and which appeared only in 1839, when Mickiewicz was lecturing in Lausanne, she said about his masterpiece: "Those paintings are such as Byron, Goethe, and Dante could not have drawn."[252] In her *Journal intime* she wrote: "Mickiewicz is the only great ecstatic I know … he is touched by that grand intellectual disease that makes him akin to the famous ascetics, to Socrates, to Jesus, to St John, Dante, and Jeanne d'Arc."[253]

In Germany,[254] Mickiewicz's poems were translated as early as 1824 (with *Gedichte* and *Herr Thaddaeus* appearing in 1836 and his Paris lectures in 1843–1845). When he visited Weimar in the summer of 1829 with his friend, Antoni Edward Odyniec, they were both invited to join the celebration of the eightieth birthday of Goethe on the 28th of August. Mickiewicz was warmly received, even though Goethe had not read any of his poems. Goethe arranged Mickiewicz's portrait by his friend, Johann Schmeller, and a medallion and bust by David d'Angers, who became the poet's friend as a result of their meeting in Weimar. The meeting with Goethe certainly helped Mickiewicz's career in Germany. During his brief stay in Germany, he managed to visit August Wilhelm Schlegel in Bonn, where Schlegel was a professor, at this period of his life immersed in Oriental studies. On his way back, Mickiewicz encountered David d'Angers, who told him that Goethe said to him of Mickiewicz: "One

252 Quoted in: ibidem, p. 258.

253 Quoted in R. Koropeckyj, *Adam Mickiewicz. The Life of a Romantic*, Ithaca – London 2008, p. 274.

254 See H. Schroeder, "Mickiewicz in Germany," in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 159–193.

can see that he is a man of genius."[255] In the nineteenth century Germany Mickiewicz's name regularly appeared in collections of "world literature" (*Bildersall der Weltliterature, Allgemeine Geschichte der Weltliteratur* etc.).

In Russia,[256] his poetry was known from the very beginning of his career, if we count a fragment of his ballad *The Lilies* (*Lilije*) that was translated by his friend, a Decembrist and a poet, Kondraty Ryleev.[257] He was widely read by the Russian poets both in his time and after his death, and he influenced Russian poetry in ways he never influenced Western European literature.

In Italy, the underground translation of his *Books of the Polish Nation*, rendered from the French edition, fascinated the great social and political activist Giuseppe Mazzini, who even produced a prose translation of Mickiewicz's poem *To a Polish Mother* (*Do matki Polki*) for his own mother.[258] Mazzini found Mickiewicz' metaphysical and religious patriotism congenial; when he arrived in London in 1837, having being earlier arrested in Switzerland and in France, he wrote a piece on Mickiewicz for *The Polish Magazine* (no. 2, 1838). The article is entitled *Literature and Education* and was published anonymously, but beyond doubt its author was Mazzini. He writes that "Mickiewicz is more than a poet: he is a prophet, like the great poets of Israel" and adds that "Mickiewicz had become the Christian poet and the Polish one, of his time."[259] The issue of *The Polish Magazine* contained also some English translations of Mickiewicz: a prose translation of Konrad's *Improvisation* from *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, a free-verse translation of *Farys*, and one of the Crimean sonnets (*The Grave of the Countess Potocka*). Although Mazzini criticised Mickiewicz for being too Catholic (Mazzini himself was strongly

255 Ibidem, p. 170.

256 See W. Lednicki, "Mickiewicz's Stay in Russia and His Friendship with Pushkin", pp. 13–104 and G. Struve, "Mickiewicz in Russian Translations", pp. 105–152; both in *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*.

257 Struve, "Mickiewicz in Russian Translations", pp. 105–106.

258 G. Maver, "Mickiewicz and Italy", in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 197–220, on 205.

259 See W.R. Rose, "Mickiewicz and Britain", in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 295–318, quotations on pp. 298 and 299.

anticlerical, but deeply religious, on account of which he was later considered a "reactionary" by Karl Marx), he always believed that Mickiewicz was the greatest European poet, even if he appreciated his poetry itself less than his messianistic worldview and thought.

Mazzini's praise for Mickiewicz helped him little in Great Britain. His *Books of the Polish Nation* appeared in 1833 and were immediately criticised by a literary magazine *Athenaeum* as "a mere parody on Scripture, and not likely to suit the taste of a British public".[260] At the same time, Henry Reeve, an English journalist, who was a friend of Zygmunt Krasiński, published a piece on Mickiewicz in *December Metropolitan* in 1831. Two of Mickiewicz's poems were translated by George Borrow and published in 1835 (*The Renegade* and *The Three Sons of Budrys*). *Konrad Wallenrod* was published in a prose version and in a verse rendering in the same year 1841.

In America some translations were made in the second half of the nineteenth century, but, as Francis Whitfield writes, "the translators and critics who strove to acquaint the American public with Mickiewicz's poetry were too much on the peripheries of literary life and, it must be admitted, their work was in general too unskilled to impress the poet's name on their countrymen."[261] In Paris in February 1847 Mickiewicz met Margaret Fuller, an American feminist writer who was a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and helped him publish his journal, *The Dial*. Earlier, she had sent Mickiewicz a volume of Emerson's poetry in a packet with a letter asking him to come and see her. They became close friends. Fuller tried to interest Emerson in Mickiewicz, but to no avail. On the other hand, Mickiewicz found in Emerson a kindred spirit, calling him an "American Socrates" in his Paris lectures, and translated some of his essays into Polish. In any case, a shipwreck off Fire Island, New York on 19th July 1850 permanently ended that friendship, as well as any further possibility that Fuller might help promote Mickiewicz's works in America: Fuller's body was never found; nor was that of her husband; their child's body later washed ashore.

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260 Ibidem, p. 302.

261 F.J. Whitfield, "Mickiewicz and American Literature", in: *Adam Mickiewicz in World Literature*, pp. 339–352, on p. 349.

Mickiewicz was never appreciated in Britain or America as he was in Russia or France, or even Germany. As Rose writes:

> The odds were, indeed, against any major enthusiasm for a Polish poet among British intellectuals, and for at least three reasons: (i) the concern of the public with its own grim problems during the generation following Waterloo (and Peterloo!), and its inherent skepticism in regard to the utopian socialism prevailing on the Continent; (ii) the lingering antagonism toward France and her allies; (iii) the fact that Mickiewicz came from the Slav world, about which people knew nothing and cared little, and that by confession he was a Roman Catholic.[262]

Mickiewicz clearly could leave a profound impression in person; and his poetry and prose could have an even greater impact on readers who were interested in metaphysical, religious or existential themes, be it personal or national. Even though he was considered a man of genius by Goethe, even though Mazzini proclaimed him to be the greatest European poet and a true Christian prophet of his time, even though Pushkin believed that he was "inspired from above" and George Sand claimed that he was to be ranked with Goethe, Byron, and Dante, Mickiewicz is still far less appreciated outside of Poland than he deserves. In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century there were increasing attempts to translate Mickiewicz's poems into English, but this did not change the situation very much, according to Charles Zakrzewski: "Adam Mickiewicz, the Byron, Goethe and Pushkin of Poland, remains an anomalously obscure figure to the English-speaking world. To this day his nimbus outside of the Slavic world rarely transcends the confines of the academic lecture hall and the serious poet's private study."[263]

Even though Mickiewicz has so far failed to become as popular as (say) Pushkin in the English-speaking world, some of his works are available in English, sometimes in more than one version, and both in verse and in prose. Many of the poems included in this anthology were earlier translated and published in journals or collections: we

262 Rose, "Mickiewicz and Britain", p. 295.
263 Zakrzewski, "The 'Crimean Sonnets'", p. 401.

indicate all previous translations that we were able to find in the commentaries. But some of those poems are published for the first time in English. In any case, the nature of this anthology is to present the reader with a coherent selection of Mickiewicz's metaphysical lyric poems, since, as we argue, they form an intellectual and spiritual whole. Such an anthology has hitherto never been published in Polish, or any other language.

Poems

Romantyczność

Methinks I see... . where?
– In my mind's eyes.
Shakespeare

Zdaje mi się że widzę.... gdzie?
Przed oczyma duszy mojej.

Słuchaj, dzieweczko!
– Ona nie słucha –
To dzień biały! to miasteczko!
Przy tobie nie ma żywego ducha,
Co tam wkoło siebie chwytasz?
Kogo wołasz, z kim się witasz?
– Ona nie słucha. –

To jak martwa opoka
Nie zwróci w stronę oka,
To strzela wkoło oczyma,
To się łzami zaleje;
Coś niby chwyta, coś niby trzyma;
Rozpłacze się i zaśmieje.

"Tyżeś to w nocy? – To ty, Jasieńku!
Ach! i po śmierci kocha!
Tutaj, tutaj, pomaleńku,
Czasem usłyszy macocha!

Niech sobie słyszy, już nie ma ciebie!
Już po twoim pogrzebie!
Ty już umarłeś? Ach! ja się boję!

Czego się boję mego Jasieńka?
Ach, to on! lica twoje, oczki twoje!
Twoja biała sukienka!

I sam ty biały jak chusta,
Zimny, jakie zimne dłonie!
Tutaj połóż, tu na łonie,
Przyciśnij mnie, do ust usta!

Ach, jak tam zimno musi być w grobie!
Umarłeś! tak, dwa lata!
Weź mię, ja umrę przy tobie,
Nie lubię świata.

Źle mnie w złych ludzi tłumie,
Płaczę, a oni szydzą;
Mówię, nikt nie rozumie;
Widzę, oni nie widzą!

Śród dnia przyjdź kiedy ... To może we śnie?
Nie, nie ... trzymam ciebie w ręku.
Gdzie znikasz, gdzie mój Jasieńku?
Jeszcze wcześnie, jeszcze wcześnie!

Mój Boże! kur się odzywa,
Zorza błyska w okienku.
Gdzie znikłeś? Ach! stój Jasieńku!
Ja nieszczęśliwa."

Tak się dziewczyna z kochankiem pieści.
Bieży za nim, krzyczy, pada;
Na ten upadek, na głos boleści,
Skupia się ludzi gromada.
"Mówcie pacierze! – krzyczy prostota –
Tu jego dusza być musi.

Jasio być musi przy swej Karusi,
On ją kochał za żywota!"

I ja to słyszę, i ja tak wierzę,
Płaczę, i mówię pacierze.

"Słuchaj dzieweczko!" – krzyknie śród zgiełku
Starzec i na lud zawoła:
"Ufajcie memu oku i szkiełku,
Nic tu nie widzę dokoła.

Duchy karczemnej tworem gawiedzi,
W głupstwa wywarzone kuźni.
Dziewczyna duby smalone bredzi,
A gmin rozumowi bluźni".

"Dziewczyna czuje – odpowiadam skromnie –
A gawiedź wierzy głęboko;
Czucie i wiara silniej mówi do mnie
Niż mędrca szkiełko i oko.

Martwe znasz prawdy, nieznane dla ludu,
Widzisz świat w proszku, w każdej gwiazd iskierce.
Nie znasz prawd żywych, nie obaczysz cudu!
Miej serce i patrzaj w serce!"

[*styczeń 1821*]

The Romantic

Methinks I see ... where?
– In my mind's eyes.
Shakespeare

Listen, girl, listen!
– She doesn't listen –
This is your town, in broad daylight
You're all alone! No living soul!
What are you catching?
Whom are you calling?
– She doesn't listen. –

She is almost like a stone
She doesn't even look here
Now she is glancing around,
Suddenly all in tears.
As if she were grasping, as if she were holding
Something in tears or in joy.

"Is this you, Johnny, at night? It is you!
Death didn't stop him from loving!
Here, come here – but slowly,
Or my stepmother will hear!

Oh, let her hear, now that you're gone!
Your funeral is over!
Are you dead, Johnny? Oh, how I'm scared!
Why am I scared of my Johnny?
It's him! I see your cheeks and eyes!
And your white clothes.

Yes, it is you, white as snow,
Cold, oh, how your hands are cold.
Put them here, on my breast,

Oh, hold me close, lip to lip.
It must be cold there, down in the grave!
You died! Two years ago!
Take me, I'll die by you.
I don't like the world.

It's bad, among these bad people,
I cry – they mock me and sneer;
I talk – no-one understands:
I see – they cannot see you!

Come in the daylight! Or when I sleep …?
No … I hold you in my hand.
Johnny, where are you going?
It's early, it is still early!

My God! The cock is crowing!
The dawn gleams in the window.
Where are you? Johnny, hold on!
Woe is me …"

In this way the two young lovers caress.
She runs, she cries, she falls.
People have heard her, the sound of her pain,
And they have gathered around.

Come, say your prayers! – The commoners cry:
Surely his soul must be here.
Those two young lovers belong together:
He loved her when he was alive!

I listen to it; I also believe;
I weep, I say my prayers.

Listen, girl, listen! – cried out an Old Man
Loudly, and turned to the crowd.
My eye and my lens! In these you trust!
There's nothing here I can see!

Ghosts! They are figments of foolish people;
Simpletons make these things up.
The girl is raving, babbling and blathering;
The mob blasphemes against reason.

The girl can feel it, I answer meekly,
And the crowd deeply believes.
I am more convinced by feeling and faith,
Than by scholarly eye and lens.

Dead are your truths, and unknown to the people;
Your world is powder, the twinkling of the stars.
You do not know wonders or the living truths,
Have a heart: look into the heart!

[*January 1821*]

Hymn na dzień Zwiastowania N.M.P.

Pokłon Przeczystej Rodzicy!
Nad niebiosa Twoje skronie,
Gwiazdami Twój wieniec płonie
    Jehowie na prawicy.

Ninie, dzień Tobie uświęcamy wierni,
Śród Twego błyśnij kościoła!
Oto na ziemię złożone czoła,
Oto śród niemej bojaźnią czerni
Powstaje prorok i woła:
Uderzam organ Twej chwale,
Lecz z bóstwa idzie godne bóstwa pienie,
Śród Twego błyśnij kościoła!
I spuść anielskie wejrzenie!
Duchy me bóstwem zapalę,
Głosu mi otwórz strumienie!

A zagrzmię pieśnią, jaką cheruby
Zagrzmią światu na skonanie,
Gdy proch zapadły w wieków otchłanie
    Ze snu nicości wybiją:
    Takim grzmotem Twoje chluby,
Gdzie piekło, gdzie gwiazdy świecą,
Nieskończoność niech oblecą,
    Wieczność przeżyją.

    – A któż to wschodzi? Wschodzi na Syjon dziewica;
Jak ranek z morskiej kąpieli
I jutrznia – Maryi lica;
Śnieży się obłok, słońce z ukosa
Smugiem złota po nim strzeli:
Taka na śniegu, co szaty bieli,
Powiewnego jasność włosa.

Pojrzał Jehowa i w Niej upodobał sobie;
Pękły niebios zwierciadła,
Biała gołąbka spadła
I nad Syjonem w równi trzyma skrzydła obie,
I srebrzystej pierzem tęczy
Niebianki skronie uwięczy.

Grom, błyskawica!
Stań się, stało:
Matką Dziewica.
Bóg ciało!

[*grudzień 1820*]

Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

O, purest Mother, let us honour Thee!
Your head is raised above the heavenly dome,
The twelve-starred crown is burning there on high,
    At the right hand of Jehova.

Today the faithful celebrate your feast:
Appear and shine amid your church!
Our foreheads touch the ground; we bow to you,
And suddenly among the speechless crowd
A prophet arises and cries aloud:
I strike the organ, glorifying you,
Though only the godlike can the godlike praise.
Appear and shine amid your church
And cast upon us your angelic eyes!
I will make spirits blaze with the Divine,
If you unleash the springs of song in me!

Then I will thunder with the very tune
With which the cherubim will shake the world
At its last hour, when the dust will rise
    From nothingness, and from the sleep of time.
    Your glory with such thunder is proclaimed
In Hell and Heaven, among the gleaming stars,
And circulates infinity,
    And lives eternally.

    – And who is rising so? It is the Maid
Coming to Zion. It is Mary's face:
The morning star; dawn bathing in the sea;
As snowy clouds are stricken by the sun
With golden lining coming from its beam:
Her glowing hair upon her garment white
Is flowing down as lightly as the wind.

Jehova saw her and he was well pleased.
Behold the shattered mirrors of the heavens,
Behold the whiteness of the falling dove
Which hangs above Mount Zion with even wings.
And with the feathers of the silver rainbow
The dove is crowning Mary's heavenly head.

Thunder, lightning!
Be it; it is.
Virgin – Mother,
God – flesh!

[*December 1820*]

Do M.Ł. w dzień przyjęcia komunii świętej

Dziś cię za stołem swym Chrystus ugościł,
Dziś Anioł tobie niejeden zazdrościł;
Ty spuszczasz oczy, które Bóstwem gorą!
Jak ty mnie swoją przerażasz pokorą!
Święta i skromna! – Grzesznicy nieczuli,
Gdy my w spoczynku skroń ospałą złożym,
Tobie, klęczącej przed Barankiem Bożym,
Jutrzeńka usta modlące się stuli.
Wtenczas zlatuje Anioł, twój obrońca,
Czysty i cichy, jak światło miesiąca:
Zasłonę marzeń powoli rozdziela,
A troskliwości pełen i wesela,
Z takim nad tobą schyla się objęciem,
Jak matka nad swym sennym niemowlęciem.
Jeżeli promień nieśmiertelnej łaski
Zbyt żywo w oczach Anioła jaśnieje,
I gdy się senna zbyt żywo rozśmieje:
Anioł łagodnie przygasza swe blaski,
Stula nad senną zasłonę marzenia
I odlatuje, biorąc twe westchnienia;
Lecz nim odleci, kładzie wdzięki nowe,
Jak nowe suknie dziecięciu pod głowę.
Tak się piastunka jego co dzień budzi,
Z nową miłością u Boga i ludzi.
Ja bym dni wszystkich rozkosz za nic ważył,
Gdybym noc jedną tak jak ty przemarzył.

[*styczeń 1830 r.*]

To M.Ł. at the Day of Taking the Holy Communion

Christ hosted you today at his great feast:
Today the angels envied you this gift;
Your eyes are blazing with the Godhead still!
How terrifying are your humble looks!
So holy and so modest! Whereas we,
The callous sinners, slumber in our beds.
You kneel before the Lamb, until the dawn
Will close your gentle lips to end your prayer.
And then your guardian Angel comes to you:
He's pure and quiet as the moonlight's glow:
He slowly separates the veil of dreams,
He leans down and he tends to you with care.
And with such joy he watches you in prayer
As mother sitting by her sleepy child.
And if the ray of the immortal grace
Is shining too intensely in his eyes
(Making the sleepy baby laugh too loud),
The Angel gently dims his brightness down,
Pulls back the veil of dreams and flies away,
Taking your sighs with him, and nothing more.
Before he goes, he leaves new charms to you,
As if new clothes slipped under baby's head.
His nurse is waking up each day like that:
With still new love from people and from God.
I would despise the pleasures of all days,
If only I could dream one night like that.

[*January 1830*]

Aryman i Oromaz

Z Zenda-Westy

W samym przepaści niezgłębionej środku,
W samym ciemności najgrubszym zarodku
Osiadł Aryman, jak złodziej ukryty,
Gniewny jako lew, jak wąż jadowity.

Onego czasu nadął się i dźwignął,
I wielką ciemność piersiami wyrzygnął,
I po ciemności, jak pająk po sieci,
Szczeblował w górę, tam, gdzie bóstwo świeci.
Oparł się o dnia i nocy granice,
Wynurzył głowę i podniósł źrenice.
A skoro ujrzał w samym niebios środku,
W samym jasności najczystszej zarodku,
Oromadesa, co śród tworów świeci,
Jak śród gwiazd słońce, jak ojciec śród dzieci;
Skoro na widok przedwiecznego słońca
Zły duch pomyślił o szczęściu bez końca:
Ta myśl, ogromna jako świata brzemię,
Z takim ciężarem padła mu na ciemię,
Że stracił siłę, runął na dół głową
Przez wieki wieków i osiadł na nowo
W samym przepaści niezgłębionej środku,
W samym ciemności najgrubszym zarodku.

1830.

Ahriman and Ormusd

from *Zend Avesta*

Within the deepest core of the abyss,
Right at the black germ of the thickest dark,
Dwells Ahriman: this hidden, wicked thief –
An angry lion and a poisonous snake.

He rose up, long ago, to his full height,
And vomited the darkness from his breast,
Upon this darkness, spider-like, he inched,
And up he climbed, towards the light of God.
First he leaned on the edge of day and night,
He poked his head and lifted his dark eyes.
And in an instant, right at Heaven's core,
Hard at the bright germ of the purest light,
He spotted Oromasdes who is like
The sun, the father of the shining stars.
In contemplating this eternal sun
His black heart wanted bliss which never ends:
This thought, as vast as the whole world itself,
Dropped heavily on his head, like a rock
He lost his strength; he slid downwards, headfirst.
Again he has to sit, forever now,
Within the deepest core of the abyss,
Right at the black germ of the thickest dark.

1830.

Arcymistrz

Jest mistrz, co wszystkie duchy wziął do chóru
I wszystkie serca nastroił do wtóru,
Wszystkie żywioły naciągnął jak struny:
A wodząc po nich wichry i pioruny,
Jedną pieśń śpiewa i gra od początku:
A świat dotychczas nie pojął jej wątku.

Mistrz, co malował na niebios błękicie
I malowidła odbił na tle fali,
Kolosów wzory rzezał na gór szczycie
I w głębi ziemi odlał je z metali:
A świat przez tyle wieków, z dzieł tak wiela,
Nie pojął jednej myśli tworzyciela.

Jest mistrz wymowy, co bożą potęgę
W niewielu słowach objawił przed ludem,
I całą swoich myśli i dzieł księgę
Sam wytłomaczył głosem, czynem, cudem;
Dotąd mistrz nazbyt wielkim był dla świata,
Dziś świat nim gardzi – poznawszy w nim brata.

Sztukmistrzu ziemski! czym są twe obrazy,
Czym są twe rzeźby i twoje wyrazy?
A ty się skarżysz, że ktoś w braci tłumie
Twych myśli i mów, i dzieł nie rozumie?
Spojrzyj na mistrza i cierp, boży synu,
Nieznany albo wzgardzony od gminu.

1830.

The Grand Master

There is a Master who took to his choir
All spirits, and made all one harmony.
He stretched out all four elements like strings,
Moving across them with lightnings and winds,
From the beginning singing this one song
Whose theme the world still does not comprehend.

There is a Master who painted the sky
And made the water all those shapes reflect.
He carved the patterns in the mountains' tops,
And moulded metals' shapes under the ground.
The world for ages could not comprehend
A single thought of those wonderful works.

There is a Master who in a few words
Revealed his power divine before the crowd,
And he explained the wonders of his book
In voice, in deed, in miracle, alike.
He has been far too great to comprehend,
When he became our brother—he's despised.

You worldly artist! Tell me, what are worth
Your paintings, and your sculptures, and your words?
You keep complaining that your neighbours' crowd
Can't comprehend the greatness of your art?
Look at the Master! Suffer, son of God,
That you're despised, unknown, ignored by all.

1830.

Mędrcy

W nieczułej, ale niespokojnej dumie
Usnęli mędrcy – wtem odgłos ich budzi,
Że Bóg widomie objawił się w tłumie
I o wieczności przemawia do ludzi:
»Zabić go – rzekli – spokojność nam miesza;
Lecz zabić we dnie? – obroni go rzesza.«

Więc mędrcy w nocy lampy zapalali,
I na swych księgach ostrzyli rozumy
Zimne i twarde, jak miecze ze stali;
I wziąwszy z sobą uczniów ślepych tłumy,
Szli łowić Boga – a zdrada na przedzie
Prostą ich drogą, ale zgubną wiedzie.

»Tyś to?« – krzyknęli na Maryi Syna. –
»Jam« – odpowiedział, i mędrcy pobladli:
»Ty jesteś?« – »Jam jest«. – Służalców drużyna
Uciekła w trwodze, mędrcy na twarz padli.
Lecz widząc, że Bóg straszy a nie karze,
Wstali przelękli, więc srożsi zbrodniarze.

I tajemnicze szaty z Boga zwlekli,
I szyderstwami ciało jego siekli,
I rozumami serce mu przebodli:
A Bóg ich kocha i za nich się modli!
Aż gdy do grobu duma go złożyła,
Wyszedł z ich duszy, ciemnej jak mogiła.

Spełnili mędrcy na Boga pogrzebie
Kielich swej pychy. – Natura w rozruchu
Drżała o Boga. Lecz pokój był w niebie:
Bóg żyje, tylko umarł w mędrców duchu.

[*1832*]

The Wise Men

The wise men slept in cold but anxious pride
And suddenly a loud voice woke them up:
For God revealed himself before the crowd
And came to preach eternity to them.
"Let's kill him – they have said – for meddling here!
But in broad daylight? They will fight for him."

The wise men kindled all their lamps all night
And on their books they sharpened Reason's blades
Which glittered hard and cold as dagger-steel.
They called for their disciples – blind as they –
To hunt for God, with treason in the lead,
On this straight path: it led them straight to Hell.

"Are you the one?" – they cried to Mary's Son;
"I am" – he said – and made them suddenly pale.
"It's really you?" – "I am" – the mob in fear
Fled. And the wise men fell flat on the ground.
God terrified them, but he did not strike,
So they rose up, more wicked in their fear.

And they tore off mysterious clothes of God
And whipped his body with malicious sneers,
And with their reasons pierced his loving heart:
But God still loves them and he prays for them!
When in a tomb their pride has laid him down,
He's left their blinded souls as dark as graves.

The wise men drank the chalice of their pride
During God's funeral. All Nature shook
In fear, but in the heavens there was peace.
God lives. He's dead only within the wise.

[*1832*]

Rozum i wiara

Kiedy rozumne, gromowładne czoło
Zgiąłem przed Panem, jak chmurę przed słońcem,
Pan je wzniósł w niebo jako tęczy koło
I umalował promieni tysiącem.

I będzie błyszczyć na świadectwo wierze,
Gdy luną klęski z niebieskiego stropu;
I gdy mój naród zlęknie się potopu,
Spojrzy na tęczę i wspomni przymierze.

Panie! Mą pychę duch pokory wzniecił;
Choć górnie błyszczę na niebios błękicie,
Panie! jam blaskiem nie swoim zaświecił,
Mój blask jest słabe twych ogniów odbicie!

Przejrzałem niskie ludzkości obszary
Z różnych jej mniemań i barwą i szumem:
Wielkie i mętne, gdym patrzył rozumem,
Małe i jasne przed oczyma wiary.

I was dostrzegam, o dumni badacze,
Gdy wami burza jak śmieciem pomiata,
Zamknięci w sobie, jak w konchy ślimacze,
Chcieliście mali obejrzeć krąg świata.

Konieczność – rzekli – wedle ślepej woli
Panuje światu, jako księżyc morzu.
A drudzy rzekli: Przypadek swawoli
W ludziach, jak wiatry w nadziemskim przestworzu.

Jest Pan, co objął oceanu fale
I ziemię wiecznie kazał mu zamącać;
Ale granicę wykował na skale,
O którą wiecznie będzie się roztrącać.

Darmo chce powstać z ziemnego pogrzebu,
Ruchomy wiecznie, ruchem swym nie władnie:
Im wyżej buchnął, tym głębiej upadnie,
Wznosząc się wiecznie, nie wzniesie ku niebu.

A promień światła, który słońce rzuci,
Na szumnej morza igrając topieli,
Nie tonie, tylko w tęczę się rozdzieli,
I znowu w niebo, skąd wyszedł, powróci.

Rozumie ludzki! tyś mały przed Panem,
Tyś kroplą w Jego wszechmogącej dłoni.
Świat cię niezmiernym zowie oceanem,
I chce ku niemu na twej wzlecieć toni.

Zdajesz się tykać brzegów widnokręga;
Daremnie z żaglem nawa leci chyża,
Opływa ziemię, niebios nie dosięga:
Twa fala nigdy ku niebu nie zbliża.

Wzdymasz się, płaszczysz, czernisz się i błyskasz,
Otchłanie ryjesz i w górę się ciskasz,
Powietrze ciemnisz chmurami mokremi,
I spadasz z gradem – tyś zawsze na ziemi!

A promień Wiary, którą Niebo wznieca,
Topi twe krople, zapala twe gromy,
I twe pogodne zwierciadła oświeca;
Ach! ty bez Wiary byłbyś niewidomy.

[*1832*]

Reason and Faith

When I have bowed proud reason and my head
Before the Lord like clouds before the sun:
The Lord raised them up like a rainbow bright
And painted them with myriad dazzling rays.

And it will shine, a witness to our faith,
When from the heavenly dome disaster flows;
And when we fear the flood, the rainbow will
Remind us of the covenant once more.

Oh, Lord! Humility has made me proud,
For even though I shine in heavenly realm –
My Lord! – the shine's not mine! It's but a weak
Reflection of your glorious, dazzling fires!

I looked upon the lowly realms of Man,
On his opinions' varying tones and hues:
To reason they appeared large and confused,
But to the eyes of faith they're small, and clear.

All the proud scholars! Also you I see!
The storm is throwing you around like trash.
You are enclosed like snails in little shells,
While you desire to comprehend the globe.

They claim: "Necessity! It blindly rules
The world like the moon which governs the waves."
While others say: "It's Accident which plays
In Man like winds that frolic in the sky."

There is a Lord who has embraced the sea
And made it trouble Earth eternally;
But carved for it the boundary in rock,
Designed to act as an eternal check.

It tries in vain to rise from its dark tomb,
But cannot master its chaotic waves:
So high it aims, so low it has to fall,
And it will never reach the sky it craves.

The ray of sunlight cast upon the sea,
Which on the noisy surface plays with joy,
Becomes a rainbow; and it does not sink,
But rather travels back to whence it came.

Oh, Reason! You're so small before the Lord,
You're but a droplet in his mighty hand.
The world believes you are vast as the sea
And on your waves it wants to fly to him.

You seem to touch the far horizon's edge:
In vain, however, ships so swiftly run,
For they will never touch the heaven's edge,
And your blue waves will never reach the sky.

You puff out, you lay flat, blacken and gloat,
You dig through the abyss, you jump up high,
you darken with wet clouds the air above
you fall with hail – but you belong to Earth!

The ray of Faith which Heaven sends from high
Will melt your drops and it will fire your lights,
It will enlighten all your mirrors bright;
O, without Faith you would be wholly blind!

[*1832*]

Rozmowa wieczorna

I

Z Tobą ja gadam, co królujesz w niebie,
A razem gościsz w domku mego ducha;
Gdy północ wszystko w ciemnościach zagrzebie
I czuwa tylko zgryzota i skrucha,
Z Tobą ja gadam! Słów nie mam dla Ciebie:
Myśl Twoja każdej myśli mej wysłucha;
Najdalej władasz i służysz w pobliżu,
Król na niebiosach, w sercu mym na krzyżu!

I każda dobra myśl jak promień wraca
Znowu do Ciebie, do źródła, do słońca,
I nazad płynąc znowu mię ozłaca,
Śle blask, blask biorę i blask mam za gońca.
I każda dobra chęć Ciebie wzbogaca,
I znowu za nię płacisz mi bez końca,
Jak Ty na niebie, Twój sługa, Twe dziecię
Niech się tak cieszy, tak błyszczy na świecie.

Tyś król, o cuda! I Tyś mój poddany!
Każda myśl podła jako włócznia nowa
Otwiera Twoje niezgojone rany,
I każda chęć zła, jak gąbka octowa,
Którą do ust Twych zbliżam zagniewany.
Póki Cię moja złość w grobie nie schowa,
Cierpisz jak sługa panu zaprzedany:
Jak Ty na krzyżu, Twój pan, Twoje dziecię,
Niechaj tak cierpi i kocha na świecie.

II

Kiedym bliźniemu odsłonił myśl chorą
I wątpliwości raka, co ją toczy,
Zły wnet ucieczką ratował się skorą;
Dobry zapłakał, lecz odwracał oczy.
Lekarzu wielki! Ty najlepiej widzisz
Chorobę moją, a mną się nie brzydzisz!

Gdym wobec bliźnich dobył z głębi duszy
Głos przeraźliwszy, niźli jęk cierpienia,
Głos wiecznie grzmiący w piekielnej katuszy,
Cichy na ziemi – głos złego sumienia!
Sędzio straszliwy! Tyś ognie rozdmuchał!
Sumieniu złemu – a Tyś mnie wysłuchał.

III

Gdy mię spokojnym zowią dzieci świata,
Burzliwą duszę kryję przed ich okiem,
I obojętna duma, jak mgły szata,
Wnętrzne pioruny pozłaca obłokiem;
I tylko w nocy – cicho – na Twe łono
Wylewam burzę we łzy roztopioną.

[*1831–1832*]

Evening Conversation

I

I chat with you, my Lord, who reign in heaven,
But whom my spirit's little house can host:
When midnight in the darkness buries all,
And only guilty conscience keeps its watch.
I chat with you! Although my words have failed,
Your every thought my every thought will hear:
You rule so far away and yet you're here
To serve: the crucified king in my heart!

And every good thought like a ray returns
Back to the source, to you, like to the sun,
And then flows back to me: I shine like gold:
You send light – I take light – sending light back.
For every good intent enriches you;
You pay me back again, and without end.
Make me, your servant and your dearest child,
Shine here with joy as you do in your heaven.

You are the king! O wonders: but you serve!
And every wicked thought pierces your heart,
And opens all your burning wounds anew.
Each evil thought is like a vinegar sponge
That in my malice I raise to your mouth,

Till my depravity sends you gravewards,
You suffer like a slave sold out to me.
Make me, your master and your child, love thus
And suffer thus as you did on the cross.

II

When to my neighbour all my sickly thoughts
I showed, and all my cancerous doubts I shared:
An evil neighbour quickly ran away;
The good one wept, but turned away his eyes.
O great physician! You so clearly see
My hideous sickness, and you never wince!

I cry out from the bottom of my soul
In a dreadful voice, worse than painful moans:
Infernal torture! Although here on earth
It is a pang of conscience, which is Hell.
O dreadful Judge! You blew the fire up,
While only you, my Lord, could hear me out.

III

The children of this world say I am calm,
Because I hide my stormy soul from them:
And callous pride in me is like a cloth
Of golden mist which covers fire within.
Only at night may I pour out the storm
Of tears, and at your bosom gently weep.

[*1831–1832*]

Do samotności

Samotności! do ciebie biegnę jak do wody
Z codziennych życia upałów;
Z jakąż rozkoszą padam w jasne, czyste chłody
Twych niezgłębionych kryształów.

Nurzam się i wybijam w myślach nad myślami,
Igram z niemi jak z falami:
Aż ostygły, znużony, złożę moje zwłoki –
Choć na chwilę – w sen głęboki.

Tyś mój żywioł: ach, za coż te jasnych wód szyby
Studzą mi serce, zmysły zaciemiają mrokiem,
I za coż znowu muszę, na kształt ptaka-ryby,
Wyrywać się w powietrze słońca szukać okiem?

I bez oddechu w górze, bez ciepła na dole,
Równie jestem wygnańcem w oboim żywiole!

[*wiosna 1832*]

To Solitude

O, solitude! To you I rush as to water,
Escaping from the heat of daily life:
With such delight I fall into your cooling light
Into your bottomless, crystalline depth.

I dive and I leap up to the thoughts above my thoughts,
I play with them as if they were waves,
Until, cooled down, I lay my corpse to sleep,
To give it rest, at least, just for a while.

You are my element! This watery clear glass
Cools down my heart and covers the senses in the dark,
Why, oh why do I have to be this bird-fish thing
That throws itself into the air to seek the sun?

Thus, without breath above, and without warmth below,
There and here, I ever remain an exile all the same!

[*spring 1832*]

[Śniła się zima ...]

Miałem sen w Dreźnie 1832, marca 23,
który ciemny i dla mnie niezrozumiany.
Wstawszy zapisałem go wierszem.
Teraz, 1840, przepisuję dla pamiątki.

Śniła się zima; ja biegłem w szeregu,
Za procesyją pod niebem, po śniegu.
Nie wiem, skąd wiemy, że na brzeg Jordanu
Idziem, i w górze odgłos: »Chwała Panu,
Pokój trzem królom, ludy! do Jordanu!«
Ludzie obok mnie szli dwoma rzędami,
Kobiety, starce i dzieci parami;
W bieli ubrani ci, co z prawej strony;
Ci, co na lewo, w żałobne opony,
Szli ze świecami w dół obróconemi;
Świece gorzały płomieniem do ziemi,
Jak złote strzały.
A ci bez światła szli, co po prawicy:
Każdy z nich w ręku niósł kwiat, zamiast świécy.
Spojrzałem w twarze: są i mnie znajome;
Zląkłem się: wszystkie jak głaz nieruchome.
Jedna osoba wyszła z prawej strony:
Kobieta, świeci okiem przez zasłony.
Stanęła przy mnie; wtem wybiegł chłopczyna
I o jałmużnę dla ojca zaklina.
Dałem grosz, ona dała tyle dwoje.
Znowu sześć dałem, ona znów we dwoje.
Zbiegli się widze; po złoto sięgamy,
Kto z nas da więcej, dajemy, szukamy,
Wstyd nam! już wszystko daliśmy, co mamy.
Lud łajał chłopcu: »Oddaj im, żartują!«
»Oddam – rzekł chłopiec – jeżeli żałują.«
Lecz nazad przyjąć już mi się nie chciało,
Postać mnie ręką przeżegnała białą.

*

Wtem weszło słońce – lato – śnieg nie spłynął,
Lecz jak ptak biały dwa skrzydła rozwinął
I skacząc leciał; niebo się odkryło
I wkoło ciepło i błękitno było!
Uczułem zapach Włoch, róż i jaźminu,
Różą pachnęły góry Palatynu.
Ujrzałem Ewę,
Jaką widziałem na Albańskiej Górze,
W białej sukience i ubraną w róże;
Motyle wkoło, ona między niemi
Zdała się wznosić i nie tykać ziemi;
Twarz piękna jako Przemienienie Pańskie.
Wzrok utopiła w Jezioro Albańskie;
Ciekawie patrzy, nie ruszy powieki,
Jakby w tej głębi modrej i dalekiej
Odbite swoje oblicze widziała
I przed jeziorem róże poprawiała.
Chciałem przywitać, lecz siły nie miałem,
Z gwałtownej chęci mówić – oniemiałem;
Lecz rozkosz moja, ach, ta rozkosz senna,
Któż ją opowie? – mocniejsza niż dzienna,
Lżejsza i milsza: jawa ma żar słońca,
A sen łagodność i ciszę miesiąca.
Za ręce wreszcie jak siostrę ująłem;
Spojrzała ku mnie okiem niewesołem.
»O siostro moja! patrząc w to twe oko,
Czuję me szczęście tak dziwnie głęboko,
Że mi się zdaje, że jestem w kościele.«
Ona mi rzekła z uśmiechem dziecięcia:
»Rodzice moi chcą mnie z innym swatać,
Lecz ja jaskółka chcę daleko latać;
Mam skrzydła dobre, patrz, jaki ptak ze mnie!
Lecę popłukać pióra moje w Niemnie.
Wiem ja o twoich wszystkich przyjaciołach,

Znajdę ich, leżą w grobach, po kościołach.
Muszę i w lasy, w jeziora przepadać,
I drzew popytać, i z ziółkami gadać,
One o tobie dziwne rzeczy wiedzą,
Wszystko, gdzieś chodził, coś robił, powiedzą.«
Słuchałem – i mnie nie zdała się ciemna
Jej mowa, choć tak dziwna i tajemna.
I mnie się zdało, że sam lecieć mogę,
I prosiłem ją, by mnie wzięła w drogę.
Zląkłem się tylko, że chce na doliny
Iść, pytać o mnie drzewa i krzewiny.
I przypomniałem nagle wszystkie błędy,
Chwile pustoty, szaleństwa zapędy,
I czułem serce tak mocno rozdarte,
Tak jej i szczęścia, i nieba niewarte.
Wtem obaczyłem jaskółkę, z powrotem
Już leci; za nią jakby wojsko czarne:
Sosny i lipy, piołuny i cząbry,
Świadczyć przeciwko mnie –

Przebudziłem się – z obliczem ku niebu,
Z rękami na krzyż, jakby do pogrzebu.
Sen mój był cichy. Łzy jeszcze płynęły
Gęsto po licach, i jeszcze wionęły
Świeżym zapachem i Włoch, i jaźminu,
I Gór Albańskich, i róż Palatynu –

Wiersze te były pisane, jak przychodziły, bez namysłu i poprawek.

[I Dreamt of Winter ...]

I had a dream in Dresden on the 23rd of March 1832,
which was obscure and unintelligible to me.
Having got up, I wrote it down in verse.
Now (1840), I copy it for the sake of memory.

I dreamt of winter. Running through the snow
I followed some procession which marched on.
I knew, I don't know how, that we all went
Towards the river Jordan. A voice cried:
"Oh, people, praise the Lord: peace to Three Kings!
To Jordan!" We were moving in two rows,
Men, women, children, all marching in pairs.
Those who were on the right were clothed in white,
Those on the left were clad in mournful black,
And walking with their candles upside down:
Their flames were burning downwards to the ground,
Like golden arrows.
Those on the right were marching without light,
They carried flowers, not those candle flames.
I saw the faces: some of them I knew.
I feared them: for they looked as hard as stone.
Then suddenly a woman from the right
Approached me, with her eyes behind a veil.
Meanwhile, there stood a boy right by my side:
He begged for money for his father's sake.
I handed him a penny; she gave two.
I gave him six; she doubled that again.
The crowd was watching us, while we in turn
Were searching through our pockets for some change,
Embarrassed, for we had nothing to give.
The crowd said to the boy: "Stop playing games!
And give them back their gold." He said: "I will,
If they repent." But I said no to him.
The woman blessed me with her snow-white hand.

*

The sun has risen and the summer's come.
Snow didn't melt, but spread its wings to fly:
Like a white bird it leapt towards the sky.
The sky was open; it was warm and blue!
The scent of jasmine, and of Italy,
Of roses fresh, and of the Palatine.
And I saw Ewa,
Like when I saw her in the Alban Hills,
In her white dress and roses. Butterflies
Flew all around her, while she hovered there
Among them, barely standing on the ground.
Her face was fair like the transfigured Christ:
She gazed at Lake Albano and stood still,
As if she saw her own reflection there
In that blue water, so remote and clear,
Gazing intently with wide-open eyes,
As if to fix the roses in her hair.
I couldn't greet her, even though I tried:
It was the urge to speak that made me mute.
But that delight of mine, that night-dream's bliss!
Who'd voice it? – stronger than that of the day,
It's light, and nice. Daydreaming's hot as the sun;
Night-dreaming has the moon's gentle silence

I took her, like a sister, by the hand,
And she returned my look with saddened eyes.
"My sister, when I look into your eyes,
I feel such joy as that which one can feel
Only at church. It penetrates so deep!"

Then with a childlike smile she said to me:
"My parents will give me to someone else!
But I'm a sparrow, flying far away;
I have good wings: look here, I am a bird!

I fly to Niemen to wash feathers there.
I know your friends all lie in graveyards, dead:
I'll find them in their graves or else at church.
I'll fly into the woods, over the lakes,
To ask the trees, and gossip with the herbs:
They know all about you, and your strange deeds;
They'll tell me where you went and what you did."
I listened to her dark, mysterious speech;
I understood it and I thought I could
Fly there with her. I asked her to take me.
I only feared that she might talk to trees
To ask about me and all that I did.
For I remembered suddenly my sins,
Moments of folly and of vanity,
I felt my heart as torn and of her love
Unworthy – and of joy and paradise.
But then I saw a sparrow coming back,
As she was followed by some darkling hosts
Of pines and limes, of savory and wormwood.
To bear witness against me.

Then I woke up with face turned to the sky,
My hands crossed on my chest, as in a grave.
My dream was quiet. Tears flowed down my cheeks
And smelled as sweet and fresh as Italy,
They smelled like jasmine, like the Alban Hills,
And like fresh roses and the Palatine.

Those verses were written as they were coming, without consideration or correction.

[Broń mnie przed sobą samym ...]

Broń mnie przed sobą samym – maszże dość potęgi;
Są chwile, w których na wskroś widzę Twoje księgi,
Jak słońce mgłę przeziera, która ludziom złotą,
Brylantową zdaje się, a słońcu – ciemnotą.
Człowiek większy nad słońce wie, że ta powłoka
Złota, ciemna jest tylko tworem jego oka.
Oko w oko utapiam w Tobie me źrenice,
Chwytam Ciebie rękami za obie prawice
I krzyczę na głos cały: wydaj tajemnicę!
Dowiedź, żeś jest mocniejszy, lub wyznaj, że tyle
Tylko ile ja możesz w mądrości i sile.
Nie znasz początku Twego, a czyż ludzkie plemię
Wie, od jakiego czasu upadło na ziemię?
Bawisz się tylko ciągle, badając sam siebie?
Coż robi rodzaj ludzki? – w swych dziejach się grzebie.
Twoja mądrość samego siebie nie dociecze?
A czyliż samo siebie zna plemię człowiecze?
Jeden masz nieśmiertelność, my czy jej nie mamy?
I znasz siebie, i nie znasz, my czy siebie znamy?
Końca Twojego nie znasz, my kiedyż się skończym?
Dzielisz się, łączysz, i my dzielim się i łączym.
Tyś różny, i my zawsze myślą rozróżnieni.
Tyś jeden, i my zawsze sercem połączeni.
Tyś potężny w niebiosach, my tam gwiazdy śledzim.
Wielkiś w morzach, my po nich jeździm, głąb ich zwiedzim.
O Ty, co świecąc nie znasz wschodu i zachodu,
Powiedz, czym się Ty różnisz od ludzkiego rodu!
Toczysz walkę z szatanem w niebie i na ziemi,
My walczym w sobie, w świecie z chęciami własnemi.
Ty sam na siebie wdziałeś raz postać człowieka,
Powiedz, czyś wziął na chwilę, czyś ją miał od wieka?

[*1833–1836?*]

[Defend Me from Myself …]

Defend me from myself: you have the power;
For sometimes I can see your books right through,
Like sunlight's beams which penetrate the fog:
To us it's golden; to the sun it's dark.
Yet we are greater than the sun and know
That gold-dark veil was made by our own eyes.
I see you, eye to eye, and by the hands
I hold you and I cry: "Reveal yourself!"
Then overpower me or else confess
That you but equal me in strength and wit.
Your own beginning is unknown to you:
And do we know how long we've been on earth?
You play self-searching from eternity,
And what do we? We dig through history.
Your wisdom cannot penetrate your depth.
Can we fathom ourselves? We never can.
You know not death; we are immortal too;
You know yourself and yet remain unknown,
As we don't know ourselves. When will you end?
And when will we? You join, divide yourself,
As we divide and join ourselves as well.
You are distinct: we differ by our thoughts;
You are the same; we are one in the heart.
You're mighty in the sky, we watch the stars;
You are great in the seas, we've made it ours.
Your brilliance knows no sunrise or sunset:
Then tell me how you differ from mankind.
You fight the devil in heaven, and on earth;
As we wage war within against our whims.
You took the form of Man. Just for a while?
Or did you have it since all time began?

[*1833–1836?*]

[Pytasz, za co Bóg trochą sławy mię ozdobił …]

Pytasz, za co Bóg trochą sławy mię ozdobił;
Za to, com myślił i chciał, nie za to, com zrobił.
Myśli i chęci jest to poezyja w świecie:
Wykwita i opada, jak kwiat w jednym lecie.
Lecz uczynki, jak ziarna w głąb ziemi zaryte,
Aż na przyszły rok ziarna wydadzą obfite.
Przyjdzie czas, gdy błyszczące imiona pogniją,
Z cichych ziaren wywite kłosy świat okryją.
Huk mija, musim minąć z blaskiem i gawędą.
Błogosławieni cisi, oni świat posiędą.
Niech prawdę zrozumie, kto Chrystusa słyszy;
Kto pragnie ziemię posiąść, niechaj siedzi w ciszy.

[*1833–1836?*]

[You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Little Fame ...]

You ask me why the Lord gave me a little fame?
For what I thought and wanted, not for what I've done.
The poetry of life is our desires and thoughts:
They bloom like flowers in spring, they wither and are gone.
But deeds are just like seeds which, buried in the soil,
The next year bear the fruit and the wealth of new seeds.
A time will come when the glittering names will rot,
While quiet seeds will grow and cover the whole world.
Noise passes; we must pass, with all the shine and talk.
Only the meek are blessed: they will possess the world.
But listen to Christ's words and understand the truth:
Who wants to possess the earth, must first in silence sit.

[*1833–1836*]

[Gęby za lud krzyczące …]

Gęby za lud krzyczące sam lud w końcu znudzą,
I twarze lud bawiące na koniec lud znudzą.
Ręce za lud walczące sam lud poobcina.
Imion miłych ludowi lud pozapomina.
Wszystko przejdzie, po huku, po szumie, po trudzie
Wezmą dziedzictwo cisi, ciemni, mali ludzie.

[*1833–1836?*]

[Gobs who Yell in the Name of the People …]

Gobs who yell in the name of the people will bore the people,
The faces entertaining the people will bore the people.
The hands that fight for the people will be cut out by them;
The people will also forget their favourite names.
Soon this all will pass. And after noise, and roars, and work,
The meek, the dim and the small will then inherit the world.

[*1833–1836?*]

Widzenie

Dźwięk mię uderzył – nagle moje ciało
Jak ów kwiat polny, otoczony puchem,
Prysło, zerwane anioła podmuchem,
I ziarno duszy nagie pozostało.
I zdaje mi się, żem się nagle zbudził
Ze snu strasznego, co mię długo trudził.
I jak zbudzony ociera pot z czoła,
Tak ocierałem moje przeszłe czyny,
Które wisiały przy mnie jak łupiny
Wokoło świeżo rozkwitłego zioła.
Ziemię i cały świat, co mię otaczał,
Gdzie dawniej dla mnie tyle było ciemnic,
Tyle zagadek i tyle tajemnic,
I nad którymi jam dawniej rozpaczał,
Teraz widział[em] jak[o] [w] wodzie na dn[ie,]
Gdy [na] nią ciemną promień słońca padnie.
Teraz widziałem całe wielkie morze
Płynące z środka, jak ze źródła, z Boga,
A w nim rozlana była światłość błoga.
I mogłem latać po całym przestworze,
Biegać, jak promień przy boskim promieniu
Mądrości bożej; i w dziwnym widzeniu
I światłem byłem, i źrenicą razem.
I w pierwszym jednym rozlałem się błysku
Nad przyrodzenia całego obrazem;
W każdy punkt moje rzuciłem promienie,
A w środku siebie, jakoby w ognisku,
Czułem od razu całe przyrodzenie.
Stałem się osią w nieskończonem kole,
Sam nieruchomy, czułem jego ruchy,
Byłem w pierwotnych żywiołów żywiole,
W miejscu, skąd wszystkie rozchodzą się duchy
Świat ruszające, same nieruchome,
Jako promienie, co ze środka słońca

Leją potoki blasku i gorąca,
A słońce w środku stoi niewidome.
I byłem razem na okręgu koła,
Które się wiecznie rozszerza bez końca
I nigdy bóstwa ogarnąć nie zdoła.
I dusza moja, krąg napełniająca,
Czułem, że wiecznie będzie się rozżarzać
I wiecznie będzie ognia jej przybywać;
Będzie się wiecznie rozwijać, rozpływać,
Rosnąć, rozjaśniać, rozlewać się – stwarzać,
I coraz mocniej kochać swe stworzenie,
I tym powiększać coraz swe zbawienie.
Przeszedłem ludzkie ciała, jak przebiega
Promień przez wodę, ale nie przylega
Do żadnej kropli: wszystkie na wskroś zmaca
I wiecznie czysty przybywa i wraca,
I uczy wodę, skąd się światło leje,
I słońcu mówi, co się w wodzie dzieje.
Stały otworem ludzkich serc podwoje,
Patrzyłem w czaszki, jak alchymik w słoje.
Widziałem, jakie człek żądze zapalał,
Jakie i kiedy myśli sobie nalał,
Jakie lekarstwa, jakie trucizn wary
Gotował skrycie. A dokoła stali
Duchowie czarni, aniołowie biali,
Skrzydłami studząc albo niecąc żary,
Nieprzyjaciele i obrońcy duszni,
Śmiejąc się, płacząc – a zawsze posłuszni
Temu, którego trzymali w objęciu,
Jak jest posłuszna piastunka dziecięciu,
Które jej ojciec, Pan wielki, poruczy,
Choć ta na dobre, a ta na złe uczy.

[*1835–1836*]

Vision

A sound has struck me. Suddenly my flesh,
Was puffed away just like a dandelion–down
By an angel's breath, exposing my soul's seed.
It seemed to me that I'd just woken up
From hideous dreams that long tormented me.
I rubbed away what I did in the past,
As someone rubs away the sweat, relieved:
They fell away as husks do from fresh herbs.
The world that, up till now, surrounded me
And seemed to me opaque, completely dark
(So many mysteries to puzzle me!),
Now laid as at the bottom of a pool,
When rays of sunlight fall into its depths.
And all was like the ocean that I saw
Flowing from God – the Centre – as its spring,
And blissful light was spreading everywhere
And I could fly up in the air and speed
Just like a ray of light along the Ray
Of God's own Wisdom. I was both an eye
And light in this strange vision: all at once.
I poured myself out over everything,
I saw the whole of Nature in a flash of light
I cast my spirit's rays at every place
I felt it all inside me at this point.
I was the axis of the boundless wheel:
Though motionless, I felt its every move:
I was within the first of elements,
Whence all the spirits come, which move the world,
While they remain at rest. They're like the springs
Of light and heat, which pour out from the sun
At centre, like the rays which spread around,
While it remains unseen in its dark depth.
I saw the outer rim of this great wheel
Expanding endlessly, eternal, vast,

But still unable to encompass God.
My soul was filling out that boundless sphere
(Which burnt, I felt, for all eternity),
And she was also burning more and more
In her expanding, flowing, shining growth.
My soul will pour out in creative acts:
She will love her creation, knowing well
She will be saved and in salvation grow.
I went through human bodies like a ray
Which runs through water without clinging fast
To any of its droplets. Thus the ray
Teaches dark waters, whence the sunlight comes,
And then returns back to the sun to tell
Of all the things that happened down below.
I saw the open gates of human hearts
And I was looking deep into the skulls
As alchemists examine secret jars.
I saw the people's lusts and all those thoughts
Which they were pouring into their own hearts:
What poisons and what medicines they brewed!
And countless spirits I saw all around,
Black demons and white angels. They were there
To cool the jars, or else to stir the flames.
Those white protectors and black enemies
May laugh or cry, but still they must obey
Each soul that they were cradling in their arms,
As an obedient nurse cares for a child
Whom the Great Lord, his father, gave to her,
Though this nurse is for good, that one for ill.

[*1835–1836*]

[Żal rozrzutnika]

Kochanek, druhów, ileż was spotkałem,
Ileż to oczu, jak gwiazd przeleciało,
Ileż to rączek, tonąc, uściskałem:
A serce? nigdy z sercem nie gadało.
Wylałem wiele z serca, jak ze skrzyni
Młody rozrzutnik! lecz dłużnicy moi
Nic nie oddali. Któż dzisiaj obwini,
Że się rozrzutnik spostrzegł, że się boi
Zwierzać w niepewne i nieznane ręce?

Żegnam was, żegnam, nadobne dziewice;
Żegnam was, żegnam, o druhy młodzieńce!
Rozrzutnik młody, resztę skarbu schwycę,
W ziemię zakopię; nie czas resztę tracić.
Już czuję starość: mam żebrać w potrzebie?
Znalazłem tego, co zdoła zapłacić
Rzetelnie, z lichwą i na czas – On w niebie!...

[The Profligate's Regrets]

Oh lovers, friends! how many I have had!
How many eyes like stars have passed me by!
How many hands I grasped while sinking down!
My heart? It never talked from heart to heart.
And I gave much, like a young profligate
Who gives money away. But those who owed
Gave nothing back to me. Who are to blame?
The profligate's a fool! Now he's afraid
To put his trust in doubtful, unknown hands!
So fare you well, all of you, beautiful girls!
So fare you well, all of you, my young lads!
I'll grab my treasure or what's left of it,
And I shall bury it: no time to lose!
Old age is coming soon. Am I to beg?
I found the One who will repay on time,
With interest. Where is he? In heaven he dwells.

[*1835–1836*]

[Veni Creator]

Przyjdź, Duchu Stworzycielu,
Myśli Twoich (wiernych) nawiedź,
Napełnij łaską niebieską
Piersi, któreś stworzył.

O Ty którego zowią Jasnością najwyższą,
Darem Boga Najwyższego,
Źródłem Żywym, ogniem, miłością
I duchownym balsamem.

Ty, siedmioraki w darach,
Któryś jest palcem prawicy Bożej,
Wedle obietnicy Ojca
Wzbogacający mową usta.

Zapal światłość w zmysłach,
Wlej miłość w serca,
Dolegliwości naszego ciała
Twoją siłą pokrzep.

Nieprzyjaciela odpędź daleko,
Pokojem udaruj rychło.
Za Toba, idąc jak za wodzem,
Obyśmy uniknęli wszelkiej szkody.

Daj, abyśmy przez Ciebie pojęli Ojca,
    I uznali Syna,
I uwierzyli na zawsze w Ciebie, Ducha,
Od obudwu pochodzącego.

Niech będzie chwała Ojcu, chwała Synowi
    I równa chwała Tobie, Duchu!
    Za którego natchnieniem
Myśl ludzka świeci się i płonie świętymi ogniami.

[*1835*]

[Veni Creator]

Come, Creator Spirit,
Visit the thoughts of Your faithful,
Fill with heavenly grace
The breasts which you created.

You, who are called the highest Brightness,
The Gift of the highest God,
A living spring, fire, love,
And a spiritual balsam.

You, sevenfold in your gifts,
Who are the finger of God's right hand,
According to the Father's promise
Enriching our mouths with speech.

Kindle light in our senses,
Pour love into our hearts,
Strengthen our flesh against ailments
With your strength.

Chase far away the Enemy,
Swiftly bestow peace on us.
Following you as our chief,
May we avoid every harm.

Grant us that, through You, we may understand the Father
And acknowledge the Son,
And believe forever in You
Who proceed from both.

Glory to the Father, glory to the Son,
And equal glory to You, Spirit!
It is by Your inspiration
That the human thought shines and burns with holy flames.

[*1835*]

[Snuć miłość ...]

Snuć miłość, jak jedwabnik nić wnętrzem swym snuje,
Lać ją z serca, jak źródło wodę z wnętrza leje,
Rozwijać ją jak złotą blachę, gdy się kuje
Z ziarna złotego; puszczać ją w głąb, jak nurtuje
Źródło pod ziemią. – W górę wiać nią, jak wiatr wieje,
Po ziemi ją rozsypać, jak się zboże sieje.
Ludziom piastować, jako matka swych piastuje.

Stąd będzie naprzód moc twa, jak moc przyrodzenia,
A potem będzie moc twa jako moc żywiołów,
A potem będzie moc twa jako moc krzewienia,
Potem jak ludzi, potem jako moc aniołów,
A w końcu będzie jako moc Stwórcy stworzenia.

1839, Lausanne.

[Spin Love ...]

Spin love like silkworms, from the source within,
Pour it out like water coming from a spring,
Forge it like golden brass from golden seeds,
Let it come back inside as hidden streams.
Let it blow up like wind into the sky,
Let it be sown like corn into the soil,
Nurse it maternally for others' sake.

And if you do it, first your power will be
Like Nature's energy in elements,
Then like the power of growth and life, and Man,
Then it will be like angels'. In the end,
It will be the Creator's power divine.

1839, Lausanne

[Nad wodą wielką i czystą ...]

Nad wodą wielką i czystą
Stały rzędami opoki
I woda tonią przejrzystą
Odbiła twarze ich czarne;

Nad wodą wielką i czystą
Przebiegły czarne obłoki,
I woda tonią przejrzystą
Odbiła kształty ich marne;

Nad wodą wielką i czystą
Błysnęło wzdłuż i grom ryknął
I woda tonią przejrzystą
Odbiła światło, głos zniknął.

A woda, jak dawniej czysta,
Stoi wielka i przejrzysta.

Tę wodę widzę dokoła
I wszystko wiernie odbijam,
I dumne opoki czoła,
I błyskawice – pomijam.

Skałom trzeba stać i grozić,
Obłokom deszcze przewozić,
Błyskawicom grzmieć i ginąć,
Mnie płynąć, płynąć i płynąć! –

W Lozannie [*1839–1840*]

[Above the Water Great and Clear ...]

Above the water great and clear,
The rows of stony mountains stood:
The watery transparent depths

Reflected their cold and black heads.

Above the water great and clear,
Dark clouds were running swiftly by,
And its transparent, darkling depth,
Reflected their unbodied shape.

Above the water great and clear,
Lightning struck and thunder roared;
And its transparent, darkling depth
Reflected light, and all was still.

The water, as pure as before,
Abides in peace, so great and clear.

I see this water everywhere,
I mirror all things faithfully;
I let those rocky faces pass;
I let thunder and lightning go.

The mountains stand and they must loom,
The rapid clouds must carry rain.
Lightning must strike and fade away.
And I must flow, and flow, and flow.

In Lausanne [*1839–1840*]

[Gdy tu mój trup ...]

Gdy tu mój trup w pośrodku was zasiada,
W oczy zagląda wam i głośno gada,
Dusza w ten czas daleka, ach, daleka,
Błąka się i narzeka, ach, narzeka!

Jest u mnie kraj, ojczyzna myśli mojej,
I liczne mam serca mego rodzeństwo,
Piękniejszy kraj niż ten, co w oczach stoi,
Rodzina milsza, niż całe pokrewieństwo.

Tam, wpośród prac i trosk, i wśród zabawy,
Uciekam ja. Tam siedzę pod jodłami,
Tam leżę śród bujnej i wonnej trawy,
Tam pędzę za wróblami, motylami –

Tam widzę ją, jak z ganku biała stąpa,
Jak ku nam w las śród łąk zielonych leci,
I wpośród zbóż, jak w toni wód się kąpa,
I ku nam z gór jako jutrzenka świeci.

[*1839–1840*]

[My Corpse Is Sitting Here ...]

My corpse is sitting in the midst of you:
Looking you in the eyes, talking out loud,
My soul is gone, it wanders far away,
Lamenting in deep sorrow and despair.

There is a land, the homeland of my thought:
My lonely heart has many siblings there:
That land exceeds in beauty what is here;
The people there are dearer than my kin.

This is my refuge from worries or toil,
Or even fun. I sit there under firs,
And lay down in abundant, fragrant grass,
As butterflies and sparrows fly above.

I see her, softly walking from the porch,
She flies amid the meadows to the woods:
She bathes and swims within the sea of corn,
She shines down at us from the sky at dawn.

[*1839–1840*]

[Polały się łzy me czyste ...]

Polały się łzy me czyste, rzęsiste,
Na me dzieciństwo sielskie, anielskie,
Na moją młodość górną i durną,
Na mój wiek męski, wiek klęski;
Polały się łzy me czyste, rzęsiste.

[*1839–1840*]

[I Shed Pure Springs of Tears ...]

I shed pure springs of tears
On my angelic, bucolic childhood years,
On my aloof and foolish youth,
On my coming of age; on my coming to fail.
I shed pure springs of tears.

[*1839–1840*]

[Ach, już i w rodzicielskim domu …]

Ach, już i w rodzicielskim domu
Byłem złe dziecię,
Choć nie chciałem naprzykrzyć się nikomu,
A przecie.

Byłem między krewnymi i czeladzi gromadą
Przeszkodą i zawadą.

A choć wszystkich kochałem, ni w dzień, ni w nocy
Nie byłem nikomu ku pociesze, ni ku pomocy.

[*1839–1840*]

[Already as a Child in Our House ...]

Already as a child in our house
I was bad.
I didn't want to bother anyone,
Yet I failed.
Among my kin and servants I was then
Merely an obstacle, a stumbling block.

Although I loved them all, I couldn't help
Nor comfort anyone, day or night.

[*1839–1840*]

[Uciec z duszą na listek ...]

Uciec z duszą na listek i jak motyl szukać
Tam domku i gniazdeczka –

[*1839–1840*]

[To Fly Away with the Soul …]

To fly away with the soul to a little leaf, like a butterfly, to look for a little house and a little nest there –

[*1839–1840*]

[Drzewo]

I z drzewa wysłużyło już zostać robakiem,
Już świeci się po wierzchu liściem niejednakim,
Barwistą wróżbą liszki, wierzchołki jak rożki
Bodzie w górę i liśćmi przebiera jak nożki,
Gdy wiatr wionie, że nie wiesz, czy dziecko w kolebce,
Czy gąsienica szybko mącąca nogami,
Czy wąż [……]

[*1842?*]

[Tree]

At last the tree deserved to be a bug.
The faces of its leaves already glisten:
Foretelling the caterpillar's advent,
Its branches jab the air like little horns;
Wind makes the leaves kick like baby-legs.
Is it a bug with swiftly-moving legs,
Or else a snake [.....]

[*1842?*]

[Wsłuchać się w szum wód głuchy …]

Wsłuchać [się] w szum wód głuchy, zimny i jednaki
I przez fale rozeznać myśl wód jak przez znaki,
Dać się unosić wiatrom, nie wiedzieć gdzie lotnym,
I zliczyć każdy dźwięk w ich ruchu kołowrotnym,
Wnurzyć się w łono rzeki z rybami …
Ich okiem niewzruszonym jak gwiazda …

[*1842?*]

[To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …]

To listen to the sound of water cold and still,
To read its waves like signs and learn its inmost thoughts,
To give myself to wind, which flies through unknown paths
In its swirling motion, counting every sound.
To dive in the womb of a river like a fish –
To see with its own eyes, as motionless as stars …

[*1842?*]

[Jak drzewo przed wydaniem owocu ...]

Jak drzewo przed wydaniem owocu w zarodek,
Tak całe życie zbiera się w pierś, w sam jej środek.

[*lato 1843*]

[Just Like a Tree before It Gives …]

Just like a tree before it gives its fruit to seeds,
My whole life gathers at the centre: in my breast.

[*summer 1843*]

Słowa Chrystusa
Z objawienia

1. Wiedz, iż obejmowałem duchem moim świat słoneczny cały, jako ptak nosi w sobie jaje swoje; napełniałem świat, jako gospodarz napełnia duchem swoim dom cały i trzyma go, i skinieniem nim włada.

2. A jeżeli Pan sam zacznie dziecko swoje uczyć, nie przez najętych mistrzów, ale sam, siedząc nad nim dzień i noc, zapominając niejako o mądrości swojej i potępiając się na rozmowy dziecinne – a cóż to za miłość! Tak ja gadałem z ludem-dzieckiem przez proroki moje starozakonne.

3. A cóż kiedy Pan dorosłego chłopca narowy i namiętności chce powściągnąć, pokazując złe ich skutki nie na zwierzęciu domowym lub na niewolniku, ale sam na swojej osobie, dając się głodzić i katować, mówiąc: "Dziecię, widzisz, jak mię to boli; Pamiętaj o łzach tych i o krwi tej, jak przyjdziesz do rozumu."

4. Ja tak uczyłem brata mojego. Bo dzieckiem Boga jest człowiek zbiorowy, ludzkość; hodowałem ją, jak wy dzieci wasze, tylko z większą miłością.

5. Teraz młodzieńcem jest człowiek zbiorowy i pójdzie na wojnę ze złem.

6. A Duch Pański, duch mój, staje się człowiekiem, a nie poznajecie go, bo uczy was jako wolnych dzieci.

7. Ojciec miłujący stanie z tobą, człowiecze, w postaci kolegi, towarzysza broni, owszem, luzaka wiernego; przypasze tobie miecz, konia tobie poda, wsadzi ciebie, a sam, stary wojak, bezbronny, iść przed tobą będzie, mówiąc: "Synu, idź tu za mną, prosto. Złe jest mądre, a widzisz, że ja prostszy a mędrszy od niego; obszedłem je, zdybaliśmy je, wydane jest w ręce twoje. Złe jest zbrojne, a ja nie boję się go bezbronny: patrz, blednieje i ucieka."

8. Zwyciężaj i ciesz się, dziecię me; ale jak postarzejesz, nie zapominaj i drugim powiedz, gdzie szukać mądrości i co jest waleczność. Widzisz, synu, dlaczego teraz żołnierzem być muszę. A życie młodzieńca jeszcze długie, praca Ojca twojego długa, a ty kochaj Go i noś Go w duchu.

9. A kiedy znowu przyjdzie do ciebie, znowu z innym obliczem, poznasz głos Jego i oblicze Jego objawi się tym, którzy Go miłują i noszą w sercu.

[*październik 1842*]

The Words of Christ
From a revelation

1. Believe that I contained in my spirit the whole solar world (as a bird carries inside its egg), I was filling the world, as a host who fills with his spirit his whole house and holds it and rules in it with the wave of his hand.

2. And if the Lord himself begins to teach his child, not through hired masters, but by himself, sitting with him day and night, forgetting, as it were, his wisdom and lowering himself to have childlike conversations with him: what love this is! This is how I used to talk to my people–child by the prophets of the old covenant.

3. But what if the Lord wants to restrain the willfulness and passions of a grown up boy, showing its bad results not on a domestic animal or a slave, but on his own person, letting himself be starved and tortured, saying: Child, you can see how it hurts. Remember my tears and my blood, when you come to your senses.

4. This is how I was teaching my brother. For the collective Man, mankind, is the child of God; I nourished it, as you nourish your children, only with a greater love.

5. Now the collective Man is a youth and he will go to war with evil.

6. And the Spirit of the Lord, my spirit, becomes Man and you don't recognize him, because he teaches you as already free children.

7. Your Father who loves standing next to you, Man, as your friend, your comrade in arms–nay, your faithful squire–he will now hand you a sword, he will hand you a horse, he will seat you on it and he himself, the old warrior, unarmed, will go before you, saying: Son, follow me here, straight ahead. Evil is wise, and you can see that I am simpler, and so wiser, than it. I came around it: we ambushed it, and it is handed over to you. Evil is armed and I, though unarmed, am not afraid of it. Look! It is already pale and on the run.

8. Prevail and rejoice, my child; but as you grow old, don't forget to tell the others, where to look for wisdom and what valiancy is. You see, son, why I have to be a soldier now; and a youth has a long life

before him, while the work of your Father is long. Love him and carry him in your spirit.

9. And when he comes to you again, with a different face again, you will know his voice, and his face will be revealed to those who love him and carry him in their hearts.

[*October 1842*]

Słowa Panny

1. Pamięć ludu mojego obcisnęła serce moje dwunastu taśmami płomienistymi i czułam zawsze tkwiące w sercu dwanaście węzłów, zawiązanych na pamiątkę ludu mego.

2. Żyłam Izraelem i w Izraelu cała, jako oblubieńcem i w oblubieńcu.

3. Przewiewały mię na wskroś westchnienia jego, łzy jego wszystkie ściekły w serce moje. Pełna byłam bolu jego. Ale nadziejami jego jako pierzem porastałam, nosiłam się po Izraelu, żądzami jego jako skrzydłami sięgałam Niebios.

4. Odtąd przez pierś moję, jako przez noc letnią, pogodną przechodziły łyskania, pierś moję oświecały łyskania bardzo szerokie i ciche.

5. Aż miłość moja zamieniła się w iskrę widomą i duch mój cały otoczył ją i tylko w nią patrzył.

6. I poczułam w łonie bijące dziecię jako drugie serce, a dawne serce moje utuliło się i ucichło.

7. I wypowiedziałam światu całą miłość moję jednym słowem Pańskim, które stało się ciałem. Odtąd żyłam w Synie moim i Synem moim.

[8.] Ale przez pierś moję jako przez dzień gorący zaczęły przebijać się pioruny i serce moje stało się pełne mocy jako gromów. Rozpromienianie się moje siecze ciemności złe. Unoszona miłością depcę zło i na dnie piekła roztłaczam je.

[9.] Otaczam ziemię dłoniami moimi jako niebem błękitnym, i w każdej chwili, na każdym miejscu, każdemu dobremu duchowi zapalam się i świecę gwiazdą ranną.

W noc Wszystkich Świętych, 1842.

The Words of the Virgin

1. The memory of my people has fastened twelve fiery ribbons around my heart, and I have always felt twelve knots in my heart, tied in remembrance of my people.

2. I lived with Israel, and in Israel with my entire being, with my bridegroom and in my bridegroom.

3. His sighs used to blow right through me: all his tears used to trickle down into my heart. I was filled with his pains, but I grew his hopes like feathers; I carried myself around Israel, reaching to Heaven with his desires like with wings.

4. From then on, flashes went through my breast, as through a serene, summer night, illuminating my breast. The flashes were broad and quiet.

5. Till my love turned into a visible spark and my whole spirit embraced it and was looking only into it.

6. And I felt a beating baby in my womb, like the second heart, and my old heart became mellow and quiet.

7. And I have told the whole world my entire love with the single Word of the Lord which became flesh. Since then I have lived in my Son and by my Son.

[8.] But lightnings began to cut through my breast like through a hot day, and my heart became full of power, full of thunders; my brilliance scourges malicious darkness; carried by love I stamp on evil and I crush it at the bottom of Hell.

[9.] I cup the earth with the palms of my hands as with a blue sky and at every moment, in every place, I am ablaze for every good spirit, and I shine as the morning star.

On the All Souls' Night, 1842.

Commentaries

1. Poems Published during Mickiewicz's Life

The Romantic

This is the first poetic manifesto in Polish literature. Czesław Zgorzelski, a prominent critic of Adam Mickiewicz's lyric poetry, has precisely reconstructed the phases of the forming of this ballad. Its first (incomplete) version was written in Kowno before 22nd of January 1821. It was corrected after a few days (25th January 1821) and sent over to Vilnius to Józef Jeżowski (1793–1855), and the poet Tomasz Zan (1796–1855), Mickiewicz's friends from the Philomath Society; later (1824) the manuscript was sent to the Russian heartland; it remains extant. Over a few days, Mickiewicz introduced several corrections, thoroughly changing the last two, key stanzas in particular and sending the revised version again to Vilnius, to Zan. This autograph is now in the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

The poem started a lively discussion among the Philomaths. Mickiewicz rejected revisions suggested by his close friend the poet Jan Czeczot (1796–1847), also soon to be exiled to the Russian heartland (1824). The final redaction of the ballad took place during Mickiewicz's work on the printed version of his debut volume *Poems*, which was published in 1822 in Vilnius and later considered a groundbreaking masterpiece that inaugurated the Romantic era in Polish literature.[1] Its main section featured in *Ballady i romanse* (*Ballads and Romances*). *The Romantic* was included in this volume after the introductory poem *Pierwiosnek* (*Primrose*) and was in fact the poem from which the entire ballad collection originated. A complete edition of this ballad, along with revisions and variants, was prepared by Czesław Zgorzelski.[2]

1 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezye*, Wilno 1822, pp. 6–10.

2 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 16–18, critical remarks and alternative versions: pp. 184–193. In the subsequent commentaries we refer to Zgorzelski's edition.

What demands explanation is the figure of the Old Man, the rationalist, who violently opposes the belief of the crowd of commoners in the encounter between Karusia and the ghost of her dead lover. Here Mickiewicz portrays Professor Jan Śniadecki (1756–1830), a former rector of Vilnius University and a proponent of literary classicism. In his dissertation *O pismach klasycznych i romantycznych* (*On Classical and Romantic Writings*), published in the journal *Dziennik Wileński* in 1819,[3] Śniadecki vehemently attacked German Romantic culture, especially, the magical-fantastic elements in it. The monologue of the Old Man synthesises the arguments of this dissertation, where Śniadecki wrote:

> Magic, sorcery and ghosts are not nature, but the offspring of a mind debilitated by ignorance and superstition. […] They bring to the scene the meetings of witches, their sorcery and prophecies, walking ghosts and ghouls, conversations of devils and angels […] Can this incompetent blathering, brought back from the era of crudeness, naivete and superstition, entertain and educate in the eighteenth and nineteenth century not only well-educated people, but even uncouth commoners?

The polemic between a young Romantic poet and the Old Man may be considered the first manifestation in Polish literature of the Romantic style of thinking. The 'lyrical subject' of this poem, that represents the voice of the author and expresses his views, is the first such literary protagonist of the early Romantic movement in Poland, whose first climactic point will be the figure of Gustaw, created by Mickiewicz in the *Forefathers' Eve*, part IV (1823).

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The metre of the poem is irregular; the number of syllables differs in almost every line. Certain metric patterns repeat themselves throughout the poem; the metrical variety within the poem is nonetheless striking. This translation attempts to imitate those patterns in an isometric fashion, as far as seems possible in English.

3 *Dziennik Wileński*, vol. I, p. 6.

Previous translations:

"Romanticism," tr. F.H. Fortey, in: *Gems of Polish poetry: selections from Mickiewicz*, Warsaw 1923, p. 21–24.

"The Romantic" tr. W.H. Auden, in: *The Slav Anthology: Russian, Polish, Bohemian, Serbian, Croatian*, Portland, ME, 1931, pp. 335–337 (reprinted later in A. Mickiewicz, *Selected poems*, ed. C. Mills, New York 1956, pp. 67–9).

"Romanticism," tr. G.R. Noyes, J. Parish, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. S. Helsztyński, Warsaw 1955, pp. 27–28.

"Romanticism," tr. unknown, in: *Twenty Five Poems by A. Mickiewicz, National Poet of Poland*, Mickiewicz Centenary Committee 1955.

"Romanticism," tr. J. Lindsay, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Poems*, London 1957, p. 9–11.

"Romanticism," tr. Angela Britlinger; with commentary, *Sarmatian Review* 12, 1 (1992).

"Romanticism," tr. M.J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M.J. Mikoś. Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, pp. 20–21.

"Romanticism," tr. C.S. Kraszewski, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Ballads and Romances*, London 2022, pp. 50–52.

Epigraph: The concept of "the eye of the soul" and "the eye of the mind" appears for this first time in Plato's *Republic*, in books VI and VII, where we encounter the Greek phrase *tes psyches omma* ("the eye of the soul").[4] Subsequently, it becomes an integral part of the language of Platonism. We find it in Plotinus, who says that we should close the eyes of the body and awaken our inner sight, which everyone has, but very few use.[5] He also discusses "the eye which alone see the great Beauty".[6] Interestingly, Plotinus also calls love (gr. *eros*) "the eye of the soul", thus extending the semantic field of this metaphor beyond intellect or reason, since, in his view, the highest

4 Plato, *Rep.* VII, 533d.

5 Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6.8.

6 Ibidem, I.6.9.

God cannot be known intellectually, but only by virtue of union with Him through love.[7]

Later on, St Augustine (who studied Plotinus in a Latin translation after coming to Milan in 386) familiarised the Western Latin tradition with this metaphor, by using a range of expressions including *oculus animae* ("the eye of the soul"), *oculus animi* or *mentis* ("the eye of the mind" or "intellect") and *oculus cordis* ("the eye of the heart"). Augustine, along with the other Church Fathers, synthesises the Platonic metaphor of the inner eye with the biblical image that he found in the *Letter to Ephesians*, where the author speaks about "the eyes of the heart" (gr. *hoi ophthalmoi tes kardias*, Eph 1:18). There is also the Platonic reading of the Sixth Beatitude that promises those who are of pure heart that they will see God; this suggests the pure heart itself to be an instrument of seeing (Mt 5:8).[8] The entire mediaeval and early modern mystical tradition of the West uses this metaphor which has become so vital to Mickiewicz.

1 In Auden's version the vocative "*dzieweczko*" is rendered "silly girl". The original features no such condescending meaning. It is only the Old Man who, towards the end, openly disparages Karusia as a simpleton, while the lyrical subject as well as the crowd are highly sympathetic towards her. This is why we chose simply "girl".[9]

48–51 The idea of lovers whom even death cannot separate was a favourite for Romantic poets. Friedrich Hölderlin in his poem *Once There Were Gods* describes this as a part of the old 'enchanted' world, which Romantic poetry tries to bring back.

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7 Ibidem, III.5.2; cf. also VI.7.35.

8 See the sixth homily in St Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Beatitudes*: *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VII.1.136–148, English translation in: Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, ed. H. Drobner, A. Viciano, Leiden 2000.

9 Marta Skwara, in her study of Auden's translation, writes: "Thus in Auden's version (…) we find numerous additions to the original on the one hand (actually, there are five additional verses in Auden's rendition of Mickiewicz's ballad), and many omissions on the other (particularly Polish cultural realities disappear). Serious changes of the original phrases can also be easily found, confirming Auden's unfamiliarity with Polish." (M. Skwara, "(Mis)translation as a Literary Success", *Przekłady Literatur Słowiańskich* 10, 1 (2019), pp. 29–46, on 34).

Once there were gods, on earth, with people, the heavenly muses
And Apollo, the youth, healing, inspiring, like you.
And you are like them to me, as though one of the blessed
Sent me out into life where I go my comrade's
Image goes with me wherever I suffer and build, with love
Unto death; for I learned this and have this from her.

Let us live, oh you who are with me in sorrow, with me in faith
And heart and loyalty struggling for better times!
For such we are! And if ever in the coming years they knew
Of us two when the spirit matters again
They would say: lovers in those days, alone, they created
Their secret world that only the gods knew. For who
Cares only for things that will die the earth will have them, but
Nearer the light, into the clarities come
Those keeping faith with the heart's love and holy spirit who were
Hopeful, patient, still, and got the better of fate.[10]

64–65 The juxtaposition "*czucie i wiara*" (which we translated as "feeling and faith") influenced Polish language powerfully and has become a commonplace. Young Mickiewicz is here close to such opponents of overly speculative Enlightenment tendencies as J.G. Hamann, F. Jacobi, and (later) the Jena Romantics, such as Novalis and F. Schlegel, who were themselves influenced by Hamann and Jacobi,[11] and whom Mickiewicz certainly read later, if not during his studies.[12] The word "*czucie*" ("feeling") is much broader than

10 F. Hölderlin, *Selected poems*, tr. D. Constantine, Newcastle 1996.

11 On the importance of Hamann for Novalis and F. Schlegel see A. Regier, "Johann Georg Hamann: Metacritique and Poesis in Counter-Enlightenment," in: *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. P. Hamilton, Oxford 2015, pp. 165–183, on p. 166. On Jacobi's influence on *Frühromantik* see M. Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, tr. E. Millan-Zaibert, New York 2004, p. 77.

12 Mickiewicz seems to have read the Jena Romantics during his exile in Russia. In his letter to Joachim Lelewel (19th of January 1827) he mentions F. Schlegel's seminal *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (Heidelberg 1818) as well as A.W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur* (Heidelberg 1811) and L. Tieck's *Dramaturgische Blätter* (Breslau 1826) in his letter to Odyniec (10th of May 1828), p. 470. He discusses Jacobi (particularly his concept of the experience of God through feeling) as well as his influence on F. Schlegel, in the third course of his lectures at the Collège,

emotions or desires; in his later works Mickiewicz associates it with spiritual perception, as in the Great Improvisation (*Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, Scene II), where Konrad ascends beyond Nature to God, saying:

> I glide on rays of sentiment [*uczucia*], to Thee!
> And I shall gaze upon Thy feelings.
> O Thou! All-feeling heart that beats on high,
> I'm here! I've come! What strength is mine, you see.[13]

This emphasis on feeling permeates the whole Improvisation.

Jacobi primarily associates "feeling" (*das Gefühl*) with, not emotions, but cognition: "The perception of the actual and the feeling of truth, consciousness and life, are one and the same thing."[14] As Manfred Frank points out, for him it is "unmediated consciousness".[15] This, as George di Giovanni put it, "inherently ambiguous Enlightenment notion of 'feeling'",[16] became one of the key notions in Jena Romanticism. Schlegel says:

> No poetry, no reality. Just as there is, despite all the senses, no external world without imagination, so too there is no spiritual world without feeling, no matter how much sense there is. Whoever only has sense can perceive no human being, but only what is human: all things disclose themselves to the magic wand of feeling alone. It fixes people and seizes them; like the eye, it looks on without being conscious of its own mathematical operation.[17]

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advancing a rather bold hypothesis that both Jacobi and Schlegel were influenced by de Maistre and Saint-Martin. (Course III, Lecture XVI; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. X, pp. 216–222). Novalis is mentioned by Mickiewicz in Course I, Lecture XXX (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. VIII, pp. 424–5).

13 A. Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve*, p. 204. Kraszewski renders "*uczucia*" as "sentiments", while "feeling" seems more accurate, philosophically, in this whole passage.

14 *David Hume on Faith*, in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 305.

15 Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, p. 77.

16 G. di Giovanni, *Introductory Study*, in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 30.

17 *Athenaeum fragments* 350, Schlegel, *Philosophical fragments*, p. 70–71.

Also "faith" (*die Glaube*) in Jacobi's vocabulary does not signify the Christian faith in God or His revelation, but, primarily, a sort of direct intuition of reality:

> How can we strive for certainty unless we are already acquainted with certainty in advance, and how can we be acquainted with it except through something that we already discern with certainty? This leads to the concept of an immediate certainty, which not only needs no proof, but excludes all proofs absolutely, and is simply and solely the representation itself agreeing with the thing being represented. Conviction by proofs is certainty at second hand. Proofs are only indications of similarity to a thing of which we are certain. The conviction that they generate originates in comparison, and can never be quite secure and perfect. But if every assent to truth not derived from rational grounds is faith, then conviction based on rational grounds must itself derive from faith, and must receive its force from faith alone.[18]

As Manfred Frank has argued, "That which Jacobi called 'feeling' is what Hölderlin (with Fichte and Schelling) calls 'intellectual intuition."[19] This "feeling" (*Gefühl*) or "intellectual seeing" (*Anschauung*) was attacked by Hegel in the preface to his portentous 1809 masterpiece *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he says that what Jacobi, the Jena Romantics, and his friend Schelling propose is "the opposite of the form of the Notion. For the Absolute is not supposed to be comprehended, it is to be felt [*gefühlt*] and intuited [*angeschaut*]; not the Notion of the Absolute, but the feeling and intuition of it, must govern what is said, and must be expressed by it."[20] The phrase (which offended Schelling in particular) was Hegel's

18 *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza* (1785 version), in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 230.

19 Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, p. 78. We know that Mickiewicz was reading Schelling two years after publishing *The Romantic* (possibly even earlier). In a letter to Franciszek Malewski dated to July 1824 he writes: "I think and read little, but I'm in the middle of Schelling. I don't find in it anything unintelligible or even hard to understand, except for some *termina* which are *aus der Schulsprache*. But it's beautiful." (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe, t. XIV: Listy. Część pierwsza 1815–1829*, Warszawa 1998, p. 315).

20 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 4.

summary of this approach to philosophical intuition "as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black – this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity."[21]

66–67 The opposition "dead truths" vs. "living truths" reflects the opposition of speculative, conceptual worldview based on reason versus a holistic experience of the world through the higher faculties of feeling, faith or 'the heart' (see below). Jacobi also speaks of "living philosophy", which derives from the concrete, historical, existential reality of individuals and societies, as opposed to abstract notions.[22] And in his letter to Fichte, which started the so-called *Atheismusstreit* ('Atheism Controversy'), Jacobi speaks of "a living-death of rationality (…) blindly legalistic, deaf, dumb, and unfeeling; [it] must tear from it its living root, which is the heart of man, up to the last fibre – yea you must, by all your heavens and as truly as Apollo and the Muses are just categories to you."[23] In the letter, he also frequently distinguishes in various ways between 'what is true' and 'truths', which also reflects the distinction between 'the living' and 'the dead' in Mickiewicz's poem. Baader praises Böhme precisely for being 'alive' and contrasts him with Spinoza who is 'petrified'.[24]

69 This last line of the poem has become almost proverbial in the modern Polish language. The religious and philosophical significance of the heart has a long history as a source for knowledge of the truth (see above, pp. 201–202.). In the eighteenth century it becomes a popular symbol of sentiments and feelings, opposed to reason or the brain. In his lectures at the Collège, Mickiewicz will say:

21 Ibidem, p. 9.

22 *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza* (*1785*), in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 244.

23 *Jacobi to Fichte*, in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 517.

24 "Bei Spinoza findet man nur das Petrefakt von diesem Begriff der göttlichen Substanz, den der Philosophus Teutonicus lebendig uns gab." (*Fermenta cognitionis* II.7, p. 23).

> Long ago a certain French author said that great thoughts flow only from the heart; but here the whole philosophical system is based on the heart. The heart means nothing else, but the seat of soul, the seat or the cover of the inner being. The Slavic poets speak about the heart all the time, while they avoid speaking about the brain, which is universally considered to be the seat of reason. They do it in order to show that spirit and reason are not the same thing for them.[25]

"A certain French author" is undoubtedly Blaise Pascal (1623–1662); Mickiewicz alludes to his famous saying: "*Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*" ("The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know").[26] William Wordsworth expresses a similar idea in his *Tables Turned*, published in his *Lyrical Ballads* (1798):

> Enough of Science and of Art;
> Close up those barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives.[27]

25 Course II, Lecture XXXI; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, p. 396.

26 B. Pascal, *Thoughts* §277, English translation by W.F. Trotter in: B. Pascal, *Thoughts. Letters. Minor Works*, New York 1910, p. 98.

27 W. Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802*, ed. F.J. Stafford, Oxford 2013.

The Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The majority of scholars assume that the poem was written at the beginning of December 1820 and that its first readers were Mickiewicz's friends from the Philomath circle: Jan Czeczot and Franciszek Malewski (1800–1870), a lawyer, later exiled to Russia, who was a colleague of Michail Speransky (1772–1839) who codified Russian law. Malewski held the poem in high esteem, considering it better than *Ode to Youth*, Mickiewicz's manifesto of freedom. The *Hymn* was initially to be published in a journal *Hebe*, prepared by the Philomaths, but they never succeeded in editing it. The poem was first printed in the first volume of Mickiewicz's *Poems*, published at Vilnius in 1822.[28] The main section *of Poems* was the cycle *Ballads and Romances*. The volume has long been considered the first expression of Romanticism in Polish literature and, concludes with a section entitled "Various Poems". The *Hymn* opens this section of the volume.[29]

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This poem is written in an irregular metre, like *The Romantic*. Verses are usually between eight and eleven syllables, occasionally shorter. This variety is not rendered fully in the translation, where we decided to keep the iambic pentametre as the main rhythm of the poem, indicating only lines which are significantly shorter, since they tend to emphasise some important point.

1–4 Mickiewicz seems to be inspired, to a certain degree, by chapters eleven and twelve of the Book of Revelation. The reference to the "twelve-starred crown" of the Virgin Mary clearly comes from: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." (Rev 12:1) "Jehova" instead of "God" or "the Lord" in verse 4 gives the poem a strange, oriental flavour. However,

28 Mickiewicz, *Poezye*, Wilno 1822, pp. 117–119.

29 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. C. Zgorzelski, pp. 75–76, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 238–241.

Swedenborg also uses "Jehova" to speak about God in the first book of his *Divine Wisdom and Love*. Devotion to Mary was an essential part of Polish culture and religion, and, obviously, in Mickiewicz's homeland. Yet in this poem, the figure of Mary lacks the familiar qualities of folk devotions, which we can find (for example) in what is sometimes considered the most important passage in Polish literature, the invocation to *Pan Tadeusz*:[30]

> Lithuania, my country, thou art like health; how much thou shouldst be prized only he can learn who has lost thee. To-day thy beauty in all its splendour I see and describe, for I yearn for thee. Holy Virgin, who protectest bright Czenstochowa and shinest above the Ostra Gate in Wilno![2] Thou who dost shelter the castle of Nowogrodek with its faithful folk! As by miracle thou didst restore me to health in my childhood – when, offered by my weeping mother to thy protection, I raised my dead eyelids, and could straightway walk to the threshold of thy shrine to thank God for the life returned me – so by miracle thou wilt return us to the bosom of our country.[31]

9 A reference to two prophets is in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." (Rev 11:3)

11 Literally "only from the divine flows praise worthy of the divine". At the first glance, this claim may seem bold, if not heterodox, blurring the Christian distinction between Creature and creation. In fact, the Church Fathers were in agreement that the contemplation of God and union with Him can take place only through participation in His divine nature, which means that the souls have to be transformed into gods in order to praise God. This is an allusion to the ancient Christian doctrine of divinisation (Gr. *theosis*, Lat. *deificatio*), which is a foundational doctrine as early as the time of the Cappadocian Fathers.[32] Boethius (480–524), in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, one of the most popular works of the Latin Middle Ages,

30 See *Introductory Study*, p. ##.

31 A. Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz or the Last Foray in Lithuania*, tr. G.R. Noyes, London – Toronto 1917, p. 1.

32 For instance: St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 2.17.

says: "Therefore every happy man is 'God', though by nature God is one only: but nothing prevents there being as many as you like by participation."[33] St Augustine, in his *City of God*, also calls those who are united with God and participate in Him "gods". Thus the holy angels are gods:

> To this Founder of the holy city the citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods, not knowing that He is the God of gods, not of false, *i.e.*, of impious and proud gods, who, being deprived of His unchangeable and freely communicated light, and so reduced to a kind of poverty-stricken power, eagerly grasp at their own private privileges, and seek divine honors from their deluded subjects; but of the pious and holy gods, who are better pleased to submit themselves to one, than to subject many to themselves, and who would rather worship God than be worshipped as God.[34]

Humans who live according to God are also called "gods" by St Augustine: "you are men; that is, you live according to man, not according to God, for if you lived according to Him, you should be gods."[35] For Pseudo-Dionysius, created spirits are, in a way, a "multiplication" of God: "Further, since many gods have emerged by the deification which is derived from it, in which they are divinely formed according to the power of each, there seems to be and is and is said to be a multiplication and difference of the one God."[36]

16–23 "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." (Rev 11:19).

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33 Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* III.10.88–90; English translation by H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, S.J. Tester in: Boethius, *The Theological Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*, Cambridge, MA – London 1973, p. 281.

34 St Augustine, *City of God* XI.1.

35 Ibidem, XIV.4.

36 Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* II.11; English translation by J.D. Jones: *The Divine Names. Mystical Theology*, Milwaukee, WI, 1999, p. 128.

26 A reference to Mary as the morning star is traditional (cf. the Latin hymn *Ave maris stella*, where "the star of the sea" is another name for Venus or the Morning and Evening Star).

38 "Be it" ("*stań się*") is an allusion to the traditional "*Fiat!*" spoken by Mary in Luke 1:38 (from the Latin "*fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*", that is, "be it unto me according to thy word"). "God – flesh" and "Virgin – Mother" are favourite paradoxes of the Incarnation in the Church Fathers.[37]

The paradox inherent in the figure of Mary was also expressed in the exquisite, famous prayer *Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo figlio*, uttered by St Bernard of Clairvaux in the first verses of the last canto of Dante's *Comedy*:

> "Virgin mother, daughter of your Son,
> more humble and sublime than any creature,
> fixed goal decreed from all eternity,
>
> you are the one who gave to human nature
> so much nobility that its Creator
> did not disdain His being made its creature.
>
> That love whose warmth allowed this flower to bloom
> within the everlasting peace – was love
> rekindled in your womb; for us above,
>
> you are the noonday torch of charity,
> and there below, on earth, among the mortals,
> you are a living spring of hope."[38]

37 See, for instance, St Augustine, *Sermones* 186.1 and 188.3.

38 *Paradiso* 33.1–12 (the Italian text and the English translation by A. Mandelbaum we use as well as the commentary by T. Barolini, New York 2014, can be found on: digitaldante.columbia.edu).

To M. Ł. at the Day of Taking the Holy Communion

This poem was written in the first months of 1830 (most likely between early January and the beginning of May), in Rome where Mickiewicz stayed after leaving Russia (1829) and visiting German countries. A note on the autograph, written in someone else's hand ("Written for the 9th of January 1830") indicates not only the month, but also suggests the occasion for its writing, since it was on that very day that the addressee of the poem, Marcelina (Marcjanna) Łempicka (M.Ł.) celebrated her nameday; the poet could have been a witness of her prayer in a church. Mickiewicz himself confirmed that it was the sight of praying Marcelina in the famous Roman Jesuit church Il Gesù that inspired him to write the poem, but he never specified the date of this event. He mentions in one of his letters (from 11th May 1830) that he had not yet sent the finished poem to the addressee. Mickiewicz wrote it during a period of intense (if unorthodox) religious seeking, which began during his Russian exile. This process was influenced by his Roman relationships, including his platonic love affair with the profoundly pious, devout Countess Henrietta Ewa Ankwicz (1810–1879). Marcelina Łempicka (1809–1843) was the closest friend of Henrietta, and was already preparing for monastic life at the time (she made her profession in 1840).

The poem was initially published in 1837, by three journals. First, *Melitele* in Leipzig,[39] then *Wiadomości Krajowe i Emigracyjne* (published in Paris)[40] and, finally, *Zbieracz Literacki i Polityczny* (Cracow).[41] Among collected works of Mickiewicz it was published for the first time in the Paris edition of 1838,[42] and appeared in this version in later reprints. The manuscript of the poem is in the collection of the National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa) in Warsaw.[43]

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39 On pp. 20–21.

40 Issue 2, p. 6.

41 Issue 2, pp. 87–88.

42 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, t. VIII, Paryż 1836, pp. 196–7.

43 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 7, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 120–124.

The original is in hendecasyllables which is rendered in translation by the iambic pentameter.

1 Both the poem and the historical context of its origin suggest that receiving the Catholic sacrament of Holy Communion, by which (according to Catholic teaching) the human soul is united to God and divinised in Christ, was a special occasion for the addressee of the poem, and in Mickiewicz's eyes as well. Throughout Christian antiquity, the sacrament was received frequently, but during the Middle Ages and in the early modern period it became significantly rarer for Catholic laity.[44] The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) obliged Catholics to receive the sacrament at least once a year (during Easter) under pain of excommunication.

The Imitation of Christ, which Mickiewicz began reading intensely during his Rome-Dresden period, devotes the last of its four books to Holy Communion, and an entire chapter to the exhortation to frequent communion.[45] It emphasises the need to be spiritually prepared in order to receive the sacrament properly: "Although I be not every day fit nor well prepared; I will endeavour notwithstanding at due times to receive the divine mysteries, and to be partaker of so great a grace."[46] The Council of Trent (session 22, chapter 6) tried to encourage the faithful to practise it more often, suggesting that they should communicate at every mass they participate in. However, the general practice did not conform to the official position of the Church. Some authors, most prominently the formidable Jansenist theologian of Port-Royal, Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694), were opposed to the practice.[47] On the other hand, some of the influential Catholic figures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Francois Fénelon (1651–1715) and St Alphonsus Liguori

44 On the history of frequent communion see: T. Scannell, "Frequent Communion," in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 6, New York 1909.

45 Thomas à Kempis, *De imitatione Christi* IV.3.

46 *De imitatione Christi* IV.3.3; anonymous English translation: Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, London 1901, p. 240.

47 A. Arnauld, *De la fréquente communion*, Paris 1643.

(1696–1787), strongly advocated frequent communion, praising its beneficial spiritual effects.[48]

During the nineteenth century, Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) encouraged the practice of frequent, even daily communion, but the practice of daily communion was officially approved only by Pope St Pius X (1903–1914). What made it difficult for laity to communicate frequently was the requirement to go to confession before receiving the sacrament, as well as the obligation to fast (from all food and liquids) from midnight and refrain from sexual intercourse until the moment of communion. The eucharistic fast was reduced to one hour before communion by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

Mickiewicz describes the moment of the receiving of Holy Communion as a special event, closely tied to the addressee's deep spiritual life. He also describes his experience of feeling unworthy of such spiritual graces, when he contemplates Marcelina. In the *Imitation of Christ* we encounter a similar thought: "When I call to mind some devout persons, who approach to this Thy sacrament, O Lord, with the greatest devotion and affection, I am oftentimes confounded and blush within myself, that I come with such lukewarmness, yea, coldness, to Thine altar and the table of sacred communion."[49]

2 The idea that angels envy human beings their capacity to receive the sacrament of the Holy Communion is certainly not a traditional one. Traditionally, the eucharist was called "the bread of angels". This phrase comes from Ps. 78:25, but the Hebrew text does not seem to refer to the angels at all. St Jerome of Stridon (342/7–420), in his second, revised translation of the Psalms, followed the Hebrew text and changed his previous translation of this expression as *panis angelorum* ("the bread of the angels"), which was a translation not from the Hebrew, but from the authoritative Greek Old Testament (*Septuagint*). The Greek *arton angelon* is then responsible for this

48 F. Fénelon, *On frequent communion*, in: *The Spiritual Letters of Archbishop Fénelon*: *Letters to Men*, tr. H.L. Sindey Lear, London 1880, pp. 277–305; St Alphonsus Liguori, *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Charlotte, NC, 2001.

49 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.14.1, p. 268.

venerable tradition, popularised in the sixth stanza of St Thomas Aquinas' eucharistic hymn *Sacris solemniis*: "The angelic bread (*panis angelicus*) becomes the bread for men; the heavenly bread puts an end to all allegorical figures".

According to Aquinas' theology,

> such eating of Christ whereby we receive Him under this sacrament, is, as it were, derived from that eating whereby the angels enjoy Christ in heaven. Consequently, man is said to eat the "bread of angels," because it belongs to the angels to do so firstly and principally, since they enjoy Him in his proper species; and secondly it belongs to men, who receive Christ under this sacrament.[50]

In light of Catholic theology, the idea that angels could envy humans for receiving Holy Communion is, then, a purely poetic hyperbole. In the *Imitation of Christ* we see, on the one hand, this typical view, according to which the holy angels are a paradigm of contemplation, to be emulated by Christians, and Holy Communion is an occasion to become more like the angels: "And though I cannot as yet be altogether heavenly, nor so full of love as the cherubim and seraphim, yet notwithstanding I will endeavour to apply myself earnestly to devotion, and prepare my heart to obtain if it be but some small spark of divine fire, by the humble receiving of this life-giving sacrament."[51] Or, similarly: "Him I do really possess and adore Whom the angels adore in heaven; but I, for the present and in the meantime, by faith; they, by sight, and without a veil."[52]

We find only one passage where Thomas à Kempis suggests that the angels could envy humans; however, it involves, not reception of the sacrament, but the priest's ability to perform the act of transubstantiation: "For it is not within the compass of the deserts of men, that man should consecrate and administer this sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the bread of angels. Great is this mystery;

50 *Summa Theologiae* III[a] q. 80 a. 2 co. English translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province: *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, London 1920.

51 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.3.4, p. 241.

52 Ibidem, IV.11.2, p. 260.

and great is the dignity of priests to whom is granted that which is not permitted to angels."[53]

This hyperbolic idea of the envy of the angels must have been current in Mickiewicz's milieu; it is not likely that he came up with it on his own. In the teachings of St Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, (1786–1859), the famous 'Curé of Ars', who became the parish priest of Ars in 1818, this notion appears in more moderate form: "What the Angels behold only with awe, the radiant splendor of which they cannot sustain, we make our food, we receive it into us, we become with Jesus Christ one same Body one sole Flesh."[54]

An older tradition, according to which the Christian faithful are to "envy" the angels their spiritual union with Christ (of which the sacrament is a sign) is also present in Vianney: "Ah! If we had the eyes of the angels!"[55] as well as earlier in St Alphonsus: "Blessed Seraphim, I envy you, not for your glory, but for the love you have for your God and mine. Teach me what I must do to love Him and to please Him."[56] In a much stronger form the motif of the "holy envy" on the part of the angels appears in the diary of St Faustina (written between 1934 and 1938): "If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us for two things; one is the receiving of Holy Communion, and the other is suffering".[57] However, this strikingly Mickiewiczian aphorism has been since attributed to other saints as well, including St Maximilian Kolbe and Pope St Pius X.[58]

A possible source could be also Saint-Martin in whose writings (just as in Böhme's) Man plays a special role, being in some sense superior to the angels and designed to be their teacher:

> Oh what deep things might we not teach, even to angels, if we recovered our rights! St. Paul says, 'We shall judge angels' (1 Cor 6:3). Now,

53 Ibidem, IV.5.1.

54 St J.M. Vianney, *Eucharistic Meditations of the Curé d'Ars*, Meditation 2.2, Dublin 1961, p. 8.

55 Ibidem, Meditation 21.1, p. 26.

56 St Alphonsus Liguori, *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, "First Visit".

57 St Faustina Kowalska, *Diary* §1804, Stockbridge, MA, 2005, p. 395.

58 See S.M. Manelli, *The Most Blessed Sacrament*, Havertown, PA, 1973, chapter: "Holy Communion: Jesus is mine".

> power to judge supposes power to instruct. Yes, angels may be stewards, physicians, redressers of wrong, warriors, judges, governors, protectors, but, without us, they cannot gain any profound knowledge of the divine wonders of Nature.[59]

In his last work, he writes: "For this reason, Man, who, in the beginning of the Universe, was related, principally, to the Son, the Source of Universal development, knew the Father, both in the Son and in Nature. And, for this reason, Angels seek so much the society of Man, believing that he is still in condition to show them the Father in Nature."[60]

3–6 The idea that receiving Holy Communion divinises the soul is a very old one in the Christian tradition. St Augustine famously describes an experience of hearing God's voice saying to him: "I am the food of the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me."[61] Mickiewicz, familiar with the *Confessions*,

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59 L.-C. Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, tr. E.B. Penny, London 2011 (reprint of 1st ed. of 1864), p. 71.

60 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 70. There is no doubt Mickiewicz read this work of Saint-Martin (he could have read others as well, of course), because in a letter to Garczyński (23rd of May 1833) he refers to an idea that God wrapped Man in the material body as doctors cover burnt flesh with cotton or plaster (A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 209–210). This thought comes from *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, pp. 277–8. Both in a letter from the 31st of October 1834 to Hieronim Kajsiewicz and later, in his lectures at the Collège, Mickiewicz quotes this work again: "We wrote too much for entertainment or with aims too base. Remember, I beg you, those words by Saint-Martin: *on ne devrait écrire des vers qu'après avoir fait un miracle*. It seems to me that times will return, when you will have to be a saint in order to be a poet, that you will need inspiration and knowledge from above about things which reason can say nothing about." (*Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 285). This quotation can be found in *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, where Saint-Martin ascribes it to an unspecified poet: "For this reason, a lover of religious poetry has said that a poet, *Qui du Suprême Agent serait vraiment l'Oracle,/ Ne ferait pas un vers qu'il n'eût fait un miracle!*" (p. 384).

61 *Confessions* VII.10.16, p. 123–4. In a letter to Hieronim Kajsiewicz and Leonard Rettel from the 16th of December 1833 Mickiewicz writes: "Do you have *De imitatione Christi* and *Confessiones S-ti Augustini*? I would like you to read it in Latin." (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 253).

could've had this in mind, while speaking of Marcelina's eyes "blazing with the Godhead". As well as the following passage from the *Imitation of Christ*: "And yet surely in the life-giving presence of Thy Godhead no unbecoming thought ought to intrude itself, nor should any creature occupy my heart; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels whom I am about to receive."[62] The image of Holy Communion as a "spark of divine fire" can also be found in this work.[63]

Saint-Martin also places a great emphasis on the power of the Sacrament of Eucharist and its necessity for spiritual growth. Even though his *Of Errors and Truth* (1774) was placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and despite Saint-Martin's criticisms of Catholicism in his last great work *Man, His True Nature and Ministry* (1802), his opposition between "Catholicism" and "Christianity" is aimed primarily at the spiritual superficiality and worldliness of the official Church, while his dogmatic theology (leaving aside ecclesiology), eccentric as it is, remains largely orthodox.[64] A similar attitude will be found in Mickiewicz, especially in his lectures at the Collège. When it comes to Holy Communion, Saint-Martin holds the traditional Catholic view that it was established by "the Repairer" (the name he uses for Christ in his early works) and is necessary for

62 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.1.5, p. 232.

63 Ibidem, IV.3.4.

64 Modern readers often forget how zealously the official Church used to be criticised in the Middle Ages and how conventional such criticisms had become. Dante utters a harsh condemnation of the pope and cardinals whose "thoughts are never bent on Nazareth,/where Gabriel's open wings were reverent." (see *Paradiso* 9, 121–142, esp. lines 136–138). In cantos 12–14 of *Paradiso*, Dante makes St Thomas Aquinas accuse his own Dominican order of degeneracy, while St Bonaventure does the same towards his fellow Franciscans. And St Peter himself, in an astonishingly vitriolic speech (by heavenly standards, at least), says that Lucifer surely delights in the Vatican, occupied currently by the one "who on earth usurps my place, my place,/ my place that in the sight of God's own Son" and suggests a vacancy at the papal throne (occupied by Boniface VIII according to the internal time of the *Comedy: Paradiso* 27.22–27).

spiritual healing and transformation.[65] In his last work, he describes it as the sacrament which can "transform us into a kingdom of God, and make us to be one with God."[66]

9–20 The connection between virginity and angelic beings exists in the writings of the Church Fathers, both Eastern and Western, on the basis of Jesus' promise that the saved will be "like angels in heaven" (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25). St Ambrose of Milan (339–397) points to another similarity, namely: because Christ was born of a virgin, virginity, like the angels, mediates between Heaven and Earth, and joins them together.[67] He also interprets the Song of Songs 5:7, where the "guardians of the walls" strip the Bride naked of her clothes, in terms of a special care that the angels extend over virgins, stripping

65 L.-C. Saint-Martin, *Natural Table of Correspondences Which Exist Between God, Man and the Universe*, tr. P.A. Vaughan, Bayonne, NJ, 2018, pp. 274–6. Mickiewicz himself believed in the transformative power of this sacrament throughout his life. In a letter to Kajsiewicz and Rettel (the 16th of December 1833), he writes: "The greatest aids for me in everything are (*De imitatione Christi*)*: Evangelium et corpus Christi*. Do you remember what has been written, that the Apostles, having met the risen Christ on their way and talked to him for a long time, couldn't recognise him until he began to break the bread and give them to eat: this was the moment their eyes were opened. I'll tell you about my own experience. I was once having a discussion with a simpleton priest and I outsmarted him. Then he said to me: 'I appeal to Christ: let us talk about it again tomorrow, once we have taken Holy Communion.' Indeed, after that I realised that he was right, not I." (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 252). In a letter to Jakub Tomkowicz (the 10th of November 1841), he writes: "We live in times when similar miracles are easier and more frequent. I warn you that the first condition of your son's healing is to fulfil religious duties. Let him immediately go to confession and receive the Most Blessed Sacrament. Why wouldn't he want to do it? Because of worldly prejudices or philosophical theories? Oh! Dear Sir, I have been studying for ages and I have come to see that philosophers are like doctors: they have a lot to advise on small things, but when it comes to serious things, they leave you alone. As the doctors couldn't heal his body, the philosophers won't heal his soul. If I were permitted, I'd gladly talk to your son. I allow myself to send him a little book the *Imitation of Christ*. Let him accept it and keep it, until he is well." (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 671).

66 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 260.

67 St Ambrose of Milan, *De virginibus*, I.3.11; English translation by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, H.T.F. Duckworth, in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Series II, Vol. 10.

them of the clothes of mortality and sin and restoring the inner purity of holiness.[68] The image of the angel in Mickiewicz's poem bears some striking similarities to this traditional imagery: the angel not only enjoys a deeply intimate relationship with Marcelina, but also puts new clothes under her pillow.

The image of a sleeping child's encounter with an angel can be found, independently, in Victor Hugo's *Dans l'alcôve sombre*, contained in his poetic volume *Les feuilles d'automne* (number XX), published in 1831 (cf. also *La prière pour tous* in the same volume). The last two stanzas of the poem in English translation are as follows:

> Innocent! thou sleepest –
> See the angelic band,
> Who foreknow the trials
> That for man are planned;
> Seeing him unarmed,
> Unfearing, unalarmed,
> With their tears have warmed
> This unconscious hand.
>
> Still they, hovering o'er him,
> Kiss him where he lies,
> Hark, he sees them weeping,
> "Gabriel!" he cries;
> "Hush!" the angel says,
> On his lip he lays
> One finger, one displays
> His native skies.[69]

Mickiewicz couldn't have known this poem before writing *To M.Ł. on the Day of Taking Holy Communion*, since *Dans l'alcôve sombre* was published written in November 1831, but he could have been familiar with Hugo's earlier poems, which idealise little children and compare them to angels (see his *Odes et ballades*, 1828). He praises the 1831 poem by Hugo in one of his Paris lectures (see the *Introductory*

68 St Ambrose of Milan, *De virginitate* XIV.

69 Translation according to: *The Watching Angel*, in: *The works of Victor Hugo*, New York 1888.

Study, pp. 106–107). In any case, Mickiewicz's use of the images of the angel and of a sleeping child are more complex and have a deeper religious meaning than the idyllic vignettes of Hugo.

21–24 The images in the last verses of the poem are somewhat ambiguous: the line of thought is difficult to follow (and translate). Mickiewicz uses a simile in which the praying girl is compared to a sleepy or sleeping baby, while her guardian angel is like a tender mother. The original does not use a typical Polish phrase for a guardian angel ("*anioł stróż*"); instead he is called her "defender" or "protector" ("*obrońca*"). However it seems that the identity of the angel remains the same: it is her personal guardian, appointed to her by God: not only does he protect her from all kinds of evil, he also seems to mediate between her and God. In the final lines, we have a sudden shift where the girl is suddenly called a "nurse". The Polish personal pronoun "*jego*" can refer both to the baby (neuter gender in Polish) and to the angel (masculine gender), so it is not entirely clear whether the girl is a nurse of "the baby" (which could be identified with her soul or her faith, expressed by an image of the "inner child"), or of the angel who was her nurse in the previous verses. In our interpretation (see the *Introductory Study*, pp. 24–26), we incline towards the second option; this is reflected in the choice of the pronoun "his" rather than "its" in the translation.

25–27 Mystical ecstasy was described as sleep or dream already by St Augustine,[70] St Gregory the Great,[71] St Bernard of Clairvaux,[72] Hugo of St Victor,[73] and Meister Eckhart.[74] Following the biblical Song of Songs, it was usually described as a paradoxical state of watchful sleep: "I sleep, but my heart waketh", says the Bride (Song of Sg 5:2).

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70 St Augustine, *Confessions* VII.14.20.

71 St Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* V.31.54 and XXX.16.54.

72 St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Canticum canticorum* 52.4–6.

73 Hugo of St Victor, *De contemplatione* (Hugues de Saint-Victor, *La contemplation et ses espèces*, ed. R. Baron, Tournai-Paris 1958), pp. 88–89.

74 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons 18* [*30*].

In his famous ode *Bread and Wine* Hölderlin writes in the seventh stanza:

> Meanwhile it seems to me often
> Better to sleep than be so without comrades
> Waiting thus and what to do in the meanwhile and say
> I don't know nor why be a poet in dead time?
> But they are, so you say, like the wine god's holy priests
> Who wandered from land to land in holy night.[75]

And in his novel, *Hyperion*: "Among you I became so perfectly rational, learned so thoroughly to distinguish myself from what surrounds me that I am now isolated in the beautiful world, cast out of the garden of nature, where I grew and bloomed, and am drying up under the midday sun. O man is a god when he dreams, a beggar when he thinks."[76] Novalis in the second of the *Hymns of the Night* speaks in a similar vein: "Must the morning always return? Will the despotism of the earthly never cease? Unholy activity consumes the angel-visit of the Night. Endless is the duration of sleep. Holy Sleep, gladden not too seldom in this earthly day-labor, the devoted servant of the Night."[77]

75 F. Hölderlin, *Selected poems*, tr. D. Constantine, Newcastle 1996.

76 F. Hölderlin, *Hyperion, or the Hermit in Greece*, tr. R. Benjamin, Brooklyn, NY, 2008, p. 13.

77 Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*, tr. G. MacDonald, in: G. Macdonald, *Rampolli*, London 1897.

Ahriman and Ormusd

The autograph of the poem is lost. The precise date of its writing has not been established; Mickiewicz dated it in the first edition to 1830. The first printing took place in a Paris edition of Mickiewicz's poetry[78] in 1836.[79]

The poem is not a translation or even a paraphrase of any passage from the "Zend Avesta" (the Zoroastrians' sacred scripture), which was written down in the sixth century BC; instead it is a free, poetic visualisation of the main idea of Zoroastrianism (as Mickiewicz understood it), namely the cosmic, eternal, and constant struggle between the god of light and goodness ('Ormusd' or, in old Persian, 'Ahura Mazda', the Wise or Omniscient Lord) and the god of darkness and evil ('Ahriman', or in old Persian 'Angra Mainyu', the Evil Spirit), which will end, perhaps only at the end of time, with the final triumph of Ormusd. The conclusion of the poem draws the reader's attention to the defeat of Ahriman, the embodiment of evil, and thus anticipates what has not yet happened (according to Zoroastrian beliefs). The depiction of Ahriman was probably inspired by Christian imagery, although it is hard to determine whether the main source was religious (perhaps, neo-Gnostic, since Mickiewicz was studying the writings of Böhme and Swedenborg) or literary (the epics by Dante and Milton differ in significant ways from Mickiewicz's depiction of Ahriman, although the way Lucifer is described in the *Divine Comedy* as being imprisoned in the lowest circle of Hell, could have played a role here).

The name of the god of light was written in two ways: "Oromaz" (in the title) and "Oromades" (line 13, a variant of the Greek version of this name: "Oromasdes"). Probably, Mickiewicz was looking for a Polish word for the name "Ormusd", taken from the middle Persian and used in other European languages of the time. Juliusz Kleiner, an eminent Mickiewicz scholar, suspected that the poet was familiar with the French translation of the Zend Avesta, made by the

78 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, t. VIII, Paryż 1836, pp. 150–151.

79 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, pp. 6–7, critical remarks and variants of the text: p. 119.

orientalist Abraham Anquetil-Duperron (first edition: Paris 1771, 3 vols.); but there is no conclusive evidence for this.

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The poem is in hendecasyllables.

3 The Polish verb "*osiadł*" means literally to "take up one's abode". It suggests that Ahriman may not have lived there since time immemorial, but rather came to live there at some unspecified point. The same is suggested by the repetition of this word in line 20. While it opens up an interesting line of speculation (namely, whether he chose to live there himself or was made to by some other force), it is not a key issue in the poem, which concentrates on Ahriman's ascent from the darkness where he lives to the light which he craves.

For the Zoroastrian and Gnostic context of the figures of Ahriman and Ormusd see the *Introductory Study*, pp. 27–32 On the supposed dualistic idea of two Gods in ancient Slavic religion, Mickiewicz speaks in his lectures at the Collège: "The Slavs believed in the one God; however, they also believed in the evil spirit, Dark God, who was waging war against the White God, the supreme Lord who rewarded and punished."[80] And in a later lecture: "Already German scholars noticed this and tried to explain it by assuming a myth of dual Godhead, the White God and the Dark God, both of them reflected in the language and the whole history of the Slavs."[81]

4 The image of a lion and a snake appears in Ps. 91:13. But also, curiously, in the ninth book of the *Republic*, where Plato speaks of the two irrational parts of the soul as "lion-like" and "snake-like".[82]

8 We translated "*Bóstwo*" ("divinity" or "Godhead") simply as "God", even though it is already an interpretation. This term appears also in Mickiewicz's *Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation* and also in German mystical tradition (with which Mickiewicz was familiar through Jakob Böhme, Angelus Silesius, and Franz von Baader). From the time of Meister Eckhart, the distinction between *Gottheit*

80 Course I, Lecture V; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. VIII, p. 64.

81 Course I, Lecture VIII; ibidem, p. 92.

82 Plato, *Republic* 590a–b (gr. *to leontodes te kai opheodes*).

(Godhead) and *Gott* (God) is of primary importance. The first is God in his essence, which Eckhart in his German sermons identified with the unity of the divine nature, as distinguished from the Three Persons (and in his Latin works, more traditionally, with the person of the Father), while the second is God seen in relation to His creation and His "external" activity. However, neither in the *Hymn* nor in *Ahriman and Ormusd* does this distinction play any significant role.

13–14 The image is richer in the original than in the translation; its metaphysical implications deserve comment. Oromasdes is said to shine among his creatures as the sun shines among the stars and as a father in the midst of his children. Clearly Mickiewicz, in speaking here of "creatures" ("*tworów*"), means some spiritual beings or intelligences which are comparable to the angels in the Abrahamic traditions. They are the children of Oromasdes; their spiritual brightness is incomparably weaker than his. Those interesting details of the heavenly realm in the poem are only hinted at in the translation.

15 The sun has been a symbol of God or the highest Being at least since Plato, who called it "the offspring of the Good" in the sixth book of his *Republic.*[83] He developed an analogy between the sun as the source of seeing and life for earthly creatures, and the Good as the source of knowledge and existence for all things that exist. This analogy became one of the most important allegories in the Western metaphysical tradition, coming through Plotinus to the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian writers of the Middle Ages and further on to modernity.

For Böhme, the sun is a symbol of the divine Word:

> I will show thee a similitude in nature, signifying how the holy being in the holy Trinity is. Consider heaven, which is a round globe, having neither beginning nor end, for its beginning and end are everywhere, which way soever you look upon it: So is God, who is in and above the heaven, he has neither beginning nor end. Now consider further the circle or sphere of the stars, they denote the various powers and wisdom of the Father, and they also are made by the power and wisdom of the Father. Now the heaven, the stars, and the whole deep

83 Plato, *Republic* 507b-509c.

> between the stars, together with the earth, signify the Father. And the seven planets signify the seven spirits of God, or the princes of the angels, among which also lord LUCIFER was one before his fall; all [these] were made out of the Father in the beginning of the creation of angels, before the time of this world. Now observe: The sun stirreth in the midst, in the deep between the stars, in a round circle, and is the heart of the stars, and giveth light and power to all the stars, so tempering the power of the stars that all becometh pleasant and joyful. It enlighteneth also the heaven, the stars, and the deep above the earth, working in all things that are in this world, and is the king and the heart of all things of this world, and so rightly signifieth the Son of God.[84]

Swedenborg who devotes much place to what he calls the spiritual sun or the sun in the spiritual world, claims that it is not to be equated with God or the Word, but rather, with his first emanation, or creation, which radiates the light of wisdom and the warmth of love on the world of the spirits.[85] But he still speaks quite often in a way which conflates the two.

Saint-Martin describes the heart of a divinised man to the sun:

> The Lord said: I shall take care myself of the one who looks for me, the one who loves me, the one who desires to love me. I shall ignite in his heart a fire similar to all the heats of the sun, and all his being will become radiant of light. Man of God here is your holy destiny: as long as the man does not feel his heart bubbling as a burning furnace,

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84 J. Böhme, *Aurora* 3, 41–46. See also Saint-Martin's description of the function of the sun in Böhme: "This place, or centre, according to our author, is the place in which our sun is kindled. Out of this place or centre all kinds of qualities, forms, or powers, which fill and constitute the universe, are engendered and produced, all in conformity with the laws of divine generation; for he admits, in all beings, and eternally in the Supreme Wisdom, a centre in which a sevenfold production or subdivision takes place. He calls this centre the Separator." (Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 111).

85 "Take care not to think that the spiritual world's sun is actually God. The real God is a person. The first emanation from his love and wisdom is something fiery and spiritual that looks like a sun to angels. When the Lord makes himself visible to angels in person, then, he does so in human form, sometimes within the sun, sometimes outside it." (E. Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, tr. G.F. Dole, West Chester, PE, 2010, p. 38)

> he is in danger. He is dead. I shall call upon the Lord; his word can transform the heart of the man into a living sun: he says, and each of his words gives birth to so many suns always ready to invigorate the heart of the man.[86]

86 L.-C. de Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire*, tr. F.M. Lonji, 2017, §198.

The Grand Master

The autograph of this poem is lost. The date of its writing (1830) was indicated by the author himself in the Paris edition of his poetry in 1836,[87] and is widely accepted by scholars who consider the poem to be one of the most important testimonies of Mickiewicz's religious experiences in Rome. There were attempts to date it later (for instance, Wacław Kubacki, in his 1954 monograph *Żeglarz i pielgrzym*), but no conclusive evidence for it has been found. The first edition of the poem was in 1836, in a Parisian *Rocznik Emigracji Polskiej* (p. 12), on the basis of a manuscript given to the editorial board probably by the poet himself.[88]

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The poem is in hendecasyllables and its versification is classicistic and elegant.

Previous translations:

"The Master of Masters," tr. J. Brown, G. R. Noyes, *The Slavonic Review* 3, 7 (1924), pp. 67–68.

1–2 The first two lines of the first stanza form something similar to the Hebraic parallelisms one encounters in the Psalms. Instead of "spirits", we have "heart" the second time, which was not rendered in the translation, even though the term is (obviously) of paramount importance to Mickiewicz (see the commentary on *The Romantic*, verse 69). The mention of hearts also makes it more explicit that the spirits created by the Grand Master are both angels and human souls, without much ontological difference between them.

The clear division of creation into two parts or phases (first, the spirits, then, the material elements) is a common motif within the metaphysical tradition. In the West, St Augustine popularised the tripartite division of the whole reality: God, spirits (angelic

87 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Paryż 1836, pp. 148–9.

88 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 8, critical remarks and variants of the text, pp. 124–128.

and human), and material substances.[89] He also argued for an allegorical interpretation of Gen 1:3 ("Let there be light") as referring to the creation of angels, before the material universe was made.[90] Saint-Martin follows this Augustinian tradition, when he writes about the "three Orders of Being: God, intelligent Beings and physical Nature."[91]

3–6 Those musical metaphors allude, of course, to the ancient Pythagorean metaphysics of numbers. The four elements are compared by Mickiewicz to the four strings of a lyre, on which God plays with "lightnings and winds". Until the seventh century, lyres had only four strings; according to ancient theories of music this was an expression of the cosmic, mathematical harmony. The four strings and basic pitches of a tetrachord (Greek for "four-string"), were tuned on the basis of the basic relations between the first four numbers: 1:2 (the interval of an octave), 2:3 (a fifth), and 3:4 (a fourth). In Pythagoreanism one was not a number, but a principle of all numbers and, indeed, reality itself; it also represented the mathematical point. Two represented a line, three, a surface, and four a solid, so the numbers from one to four symbolised the entire material universe, built of the inanimate four elements (number five represented life). Because the sum of 1, 2, 3, and 4 is 10, Pythagoreans believed that the number ten stands for perfection and the whole.

Plato in his *Timaeus* used this Pythagorean doctrine in describing how God creates the universe. The four elements (fire, wind, water, and earth) were build of four regular solids (tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, and dodecahedron), while the soul as the principle of life was built by God out of mathematical and musical proportions. The World Soul was conceived as a sphere encompassing the whole material universe and moving in circular motion. The Pythagorean conviction that the planetary spheres, by their mathematically organised movements, produce sounds, became a commonplace as "the music of the spheres". In the *Great Improvisation* Mickiewicz alludes to this motif, by describing Konrad's vision in which he

89 See e.g. *Epistulae* 18 and 169.11.
90 See e.g. *Confessions* XII; *The City of God* XII.9.
91 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, p. 34.

places his hands on planetary spheres like on the spheres of a glass armonica, one of the most celebrated instruments of the eighteenth century, invented by Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790).

The idea that the world is a song appears both in a Pagan philosopher Sallustious (4th century AD),[92] and in St Augustine, who compares the world to a melody and a psalm, claiming that the material beings proceeds from the divine Creator-Word.[93]. The same is repeated at the beginning of the *Letter 166* to Jerome, where Augustine more specifically compares Creation to a beautiful psalm.

7–12 in the second stanza Mickiewicz employs the traditional motif of *Deus Artifex*, God the Artist.[94] In one of the most famous odes of the Polish Renaissance, by Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584), which is still used in Catholic liturgy, there is the same *topos*:

> You are the Lord of all the world, you built the sky
> And you embroidered it with golden stars.
> You laid the foundation of the earth which cannot be traversed
> And you covered her nudity with various herbs.
> By your command the sea is kept in its shores
> And it is afraid to transgress the appointed boundaries.[95]

The idea that the world is an expression of God's mind derives from Middle Platonism, in which the Platonic Ideas were interpreted as existing in God's mind as thoughts. Saint-Martin follows this tradition, when he claims that the world is expression of God's thoughts.[96] He also uses the motif of *Deus Artifex*:

> We can say as much of our artistic creations and all of man's inventions. Every one of his works proclaims the ideas, tastes, intelligence, and particular profession of the man who is its Agent or creator. A statue leads to the thought of a sculptor, a picture to that of a painter;

92 Salloustios, *De deis* 3.

93 See St Augustine *Epistulae* 138.5 and 166.13 as well as *Confessions* IV.10.15 and XI.6.8.

94 See J.-L. Chretien, "From God the Artist to Man the Creator," in *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art*, tr. S.E. Lewis, New York 2002.

95 J. Kochanowski, *Pieśni*, Wrocław 1970 (tr. M.S.).

96 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, p. 37.

> a palace to that of an architect, because all these creations are but the physical execution of the abilities specific to the genius of the artist who created them, just as the creations of Nature are but the expression of their Principle and only exist to be its true character.[97]

It echoes Pseudo-Dionysius' claim that those who look at Beauty and form its image in themselves are artists in the image and likeness of God, the supreme Artist.[98]

13 Christ is called "the Master of eloquence", which is an obvious reference to the art of rhetoric. We have declined to include this in the translation, despite the fact that the semantic axis of verses 13–14 hinges on a contrast between infinite divine power on the one hand, and the paucity of words used by God-Man to reveal it to the people, on the other. Of course, the reference to rhetoric strengthens the point beautifully and underlines that fact that Mickiewicz includes all arts in his poem, from music, through painting, sculpture, and architecture, and even the art of making casts ("*odlał je z metali*" in verse 10, translated here as "molded metals' shapes"), to the art of rhetoric, which in this conception includes poetry, literature, and philosophy.

22 The structure of this verse is parallel to that of verse 16 and in the original there is a reference to "thoughts", "speeches", and "works". The tripartite distinction is significant in terms of the underlying anthropology. It is strikingly similar to Jan Amos Komensky's (1592–1670) view of the three primary levels of human activity: *mens, lingua, manus* ("mind", "speech", "hand"), on which he based his highly influential theory of education. Saint-Martin speaks regularly of thought, will, and action in his pre-Böhme period, which he took from his first master Martinez de Pasqually (1727?–1774).[99] This three-partite division was then adopted by Baader who also writes

97 Ibidem, p. 39.

98 *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* IV.3.1.

99 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, see e.g. the whole of chapter ten. On Pasqually's influence see ibidem, p. 52, n. 30.

of thinking, willing, and acting as principles activities of Man.[100] In the translation "thoughts", "speeches", and "works" are rendered in the translation as "art".

23–24 A similar exhortation can be found in the *Imitation of Christ*: "Christ was willing to suffer and be despised; and darest thou complain of any thing? Christ had adversaries and backbiters; and dost thou wish to have all men thy friends and benefactors?"[101]

100 Baader, *Fermenta cognitionis* I.2, p. 37–39. In their fallen condition those three activities are allegorically linked by Baader to Lucifer (thinking), Adam (willing) and Eve (acting). In the redeemed state, thinking should become admiring, willing should be praying, and acting should be serving others (I.17, p. 39).

101 *The Imitation of Christ* II.1.5.

The Wise Men

The poem was written in Dresden, at the beginning of April 1832. In the preserved portion of the autograph, containing the last 12 lines (in the collection of Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe in Cracow) Mickiewicz made a note: "this was planned in France, written in Dresden", while another note, added below by another person says that the poem "was sent from Dresden on the 6th of April 1832 to Rome!!" The first printing was included in the Warsaw edition of Mickiewicz's poems in 1833[102] and is identical to its later, fully authorised version, published in the Parisian edition of Mickiewicz's poems in 1836.[103] There is also a manuscript copy, preserved in Biblioteka Kórnicka, and made by Mickiewicz's friend, Antoni Edward Odyniec (1804–1885) who accompanied him in Dresden. This version differs somewhat from the first printed one; Czesław Zgorzelski believes that it contains an earlier version of the poem, preceding its final redaction.[104]

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The poem is in hendecasyllables. Previous translations:

"The Sages," trans. D. Todd, G. Rapall Noyes, *The Slavonic Review* 3, 7 (1924), pp. 69–70.

1 The title "*mędrcy*", just as the English phrase "the wise men" brings in Polish associations with the Magi episode from the Gospel of Matthew (2:1–12). The Magi are usually referred in Polish folk religion as "the Three Kings", but one popular, traditional carol begins with "The wise men of the world, the monarchs/ Where are you going in such a hurry" ("*Mędrcy świata, monarchowie/ Gdzie spiesznie dążycie*"). Mickiewicz's poem reverses the symbolism of the Magi episode: the wise men of the Gospel wanted to pay homage to the newborn king on their own accord, and their worldly wisdom

102 Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Warszawa 1833, vol. 3, pp. 236–137.

103 Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Paryż 1836, pp. 156–158.

104 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 75, critical remarks and variants of the text, p. 133–136.

led them humbly to submit to God's revelation in the baby Jesus, whereas the wise men mentioned here are forced to notice God's revelation (they are woken from their slumber) and must deal with it against their will. Their wisdom makes them, not humble, but proud and violent. Mickiewicz is also playing with the juxtaposition between the learned Gentiles who come to believe in the Messiah and the learned Jews who reject Him.

Criticism of the learned men who are spiritually shallow became very popular in the High Middle Ages, during controversies over the place of Aristotelianism at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. This was particularly prominent in Franciscan literature, but during the fourteenth century it became commonplace to contrast the "wisdom of this world" with true wisdom, which is based on humility, simplicity, and the purity of the heart. The first book of the *Imitation of Christ* refers in a few places to this contrast, for instance: "Surely a humble peasant who serves God, is better than a proud philosopher who, to the neglect of Him, studies the course of the heavens."[105] And: "Truly, at the day of judgment we shall not be examined as to what we have read, but as to what we have done; not as to how well we have spoken, but as to how religiously we have lived."[106]

5–6 An allusion to: "And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people." (Luke 22:2; cf. Mt 26:3–5; Mk 14:1–2).

7 In this image the darkness of the night represents the spiritual ignorance of the wise men, while their "lamps" seem to symbolise the feeble light of speculative reason.

8–9 The original has "*ostrzyli rozumy*", that is, "they sharpened their reasons": "reasons" (plural), rather than "reason" (singular). However, it would hardly seem clear in the translation to write: "And on their books they sharpened reasons' blades". Not least since, in English, "reasons" will not immediately be read or heard as the plural of "reason" in the sense of 'the mental faculty of reasoning'. We retained the plural, however, in the added word "blades"; in verse

105 *The Imitation of Christ* I.2.1, p. 5.
106 Ibidem, I.3.5, p. 9.

21 we also decided to leave the plural of "reason" ("And with their reasons pierced his loving heart"). The use of the plural "reasons" has some philosophical significance, since it is not about reason as such, which is universal, and unites all those who use it in their common search for and contemplation of the truth. Instead it is about individual human minds, which in modern times have become overly independent and autonomous, and thus progressively isolated from each other and from the truth itself. The proliferation of philosophical systems was seen by Mickiewicz as a failure of reason rather than its glory; this is a traditional charge brought against speculative philosophy by religious and non-religious opponents alike. The daggers of reason are "hard and cold", because they represent dead, abstract philosophy and the "dead truths" of *The Romantic*, opposed to the "living truths". Saint-Martin says: "And, woe unto you, cold metaphysicians, who make of the Divine Being, and all that emanates from Him, merely a subject for your dissertation and reasoning!"[107]

11 "*Łowić*" means both "to hunt" and "to capture". It seems to allude to the assumption of some of the philosophers, criticised here by Mickiewicz, that they can fully understand God with the natural light of their reason. Of course, Hegel is the most prominent example of a philosopher contemporary to Mickiewicz, who claimed that conceptual reasoning leads, in the process of historical, dialectic development, to the full understanding of the whole of being, including God. The tradition of Western metaphysics, especially the apophatic current derived mainly from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, emphasises the fact that God's essence is unknowable and "ungraspable" (gr. *akataleptos*). The idea that the First Cause of being is impossible to know was first proposed by Plotinus, who himself was possibly inspired by the Neo-Pythagorean philosopher Numenius of Apamea (2nd century AD), whose works are preserved only in fragments.

Following Plotinus, Gregory of Nyssa claims that God's essence is unknowable and ungraspable, even though we can experience it in

107 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 292.

"luminous darkness".[108] Pseudo-Dionysius writes: "And then Moses abandons those who see and what is seen and enters into the really mystical darkness of unknowing; in this he shuts out every knowing apprehension and comes to be in the wholly imperceptible and invisible, being entirely of that beyond all of nothing, neither himself nor another, united most excellently by the completely unknowing inactivity of every knowledge, and knowing beyond intellect by knowing nothing."[109] Through the Areopagite, the concept of the unknowability of God enters the Western tradition as well. The Eastern Orthodox tradition claims that God's essence is impossible to grasp and know in the future life as well as the present, while Western theology, following Aquinas, claims that it is impossible in this life, while the eternal life will consist in knowing the essence of God, although never in the way that God knows Himself.[110]

In Mickiewicz's times this motif appeared in Jacobi's polemic with Fichte (in the famous *Atheismusstreit*), where he says: "A God who could be known would be no God at all".[111] This greatly influenced the Jena Romantics in their reaction against Fichte's epistemological optimism. Mystical darkness, representing the unknowing higher than conceptual knowledge, is the main theme of Novalis' *Hymns to the Night*. For instance, in the first part of Hardenberg's prose poem we read: "More heavenly than those glittering stars we hold the eternal eyes which the Night hath opened within us. Farther they see than the palest of those countless hosts. Needing no aid from the light, they penetrate the depths of a loving soul that fills a

108 "For leaving behind everything that is observed, not only what sense comprehends but also what the intelligence thinks it sees, it keeps on penetrating deeper until by the intelligence's yearning for understanding it gains access to the invisible and the incomprehensible, and there it sees God. That is the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness." (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, p. 80).

109 *Mystical Theology* I.3, English translation by J.D. Jones in: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names. Mystical Theology*, p. 214.

110 See *Summa theologiae* I, q.12, a.1, co.

111 *Jacobi to Fichte*, in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 500.

loftier region with bliss ineffable."[112] Hölderlin observes in his novel *Hyperion* (1797–1799): "There is a forgetting of all existence, a falling silent of our being, in which we feel as if we have found everything. There is a falling silent, a forgetting of all existence, in which we feel as if we have lost everything, a night of our soul in which no glimmer of a star, not even a rotten piece of wood illuminates us."[113] And Schelling:

> Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance. God alone – as the one who exists – dwells in pure light since he alone is begotten from himself. The arrogance of man rises up [sträubt sich] against this origin from the ground and even seeks moral reasons against it. Nevertheless we would know of nothing that could drive man more to strive for the light with all of his strength than the consciousness of the deep night from which he has been lifted into existence.[114]

12 of the original we read that the straight path which leads the wise men and their disciples is "*zgubna*", that is, "perditious". Mickiewicz declines to say where the path leads, so our translation ("it led them straight to Hell") is an interpretation of what is left unsaid. However, the theological associations of the word "*zguba*" ("perdition"), at least in the context of the poem, and to readers contemporary to Mickiewicz, points directly to the eternal perdition of Hell. The final damnation of the wise men is not a settled matter within the poem: Mickiewicz is saying: "But God still loves them and he prays for them!". It seems to be an allusion to the Passion, when, just after Jesus was stripped of His clothes He said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots." (Luke 23:34). This gives hope even for the salvation of those who murdered God, but the conclusion of Mickiewicz's poem ("God lives. He's dead only within the wise.") does not sound hopeful.

13–18 The third stanza is a paraphrase of the arrest of Jesus as told in the Gospel of John (18:3–8), with slight changes. In the Gospel

112 Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*.

113 Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, p. 56.

114 F. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, tr. J. Love, J. Schmidt, New York 2006, p. 29.

Christ asks "Whom seek ye?" and only when he hears that they seek Jesus of Nazareth, he answers with his "I am". In response, all fall on their faces, while in the poem it is only the wise men who are so humiliated, while their servants simply run away.

19–21 The idea of atheism as the murder of God appears in Böhme:

> we lie among Murderers, who have so wounded us, and beaten us, that we are half dead, and we must look about us for the Samaritan with his Beast, that he may dress our Wounds, and bring us into his Inn. O how lamentable and miserable it is, that we are so beaten by the Murderer (the Devil) that we are half dead, and yet feel our Smart no more! O if the Physician would come, and dress our Wounds, that our Soul might revive and live, how should we rejoice! Thus speaks the Desire, and has such longing hearty Wishes; and although the Physician is present, yet the Mind can nowhere apprehend him, because it is so very much wounded, and lies half dead.[115]

It is also present in the thought of Baader. He writes in essay on the concept of time, published in 1818 (in French and German): "From this point of view we can see that the atheist – or the one who can be called the murderer of God because he sets himself against the complete revelation of God within him – only denies the inner revelation (which he calls the moral), but he does not deny God's outer revelation, which he calls natural law, fate, destiny."[116] Earlier, Hamann describes speculative philosophy of his time as: "Your lying, murderous philosophy".[117]

Mickiewicz himself records a thought of Saint-Martin's:

> The prayer of a Spaniard: "My God, defend me from myself", concerns a sentiment which proves to be quite salutary, if we are able to feel it in ourselves, that is, if we feel that we are the only enemy on this

115 J. Böhme, *The Three Principles of the Divine Essence*, tr. J. Sparrow, Nashville, AR, 2016, 24, 4.

116 *Sur la notion de temps*, vol. 2, in: F. von Baader, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1851, pp. 47–68, on p. 58. The paper appeared originally in French, but a German translation by Baader is included in his collected works (as *Über den Begriff der Zeit*). English translation by J.G. Friesen: https://jgfriesen.wordpress.com/franz-von-baader/.

117 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 77.

> earth that we should fear; then, God fears only what is not Himself. To the prayer quoted above we could add the following: "My God, deign to assist me in preventing me from murdering you."[118]

This curious claim had also drawn the attention of Baader and Mickiewicz could have even taken this quotation from the author of *Fermenta cognitionis*, who points out that this passage may seem "naïve", but has a deeply mystical significance.[119]

In his last work Saint-Martin writes: "by the mode of being we have, through crime, created for ourselves, keep the Heart of God Himself, in us, on its death-bed, and in a grave of corruption."[120] Towards the end of the book he claims that murdering God in one's own soul is much more horrible than the historical murder of Jesus Christ: "Alas I come to the aid of thine own heart, thine own Word, and, in pity to thyself, save men from a Deicide; for that which they want to perpetrate is a thousand times more criminal than that which the Jews perpetrated on the material body of thy Christ."[121]

It is also a highly popular motif in English and American Romanticism. William Wordsworth writes in *The Tables Turned*, which was included in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798):

> Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: –
> We murder to dissect.[122]

The image of the cold and piercing reason of philosophy, destroying the living experience of reality, can be also found, for instance

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118 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XIII, p. 341.

119 "In demselben Sinne hat man auch jenes naive Gebet St. Martins zu verstehen, welcher Gott bittet, dass Er ihn (den Bittenden) hindern möchte, Ihn (Gott) in such zu tödten! Denn die Sünde hemmt Conjunction des sich im Menschen bittenden (suchenden) und erhörenden (findenden) Gottes; eine Conjunction, welche die französischen Mystiker *la celebration des saintes noces* nennen." (*Fermenta cognitionis* IV, p. xv)

120 Saint-Martin, *Man, His Nature and Ministry*, p. 87.

121 Ibidem, p. 414.

122 Wordsworth, Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*.

in John Keats' narrative poem *Lamia* (1820), where the philosopher Apollonius also "murders" the fantasy-born eponymous creature:

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
> There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
> We know her woof, her texture; she is given
> In the dull catalogue of common things.
> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
> The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.[123]

And further on:

> Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye,
> Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
> Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging: she, as well
> As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
> Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so,
> He look'd and look'd again a level – No!
> "A Serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
> Than with a frightful scream she vanished. (299–306)

Edgar Allan Poe in his sonnet *To Science* (1829), calls science "the true daughter" of Saturn, that is, a god associated with death, coldness, and melancholia. In traditional astrology his metal is poisonous, heavy lead:

> Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
> Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
> Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
> Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
> How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
> Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
> To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
> Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
> Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car,
> And driven the Hamadryad from the wood

123 Lines 229–238. J. Keats, *Poetical Works and Other Writings*, New York 1970.

> To seek a shelter in some happier star?
> Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
> The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
> The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?[124]

28 The last line of the poem in the original has, literally, "within the *spirit* of the wise" ("*w mędrców duchu*"), which we translate as "within the wise". The word "*duch*" ("spirit") is significant for Mickiewicz, as he emphasises in his Paris lectures:

> It is of paramount importance to define precisely the meaning of the word '*duch*', since it may be said that one third of all the words of the rich Slavic language have their root in this one word. All the words which signify, in the mental realm, the impulses of the soul, desires, the acts of the will, and in the sensible realm, all that in matter is motion, all those words are either derived from the word '*duch*' or retain some of its core in themselves. '*Duch*' means not the soul, as some philosophers understand it nor *l'esprit* in the common sense of this term, but the spiritual essence, the inner essence which animates the body, *spiritus* in the Biblical sense. (…) [a Slavic poet] doesn't represent the spirit ['*duch*'] as divided into separate faculties, he doesn't accept the distinctions made by those philosophers who believe that it is reason which is the highest part of the human spirit; he doesn't consider soul and body as separate entities. He says that the spirit exists by itself and incarnates himself now in desires, now in reason, now in the heart, not being absorbed into any of those instruments. Yes, reason, body, the heart are, according to the poet, only instruments, not constitutive parts of the spirit.[125]

Despite all that, we believe that we deviate little from Mickiewicz's meaning, when we say render "within the spirit", elliptically, as "within".

124 E.A. Poe, *The Complete Tales and Poems*, New York 2015.

125 Course II, Lecture XII; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, pp. 167–8.

Reason and Faith

The autograph is lost. The poem was written between 1830 and 1832, although most scholars nowadays, following Juliusz Kleiner and Wacław Kubacki, are inclined to the second date and links it to Mickiewicz's stay in Dresden. Kubacki interpreted also this poem as a fragment of the *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III.[126] The first printing took place in the Warsaw edition of Mickiewicz's works in 1833[127] and the fully authorised version was published in the Parisian edition of his poems[128] in 1836.[129]

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The poem is in hendecasyllables; its form is highly classicising (see the *Introductory Study*, pp. 40–41).

The main theme of the relationship of reason and faith in Christian culture has been fundamental from the writings of the ante-Nicene Apologists (2nd century AD) who tried to convince the Roman intellectual and political elite of the Christian religion's solid philosophical and scriptural base. The Christian mainstream claimed that Pagan philosophy (including natural philosophy which we today usually call 'science'), based on reason, does not conflict with a Christian virtue of faith (gr. *pistis*) in the divine revelation both in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. There have been always anti-intellectual tendencies within the Church, like those unnamed Christians who, according to Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c.215 AD), claimed that philosophy was given to the fallen humanity by Satan.[130] Clement opposes this forcefully, arguing that philosophy is also revealed by God and cannot contradict Scripture.[131]

The precursors of the idea that reason and faith or philosophy and the Scripture are two different ways in which God expressed the

126 See the commentary on *Evening Conversation*.

127 Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Warszawa 1833, vol. 3, pp. 232–235.

128 Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Paryż 1833, pp. 152–155.

129 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 10, critical remarks and variants of the text: p. 130–133.

130 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I.18.3–4.

131 Ibidem, I.44.4.

same Truth, that is, Himself, can be found in the community of the Hellenised Jews in Alexandria, most notably, Philo Judaeus (20 BC–AD 50), whose method of an allegorical interpretation of the Bible and eliminating contradictions between natural reason and scriptural revelation, was adopted by Clement and Origen of Alexandria (AD 185–253) as a more or less standard Christian teaching. This view was further transmitted to the West by St Ambrose of Milan (339–397) and St Augustine of Hippo. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, went as far as to say that he found in the "books of Platonists" (lat. *libri Platonicorum*)[132] exactly the same truth as in the Bible, but expressed differently, through rational arguments and discourses.[133]

On the other hand, the importance of faith for the achievement of rational knowledge was emphasised on the basis of a Latin translation of the words from the Book of Isaiah: "if you don't believe, you will not understand" (Isa. 7:9; *nisi credideritis, non intellegetis*). The Hebrew meaning of the verse is closer to "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established", but the imprecise Latin translation gave scriptural authority to the claim that faith is a necessary ground for the flourishing of the rational knowledge of God. Ultimately, faith was to be replaced by direct vision, as Augustine often emphasised, but it is indispensable for rational thinking. In the *Imitation of Christ*, which Mickiewicz was intensely reading at the time, this classical attitude was concisely expressed in the very last chapter of the work: "All reason and natural search ought to follow Faith, not to go before it, nor to break in upon it."[134]

However, it seems that St Thomas Aquinas' careful distinction between philosophy and science (based on natural abilities of human reason) on the one hand, and theology or 'sacred doctrine' (based on supernatural faith and divine revelation), led to a gradual separation of reason and faith, especially, with the rise of anti-Platonic philosophical tendencies such as nominalism of the fourteenth century. Some theologians saw the rational order of

132 It is believed that it was primarily a Latin translation of Plotinus' *Enneads* and possibly some works by his disciple and editor, Porphyry.

133 *Confessions* VII.9.14.

134 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.18.5, p. 278.

creation not as an expression of the inherently rational nature of the Creator, but as a result of an arbitrary act of the divine will. In this context, it became more difficult to maintain a harmony between reason and faith, science and theology.

Franz von Baader, in his essay *Über den Zwiespalt des Religiösen Glaubens und Wissens*,[135] published in 1833, which could have been known to Mickiewicz, claims that the conflict between faith and reason is a result of the Protestant Reformation. He also claims that there is no real conflict between reason and faith. They are so closely connected to each other that a decline of faith leads to the decline of reason and the decline of reason leads to the decline of faith. They flourish or degenerate only together. What the Enlightenment presented as a conflict between a blind, religious faith in the Scripture and an enlightened scientific knowledge based on sensible experience, for Baader is really a conflict between two sets of beliefs, not between beliefs and scientific truths. The notion of faith and reason in Jacobi is less traditional, since he downplays the importance of reason and identifies faith with intuition or feeling. However, towards the end of his life, Jacobi began to move closer to the idea that his "faith" or "feeling" could be reconciled with historical rationality as understood by Hegel and, in a way, was drawn towards a balance cherished in the classical Christian doctrine of reason and faith (*pace* di Giovanni who sees in this an expression of the internal contradictions of the very spirit of the Enlightenment).[136]

1–2 The first stanza features an elaborate image which cannot fully be rendered into English. "*Rozumne, gromowładne czoło*" (literally, "rational, thunder-wielding forehead") is rendered in the translation as "proud reason and my head". The Polish epithet '*gromowładny*' does not quite mean 'proud'; curiously, it is traditionally used in the Polish literature to translate one of the fixed epithets of Zeus in the *Iliad* (gr. *erigdoupos*). Mickiewicz also uses this epithet in a "small

135 F. von Baader, *Über den Zwiespalt des Religiösen Glaubens und Wissens als die geistige Wurzel des Verfalls der religiösen und politischen Societät in unserer wie in jeder Zeit*, in: *Sämttliche Werke*, vol. I, Leipzig 1851, pp. 357–82.

136 G. di Giovanni, *Introductory Study*, in: Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 163–167.

improvisation" of Konrad's in *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, where he encounters a terrible Raven in a vision: "A giant kite – who art thou, who art thou, raven?/ Who art thou? – I'm an eagle – he stares – / Who are thou? – I wield the fire of heaven!" The last phrase in the original is: "*Ja – gromowłady*" which is exactly the same epithet used in *Reason and Faith*.

In the "small improvisation" the pride of Konrad is associated with the eagle (the bird of Zeus) and his "thunder-wielding" epithet. Earlier, in *Reason and Faith*, he makes the same association. Zeus is, obviously, associated in Greek mythology with the highest place among gods and men. In the third stanza, the lyrical subject is, in fact, depicting himself as a sort of a god, shining in the sky, so it is possible that Mickiewicz suggests here, by the use of this epithet, that the pride taken in reason is a form of a sinful self-deification. The Augustinian tradition emphasised the importance of the Vulgate verse: "the beginning of all sin is pride" (*Initium omnis peccati superbia*, Eccl 10:15). In the mediaeval West pride was called "the queen of seven deadly sins" by authors including St Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville and Alcuin.[137]

On the other hand, in the Christian tradition the eagle can have multiple meanings. It may be a symbol of contemplation (cf. Ps. 103:5; Is 40:31),[138] but Dante uses it also, when he is describing the sphere of Jupiter (in cantos 18–20 of the *Paradiso*), as an allegory of the Holy Roman Empire and monarchy in general. In his dream in *Purgatorio* 9.13–42, he sees himself captured by an eagle like Ganymede.

7 ("when we fear the flood"), in the original there is a reference to "my nation", here translated simply as "we".

19–20 The image of snails in shells in lines ("You are enclosed like snails in little shells,/ While you desire to comprehend the globe.")

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137 See D.D. Allman, "Sin and the Construction of Carolingian Kingship", in: *The Seven Deadly Sins: from Communities to Individuals*, ed. R. Newhauser, Leiden 2007, pp. 21–40, on pp. 37–40.

138 Pseudo-Dionysius, *De coelesti hierarchia* XV.8, English tr. by J. Parker: *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, in: *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, London 1897, p. 177.

recalls Mickiewicz's early *Ode to Youth*, where a selfish man is compared to an abominable "reptile in a shell" ("*jakiś płaz w skorupie*"). Here the emphasis is not so much selfishness or the lack of interest in other people, but the fact that the scholars, self-enclosed because of their narrowmindedness, are incapable of doing what they desire to do: "to comprehend the globe".

21–24 Epicureans and Stoics represent strands of Enlightenment materialism. The former believe in the complete randomness of Nature, while the latter place their confidence in the absolute determinism of physical causes. Both are seen by Mickiewicz as hostile to true metaphysics. Johann Hamann writes:

> Behold! the large and small Masorah[139] of philosophy has overwhelmed the text of nature, like the Great Flood. Were not all its beauties and riches bound to turn into water? – Yet you perform far greater miracles than the gods ever delighted to do, with oak-trees and pillars of salt, with petrified and alchemical metamorphoses and fables to convince the human race – You make nature blind, that she might be your guide! Or rather, with your Epicureanism you have put out the light of your own eyes, that you might be taken for prophets who conjure inspiration and expositions out of the empty air. – You would have dominion over nature, and you bind your own hands and feet with your Stoicism, so that in your poetic miscellanies you may sing falsetto on the diamond fetters of fate all the more movingly.[140]

139 Which is the body of rules, principles, and traditions relating to the Scriptures.
140 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 80.

Evening Conversation

The exact date of this poem's composition has not been securely established. In older scholarship it was associated with Mickiewicz's stay in Rome (1830) and the religious breakthrough which took place there. Later, strong arguments were given for a later date (1832, in Dresden; according to this view, the poem was written during Mickiewicz's work on *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, the most important Polish metaphysical Romantic drama. Wacław Kubacki advanced a controversial (indeed unpopular) thesis that the poem was a fragment of the *Forefathers' Eve*, which was ultimately not used by the poet. Kubacki argued for a close doctrinal affinity between the two works, but nobody could easily point to any passage of *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, where this poem could be situated as an organic part of the whole piece. Kubacki associated the poem with the Improvisation of Konrad (scene II) and the Vision of Father Piotr (scene V), but it is much different from both in terms of poetics and rhetoric.[141] In critical editions of Mickiewicz's poems, the editors usually place *Evening Conversation* between 1830 and 1832. The first printing (accepted by the Tsarist censors) was published in the Warsaw edition of Mickiewicz's works in 1833,[142] whereas the first edition fully approved of by the poet was included in the Parisian edition of Mickiewicz's poems in 1836.[143] The autograph is lost.[144]

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The poem is in hendecasyllables.

Previous translations:

"Evening Discourse," tr. G.R.Noyes, J. Parish, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. S. Helsztyński, Warsaw 1955, pp. 85–7.

141 W. Kubacki, *Żeglarz i pielgrzym*, Warszawa 1954, pp. 188–194.

142 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Warszawa 1833, vol. 3, pp. 238–240.

143 Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, Paryż 1836, pp. 159–162.

144 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, pp. 8–9, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 128–130.

"Conversation at Evening," tr. L. Bogan, in: *Selected Poems*, ed. C. Mills, pp. 108–109.[145]

"Evening discourse", trans. M.J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M.J. Mikoś. Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, pp. 44–45.

1 It is difficult to translate the peculiar quality of the expression in the first line "*Z Tobą ja gadam*" (repeated in line 5 of the first stanza), because the verb '*gadać*' implies much more colloquial familiarity than the English 'to talk', while 'to chat' would seem too informal: '*gadać*' can refer to a conversation about the most serious things taking place between intimate friends or spouses, while 'to chat' seems to indicate that the content of the talk is not very serious. The point Mickiewicz makes here is that his prayer features both intimacy and seriousness, and combines great familiarity and trust. This verb is also used in the beginning of the famous and nationally portentous Scene V of *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, a so-called *Vision of Father Piotr*. The priest begins by confessing his nothingness before God's greatness, after which he receives a vision revealing to himself the future fate of the Polish nation. In a philological, prosaic translation: "Lord! What am I before your face? Dust and nothing. But once I confess to you my nothingness, I, dust, will chat with the Lord." ("*Ja, proch, będę z Panem gadał*") Charles Kraszewski, in the only complete English translation of *Forefathers' Eve*, omits the powerful juxtaposition of the man/dust and the Lord, joined in a 'chat':

> Lord, what am I worth in Thy sight?
> Dust, not a mite.
> Yet should I but confess my worthlessness,
> Then grantest Thou converse with Thy holiness.[146]

Strikingly similar images appear in Book Three of the *Imitation of Christ*. In the "Prayer to implore the grace of Devotion" we read: "O Lord my God! Thou art to me whatsoever is good. And who am I, that

145 It is a prose translation.

146 Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve*, London 2016.

I should dare to speak to Thee? I am Thy poorest, meanest servant, and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can or dare express. Yet do thou remember, Lord, that I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing."[147] And also later: "Shall I speak unto my Lord, who am but dust and ashes? If I esteem myself to be anything more, behold, Thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true witness, and I cannot contradict."[148]

Mickiewicz underlines the metaphysical difference between God and his creature, as well as the astonishing familiarity and even boldness of a mystic who dares to 'chat with God'. So even the first line introduces a paradox which is crucial to the structure and rhetoric of this poem. This is followed by the image of the lyrical subject inviting God, who is the King of Heaven, to come to the little house of his spirit in order to 'chat' there (a diminutive '*domku*' in Polish has much more force than English can convey, as there are no equivalent or comparable diminutives in the language).

This seems to be inspired by the beginning of Augustine's *Confessions* (just as the whole, confessional tone of the poem bears resemblance to the atmosphere of this great classic of Western spirituality), where he begins by the contrast between the greatness of God and the smallness of man: "'You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised (Ps. 47:2): great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable' (Ps. 146:5). Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you …".[149] In the chapters that follow, Augustine meditates on the possibility of *invocare Deum*, literally, "calling God in" to his soul and uses an image of the little house, which appears also in *Evening Conversation*: "The house of my soul is too small for you to come to it. May it be enlarged by you. It is in ruins: restore it."[150]

The same image reappears in the *Imitation of Christ* ("How shall I bring Thee into my house, I that have so often offended Thy most gracious countenance?")[151] and in Saint-Martin's *Man of Desire*:

147 *The Imitation of Christ* III.3.5, p.100.
148 Ibidem, III.8.1, p. 113.
149 *Confessions* I.1.1, p. 3.
150 Ibidem, I.5.6, p. 6.
151 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.1.3, p. 231.

"Without his divine assistance, the man crawls as in the mud; hardly of the bottom of his disabled person house, can he discover far off some beams of the celestial brightness."[152]

The final paradox of the first stanza, the image of the heavenly King ruling in heaven and serving on earth, crucified in the human heart, is, of course, striking, but belongs to the long tradition derived from fourth- and fifth-century doctrinal contentions, in which the orthodox position of the Church (as formally taught in the ecumenical councils of Nicea, AD 325, and Chalcedon, AD 451) was that Christ is at the same time God and Man. In the writings of the Church Fathers (including St Augustine and St Leo the Great), the doctrine of the unity of "two natures in one hypostasis" (as Chalcedon was to formulate it) was expressed rhetorically by emphasising that the same Person was lying helpless in a crib and moving the stars in heaven or suffering on the cross and sustaining the universe in existence.[153] The reference to servitude as well as the whole of lines 7–8 is a reference to the great poem of St Paul contained in the second chapter to his *Letter to Philippians*:

> Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
> But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
> And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil 2: 6–8)

The allegories of light, the sun, and the ray in the second stanza recall a popular *topos* in the Platonic tradition. However, an interesting metaphor of prayer as sending back the rays of light, which the divine Sun is sending to his creatures, is most likely taken from Saint-Martin:

> How would the eternal forget his alliance with men? The difference between them makes it present to him. Their disorders stop the circulation of the life on them; they make flow back the divine beams

152 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* §46.

153 See e.g. St Augustine, *Sermones* 187 and 202.

> towards their source, and so God knows our troubles and our needs. Let us be just and capable, and the divine beams will propagate peacefully and without obstacle, up to the last stalks of the tree.[154]

12–13 This leads to the beautifully condensed passage, which we rendered: "You send light – I take light – sending light back." This line has, theologically speaking, a strikingly Trinitarian form, but, at the same time, follows the Neoplatonic triad of *mone/proodos/epistrophe* ("abiding/proceeding/turning back"), which was early identified in Christian theology with the Father giving birth eternally to the Word which returns eternally in the breathing of the Holy Spirit to the Father. The universe is taken up in this eternal flow of divinity, because God-Man, returning to the Father in the Holy Spirit, takes with him the whole of creation. In the poem, prayer is a supernatural light descending on the lyrical subject and then coming back (through the Holy Spirit) to its source.

The image of human prayer enriching God (line 13) is doctrinally unorthodox, possibly connected to the idea of the "evolution of God" in Jacob Böhme. However, in mystical parlance there are precedents of such poetic license, for instance, St Paul's famous claim that Christ's suffering was somehow incomplete and has to be "filled up" by the sufferings of his Church (theologically untrue, if taken literally): "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col 1:24).

16 An allusion to Mt 5:16.

17–21 The third stanza is focused on the suffering of Christ and uses the typical imagery developed by Franciscan spirituality in the thirteenth century, and became popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Before the thirteenth century, Christian devotion in general focused on neither the humanity of Christ nor on the details of his suffering. The famous Lenten, Gregorian hymns, written by Venantius Fortunatus (AD 530–609), *Vexilla Regis prodeunt* and *Pange lingua gloriosi*, briefly mention the details of the Passion, but they focus on Christ as the great King, fighting the war

154 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* §249.

against evil under the banner of the Cross; his divinity is emphasised much more than his humanity. Perhaps the earliest examples of meditation on the Passion of Christ can be dated to Peter Damian (1007–1072/3).[155] It is also prominent in Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167).[156] This practice flourishes from the thirteenth century onwards, especially, after St Francis' experience of receiving stigmata and his identifying with the suffering Christ. A great change in piety occurs; the faithful are encouraged to meditate on Christ's wounds and the pictorial details of the Passion, seeking to imitate His suffering with their own suffering. Here the influence of the *Imitation of Christ* as well as (possibly) of traditional, beautiful Polish devotional hymns, was at the back of Mickiewicz's mind, when he identified himself as the one who inflicts pain on the Crucified.

22–25 The idea of man being a master of the suffering God (verses 23–24) is striking, but closely follows St Paul's idea that God, being the supreme King, took a form of a slave (Phil. 2:7). Mickiewicz finishes his thought, namely, that he became a slave of his human creatures, granting them power over himself. The idea of man having power over Christ to torment him appears earlier in the mystical tradition. St Angela of Foligno says: "He gave to humans full power over his person. He bestowed upon their hearts the power to form perverse and murderous thoughts against him, hold council to arrange everything according to plan, strike him, lacerate him, and most painfully crucify and kill him."[157]

26–31 The image of the divine Physician (*Christus Medicus*) in the fourth stanza is a commonplace in Christian tradition from the time of Origen, and is extremely frequent in the writings of St Augustine.[158] The idea of the exercise of confession as showing

155 Peter Damian, *Opusculum decimum nonum. De abdicatione episcopatus* 5, *Patrologia Latina* 145, p. 432AB.

156 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis* I.5.16.

157 St Angela of Foligno, *Instructiones* XXII, English tr. by P. Lachance in: Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, New York 1993.

158 The motif of Christ the Physician derives from the Gospel, where a significant part of Jesus' mission is healing physical and spiritual diseases. Jesus himself compares sin to disease, pointing to a symbolic character of his healing mission (Mt 9:12; Mk 2:17; Luke 5:31). Due to the popularity of the motif in

spiritual wounds to the divine Physician who alone can heal them is derived from Augustine's *Confessions* (e.g. X.3.3., see note 83 in the *Introductory Study*). It appears also in the last book of the *Imitation of Christ*: "Unto Thee I come for remedy, I entreat of Thee consolation and support. I speak to Thee Who knowest all things, to Whom all my inward thoughts are open, and Who alone canst perfectly comfort and help me."[159]

32–37 This stanza is difficult to translate, because of the density of contrasting images, which can be reproduced in English only to some degree. The main contrast of the first lines of this stanza is that between an internal, quiet, but horrifying moan of guilty conscience (which is equated with the moans of the damned in Hell), and an external, loud expression of it that is addressed to the subject's neighbours. Our translation follows the internal logic of this imagery rather than the letter of the poem.

St Augustine's writings, it is also prevalent in the Middle Ages (for instance, in St Bonaventure, where the sixth part of his work *Breviloquium* is entitled "On Sacramental Therapy" (*De medicina sacramentali*, see St Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio, *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, Quaracchi 1882–1902, vol. 5, p. 265).

159 *The Imitation of Christ* IV.16.1, p. 272.

2. Poems Unpublished during Mickiewicz's Life

To Solitude

Nineteenth-century scholars dated this sonnet to a variety of periods of Mickiewicz's creative life. Piotr Chmielowski dated it to 1840 and included it among the Lausanne lyrics. Wilhelm Bruchnalski associated it with the Roman lyrics (1830). Stanisław Pigoń argued decisively that the preserved autograph of the poem (the collection of the Mickiewicz's Museum in Paris) is derived from a very rough draft of *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, and situated it at the upper part of page 50, where there is a fragment of the *Ball at the Senator's* (scene VIII of the play) underneath the sonnet.[160] This discovery allows scholars to date the poem to April 1832 (according to Czesław Zgorzelski, the end of the month), while some scholars are even inclined to consider it a discarded section from *Forefathers' Eve*, intended to precede the Improvisation of Konrad (scene II); but this view has not been widely accepted.

The sonnet *To Solitude* remained unpublished by Mickiewicz during his life, but the first stanza appeared in 1856 in the Cracow journal *Czas*, while the full version was first printed in Paris in 1861.[161] Sadly, this edition features mistakes resulting from an inaccurate reading of the manuscript; a correct version was later established, thanks largely to the textual proficiency of Pigoń, and this version is considered the standard one nowadays.[162]

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While this poem is considered a sonnet, the poet has not respected all the formal rigors of the sonnet. Jacek Łukasiewicz perceptively describes its structure:

160 See S. Pigoń, "Jakiego Mickiewicza znamy?", *Przegląd Warszawski* 12 (1922).

161 A. Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, eds. E. Januszkiewicz, J. Klaczko, Paryż 1860–1861, t. 1, p. 417.

162 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 54, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 248–251.

> The poem has the size of a sonnet, even though the layout of rhymes is different (abab, ccdd, efef, gg). The encompassing stanzas have alternating rhymes, the middle stanza has even rhymes: this is the one in which the psychological momentum quickens. There is also a division into two parts, as is appropriate for a sonnet; in the first quatrain, the plot takes place (the actions of the subject), while the second section contains reflections. The final distich (and this kind of distich usually ends the so-called "French" or "Spenserian" sonnet) collects, as it were, the whole energy of the incomplete stanza. One could interpret this distich as an interrupted stanza with even rhyme. The poem is astoundingly composed.[163]

Krystyna Poklewska calls this "A crippled sonnet, breaking all the versification canons of its genre"[164] and claims that its form is supposed to express the inner disharmony of the lyrical subject. She presumably refers to its alternation of Polish 13-syllable alexandrines with the verses which form a half of an alexandrine. Since we decided not to use rhymes, we attempted to reproduce the metrical variety of the poem by alternating alexandrines with iambic pentameters in the first two stanzas. The last two stanzas are in English alexandrines (full Polish 13-syllable alexandrines in the original). In the only existing English translation, by R. Humphries, all the lines are equal in length and metre.

Previous translations:

"To Solitude," tr. R. Humphries, in: *Selected poems*, ed. C. Mills, p. 78.

4 Depth or abyss takes on a special significance within the history of mediaeval mysticism. The Scriptural foundation for it was the image from the Book of Psalms "Deep calleth unto deep" (*abyssus invocat abyssum*, Ps. 42:7),which has been always understood as referring to the human abyss calling the divine Abyss. However, before the thirteenth century, the human abyss was primarily that of a sinful soul, praying for forgiveness. From the thirteenth century onwards, however, the abyss acquires a new, more metaphysical meaning. It is the

163 J. Łukasiewicz, *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 137.

164 K. Poklewska, "Poeta i żywioły. O wierszu *Do samotności*," in: *Mickiewicz mistyczny*, pp. 123–128, on 128.

depth of the soul that is seen as infinite: in this infinite abyss of the soul, the union or unity with the Abyss of God takes place. Beatrice of Nazareth uses the Dutch word *afgrunt*, describing the depth of the soul which sinks into the abyss of love to such a degree that it completely becomes love;[165] towards the end of her treatise she speaks of a deep abyss of Godhead.[166] Hadewijch of Antwerp was the first author to use this term frequently in this metaphysical and mystical sense, calling not only God, but also the soul "bottomless abyss".[167] A similar case is Mechtild of Magdeburg (1207–1282).[168] Abyss is also a favourite motif of Franciscan mystics of the late 13th century, such as Iacopone da Todi, Angela of Foligno and Ubertino of Casale.[169]

5 The phrase "*w myślach nad myślami*" in verse 5 was suggested, by Jacek Łukasiewicz, to be an allusion to the Song of Songs, based purely on the use of a syntactic construction which imitates the Greek and Latin genitive (Gr. *asma asmaton*; Lat. *canticum canticorum*). "Thoughts of thoughts" would follow the pattern of the "Song of Songs" and thus be closer to the original, but it wouldn't suggest the biblical poem to the reader. Rather, it might suggest something like thinking about one's own thoughts, which is obviously not the case here. The lyrical subject leaps up to a higher level of thinking that the ordinary thought, probably, meaning either supernaturally enlightened and inspired thoughts, or intuitive thinking which goes beyond the chatter of the everyday mind. Our: "I swim and I leap up to the thoughts above my thoughts" is clearer in terms of its suggested meaning, even though it doesn't have the peculiar tone of the original.

This is also a key metaphor in Meister Eckhart, who uses 'abyss' to describe the metaphysical and mystical unity of God and the

165 Beatrice of Nazareth, *Seven Ways of Love* IV.

166 Ibidem, VII.

167 Hadewijch of Antwerp, *Letters* XVIII.63. See also *Visions* I.163, XI.1, XII.1, 42 and 105; XIII.31 and 252; *Poems in stanzas* VII.4; *Poems in couplets* I.11–15; XIII.1–3; XIV.3–8; English translation by C. Hart in: Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, New York – Toronto 1980.

168 Mechtild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* I.2, II.16; VI.26.

169 Iacopone da Todi, *Lauds* 90 and 91; Angela of Foligno, *Instructiones* IV, XIX, XXXII, XXXV, XXXVI; Ubertino of Casale *Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu* IV.7.

deepest centre of the soul: "Here God's ground is my ground and my ground is God's ground."[170] And also:

> "Truly thou art a hidden God" (Isa 45:15), in the ground of the soul where God's ground and the soul's ground are one ground. The more we seek thee, the less we find thee. You must seek Him in such wise that you never find Him. If you do not seek Him, you will find Him. That we may seek Him in such wise that we eternally remain in Him, may God help us. Amen.[171]

Jacob Böhme speaks about Heaven as "the Abyss, or bottomless Pit."[172] This is also a common motif in Angelus Silesius, for instance: "The abyss that is my soul invokes unceasingly/ The abyss that is my God. Which may the deeper be?" (I.68). Interestingly, he connects the motif of abyss with that of solitude (which is the main topic of Mickiewicz's sonnet). Angelus Silesius made a note "The abyss of all the shadows calls on the abyss of divine darkness" (*Abyssus tenebrarum omnium suarum … divinae invocet caliginis abyssum*) under the heading of "*solitudo*" on his private copy of a selection of mystical texts edited by Maximilianus Sandaeus, *Pro theologia mystica clavis elucidiarum onomasticon* (1640).[173]

7 "My corpse" in line 7 is perhaps shocking, but Mickiewicz will use a similar expression in a later poem: [*My Corpse Is Sitting Here …*] (although the Polish words are different: "*zwłoki*" in the present sonnet, while "*trup*", a stronger word, in the later poem). The contrast between the soul which ascends by being warmed up and awake, on the one hand, and the dead body, cooled down and lying in sleep, comes from the Platonic tradition. When it comes to the idea of "cooling down", Origen in *On the First Principles* is developing a false etymology by associating the Greek term for the soul, *psukhe*, with *psukhros* ("cold"):

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170 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons* 13b [5b], p. 109.

171 *Sermon* 51 [15], p. 273.

172 J. Böhme, *Second birth* III.6.147.

173 Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubinic Wanderer*, p. 42, n. 10. See also e.g. V.29 and V.339.

> we have to inquire whether perhaps the name soul, which in Greek is termed ψυχή, be so termed from growing cold out of a better and more divine condition, and be thence derived, because it seems to have cooled from that natural and divine warmth, and therefore has been placed in its present position, and called by its present name.[174]

Mickiewicz seems to associate here the realm of the sun and warmth with "the heat of daily life", that is, something which is contrary to spiritual life, a little like Wordsworth in his *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*:

> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.[175]

In contrast with this, the cool and dark depth of water is a symbol of contemplation, and this contrast is, in a way, similar to the one between the bright light of the day and the darkness of the night in Novalis' *Hymns to the Night*. On the other hand, the watery realm is not described in entirely positive terms, since it is associated with deadness, sleep, exhaustion, while "leaping up" gives the subject access to the "thoughts above thoughts". Also, Mickiewicz is well aware that the idea of searching for the sun with the eye in line 12 is a Platonic stock metaphor for the experience of God (and he used that imagery in *Reason and Faith* as well as later in his *Vision*). The dry and warm realm is "without breath", while the watery and cool domain is "without warmth", so both are deficient in some way, and inspire restlessness in the subject.

174 Origen, *De principiis* II.8.3, English translation by F. Crombie in: *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, Buffalo, NY, 1885.

175 *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, vol. I, ed. J. Curtis, Penrith 2009.

[*I Dreamt of Winter …*]

According to the information provided by Mickiewicz himself, the poem is a poetic transcription of an authentic dream that he had on 23rd March 1832 in Dresden. The author was to write it up in the form of a poem which faithfully renders the set of scenes in the dream, immediately after waking up from the dream vision ("Those verses were written as they were coming, without consideration or correction"). The original autograph has not been preserved. In 1840 Mickiewicz copied the Dresden manuscript of the poem; this handwritten version is preserved in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris. It is impossible to tell whether Mickiewicz made any changes in the text while copying it as he never published the poem during his lifetime. The first (untitled) printing[176] took place only in 1880.[177]

Ewa, the figure introduced in the second part of the dream vision, has her historical counterpart in the person of Countess Henrietta Ewa Ankwicz (1810–1879), whom Mickiewicz met in 1829 in Rome. There was a strong emotional bond between the two, and the poet was captivated not so much by her looks, as by the spirituality, religious intelligence and vivid mind of the young girl. He even thought about marrying her, but her father informed him that he was intending to arrange a marriage for his daughter with an aristocrat. The fact that the parents of the countess did not approve of the potential *mésalliance* played a significant, perhaps even crucial, role in the affair. After a year, Mickiewicz's relations with the Ankwicz family were severely restricted. Scholars have frequently discussed the story of Adam's and Henrietta Ewa's relationship. In the poem, Mickiewicz depicts the love affair in a different light, suggesting that it was less the resistance of the parents and the submissiveness of their daughter than his own conviction that he could not equal the spiritual and religious stature of his beloved that caused the ultimate breaking apart (in the poem Ewa says that she could have defied their parents). Mickiewicz endowed her with symbolic-sacralised features and eliminated all erotic overtones from the story.

176 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Paryż 1880–1885, t. 5, pp. 11–13.

177 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, pp. 51–4, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 244–248.

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The poem is in hendecasyllables, except that lines 12 and 36 are shorter, arresting the flow of the poem and fixing the attention of the reader.

1–16 Even though in the first part of the poem light and dark are contrasted with each other, this part is dominated by images of death: winter, "mournful black" clothes, all the faces "as hard as stone", the mysterious woman with her face veiled. The river Jordan seems to symbolise either death or the eschatological end of time, as a borderline between the realm of guilt, suffering, and death, and the divine realm of light, revealing itself, as the allusions to the Feast of Epiphany.

In Eastern Orthodox liturgy, the Feast of Epiphany, unlike the Catholic equivalent, focusses not on the visit of the Magi in Bethlehem, but the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. Throughout the first centuries of the Church, the Feast of Epiphany included the commemoration not only of the homage of the Magi, but also Christ's Baptism in Jordan, and the Marriage at Cana. These three moments from the Gospels were understood by the Church Fathers as a gradual revelation of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, to the whole world. There is a wealth of images associated with those three aspects of the Epiphany: the humble homage of the Magi, bringing gifts symbolising kingship (gold), priesthood (incense), and suffering (myrrh); the descent of Jesus into the river Jordan, and the theophany of the Dove over His head as the paternal voice announces Him as the Son of God; and the Marriage at Cana, with the mystical marriage of God and His people, and the transformation of water into wine. The central symbol is light, since *epiphaneia* in Greek means "shining out".

In the Bible, the river Jordan, the procession's destination, signifies the boundary between Egypt, the fallen world of sin, and the Promised Land of Kanaan. In Deuteronomy (30:18–20) the passing over Jordan is associated with the choice given to Israel between "life and death, blessing and cursing". In Joshua, chapters 3 and 4,

crossing the Jordan is compared to crossing the Red Sea, with all its significance of moving from the realm of death and sin to the realm of salvation and God's kingdom. Jordan is also the river in which Jesus was baptised, and whose waters served John the Baptist as a means of purification of sins. Christ needed no such purification; His baptism was instead a symbol of divine nature entering sinful human condition in the act of Incarnation, transforming the waters of sin into the holy water of baptism, the means of regeneration and salvation.

31 The rising of the sun in line 31 brings the reader towards a different set of images, associated with regeneration and contemplation. Snow turning into a white bird seems to have Platonic overtones, in connection with the opening of the bright sky, which is permeated with sunlight. Plato in his *Ion*, when talking about poetry as divinely inspired, calls the poet "a light and winged and sacred thing".[178] In his *Phaedrus* we encounter an image of a "perfect and fully winged" soul which has the ability to fly and move around the whole world: "Soul, considered collectively, has the care of all that which is soulless, and it traverses the whole heaven, appearing sometimes in one form and sometimes in another; now when it is perfect and fully winged, it mounts upward and governs the whole world."[179] The Church Fathers adopted this Platonic allegory of the winged soul, associating it with biblical images of flight. St Ambrose famously asserts that the soul has wings, and claims that Plato and other pagan writers took this image from Jewish scriptures ("from us") rather than the other way around.[180] This Christianised image of the winged soul flying up in contemplation became a standard element of mystical and metaphysical language in both the East and in the West. John Keats in his *Ode to Psyche* (1819) writes: "Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see/ The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?". And Novalis, in the first part of his *Hymn to the Night* speaks about "the heavy-laden wings of the soul."

178 Plato, *Ion* 534b.
179 *Phaedrus* 246b–c.
180 St Ambrose of Milan, *De virginitate* XVII–XVIII.

Such an image of mystical flight appears in Mickiewicz's early *Ode to Youth*: "Youth, give me wings! Let me fly over a dead world/ Into the heavenly realm of illusion/ Where zeal creates wonders". In *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, Konrad becomes an eagle in the "small improvisation" (in scene I) and, then, in the Great Improvisation (scene II), this image is repeated:

> I'll cast my flesh aside, and when I've risen
> On spirit wings, I'll soar
> Out of the sluggish round where star and planet roll,
> To where Created borders on Creator.
> I have them, yes, I have – I have such wings;
> They suffice – I stretch them out from east to west,
> The left on Past, the right on Future rests.[181]

36–41 The line "And I saw Ewa" (pronounced "Eva" in Polish) has the air of a mystical vision, not only on account of its shortness, but by virtue of its place within the poem. Ewa seems to levitate or hover over the ground, surrounded by butterflies, which in the Romantic imagination represent the soul. Ancient sources associate butterflies with the soul;[182] Jean Lemprière, in his entry in the popular *Bibliotheca Classica* (1788),[183] describes Psyche as: "generally represented with the wings of a butterfly to imitate the lightness of the soul, of which the butterfly is the symbol, and on that account, among the ancients, when a man has just expired, a butterfly appeared fluttering above, as if rising from the mouth of the deceased."

The appearance of Ewa is strongly analogous to the appearance of Beatrice towards the end of Dante's *Purgatorio*,[184] where she is associated with the rising sun, blue sky, and flowers:

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181 Mickiewicz, *Forefathers' Eve*.

182 Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 551a; Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* II.4.4; Plutarch, *Moralia* II, 636c.

183 J. Lemprière, *Bibliotheca Classica; or, a Classical Dictionary*, London 1788, *s.v.* "psyche". On the motif of Psyche in Keats see: R. May, "Keats's 'Ode to Psyche'. Psyche as poetry and inspiration", in: *Cupid and Psyche. The reception of Apuleius' Love Story since 1600*, ed. R. May, S. Harrison, Berlin – Boston 2020.

184 Mickiewicz was translating parts of the *Commedia* in 1827. In his letter to Malewski (20th of November 1830) he says he continues to be impressed by Dante (Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XV, p. 82).

I have at times seen all the eastern sky
becoming rose as day began and seen,
adorned in lovely blue, the rest of heaven;

and seen the sun's face rise so veiled that it
was tempered by the mist and could permit
the eye to look at length upon it; so,

within a cloud of flowers that were cast
by the angelic hands and then rose up
and then fell back, outside and in the chariot,

a woman showed herself to me; above
a white veil, she was crowned with olive boughs;
her cape was green; her dress beneath, flame – red.[185]

From her appearance at the top of the purgatorial mountain, and throughout the *Paradiso*, Beatrice is frequently described as contemplatively gazing at God or some other sacred object, while Dante contemplates her face. Mickiewicz seems to be using the same trope. However, the key difference between Beatrice and Ewa is that Dante's beloved is an authority full of dignity, while Mickiewicz's friend has the simplicity and unpretentious freshness of a young girl.

42–46 Ewa is described as a mystic in rapture, just as she appears in *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III (scene IV). She is motionless and gazes at Lake Albano, as if she were looking at her own reflection in the water of the lake. She resembles Beatrice in Dante:

A thousand longings burning more than flames
compelled my eyes to watch the radiant eyes
that, motionless, were still fixed on the griffin.

Just like the sun within a mirror, so
the double-natured creature gleamed within,
now showing one, and now the other guise.[186]

She is also implicitly compared to the Virgin Mary, when she is assumed into Heaven, and simultaneously conflated with the

185 *Purgatorio* 30.22–33.
186 *Purgatorio* 31.118–123.

Transfiguration of Christ at Mount Tabor (Mt 17:1–8; Mk 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36). According to Eastern Orthodox tradition, as classically represented by St. Maximus the Confessor (580–662), the Transfiguration allegorically shows the light of the divine Logos (Word) shining through the garments of both the Sacred Scripture and the whole universe. The Son of God blazes like fire at the core of every creature, as in the burning bush of Exodus (3:1–17). Both invisible and visible things are his clothes; their destiny is to be transformed into pure and shining white, like the garments of Christ at Tabor.[187] While talking about the Transfiguration, St Maximus compares the saints to clear mirrors,[188] reflecting the light of the Word, while Ewa in Mickiewicz's vision both contemplates the divine light in the mirror of the lake and herself becomes a holy reflection of its beauty. In St Maximus, the saints are not only so pure that they are able to reflect the divine light, but Christ himself gazes out from within them, as if He were using their eyes to look at the world, which is transformed in this vision, seen as God sees it through human eyes. Dante first sees God reflected in Beatrice's eyes, only later turns from her to contemplate Him in Himself.[189]

Mickiewicz's combination of imagery from the Feast of Assumption and the Feast of Transfiguration seems related to the fact that both feasts have been celebrated in the same month by Latin and Greek Churches since the early Middle Ages. Transfiguration is celebrated by both Churches on the 6th August, but in the Julian calendar (used in Eastern Orthodox liturgy with which Mickiewicz was familiar in his childhood) this date falls on the (Gregorian) 19th of August, which comes only four days after the Catholic celebration of the Assumption (15th August). Both Christ and His Mother are transformed into luminous beings whose home is Heaven rather than Earth; Mickiewicz associates those feasts of light and heat with the summer and the August harvest.

187 See St Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Iohannem* X.34, X.52, X.59, English translation by N. Constas: St Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 2014.

188 St Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Iohannem* X.41.

189 *Paradiso* 28.1–12.

There seems to be a reference both to childhood experiences of liturgy and to Ewa's simultaneous identification with the Assumed Mary and the Transfigured Christ, like Beatrice in *Purgatorio*:

> Even as Peter, John, and James, when brought
> to see the blossoms of the apple tree –
> whose fruit abets the angels' hungering,
>
> providing endless wedding-feasts in Heaven –
> were overwhelmed by what they saw, but then,
> hearing the word that shattered deeper sleeps,
>
> arose and saw their fellowship was smaller –
> since Moses and Elijah now had left –
> and saw a difference in their Teacher's dress;
>
> so I awoke and saw, standing above me,
> she who before – compassionate – had guided
> my steps along the riverbank. Completely
>
> bewildered, I asked: "Where is Beatrice?"[190]

54–58 Mickiewicz calls Ewa his "sister" (in line 54 and also in line 55: "My sister, when I look into your eyes …"), deliberately eliminating all erotic elements from the relationship. The use of "sister" may be an allusion to the Song of Songs, where the Bridegroom addresses the Bride in such a way. In this way, Mickiewicz transfers his relationship with Ewa to a purely spiritual and mystical level, like Dante did with Beatrice. At the same time, she is his bride, the bride of the divine Bridegroom, and a symbol of Mary (who is also identified with the Bride by the ancient and mediaeval tradition). Just as Ewa contemplated God through her beautiful image reflected in the Lake Albano, now the lyrical subject contemplates Him by looking into the shining mirrors of Ewa's soul. Mickiewicz, in a somewhat naïve manner, exclaims that he feels like he is at church.

59–69 In the third section of the poem, Ewa is transformed into a bird (a sparrow), like the snow in lines 31–32; while she flies, while

190 *Purgatorio* 32.73–85.

the lyrical subject desires to join her, but feels unable to do so on account of his sins. Like Dante in the 30th canto of the *Purgatorio*, he is consumed with guilt and shame, feeling unworthy of following his beloved. The poignant atmosphere of this moment has in it also something of the famous *poi si tornò all'eterna fontana* moment in Canto 31 of the *Divine Comedy*, when Beatrice, having led Dante towards the ultimate vision of God, leaves him in order to lose herself in the contemplation of the Good which transcends and includes all human love:

> "O lady, you in whom my hope gains strength,
> you who, for my salvation, have allowed
> your footsteps to be left in Hell, in all
>
> the things that I have seen, I recognize
> the grace and benefit that I, depending
> upon your power and goodness, have received.
>
> You drew me out from slavery to freedom
> by all those paths, by all those means that were
> within your power. Do, in me, preserve
>
> your generosity, so that my soul,
> which you have healed, when it is set loose from
> my body, be a soul that you will welcome."
>
> So did I pray. And she, however far
> away she seemed, smiled, and she looked at me.
> Then she turned back to the eternal fountain.[191]

The lyrical subject wakes up, lying down like a corpse, with his hands crossed on his chest; this seems to be a symbolic return to the first, death-oriented part of the poem. A return to daily life is a return to the realm that is subject to death, while the dream vision has opened up the spiritual and divine realm for the lyrical subject, where Ewa dwells constantly. The Platonic contrast between the winged soul

191 *Paradiso* 31.79–93.

and the flight of contemplation on the one hand, and the heaviness of the body (the corpse or the prison of the soul, chained to the realm of death) is striking. However, the contemplative experience leaves some traces: his very tears retain the mystical smell of roses and jasmine.

[*Defend Me from Myself …*]

This poem remained unpublished during Mickiewicz's life; we cannot be certain whether he considered it finished. The preserved manuscript is in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris; on the same sheet of paper there are also two other poetic fragments [*Gobs Who Yell in the Name of the People …*] and [*You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Little Fame …*]. A note on this sheet, written probably by the poet's son Władysław Mickiewicz,[192] has tempted scholars to speculate that those may be some fragments of further sections of the *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, on which Mickiewicz was working after publishing the first act of this play in Paris in 1832. Such a conjecture was proposed by Józef Kallenbach, who edited those poems for the first time on the basis of the autograph in 1889,[193] advancing the thesis that they were written between 1836 and 1838. Later editors (Stanisław Pigoń, Wacław Borowy), having read the autograph carefully, introduced a number of corrections to the poem; the most recent version of the poem, translated here, was established by Czesław Zgorzelski. It is generally now assumed that Mickiewicz wrote this poem either in 1835 or in 1836, while working on the cycle *Sentences and Remarks*, even though there is no conclusive evidence for this. An argument for this dating are ideational similarities between this poem and the aphorisms of the cycle mentioned above, as well as with the views of the mystics (such as Böhme and Saint-Martin), whom the poet had been studying for years, at least since his exile in Russia (1824–1829) and whose thoughts he paraphrased in the cycle.[194]

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The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines. Previous translations:

192 "Warianty – *Dziady* cz. III".

193 *Nieznane wiersze Adama Mickiewicza*, "Przegląd Polski" 1889, R. XXIII, pp. 1–4.

194 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, pp. 71–2, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 305–9.

"Defend me from myself", tr. J. Zawadzki, in: *Selected Masterpieces of Polish Poetry*, ed. J. Zawadzki, Shenzhen 2007, pp. 54–55.

1 The *incipit* in Polish is slightly ambiguous, in the sense that the reflexive pronoun '*sobą*' can be used both for any grammatical person. Thus, it could possible be read as "Defend me from *your*self". Zawadzki, in a footnote to his translation of this poem, also notes this ambiguity. As we indicated in the Introduction, the context, including the reference to Saint-Martin, essentially clears up this ambiguity. However, the idea of God defending the lyrical subject from God is not unimaginable for Mickiewicz, due to his familiarity with Böhme, and his idea of God's wrath, a dark aspect of the Divine Nature which it overcomes in itself, while also remaining the source of evil in fallen, created spirits.

2 The lyrical subject refers to what seem to be contemplative or mystical experiences in which he is able to see through and understand God's 'books'. As we have written in the introductory study, Mickiewicz is referring here to the traditional idea that God revealed himself in two 'books', the Book of Creation and the Book of Scripture, and that both need to be interpreted allegorically. The Alexandrian Platonists (Philo Judaeus, Clement and Origen) initiated the influential view that the ability to penetrate behind the veil of 'the letter' (or carnal surface) both of the Bible and of the universe, in order to see God hidden behind it, requires divine inspiration from the Holy Spirit. In any case, the lyrical subject seems unsatisfied with the fact that even though sometimes he is able to see God through his books, this experience and the following understanding is not permanent.

Saint-Martin gives a special place above both Nature and the Scripture to the human being as the image of God, saying that "Man is the book of books."[195]

3–6 The complex image that is used is that of the cloud and the sun. The sun is usually used to symbolise God, but here Mickiewicz ascribes no single meaning to it; instead he develops a puzzling simile. The sun is shining through the fog to the effect that it, first

195 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature*, pp. 57–8.

penetrates through it, then makes it look golden to those who observe it from the other side. The fog is clearly intended to represent a barrier between human spectators and the sun. It seems that the experience of the two observers (the personified sun on the one hand and human spectators on the other) corresponds to the two states of consciousness alluded to at the beginning.

When the spectators see the golden mist, they see the sun shining through it, even though they cannot see the sun directly. This seems to be the moment when the subject of the poem "see[s] [God's] books right through": the fog becomes, to a certain degree, translucent to sunlight. When the sun sees darkness, it represents the state in which both the world and the Scripture seem opaque to the subject, while God's presence appears hidden. Then Mickiewicz elaborates on this simile and adds that we, "being greater than the sun" (which curiously remains endowed with some sort of imaginary consciousness and sense-perception), realise that the fog (that is, the barrier between us and God) is made by us ourselves. Most probably, it is human sin or ignorance that creates the fog between us and God; this corresponds to the request made in the first line, namely, that God take away the barrier that we raised between Him and us. We translated the original '*powłoka*' ('cover', 'layer') by 'veil', which deviates little from the intent of the original, although it bears the additional meaning of something external and superficial in contrast to something internal and meaningful, which is the key element of the simile as well.

It is worth noting that a similar image appears in Saint-Martin's *Natural Table*:

> Often, for an entire morning thick fog, or a single mass of vapor spread uniformly in the air, appears to rise up against the light of the daystar and stands in the way of its brightness; but then the full power of the sun breaks through this barrier, dispels the darkness and separates those vapors into a thousand clouds, of which the purest and most buoyant are attracted by its heat, while the coarsest and most unhealthy are precipitated onto the terrestrial surface, there to join and combine with various mixed, material substances. This physical picture is clearly meant to educate us.[196]

196 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, pp. 30–31.

And in his last work, he writes: "his earthly life is itself the sea of mist which shuts out the light of the sun."[197]

7–8 The subject seems to achieve the desired experience of transparency, since he exclaims: "I see you, eye to eye". There is no fog, dark or golden, but curiously it still is not enough, since he, now face to face with God, and has to hold Him by the hands and raise his voice from asking to shouting: "Reveal yourself!" Which suggests that God's nature is still hidden to him. In the original we read, literally, "give out the secret", which means implies that there is some intention in God to hide the mysteries of Being from His human creature.

The violence with which the lyrical subject begs God to reveal himself seems shocking, but this is grounded in Jesus' comment on the character of John the Baptist: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (Mt 11:12). The motif of such a "holy violence" appears, for instance, in Angelus Silesius: "If it was not God's wish to raise me above God/ I should compel him thus, by force of sheerest love."[198]

9–23 In the second part of the poem, which follows this climactic cry of desperation, the difficulty for a translator lies in the fact that Mickiewicz expresses a lot of paradoxical ideas, compressed into a relatively small number of lines. The translator's task is to avoid distorting the ideas whilst retaining the paradoxes, which are the most important element of that section. Mickiewicz uses both rhetorical questions and bald assertions to express the paradoxical similarities between God and humanity. We reproduce this strategy throughout the translation, but in the English version sometimes a question represents an assertion in the original (and vice versa).

10 The idea of equality to God appears in the first book of Angelus Silesius' work (I.84).[199]

11–19 The central idea here is of God not being able to fully know himself (and the same applies to the human image of God). Böhme

197 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature*, p. 29.

198 Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubinic Wanderer* I.16.

199 "Wer Gott will gleiche sein, muß allem ungleich werden,/ Muß ledig seiner selbst und los sein von Beschwerden."

writes: "God himself knoweth not what he is: For he knoweth no beginning of himself, also he knoweth not anything that is like himself as also he knoweth no end of himself."[200] This motif can be found in some of Angelus Silesius' poems. For instance: "So you would like to see God's life in length revealed?/ Silence! It is so long, from Him it is concealed." (III.180) or "How deep the Godhead is, no one may ever fathom;/ Even the soul of Christ in its abyss must vanish." (V.339). See also I.41.[201]

24–25 This might initially sound "pantheistic" in a broad (and in fact) improper sense. Mickiewicz is not saying that God is the sky or the seas, but that He is intimately present in them, which is a classical metaphysical doctrine of God's omnipresence. Baader points out that the source of pantheism is the confusion between *Deus in se* (God as He is in Himself) and *Deus in creaturis* (God as He is present in His creation). That distinction allows Baader to say: *Deus est in se, fit in creaturis* ("God exists in Himself, becomes in His creatures").[202] He invokes Eckhart and his defense of the claim that "God is all things that He creates", which may sound pantheistic, but, properly understood, is a classical metaphysical truth. It means that only God has the fullness of existence, while His creatures depend on Him entirely in their being.[203]

As in *The Grand Master*, another point of reference here might be the hymn by Jan Kochanowski *What do you want from us, o Lord?* (*Czego chcesz od nas, Panie?*), where that great poet of the Polish Renaissance says to God: "No church can contain you, every place is full of you: you are in the abyss and in the sea, on the earth and in the sky". Dante expresses this classical view in the first lines of his *Paradiso*: "The glory of the One who moves all things/ permeates the universe and glows/ in one part more and in another less."[204] Swedenborg also accepts the traditional Neoplatonic teaching of

200 J. Böhme, *Aurora* 23.17.

201 "Gott ist unendlich hoch. Mensch, glaube das behende;/ Er selbst findt ewiglich nicht seiner Gottheit Ende."

202 See Baader, *Fermenta cognitionis* I.2, p. 3.

203 He quotes Eckhart: "Weil Gott frei ist von allen Dingen, ist Er alle Ding." (*Fermenta cognitionis* VI.6, p. 40).

204 *Paradiso* 1, 1–3.

the omnipresence of God, asserting "The Lord is present in us and with us through out the whole world; and the reason for this is simply that the Lord is not in space."[205] Saint-Martin justifies the metaphysical-mystical experience of seeing everything in God and God in everything by a reference to Nicolas Malebranche, whom Joseph de Maistre called the "Christian Plato", and who said that:

> "we see every thing in God"; but we conceive also that his idea might be conveyed under a less gigantic form; and, if not simplified, at least brought more within reach of our weak minds, so as to shine upon them with a softer light than that dazzling flame which blinds them. This form would be to say: "we really see God in every thing"; and, in truth, we should see nothing in any object whatever, if the Principle of all qualities, that is, God, did not move actively in it, either by Himself or His powers.[206]

27 Mickiewicz seems to suggest that God and Man are really equals or even that Man exercises some power over God. It can be, of course, read as demonic pride, but also as a reference to the motif present in German mysticism from the time of Eckhart, based on an orthodox and uncontested doctrine that the deepest core of our human self is God's thought or idea of us, which exists eternally in Him, and is not distinct from Himself. This doctrine was classically formulated by St Augustine, who described God as "that which is closer to me than my innermost self and that which is higher than the highest in me" (*interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*).[207] Line 27 is a paraphrase of Angelus Silesius' couplet: "Tell between me and God the only difference?/ It is (put in one word) nothing but otherness." (II.201).

The motif itself is frequent in the *Cherubinic Wanderer*. In I.10 Angelus Silesius says: "I am as Great as God, he is as small as I;/ He is not over me, not under him am I." and in I.100: "God shelters me as much as I do shelter Him;/ His Being I sustain, sustained I am therein." (I.100). This basic paradox is reworked in many other

205 Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, p. 5.
206 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 358.
207 *Confessions* III.6.11 [tr. M.S.].

couplets, where Silesius claims that God cannot live an hour without ourselves (I.8) and we are as rich as God (I.14), that we are His "other self" (I.278): without the relationship between us and God, God wouldn't be God (I.178). He cannot create even a tiny worm without us (I.96) and must do what we want, if our will is completely dead and united to His will (I.98). Baader points out that it is a misunderstanding to read Angelus Silesius in a pantheistic manner, because, again, one has to apply here the distinction between the transcendence (*Deus in se*) and the immanence of God (*Deus in creaturis*).[208]

This motif also appears in Saint-Martin:

> Instead of this discouraging system of predestination, might you not, on the contrary, have taught us that it is man, who, by his love, may, in a manner, govern God? For, the hasty do not perceive that God is guided, not only by our wants, but even by our desires. He is to us, not only like a clever physician, who follows, step by step, the course of an illness, and regulates his remedies every moment accordingly; but also like a tender and watchful mother, who studies all our tastes, and who, if we are eager to please her, has nothing too costly for us, and sees nothing in us but the cherished object of all her indulgences. Where is the mother who is not entirely possessed by her son, and ruled by him, when he behaves towards her as he ought?[209]

28–29 "As we wage war within against our whims": it is impossible fully to translate the original, where the human war against our whims is waged both internally and in the world, which is to correspond between God's war with the Devil fought both "in heaven" (within) and "on earth" (in the world). Angelus Silesius equates human, spiritual victory over sin in ourselves with the moment of throwing the Dragon out of heaven by St Michael (III.124).

30–31 Mickiewicz concludes the poem with the most important questions, first, about the meaning of the Incarnation of the Son of God and then about the inherent humanity of God: "You took the form of Man. Just for a while?/ Or did you have it since all time began?" This is an old idea from St Irenaeus of Lyons, who claimed

208 "Wo nämlich nicht von dem immanenten Leben Gottes, sondern von seinem Gemeinleben mit der Creatur die Rede ist." (*Fermenta cognitionis* II.22, p. 54).

209 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 376.

that the Son of God would have become Man even if Adam did not fall, and that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God in the further sense that Christ, the God-Man, was the prototype of the human nature (the Church Father based his views on the exegesis of Rom. 5:14, where St Paul says that Adam was "the figure of him that was to come").[210]

Irenaeus developed his conception in his polemic against the Gnostics who denied the real Incarnation of God. Christ for him is the archetype and the end of all Creation, not only as the divine Word, but also as God-Man. Since God is beyond time, the divine Word is eternally united to human nature in Jesus Christ, even though it is true that, from the human perspective, there was a time, when the Word had not yet been incarnated. This metaphysical view of eternity and time allowed Dante to describe God as having the human face (which he compares to squaring the circle) in the final mystical vision with which his *Comedy* ends:

> That circle – which, begotten so, appeared
> in You as light reflected – when my eyes
> had watched it with attention for some time,
>
> within itself and colored like itself,
> to me seemed painted with our effigy,
> so that my sight was set on it completely.
>
> As the geometer intently seeks
> to square the circle, but he cannot reach,
> through thought on thought, the principle he needs,
>
> so I searched that strange sight: I wished to see
> the way in which our human effigy
> suited the circle and found place in it –
>
> and my own wings were far too weak for that.
> But then my mind was struck by light that flashed
> and, with this light, received what it had asked.

210 See St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* III.19.1, III.22.3 (English translation by A. Roberts and W. Rambaut in: *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1).

> Here force failed my high fantasy; but my
> desire and will were moved already – like
> a wheel revolving uniformly – by
>
> the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.[211]

Mickiewicz may consciously allude especially to Emmanuel Swedenborg (rather than St Irenaeus or Dante), since the Swedish mystic goes even further in claiming that God Himself has always had human nature, even though he became a physical human being only in the moment of the historical Incarnation: "This [understanding of God as human] is where the concept of the Lord is to be found, and nowhere else." He adds later: "He put on this human nature over the human nature he had before."[212]

211 *Paradiso* 33.127–145.

212 Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, p. 6 and p. 84.

[*You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Little Fame ...*]

On the autograph and the first printing (1889), as well as the date of this poem's composition (1835–1836?), see the commentary to the previous poem. Both poems were written by Mickiewicz on the same sheet of paper as unfinished notes. Correct readings of certain words from the manuscript were problematic for its editors. The poem [*Defend Me From Myself ...*] was evidently the first to be written on the sheet of paper in question: it is placed at the top of the sheet; while [*You Ask Me Why the Lord ...*] is situated beneath it, and thus must have been written second.[213]

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The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines, which the translation renders with free English alexandrines. Previous translations:

"You ask why God adorned me with a mere bit of fame?", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 67

213 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 72, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 309–10.

[*Gobs Who Yell in the Name of the People …*]

For information about the autograph and the date of the poem's composition (1835–1836?) see the commentary to [*Defend Me from Myself …*]. This fragment was written down, as Zgorzelski points out, "at the left margin of the last ten lines of the fragment [*Defend Me from Myself …*] and next to the first words of the third fragment of this manuscript, [*You Ask Me Why the Lord Gave Me a Little Fame …*]." An incomplete text of the fragment (with the two first lines missing, because they were considered illegible) was published by Kallenbach in 1889, along with the two other fragments. The full version was established by Stanisław Pigoń in 1929, although he read the first words as "Gobs Who Yell at the People" ("*Gęby na lud krzyczące*"), which was corrected later in 1933 by Wacław Borowy who closely examined the manuscript again and changed the Polish preposition "*na*" to "*za*". This is the standard version today. Of the three fragments found on this sheet, this one was written last.[214]

*

The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines, which the translation renders with free English alexandrines. Previous translations:

"Hands that fought," tr. C. Mills, in: *Selected Poems*, ed. C. Mills, New York 1956, p. 117.[215]

"Mouths shouting for the crowd will bore the crowd at the end", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, pp. 67–68.

214 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 73, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 311–12.

215 The first verse of the poem was, for some reason, entirely omitted by the translator; hence the title is derived from the first line of the translation.

Vision

The autograph is in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris. It is written on a single sheet of paper and its end is on its reverse. On the same sheet Mickiewicz wrote down another poem, *Profligate's Regrets*. Both are sketches, with numerous corrections, crossed-out words, omissions of letters or parts of words etc. Copies of both those poems were published by Wincenty Lutosławski in his article *"Widzenie" Mickiewicza*.[216]

The date of writing has not been precisely established. Maria Dernałowicz dates it to 1833–1836,[217] the majority of scholars incline to narrowing this down to 1835–1836, because of textual evidence, including the character of the manuscript. Due to its strong connections to the ideas of Jakob Böhme, one of the earlier Mickiewicz scholars, Henryk Szucki, dated it to 1853 or so, around the time that Mickiewicz dictated his essay on the thought of Böhme to his personal secretary Armand Levy (1827–1891).[218] However, this dating has not been accepted by subsequent scholars, particularly because Mickiewicz had stopped writing poetry by this time.

The first printing of the poem was included in the Parisian edition of Mickiewicz's works in 1861,[219] with a note: "*Z rękopisu, niedokończone*" ("unfinished, from a manuscript"), but the scholars have later rejected the suggestion of the first editors, considering the poem to be a coherent and finished whole.[220]

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216 W. Lutosławski, "*Widzenie* Mickiewicza," *Przegląd Współczesny* 182 (1937), pp. 95–113.

217 See M. Dernałowicz, *Kronika życia i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza. Od "Dziadów" części trzeciej do "Pana Tadeusza"*, Warszawa 1966, p. 284.

218 See H. Szucki, "Mickiewicz i Boehme," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 26 (1929), pp. 315–341.

219 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, Paryż 1860–1861, pp. 250–3.

220 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, pp. 73–4, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 312–8.

The poem is in hendecasyllables.

Previous translations:

"A Vision," tr. P. Mayewski, in: *Selected Poems*, ed. C. Mills, pp. 109–111.

1–3 The motif of going out of the body is an ancient one in Western mysticism. The key text is St Paul's claim to have journeyed to the third heaven: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." (2 Cor 12:2). The doubt as to whether Paul was in the body or out of it was usually taken as a sign that he was wholly unaware of his body during this rapture; Christian mystics used it to describe their own experiences of what in mediaeval mystical theology was usually called *raptus*, *excessus mentis* or *ecstasis*. Probably quite independently of the New Testament, the only first-person account of a mystical experience in Plotinus' *Enneads* reads: "Often have I woken up out of the body to my self, being then outside all other things and within myself, and I have seen a beauty wonderfully great and felt assurance that then most of all I belonged to the better part; I have actually lived the best life and come to identity with the divine."[221] Plotinus' account was undoubtedly known to St Ambrose of Milan, who alluded to it in his treatise *On Isaac or on the Soul*[222], suggesting that Plotinus had the same "out of the body" experience as St Paul.

Another question is whether the experience of the body being "puffed away" by an angel means that there is no sense-experience at all. In Mickiewicz this does not seem to be the case, given the elaborate description of a kind of cosmic vision which follows. Dogen Zenji (1200–1253) who was the founder of the Soto school in Japanese Zen Buddhism also describes a key experience of awakening or enlightenment (*kensho* or *satori*) by a Japanese phrase "*shinjin datsuraku*," which means, literally, "body and mind dropped". It is believed that Dogen himself experienced his spiritual breakthrough, when he heard his master uttering that very sentence to a fellow

221 Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.8.1.

222 St Ambrose of Milan, *De Isaac sive de anima* IV.11.

monk. However, for Dogen and for the whole Zen tradition, the fact that the body is "dropped", does not mean that there is any interruption in sense-perception or even in ordinary mental activity.[223] The sense of losing the body coexists with normal functioning.

This is stressed in the famous saying attributed to Seigen Ishin, a Chinese Zen master of the ninth century: "Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after he gets an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, mountains to him are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when he really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters."[224] The middle phase, when mountains are not mountains does not mean that the Zen adept stops seeing mountains, but rather that he is seeing mountains in a completely different way in his experience of awakening.

The experience of the body being "puffed away" in contemplation appears also in the famous poem by Wordsworth, entitled: *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*:

> that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on, –
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.[225]

The metaphor of spiritual nakedness is present in pre-Christian ancient Greece sources, based on the mystery ritual of putting off clothes before initiation (which was also adopted in the Christian

223 See S. Heinte, "Dogen Casts Off 'What:' An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*", *The Journal Of The International Association Of Buddhist Studies* 9, 1 (1986), pp. 53–70.

224 D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism. First Series*, London – New York 1926, p. 24.

225 Wordsworth, Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*.

initiation rite of baptism). Becoming naked is then one of the most significant metaphors in Plotinus' mysticism, in that it implies the stripping off everything that is external to the true self, which alone is capable of seeing God. Christianity adopted this metaphor; it became extremely popular in the thirteenth century, where it was blended with the ideal of spiritual poverty, embodied in the figure of St Francis of Assisi, who stripped himself before the crowd in order to proclaim his total self-surrender to God.[226] The Scriptural grounds for this metaphor are usually the scene of stripping Christ off his clothes before crucifixion and his "self-emptying" or *kenosis* in Phil 2:5–11.

The motif of the seed of the soul appears frequently in Böhme and Saint-Martin, and derives originally from the classical Stoic doctrine of *logoi spermatikoi* ("creative rational principles" as it is usually rendered, even though it literally means "seed-like words", "reasons" or "thoughts"). According to this view, every living being has in itself the inner principle or essence, which dynamically leads it to development and fulfilment of its proper nature. Plotinus absorbed this idea into his Neoplatonic synthesis, which was later, through St Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius, received by St Maximus the Confessor, who made it one of the most important elements of his metaphysics. Also, St Augustine took it over from Plotinus (in the form already latinised earlier by Cicero: *rationes seminales*) and included it into this doctrine of creation. According to St Augustine, God created everything by a single act, but left hidden and dormant rational 'seeds' in the world, which later, in proper time, would begin to awake and develop into plants, animals or human beings. According to the view of both St Augustine and St Maximus, the rational 'seeds' are dynamic powers which make the world develop

226 Jacques de Vitry in his biography of Mary of Oignies says that she was following "naked the naked Christ" (*nudum Christum nuda*; see his *Vita B. Mariae Oigniacensis* II.5.45, in: *Acta Sanctorum Iunius 5*, Paris 1867, p. 557E). He also used the phrase "to follow naked the naked [Christ]" with regard to the whole Franciscan order (in his *Historia occidentalis* 32). The image is also present in St. Bonaventure (*De triplici via* II.10). Meister Eckhart speaks about "pure nakedness" and "pure naked being" (e.g. *Sermons* 51 [15], p. 271 and 273).

and which ultimate come from the Son of God who is the primary *Logos* or *Ratio* ("Reason", "Thought", "Principle").

Böhme, following Paracelsus and other Renaissance alchemists, looked for such dynamic, spiritualised physical causes in the alchemic doctrine of elements. Also Saint-Martin, in the works he wrote before he familiarised himself with Böhme, often referred to the idea that matter contains the seeds or germs of substances which develop when there is enough warmth to awaken them. In his *Of Errors and Truth* he identifies the seed of every being with the "innate germ" or inner principle, which governs the development of this being.[227]In his last work, he writes also: "every act of this substance is a florescence, which ought to begin at the root of our being, at what may be called our soul-germ [fr. *germe animique*]."[228] He also identifies the germ or seed with the *ratio* (reason or principle):

> You who would like to know the reason of things, remember that this is not to be found on their surface; it is not even in their exterior centre, which is the only one which human sciences can open. It can be found only in their inward centre, because there only their life resides; but, as their life is the fruit of the Word, so only by the Word can their inward centre be opened.[229]

This germ is given to us by God with a task to develop what is "a germ in us, a concentrated germ, which it is for us afterwards to develop."[230] The Scriptural ground for this is the Gospel parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31–32; Mk 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19); Angelus Silesius alludes to it directly when calling himself "a mustard seed" in I.52.[231] Earlier, Böhme says:

> Therefore, if you do not understand this Writing, then do not as Lucifer did in taking the Spirit of Pride presently, and fall a f mocking, and deriding, and ascribe it to the Devil; but seek the humble lowly

227 Saint-Martin, *Of Errors and Truth*, pp. 94–95.
228 Saint-Martin, *Man, His Nature and Ministry*, p. 84.
229 Ibidem, p. 133.
230 Ibidem, p. 405.
231 "Ein Senfkorn ist mein Geist; durchscheint ihn seine Sonne,/ So wächst er Gotte gleich mit freudenreicher Wonne."

> Heart of God, and that will bring a small Grain of Mustard-seed (from the Tree of Paradise) into your Soul; and if you abide in Patience, then a great Tree will grow out of that [Seed,] as you may well think, that the like has come to pass with this Author.[232]

2 The original says only "a field flower", without mention its name, but he clearly means a dandelion.

13, 29–32 The soul as a ray of divine Light appears, for instance, in Angelus Silesius (IV.136, IV.201, V.50). The relation of the ray to the divine Sun is that of mystical and metaphysical unity by participation: "Myself I must be sun, whose rays must paint the sea,/ The vast and unhued ocean of all divinity" (I.115)

14–15 the images of water and ocean clearly have a spiritual meaning, albeit an ambiguous one. The ray of sunlight which falls into the water and enlightens it seems to mean, as in *Reason and Faith* and *Evening Conversation*, the divine light given to the soul that enables the inner eye to see reality as it is. The image of a pool or a lake seems to refer to the transformed soul, since the world with its mysteries is, in this simile, the bottom of the pool. In the subsequent image, all creation seems to be the sea, flowing out of God, but the metaphor of clear water stands for spiritual, not physical nature; again, as in the preceding simile, this ocean is filled with the "blissful light" of God. Dante used a similar image in *Paradiso*: "Into itself, the everlasting pearl/ received us, just as water will accept/ a ray of light and yet remain intact."[233]

The metaphor of the sea and swimming in the sea is one of the favourite in the Western mysticism. We find it in St Angela of Foligno,[234] Beatrice of Nazareth,[235] Marguerite Porete,[236] Gertrude the Great[237] and Iacopone da Todi.[238] Meister Eckhart speaks about the mystical union in the following way: "God places the soul in the

232 Böhme, *Three Principles* 9.45. See also *Ibidem*, 24.32.
233 *Paradiso* 2.34–36.
234 St Angela of Foligno, *Instructiones* III.
235 Beatrice of Nazareth, *Seven Ways of Holy Love* 6.
236 Marguerite Porete, *Le mirouer des simples âmes* 28.
237 Gertrude the Great, *Exercitia* 4.
238 Iacopone da Todi, *Lauds* 92.

highest and purest place that she can attain to, into space, into the sea, into a bottomless ocean, and there God works mercy."[239] And in another sermon:

> As to this, the prophet says that all things are to God as a drop in the ocean. If you were to cast a drop into the ocean, the drop would become the ocean and not the ocean the drop. Thus it is with the soul: when she imbibes God she is turned into God, so that the soul becomes divine but God does not become the soul.[240]

Dante in the first canto of his *Paradiso* speaks of "the great sea of being" (*lo gran mar de l'essere*).[241]

In the Seventh Mansion of her *Interior Castle*, St Teresa describes the highest mystical union of the soul with the Trinity in a similar way: "But spiritual marriage is like rain falling from heaven into a river or stream, becoming one and the same liquid, so that the river and rain water cannot be divided; or it resembles a streamlet flowing into the ocean, which cannot afterwards be disunited from it."[242] This is also a favourite metaphor of Angelus Silesius: for example: "The Godhead is a source from which all things do rush/ And then return to it. An ocean It is thus." (III.168), or "Here I still flow in God, as does a brook in Time,/ There, I shall be the sea of beatitude divine." (IV.135) or "The drop becomes the sea when it the sea has reached;/ The soul does God become, if once in God received." (VI.171), or "All in the sea is sea, even the tiniest drop;/ Tell me, which holy soul will not be God in God?" (VI.173).[243]

Johannes Hamann compares the intellectual heaven to "a sea of glass, like unto crystal mixed with fire"[244]. Novalis speaks about: "The crystal wave, which, imperceptible to the ordinary sense, springs in the dark bosom of the mound against whose foot breaks the flood of the world, he who has tasted it, he who has stood on the mountain

239 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons* 72 [7], p. 368.
240 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons* 94 [80], p. 457.
241 *Paradiso* 1.113. Also *Paradiso* 3, 85–7.
242 St Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle, Seventh Mansion*, II.5, p. 273.
243 See also: I.3, III.168, IV.139, IV.153, IV.157; V.50, VI.172.
244 Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce*, p. 67.

frontier of the world, and looked across into the new land, into the abode of the Night, verily he turns not again into the tumult of the world, into the land where dwells the Light in ceaseless unrest."[245] and Hölderlin describes a contemplative experience thus in his *Hyperion*: "Often, lost in the wide blue, I look up at the ether and into the holy sea, and I feel as if a kindred spirit opened its arms to me, as if the pain of solitude dissolved into the life of the divinity. To be one with all – that is the life of the divinity, that is the heaven of man."[246]

Wordsworth, in his *Intimations of Immortality* (1807), also compares God to the sea:

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither.[247]

17–19 The soul is compared to a ray of light, flying throughout the whole universe, by virtue of its participation in the light of divine Wisdom. The mention of Wisdom seems to allude to the images from the *Book of Proverbs*, where there is a dynamic depiction of the creation of the world, in which the Wisdom takes part, accompanying God in creating waters, mountains, hills, the heavens etc. In the conclusion, she is said to play or enjoy herself not only in the earth, but in the sons of men as well: "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;/ Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." (Prov 8: 30–31) Also in the *Book of Wisdom* we have a similar image: "For wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me: for in her is an understanding spirit holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good,/ Kind to man, steadfast, sure, free from care, having all power, overseeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure, and most subtil, spirits." (Wis 7:21–22)

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245 Novalis, *The Hymns to the Night* IV.
246 Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, p. 12.
247 *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, vol. I.

Saint-Martin uses a strikingly similar image: "No doubt, Man was born to penetrate the wondrous works of God, and repress disharmony; but it was, also, that he should always dwell near to God, and, from that eminence, continually overlook the whole circle of things, and distribute the divine riches, under the eye of Wisdom itself."[248]

19–20 In the tradition of Augustinian mysticism, the eye of the soul can see, because it is enlightened with the divine light. Mickiewicz's suggestion that he was both the eye and the light seems to point to the tradition of German mysticism, deriving from Eckhart who says: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing and one love."[249] The Cologne censors objected to this sentence in 1325, to which Eckhart responded by quoting the authority of St Augustine's *On the Trinity* (IX.2). Earlier, the thirteenth-century mystic Hadewijch of Antwerp, who inspired later metaphysical mysticism, had spoken in one of her poems of the union with God: "And that beauty will meet with one Beauty/ And they will greet with one single greeting./ And that kiss will be with one single mouth,/ And that fathoming will be of one single abyss,/ And with a single gaze will be the vision of all/ That is, and was, and shall be;/ And that all are wise with one wisdom …"[250] Angelus Silesius writes: "God dwells in light supreme, no path can give access;/ Yourself must be that light, if you would there progress." (I.72).

21–23 Mickiewicz speaks of pouring himself out over everything in a single flash of light. In the translation we added what is implicit in the original, namely, that he saw the whole in this flash of light that he was. The image of seeing everything in one flash of light is a famous one in mediaeval literature and comes from St Gregory the Great's (540–604) biography of St Benedict of Nursia, where the pope describes a mystical vision that Benedict received: "Standing there, all of a sudden in the dead of the night, as he looked forth, he saw a light that banished away the darkness of the night and glittered with such brightness that the light which shone in the midst

248 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 160.
249 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons* 57 [12], p. 298.
250 Hadewijch of Antwerp, *Daughter of the Father*, p. 342.

of darkness was far more clear than the light of the day. During this vision a marvelously strange thing followed, for, as he himself afterward reported, the whole world, gathered together, as it were, under one beam of the sun, was presented before his eyes."[251]

24–26, 33–35 We tried to retain the crucial image of the centre and the wheel, even though we were not able to preserve all the details as they are in the original. However, this is a traditional image of experiencing the world as being within the soul rather than outside of it, as in an ordinary state of consciousness. Another facet of it is the abolition of any distinction between the centre of the circle and the whole of it or its circumference, which implies the abolition or relativisation of the ordinary sense of space by participation in God's incorporeal omnipresence.

The sources for the symbol of the circle or the sphere can be traced back to the Presocratics: Parmenides (5th century BC) compares the eternal Being to the perfect, geometrical sphere. Later, Plato depicts the World Soul, which is created by God out of mathematical proportions. This image influenced mystical thought through Plotinus, who repeatedly speaks of God as both the centre of the sphere and an all-encompassing sphere.[252] In the same way he describes the Soul.[253] Through late-antique readers of Plotinus (St Gregory of Nyssa, St Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite) this motif finds its place in Christian mysticism and metaphysics, associated later mostly with an aphorism by Alan of Lille: "God is the intelligible sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."

The whole of Dante's *Comedy* is permeated by that image of concentric spheres, circular movements, and the centre. In canto 28 of the *Paradiso*, Dante has a vision in which spatial relations begin to collapse; he sees that God (or His dwelling place in the Empyrean), who is the all-embracing, spaceless, infinite sphere, has become

251 St Gregory the Great, *De vita et miraculis sancti Benedicti* 35; English translation: *The Life of St. Benedict*, in: St Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, Saint Pachomius Library 1995 (reprint of the Parisian edition of 1608).

252 Plotinus, *Enneads* V.1.8, V.1.11, VI.6.17, VI.7.15, VI.8.18.

253 Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.3.17, VI.4.7, VI.5.9.

the shining point, while the planetary spheres are transformed into angelic choirs, moving circularly around it. The earth is no longer the centre, it is the outermost surface of being, but God is both the centre and the sphere containing everything in it. This is strengthened in canto 30, where God is contemplated again as the point which embraces all the spheres which move around Him:

> So did the triumph that forever plays
> around the Point that overcame me (Point
> that seems enclosed by that which It encloses).[254]

Later, the river of light which Dante sees, turns into a luminous globe:

> But as my eyelids' eaves drank of that wave,
> it seemed to me that it had changed its shape:
> no longer straight, that flow now formed a round.[255]

The second important source of this metaphor, crucial for the Kabbalah mysticism, is the vision from the beginning of the Book of Ezekiel (later developed into the *Merkabah* mysticism), where the prophet sees God sitting at a throne on a sort of a chariot, with moving, concentric circles which have eyes (Ez. 1:4–26). Böhme refers to the vision of Ezekiel many times.[256] Böhme compares God to concentric circles:

> For the being of God is like a wheel, wherein many wheels are made one in another, upwards, downwards, crossways, and yet they continually turn, all of them together. Which, indeed, when a man beholdeth the wheel, he highly marvelleth at it, and, in its turning, cannot at once learn to conceive and apprehend it: But the more he beholdeth the wheel, the more he learneth its form or frame; and the more he learneth, the greater longing he has to the wheel; for he continually seeth somewhat that is more and more wonderful, so that a man can neither behold it, nor learn it enough.[257]

254 *Paradiso* 30.10–12.
255 Ibidem, 30.88–90.
256 For instance: *Aurora* 3.20.
257 Böhme, *Aurora* 21.64–65.

The motif is frequent in Angelus Silesius as well, for instance: "God is my center, if I do encompass Him,/ My circle He becomes, I am enclosed in Him." (III.148) or "It is but you alone that moves and is the wheel,/ Running all by itself and never standing still." (I.37).[258]

Saint-Martin already in his early works, independently of Böhme, describes God as "the Universal Principle or Centre, from which all Centres continually emanate."[259] Later, in his last work, he describes a mystical experience of the world as a diaphanous sphere:

> And, as Man belongs to Unity, or the Centre, which is the middle of all things, he may grow old in his body, and not the less believe himself to be in the midst of his days. Thus the concealed origin of things is a speaking evidence of their eternal and invincible source, and we feel that there is nothing but death and evil which commence, but that life, perfection, happiness, could not be, if they had not always been. (…) Happy is he who can elevate his thought to this height, and maintain it there! He will thereby attain such clearness of intelligence, that the ground of all that exists, in the order of things invisible, as well as of those which are visible, will appear to him simple, active, permanent, and, so to speak, diaphanous; seeing that the Universal Being, by his continual living Actuality, must carry everywhere the Light [150] and limpidity of which He is the perpetual focus. But, if we can thus consider the living continual Actuality of this Supreme and Universal Focus, in all visible and invisible things, what will it be when we consider it in ourselves, and see what it works in our own being? For, we shall discover a remarkable difference, in regard to ourselves; that is, that we can, by reflection, readily observe this actuality in all individual things, but that we may feel it, in reality, and in nature, in ourselves.[260]

The experience of being a motionless axis ("Though motionless, I felt its every move") appears, independently, of course, in T.S. Eliot *Burnt Norton*:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

258 See also I.5, I.88, I.94, II.183, IV.62.
259 Saint-Martin, *Of Errors and Truth*, p. 184.
260 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, pp. 150–1.

> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
> I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
> And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

32 Mickiewicz in the original says only that the sun (representing God) remains unseen at the centre of everything. We added "in its dark depth" for metrical reasons, but this is not unjustified, since the link between God's unknowable and unseen nature and the metaphors of darkness and abyss exists at least since St Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius. Later it is developed in significant ways in German mysticism which inspired Mickiewicz (as well as in St John of the Cross).

43–48 Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a-b. The main idea here seems to be that of the human spirit (the ray of light) mediating between the Creator and the world through palingenesis. The spirits not only move the world and give it life, as Mickiewicz says a few lines above, but also teach the world about God and "report" back to God what goes on in the physical world. Thus the difference between the human spirits and the angelic spirits is blurred (both function as messengers and mediators).

55–62 A strikingly similar image in St Gregory of Nyssa:

> There is a doctrine (which derives its trustworthiness from the tradition of the fathers) which says that after our nature fell into sin God did not disregard our fall and withhold his providence. No, on the one hand, he appointed an angel with an incorporeal nature to help in the life of each person and, on the other hand, he also appointed the corruptor who, by an evil and maleficent demon, afflicts the life of man and contrives against our nature. Because man finds himself between these two who have contrary purpose for him, it is in his power to make the one prevail over the other.[261]

261 St Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* II.45–47, p. 43.

[*The Profligate's Regrets*]

For information about the autograph of the poem and its date of composition: see the commentary to the previous poem, which was written on the same sheet of paper (above *Profligate's Regrets*). The first printing was included in the Parisian edition in 1861,[262] with a different title (*Kochanek duchów*, that is, "The Lover of Ghosts") and numerous mistakes which were later corrected by other editors, including Józef Kallenbach, Stanisław Pigoń and Wacław Borowy (among others).[263]

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The poem is in hendecasyllables. We decided to use the iambic pentameter in English. Previous translations:

"Prodigal's lament", tr. S. Barańczak, C. Cavanagh, in: *Treasury of Love Poems*, ed. K. Olszer, New York 1998.

The poem, as we indicated in the introductory study, differs from other Mickiewicz's poems, since there is no trace of moral self-awareness or examination of conscience here; instead, the lyrical subject places all blame entirely on others. It is hard to discern the spirit of *The Imitation of Christ*, where we are advised: "To think nothing of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection."[264] Or: "Lord, we are blind, and are quickly misled by vanity. If I look rightly into myself, I cannot say that any creature hath ever done me wrong: and therefore I cannot justly complain before Thee."[265]

262 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, Paryż 1860–1861, p. 419.

263 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 75, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 318–21.

264 *The Imitation of Christ* I.2.4, p. 6.

265 Ibidem, III.41.1–2, p. 177.

[*Veni Creator*]

This is a free translation of the Gregorian hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, from the beginning of the ninth century, and was originally planned for a prayer book entitled *Ołtarzyk polski to jest zbiór nabożeństwa katolickiego* ("A Polish Little Altar, or A Collection of Catholic Devotional Songs"), published in Paris in 1836 by Mickiewicz's friends and fellow-emigrants Aleksander Jełowicki (1804–1877; from 1841 a Catholic priest) and the poet Stefan Witwicki (1801–1847). Witwicki, most likely in 1835, revised Mickiewicz's translation, giving it a more prosaic form and making it semantically closer to the original (in this revised version it was published in *Ołtarzyk* on p. 283). The manuscript was preserved in a private collection from 1869, and was published with an editorial note by Stanisław Pigoń[266] in his article "*Veni Creator* w przekładzie Adama Mickiewicza."[267]

The scholars who compared Mickiewicz's text with the canonical versions of the Latin poem were especially puzzled by the last stanza of his translation, which has the character of a doxology, which in Roman Catholic liturgy is a formula praising the greatness of God. In this last stanza the poet diverged most radically from the Latin text – in his critical edition Zgorzelski quotes this stanza in two original versions:

Deo Patri sit gloria
Et Filio, qui a mortuis
Surrexit, ac Paraclito,
In saeculorum saecula.

Sit laus Patri cum Filio,
Sancto simul Paraclito,
Nobisque mittat Filius
Charisma sancti Spiritus.

As Stanisław Pigoń noticed in his article mentioned above: "the conclusion of the poem in Mickiewicz has nothing to do with either of the Latin redactions and is completely different". The scholar believed that Mickiewicz has "deliberately diverged from the original", giving rein to poetic inspiration, because he was aware that in the ecclesiastic hymnody there is a phenomenon of "variety and

266 S. Pigoń, "*Veni Creator* w przekładzie Adama Mickiewicza," *Tęcza* 18 (1929), pp. 1–3.

267 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 71, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 302–5.

diversity of doxology" and this emboldened him to transform the finale of the hymn freely in order to emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit as the source of poetic inspiration for, as Mickiewicz puts it, "human thought" which "shines and burns with holy flames". We may accept those conclusions (as did Zgorzelski with approval) or challenge them, but it is beyond doubt that the way Mickiewicz formulated the conclusion of the hymn inclines us to speak here about a poetic paraphrase rather than a traditionally conceived translation.

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Krzysztof Biliński calls this poem a "creative translation".[268] As we have said in the Introduction, on the whole, the translation is anything but creative. Rather, it strikes the reader as extremely literal, apart from the final doxology, whose last two lines, on the contrary, not only are creative, but correspond in no wise to the Latin original. The first Polish translation of the famous Latin hymn, ascribed to the ninth-century poet Rabanus Maurus, appears in *The Life of Jesus Christ* (*Żywot Pana Jezu Krysta*) by Baltazar Opec, one of the oldest printed Polish books (two editions in 1522). The second edition contains a Polish translation of *Veni Creator Spiritus* (*Duchu Święty, raczyż przyjdź k nam*) as well as other famous Latin mediaeval hymns (such as Venantius Fortunatus' *Vexilla Regis prodeunt* and *Ave maris stella*).[269]

The second translation was by a popular Polish poet, Franciszek Karpiński (1741–1825) and was published as *Pieśń o Duchu Świętym* ("Song of the Holy Spirit") in his collection of devotional songs.[270] There is no question that Mickiewicz would have been familiar with that poetic translation, not only because it became quite popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Mickiewicz was a child receiving his early religious instruction, but also given how

268 K. Biliński, "Utwory mistyczne Adama Mickiewicza," *Czasopismo Zakładu Narodowego Imienia Ossolińskich*, 11 (2000), pp. 43–53, on p. 50.

269 T. Karyłowski, *Dzieje hymnów kościelnych i ich przekładów*, in: *Hymny kościelne*, tr. T. Karyłowski, ed. M. Korolko, Warszawa 1978, p. 30.

270 *Pieśni nabożne*, 1792, p. 10.

he mentions Karpiński in his lectures at the Collège.[271] Karpiński's translation is wholly literal. The Polish poet reproduces the number of syllables in each verse of the Latin hymn (eight), while also adding rhymes. Despite that, Karpiński manages to reproduce the content of the hymn very faithfully indeed, occasionally adding a word or two, that are not present in the original. However, the first stanza is strikingly different from the original, since it is, literally: "The Spirit of God, dwell with us;/ Visit erroneous thoughts,/ Enriching with the graces of Heaven/ The hearts created by you." ("*Duchu Boży mieszkay z nami; /Nawiedź myśli obłądzone,/Bogacąc Nieba łaskami,/ Serca od Ciebie stworzone*"). The crucial *incipit*, addressing the Third Person of the Trinity, as the "Creator Spirit" is transformed into "the Spirit of God", while the equally crucial apostrophe: *Veni!* ("Come!"), which also appears in the second mediaeval hymn to the Holy Spirit (the sequence *Veni Sancte Spiritus*) is replaced there by an imperative: "dwell with us". Was Mickiewicz inspired, in some strange way, by the fact that Karpiński allowed himself, for reasons that remain unclear, so much poetic license in the opening stanza of the translation, while he followed the Latin text so closely in the rest of them? After all, he did something similar with the last, closing stanza of *Veni Creator*.

Another striking aspect of this translation, however, is the lack of rhythm or rhyme, even though with his abilities he was surely able to reproduce the content of the hymn, within the rigors of versification. Yet the result is a rather unpoetical, literal translation that strives to retain the word sequence of Latin, which is much more possible in Polish than in English, since the first has flexion and syntactic flexibility similar to the classical language. It almost seems as though Mickiewicz were trying to provide the reader with an interlinear translation, so that a Latinless reader, following the original

271 "Franciszek Karpiński was the only author of the Stanislaus Augustus era who remained faithful to religion. He was the only one who could strike the tone of prayer; he deserved the high honour of being accepted by the common people. Already during his lifetime his devotional songs, honest, simple, and heartfelt were sung throughout village churches in all Catholic Poland." (Course II, Lecture XX; Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, p. 254).

and the translation, would be able to know exactly which Polish word represented a Latin one. He asks Stefan Witwicki, for whom he produced the translation, to "revise this literal translation", which Witwicki did, but not by giving it a verse form; rather, he abandoned versification altogether in favour of prose without stanzas.[272]

5 Instead of *Paraclitus* Mickiewicz, surprisingly, translates "the highest Brightness".

11 Mickiewicz confesses in his abovementioned note to Witwicki: "I don't understand the eleventh verse well. I guess it is connected to *lumen*, but it is very distant and against punctuation. I translated it as a noun, which is common in such Latin." He translates "according to the Father's promise", but Stanisław Pigoń claims it is a mistake and writes: "It is an ellipsis: *Tu rite promissum* (*donum*) *Patris*. The fact that Mickiewicz misunderstood the verse caused the translation to be mistaken."[273] It is not so simple, however. Why would *donum* and not *lumen* or any other neuter noun be omitted here? Mickiewicz who says that *promissum* functions as an abstract noun is on the right track, since the verse means: "You are what was solemnly promised by the Father". Mickiewicz seems to have understood the verse well, *pace* Pigoń, but he chose to translate it freely as "according to the Father's promise". Witwicki's prose revision of the translation has "*Tyś pierwszą Obietnicą Ojca*" ("You are the first Promise of the Father"), which grasps the *promissum* better, but introduces "first" which is nowhere to be found in the original.

21–24 In the penultimate stanza, Mickiewicz becomes less rigorous in terms of the order of the words and, unexpectedly, rendering *Noscamus atque Filium* ("Let us know also the Son") by "And acknowledge the Son". He also inverted the syntax of the next two lines. Moreover, Mickiewicz made here some choices which touch upon theological aspects, such as replacing *Te utriusque Spiritum* ("And You, the Spirit of both [scil. the Father and the Son]") by "the

272 See Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 71, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 302–5.

273 S. Pigoń, "*Veni Creator*", pp. 1–3.

Spirit/ Who proceeds from both". He also understands the Latin *omni tempore*, which means "at all times" or "at every moment" as "for ever" and suggests that the praying subject ask to make an act of faith in the Holy Spirit which will last for ever, as if he did not already believe ("*uwierzyli*" rather than "*wierzyli*" for the Latin *credamus*). This is impossible to translate without sacrificing linguistic simplicity.

27–28 The last two verses are Mickiewicz's own gloss to the poem. From what he says in his Lausanne lectures, we may infer that he was inspired by Goethe. He says in 1840: "Goethe admired above all the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. He composed a little commentary on this text. He used to say that an artist should begin his day by meditating on one of the verses of that song; he would call it 'the Lord's Prayer' of art."[274] Goethe's translation of *Veni Creator* (1820) was initially entitled "Appell ans Genie" ("Appeal to the Genius"); in this form Goethe send this text to his friend Carl Friedrich Zelter, a composer, asking him to write music for it.[275] Julian Maślanka, in his editorial commentary to the Lausanne lectures, fails to solve the mystery of Goethe's "little commentary" on *Veni Creator* that Mickiewicz mentions. He says that Goethe called *Veni Creator* also "a friend of an artist" and "a vesper song of an artist", but gives no reference. It may well be a brief remark in Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen* (182): "A beautiful church song, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, is, as a whole, an appeal to the Genius; in fact, also to Man's creativity and power."[276] We are

274 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła,* t. VII, p. 243. J. Maślanka,who edited the Lausanne lectures, notes that Goethe entitled his 1820 translation *Appell ans Genie*, also calling it "a friend of an artist" and "a vesper hymn of an artist".

275 J.W. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens Münchener Ausgabe*, ed. J. John, K. Richter, bd. 13 I, München 1992, p. 625. As O'Brien points out, in the eighteenth century genius is still a spirit or a muse distinct from the artist's self, while in the nineteenth century "the artist himself was seen as a creative genius" (W.A. O'Brien, "Friedrich von Hardenberg (pseudonym Novalis)," in: *Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. P. Hamilton, Oxford 2015, pp. 202–218, on p. 206).

276 Ibidem, bd. 17, p. 749. We owe this information to the kind efforts of Professors Norbert Oellers and Stefan Kaszyński, for which we cordially express our gratitude.

unaware of how Mickiewicz learnt that Goethe's called *Veni Creator* "the Lord's Prayer of art". The expression "used to talk" may suggest a personal communication or hearsay. Mickiewicz met Goethe in 1829: is it possible that Goethe mentioned *Veni Creator* that summer in Weimar, speaking of the need to meditate on it daily?

[*Spin Love ...*]

This poem, according to the note added by Mickiewicz to an autograph, was written in 1839 in Lausanne. The poet arrived there in June of the same year in order to work as a professor of Latin literature. The poem is in a personal notebook which also includes a manuscript of *Sentences and Remarks*. From the autograph we may infer that the poet neither felt fully satisfied with the first version of the poem nor considered it to final, as indicated by the (not entirely clear) underlinings and crossings-out of words, along with various mistakes which he did not bother to correct. A copy of the original was published by Stanisław Pigoń in his article "Autograf wiersza Mickiewicza *Snuć miłość*".[277] The first printing, including many mistakes, was included in the edition of Mickiewicz's work in 1880.[278] The poem belongs to the Lausanne lyrics, which were considered throughout the twentieth century to be one of the most original and innovative works in the history of Polish poetry.[279]

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The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines. We have used iambic pentameters in the English version.

Previous translations:

"Spin love," tr. K. Flaccus, in: *Selected Poems*, pp. 115–6.[280]

"Spin your love", tr. J. Lindsay, in: *Poems*, p. 63.

"Spin love" (unidentified translator), in: *Love Poems from Around the World*, New York 2000, p. 329.

"To spin love as a silkworm spins its thread inside grown", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 68.

277 S. Pigoń, "Autograf wiersza Mickiewicza *Snuć miłość*", *Przegląd Warszawski* 1 (1925), pp. 383–5.

278 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Paryż 1880–1885, p. 14.

279 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 75, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 321–6.

280 The translation is in verse, but extended to twenty four verses.

1 In his influential book *Agape and Eros*[281] (first edition in Swedish 1930–1936), Anders Nygren argued that the Greek concept of *eros*, passionate longing, and the Christian concept of *agape*, charity or self-giving love, are not only distinct, but opposed to and irreconcilable with one another. However, the metaphysical tradition of the Church strived to harmonise the "ascending" movement of *eros* and the "descending" movement of *agape*. The key text for the mystical, erotic ascent of the soul from the sensible beauty to the supreme, eternal Idea of Beauty, is Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*.[282] The mysteries of love, as described there, begin with beautiful bodies and ascend through beautiful souls and virtuous ways of life and laws, through the beauty of knowledge itself to supreme philosophical knowledge. At this stage, a philosopher may experience "suddenly" the final vision of Beauty or "the ocean of the beautiful".[283]

This metaphysical ladder was adopted by the Church Fathers who identified Plato's Beauty with God (as St Augustine in his famous prayer: "Late have I loved you, Beauty so old and so new, late have I loved you!").[284] What troubled some of them was the fact that the word *eros*, so crucial to the Platonic metaphysical mysticism, was nowhere to be found in the New Testament, while *agape* appeared relatively rarely in Pagan Platonism.[285] Origen, in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*,[286] argues that God must be both *agape* and *eros*, because those words refer to different aspects of love. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite speaks in even stronger terms, claiming that the meaning of *agape* and *eros* is the same and boldly asserting that God is *eros*, not only *agape*, as the *First Letter of John*

281 A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros. A study of the Christian idea of love*, tr. A.G. Hebert, London 1932.

282 Plato, *Symposium* 209e–212c.

283 Ibidem 210d.

284 St Augustine, *Confessions* X.27.38.

285 Although Plotinus said not only that the One is "the beloved (*erasmion*), and love (*eros*), and love of itself" (VI.8.15), but also that it "loves itself" (gr. *egapese*, derived from the verb *agapan*; VI.8.16).

286 Origen, *In Canticum canticorum, Prologus*. English translation by R.P. Lawson: *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, New York 1957.

declares (1 Jn 4:8).[287] The tradition arising from Origen, St Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius thus emphasises the significance of an erotic ascent of the soul to God, even though it is seen as a response to the primary act of *agape*, which is already expressed in creation.

The motif of a silkworm is important for Mickiewicz, who believed that the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly is an exemplary image of spiritual transformation. Dante uses this image in his *Purgatorio*:

> O Christians, arrogant, exhausted, wretched,
> whose intellects are sick and cannot see,
> who place your confidence in backward steps,
>
> do you not know that we are worms and born
> to form the angelic butterfly that soars,
> without defenses, to confront His judgment?
>
> Why does your mind presume to flight when you
> are still like the imperfect grub, the worm
> before it has attained its final form?[288]

It can be found in Saint-Martin's works.[289] In his lectures at the Collège, Mickiewicz says:

> If we, for instance, look at caterpillars, those caterpillars to which all the philosophers and poets of antiquity have always compared human souls, some of them still look for leaves in order to enclose themselves, others already sleep in its cocoon and seem immobile and dead, while others already manifest the vibration of their wings and are almost butterflies, still others fly towards the sky. The case is similar with human souls. Some of them continue to exist in an animal state, because they haven't worked hard enough on their liberation, and haven't acquired the essential skill of freeing themselves from the body, ripping off the insect-like cover in order to let the butterfly out. There are other souls which are so free that they pass among us with their words and deeds like meteoroids, like true butterflies. The

287 *Divine Names*, IV.11–17, 708B–713D, pp. 143–147.
288 Purgatorio 10.21–29.
289 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, p. 90.

> ancients expressed this truth in images, placing on Psyche's (that is, the soul's) brow, a butterfly as a symbol of her freedom.[290]

The motif of a silkworm derives from St Teresa's *Interior Castle*, where she writes:

> The silkworm symbolizes the soul which begins to live when, kindled by the Holy Spirit, it commences using the ordinary aids given by God to all, and applies the remedies left by Him in His Church, such as regular confession, religious hooks, and sermons; these are the cure for a soul dead in its negligence and sins and liable to fall into temptation. Then it comes to life and continues nourishing itself on this food and on devout meditation until it has attained full vigour, which is the essential point, for I attach no importance to the rest. When the silkworm is full-grown as I told you in the first part of this chapter, it begins to spin silk and to build the house wherein it must die. By this house, when speaking of the soul, I mean Christ. I think I read or heard somewhere, either that our life is hid in Christ, or in God (which means the same thing) or that Christ is our life. It makes little difference to my meaning which of these quotations is correct. (…)
>
> Forward then, my daughters! Hasten over your work and build the little cocoon. Let us renounce self-love and self-will, care for nothing earthly, do penance, pray, mortify ourselves, be obedient, and perform all the other good works of which you know. Act up to your light; you have been taught your duties. Die! Die as the silkworm does when it has fulfilled the office of its creation, and you will see God and be immersed in His greatness, as the little silkworm is enveloped in its cocoon. Understand that when I say "you will see God," I mean in the manner described, in which He manifests Himself in this kind of union.[291]

8–12 In the second stanza, which describes the ascent of the soul through the metaphysical ladder of existence and knowledge, we were not able to retain every significant detail. Mickiewicz distinguishes between the power of Nature and the power of elements; we have compressed them into a single phrase ("Like Nature's energy in elements").[292] This is by no means unjustifiable: in traditional

290 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. IX, p. 394.

291 St Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, II.3–6, pp. 130–132.

292 Plotinus, *Enneads* III.2.3, VI.7.9–11.

metaphysics, at the bottom of the 'ladder' there is the level of inanimate nature, which until modern times was identified with the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) which are endowed with neither life nor the power of growth. John Scotus Eriugena summarised the traditional ladder of being, giving the widely accepted division into five levels of created existence: (1) inanimate things, (2) plants, (3) animals, (4) human beings, and (5) angels, with (6) God as the highest level, but also the omnipresent reality encompassing all of them and giving them all existence.[293]

We rendered the Polish "*moc krzewienia*" by "the power of growth and life". The Polish word is associated with plant life: while '*krzewić*' now retains a merely metaphorical meaning of promoting or spreading, the noun '*krzewy*', signifying 'bushes', is still used in plain everyday language. Our hendiadys "growth and life" underlines the traditionally conceived features of this metaphysical level. Mickiewicz curiously skips over the level of subhuman animal life to the human level of existence and, then, the angelic and divine level. We used 'seem' in the last line as the equivalent of Mickiewicz's '*jako*' ('like', 'as if').

There are countless classical antecedents of such an ascent of love to God. St Gregory of Nazianzus, in one of his most famous orations, describes the soul's ascent from inanimate nature through plants, insects (bees and spiders), to man as the rational animal. From there, we should pass to the angelic level, in order to contemplate God together with the holy angels.[294] The idea of becoming equal to the angels (gr. *isangelia*) was popular in ancient Christianity; the angelic stage of contemplation preceded the final union with God. The important aspect of this is that the angels had the function of teaching and instruction, so the contemplation of God, according to

293 John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon* (*De divisione naturae*) II, 580d-581a. English translation by tr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams in: John Scottus Eriugena, *Periphyseon* (*the Division of Nature*), Montréal 1987. Mickiewicz may have come across Eriugena while reading Baader who refers to him every once in a while (*Fermenta cognitionis* I.2 and III.2). He points out that John Scotus is too rarely read: ("Scotus Erigen in seinem zu wenig gekannten Werk, *De Divisionae Naturae*", IV.23, p. 59).

294 *Oratio* XXVIII.22–31 (*Second Theological Oration*).

Pseudo-Dionysius, had to be mediated by the angels, who reveal the Good to the souls, then raise them, making them equal to themselves:

> After these sacred and holy intellects come the souls and all of their goods. That they are the intellects that they are, that they have an essential and indestructible life, are also due to the goodness beyond good; even their being itself is possible through their power to be raised up to the angelic life. Through the angels which act as good guides they are led upward to the good source of all goods, whence they come to be by a participation in the emanating illuminations according to their logos.[295]

Throughout the late Middle Ages and early modernity we continue to find this tradition in mystical and ascetic literature. Thomas à Kempis writes: "O sweet and delightful service of God, by which a man is made truly free and holy! O sacred state of religious service, which makes a man equal to the angels, pleasing to God, terrible to devils, and worthy to be commended of all the faithful!"[296] For further examples, look no further than Angelus Silesius (whose chosen *nom de plume* means "an angel"), who says: "With love to walk and stand, love breathe and speak and sing/ That is to spend your life as do the Seraphim." (II.254) and "Who would with just one glance above himself aspire,/ May join the Gloria of the Angelic Choir." (II.72), and "Three things that I would be: radiant as Cherubim,/ As tranquil as are Thrones, on fire as Seraphim." (III.165).

The classical Neoplatonic ladder of being could be also found by Mickiewicz in the writings of Saint-Martin who, in his *Man of Desire*, speaks about the sensible man, the moral man, the spiritual and wise man, and, finally, the divine man.[297] Swedenborg refers to this as well:

> There are many things that need to be said about levels of life and levels of vessels of life before I can give an intelligible explanation of the fact that other things in the universe, things that are not like angels and people, are also vessels for the divine love and wisdom of

295 *On the Divine Names* IV.2, p. 134.
296 *Imitation of Christ* III.10.6, p. 118–9.
297 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* §241.

> the Divine-Human One – for example, things below us in the animal kingdom, things below them in the plant kingdom, and things below them in the mineral kingdom.[298]

Interestingly, according to him the philosophy of the Enlightenment reduces Man to a status lesser than that of insects, by denying him his immaterial, immortal soul, especially on account of its deism and atheism, which prevail in what Saint-Martin believes to be the ages of the degradation of Man (the fourth and the fifth ages in his view of history of salvation).[299] A description of the ascent of the soul from the material world through the angels to God himself is given by Saint-Martin towards the end of his *Natural Table*.[300] There is also a Neoplatonic account of ascent or "climbing", as he puts it, in Swedenborg's *Divine Wisdom and Love*:

> I need also to explain briefly how we climb – or rather, are lifted – from the last level to the first. We are born on the lowest level of the physical world, and are lifted to the second level by means of factual knowledge. Then as we develop our discernment through this knowledge, we are lifted to the third level and become rational. The three ascending levels in the spiritual world are within this, resting on the three physical levels, and do not become visible until we leave our earthly bodies. When we do, the first spiritual level is opened for us, then the second, and finally the third. However, this last happens only for people who become angels of the third heaven. These are the ones who see God.[301]

It may be noted that traces of the traditional metaphysical ascent of the soul can also be found in the famous *Ode to Joy* of Friedrich Schiller, the poet whom Mickiewicz greatly admired, imitated, and translated in his youth. A section of *An die Freude* was of course popularised by Ludwig van Beethoven, who adapted it for the fourth part of his Ninth Symphony (first performed in 1824). Although Schiller writes not about love, but joy and pleasure, the old Platonic

298 Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, pp. 21–22.
299 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, pp. 281–2.
300 Ibidem, pp. 298–302.
301 Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, p. 25.

understanding of pleasure as the enjoyment of the good and beautiful permeates his poem. He says: "Every worm knows nature's pleasure,/ Every cherub meets his God." ("*Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,/ Und der Cherub steht vor Gott*"). As in Mickiewicz, we have here an insect ("der Wurm") as the lowest creature which seeks pleasure, while the angelic being ("der Cherub"), as the closest being to God, is able to contemplate Him directly and have the fullest enjoyment of the Good.

The juxtaposition of a worm and a Seraph as a poetic motif will be found as early as Angelus Silesius.[302] Schiller uses the traditional metaphysical motif of experiencing God through the created world, and ascending to the vision of divinity by contemplating created beings, when he speaks, in the final words (of Beethoven's version, not Schiller's original text), about the loving Father ("*ein lieber Vater*") who must live above the starry dome of Heaven, and asks whether the world is able to see his Creator ("*Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?*"), encouraging the creatures to search for their Creator above the stars ("*Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!*").

The conclusion of the poem is similar to Angelus Silesius' couplet: "To love is difficult, for loving's not enough./ Like God we must ourselves become that very love." (I.71).[303] And love, as Mickiewicz seems to suggest, is the Supreme Reality itself. In Swedenborg's words: "the divine reality is divine love and the divine manifestation is divine wisdom, these latter are similarly distinguishably one."[304] Also Saint-Martin alludes to the traditional concept of divinisation: "Let us go through the harmonic scale that the man embraces in his course. At the time of his fall, he became matter mixed with spirit. At the second law, he became spirit mixed with matter. At the third, it became pure spirit. At the fourth, he will become deified spirit."[305]

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302 "Wär ich ein Seraphin, so wollt ich lieber sein,/ Dem Höchsten zu gefalln, das schnödste Würmelein" (I.59) and "In Gott ist alles Gott: ein einzigs Würmelein,/ Das ist in Gott so viel, als tausend Gotte sein" (II.143).

303 Also "Die Lieb ist unser Gott, es lebet alls durch Liebe:/ Wie selig wär ein Mensch, der stets in ihr verbliebe" (I.70).

304 Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, p. 13.

305 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* §84.

[*Above the Water Great and Clear …*]

This poem included in the Lausanne lyrics cycle, which is usually dated 1839–1840. The first printing is in the Parisian edition in 1861;[306] the autograph is now in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris. It is written on a sheet of paper which includes also other Lausanne poems: [*My Corpse Is Sitting Here …*], [*To Fly Away with a Soul …*], [*Already as a Child in Our House …*]. In the manuscript the poet introduced no stanza divisions; these were later incorporated in critical editions (five four-verse stanzas and one distich after the third stanza).[307]

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In the translation we used iambic tetrameter as the closest to the rhythm of the original.

Previous translations:

"Within their silent, perfect glass," tr. C. Hemley, in: *Selected Poems*, pp. 116–7.

"Over the water grand and clear", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 68–69.

"Above water vast and pure …", tr. A. Czerniawski, in: A. Czerniawski, "Not Lost in Translation," *Toronto Slavic Quarterly* 10 (2004).

2 In the original there are '*opoki*' ('rocks'), which we translated as 'mountains' (the word clearly alludes to the Alps that can be seen above the Lake Geneva).

4 In the *Introductory Study* we have already pointed out the significance of the metaphor of mirroring. It appears also in other Mickiewicz's poems, both in the form of transparent water and of a mirror (*Reason and Faith, To Solitude,* [*I Dreamt of Winter …*], *Vision*). It is present in all the mystical texts which Mickiewicz studied intensely, including St Augustine's *Confessions* or the writings

306 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, Paryż 1860–1861, t. 1, pp. 420–1.

307 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 75, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 326–8.

of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite who writes that intellects are "Divine images, mirrors most luminous and without flaw, receptive of the primal light and the supremely Divine ray, and devoutly filled with the entrusted radiance, and again, spreading this radiance ungrudgingly to those after it, in accordance with the supremely Divine regulations."[308] But also later, in the *Imitation of Christ*: "If thy heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be unto thee a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine."[309] And in Angelus Silesius, in the very first couplet of the *Cherubinic Wanderer*: "Pure as the finest gold, hard as the granite stone,/ Wholly as crystal clear your spirit must become." (I.1). Also: "The soul a crystal is, the Godhead is her shine;/ The body you inhabit hides both as in a shrine." (I.60).

Swedenborg emphasises: "What is created is suitable for this contact because it has been created by God in God. Because it has been created in this way, it is an analog; and because of the union, it is like an image of God in a mirror."[310] Saint-Martin too compares the human mind to a mirror: "man is the mirror of Truth."[311] And "our thought, a divine mirror; – existence of a superior Being, proved by this mirror when it is clean and pure."[312] This is also a classical view, expressed by Dante in the first canto of *Paradiso*: "All things, among themselves,/ possess an order; and this order is/ the form that makes the universe like God."[313]

15–18 St Teresa also describes some of her advanced mystical visions, using the language of mirroring:

> Once, when I was with the whole community reciting the Office, my soul became suddenly recollected, and seemed to me all bright as a mirror, clear behind, sideways, upwards, and downwards; and in the

308 *De coelesti hierarchia* III.2, p. 149. Cf. *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* III.3.10.

309 *Imitation of Christ* II.4.1, p. 68.

310 Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, p. 21. He continues: "While the created universe is not God, it is from God; and since it is from God, his image is in it like the image of a person in a mirror. We do indeed see a person there, but there is still nothing of the person in the mirror." (p. 22).

311 Saint-Martin, *Of Errors and Truth*, p. 48.

312 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 186.

313 *Paradiso* 1, 103–15.

> centre of it I saw Christ our Lord, as I usually see Him. It seemed to me that I saw Him distinctly in every part of my soul, as in a mirror, and at the same time the mirror was all sculptured – I cannot explain it – in our Lord Himself by a most loving communication which I can never describe. I know that this vision was a great blessing to me, and is still whenever I remember it, particularly after Communion.[314]

Later, she had another vision, this time not of herself as mirroring God, but of God mirroring or reflecting everything in His omniscience:

> Once, when in prayer, I had a vision, for a moment, – I saw nothing distinctly, but the vision was most clear, – how all things are seen in God and how all things are comprehended in Him. (…) Let us suppose the Godhead to be a most brilliant diamond, much larger than the whole world, or a mirror like that to which I compared the soul in a former vision, only in a way so high that I cannot possibly describe it; and that all our actions are seen in that diamond, which is of such dimensions as to include everything, because nothing can be beyond it. It was a fearful thing for me to see, in so short a time, so many things together in that brilliant diamond, and a most piteous thing too, whenever I think of it, to see such foul things as my sins present in the pure brilliancy of that light.[315]

A similar image can be found in Adam's speech in the 26 canto of *Paradiso* in Dante:

> Then he breathed forth: "Though you do not declare
> your wish, I can perceive it better than
> you can perceive the things you hold most certain;
>
> for I can see it in the Truthful Mirror
> that perfectly reflects all else, while no
> thing can reflect that Mirror perfectly.[316]

22 Mickiewicz combines the traditional image of a mirror, which is static, with the metaphor of flowing (associated with water,

314 St Teresa of Avila, *Life* XL.8, p. 387–8.
315 Ibidem, XL.13–14, p. 390–391.
316 *Paradiso* 26, 103–108.

even though the waters of Lake Geneva self-evidently do not flow). However, the human soul was often compared to flowing waters by the Church Fathers, since the key difference between Man and God in authors such as St Augustine or St Gregory of Nyssa (and earlier, in Plotinus), is that the essence of the first is motion and change. It is also present in Saint-Martin's anthropology.[317] Only God is absolute immutability and rest. The human soul acquires peace of rest and immutability only by the union with God.[318]

Saint-Martin says in his *Man of Desire*: "But you, the universe, why aren't you fixed, either in your essence or your faculties? It is because you are descended from agents who are produced and separate from God, as the immortal man; it is because you are only the result of the faculties of these agents and because you cannot be the fruit of their essence."[319] This is an echo of Augustine's claim that the universe changes in substance and in time, the angelic and human spirits change in time, but not in substance, while God alone is changeless.[320]

317 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, p. 65.

318 As St Gregory of Nyssa points out, this stability is reached when: "[Man] places his own soul, like a mirror, face-to-face with the hope of good things, with the result that the images and impressions of virtue, as it is shown to him by God, are imprinted on the purity of his soul." (*The Life of Moses*, p. 44).

319 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* §66. Saint-Martin also writes about the transformed flow of human spiritual life, through the power of the living waters of the Holy Spirit: "Who will dare to say that the evil is something else than a deviation of the good? Who will dare to consider it as stagnation in the direct line? There are stagnations only next to the bed of rivers; we cannot have them in the flowing waters. In the region of life, this line is a big and eternal flowing water, which by its speed pulls everything in his course, and attracts all which is on its edges. Where would be his edges, because it is acting everywhere? Is it anything in the region of life which can resist its impulse? Down here this line also proceeds without moving of its course; it acts ceaselessly on the evil, to straighten the deviation. But it proceeds only in partial and limited flows, and the evil has the power to oppose their action." (Ibidem, §17).

320 St Augustine, *Epistula 18*.

[*My Corpse Is Sitting Here …*]

The poem included in the Lausanne cycle, dated circa 1839–1840. The autograph was written on a sheet of paper along with other poems: see the commentary above. The manuscript, as Zgorzelski writes, "bears all the marks of a hasty sketch", it contains crossing out of words, unfinished words, omitted letters. Also its first printing, which was by no means free from mistakes, was published in the Parisian edition in 1861.[321] These mistakes were corrected by later editors.[322]

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The poem is in the hendecasyllables. In the translation we used iambic pentameters.

Previous translations:

"My corpse …", in: *New Selected Poems*, ed. C. Mills, New York 1957, p. 77.

"When my corpse sits here with you together", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 69.

1 Mickiewicz also calls his body "a corpse" in an earlier sonnet, *To Solitude*. This may echo the Platonic identification of the body with the tomb of the soul, and as something dead by itself, made alive only by the presence of the soul (*Cratylus* 400b–d, *Gorgias* 492e–493a, cf. also *Phaedo* 64a and *Phaedrus* 250b-c). Also, Böhme calls the body "half-dead": "But the cold and half-dead body does not always understand this fight of the soul: The body does not know how it is with it, but is heavy and anxious; it goeth from one room or business to another; and from one place to another; it seeketh for ease and rest."[323] Saint-Martin proclaims contemporary man "a corpse", and calls upon the powers of Nature to bury it and perform

321 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, Paryż 1860–1861, p. 412–3.

322 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 75–6, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 331–4.

323 Böhme, *Aurora* 11.139.

its funeral. He also says that "the unhappy man is like the dead"[324] and that "human souls have become as walking corpses."[325]

This corresponds to both Böhme's and Saint-Martin's belief that the world in its present fallen condition, caused by the fall of Adam, is a dead or half-dead world.[326] The latter author says: "You must no more say the Universe is on its death-bed: it is in its grave! Putrefaction has got hold of it, infection issues from all its member and you, O man, are to blame! But for you, it would not have thus sunk into its grave; but for you, it would not have thus exhaled infection."[327] And: "But is not Man himself on his bed of suffering? Is he not on his death-bed? Is he not in his grave, a prey to corruption?"[328]

Apart from Platonic sources, Mickiewicz's use of 'corpse' may well be inspired by such New Testament places as "let the dead bury their dead" (Mt 8:21–22) or St Paul's references to the death of "the old man" (e.g. Rom 6:8, Gal 2:20).

5–8 The beautiful "fatherland of thought" brings, of course, immediate associations with Poland (Lithuania), from which Mickiewicz was exiled and which he described with longing in the invocation to *Pan Tadeusz*. However, in the tradition of Western metaphysics the concept of the spiritual fatherland of souls has been associated with the realm of spirits in general, which lies above the material universe. Plotinus writes that our present state is similar to people who

> sink down into the dark depths where intellect has no delight, and stay blind in Hades, consorting with shadows there and here. This would be truer advice: "Let us fly to our dear country".[329] What then is our way of escape, and how are we to find it? We shall put out to sea, as Odysseu did, from the witch Circe or Calypso – as the poet says (I think with a hidden meaning) – and was not content to stay though

324 Saint-Martin, *The Man of Desire* 34 and *Natural Table*, p. 298.

325 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 413.

326 See J. Böhme, *Aurora* 6.41–44; Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature*, p. 25 and 111.

327 Ibidem, p. 75.

328 Ibidem, p. 76.

329 It is a quotation from *Iliad* 2.140.

> he had delights of the eyes and lived among much beauty of sense. Our country from which we came is there, our Father is there. How shall we travel there on foot; for our feet only carry us everywhere in this world, from one country to another. You must not get ready a carriage, either, or a boat. Let all these things go, and do not look. Shut your eyes, and change to and wake another way of seeing, which everyone has but few use.[330]

13–16 As we have noted in the *Introductory Study* (p. 71), the woman is not named in the poem. However, in line 12, just before her appearance, butterflies and sparrows are mentioned, which are invoked also when Ewa appears in [*I Dreamt of Winter …*] (see the commentary on this poem).

330 Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.8, vol. I, pp. 257–9.

[*I Shed Pure Springs of Tears …*]

One of the Lausanne lyrics, dated to 1839–1840. Its autograph is lost; the last scholar who used it was Józef Kallenbach, at the end of the nineteenth century. The first printing was in the Cracow journal *Czas* in 1859 (issue 117). It appeared in the Parisian edition of Mickiewicz's works in 1861,[331] where editors wilfully corrected an epithet "durną" ("foolish", describing youth) to "chmurną" ("cloudy"), probably with the intent of making it sound more noble; this changed the significance of the line, and the whole poem. The correct *lectio* was restored by Kallenbach who based his edition on the manuscript; this version remains a standard one.[332]

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The poem is virtually impossible to translate. Julian Przyboś, a Polish poet, writes: "I don't know a poem more unitary nor another lyric in which experience would be more tightly and concisely linked with the bond of words".[333] He praises it as "one of the most sophisticated poems" of Mickiewicz, "one of the most innovative poems in Polish language" and points out that its simplicity is that of the "art so sublime that it is not noticed".

In every line of the poem there are internal rhymes ("*czyste, rzęsiste*", "*sielskie, anielskie*" etc.) between the epithets which describe the tears and each of the stages of life. Or, as Przyboś calls them, "parallelisms of sound-complexes", since not only the rhymes, but also the rhythm, run parallel in lines 1–3 and 5. He also coins a term to describe the peculiar quality of those rhymes: "not only sonoric, but conceptual rhymes" (since their meaning is akin to each other).

In verse 4 (Przyboś, again):

> the poem has now broken down violently. The effect is so powerful that we are overwhelmed with emotions, as if we, too, were about to pour our own tears of aesthetic experience into the springs of the

331 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, Paryż 1860–1861, p. 418.

332 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 77, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 334–5.

333 J. Przyboś, "Wiersz-płacz", in: *Strona Lemanu*, p. 115–120.

> poet's tears. The mature age of man wasn't visually depicted, but with menace and austerity hit with a name as heavy as a rock: '*wiek klęski*' [literally, "the age of failure"; "coming to fail" in our translation]. A horrifying contrast of this line with the images and the rhythmical shape of the two preceding lines, is shocking. I don't know of any other poet who could achieve such a strong emotional effect within such a short space.

Apart from that, the poem has a refrain-like structure and many alliterations. Even though it is a single sentence, it never ends, it becomes, according to Przyboś, "a never-ending weeping". In terms of meter, Przyboś claims that the poem fits into no existing canon or pattern, but has an innovative rhythm and meter of its own, which grow organically out of the syntactic structure of the sentence. It is both peaceful and restless; Przyboś compares it to a "lullaby performing aerobatics".

We have tried to gesture towards what is going on in the poem, rather than attempting to create something similar or equivalent in the English language. Instead of the rhyme in line 1, we proposed "pure springs of tears", with several of recurring sounds. "Angelic, bucolic" rhymes and imitates to a certain degree "*sielskie, anielskie*", while "aloof and foolish" share similar sounds. Line 4 doesn't "sound like a gigantic rock which crushes us" (Przyboś), but is different from the rest; the structural parallelism of the two parts of the line, with a sort of monotonous tone ("on my coming of age; on my coming to fail"), are a distant echo of what Mickiewicz achieved in the original.

Previous translations:

"My tears …", in: *New Selected Poems*, ed. C. Mills, New York 1957, p. 78.

"I shed pure tears, countless tears", tr. M. J. Mikoś, in: *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*, ed. M. J. Mikoś, Columbus, OH – Bloomington, IN, 2002, p. 69.

1 Shedding tears over one's sins and mistakes was considered one of the greatest mystical graces both in the Eastern and the Western tradition (the so-called "gift of tears"). Thomas à Kempis writes: "In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantageth itself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture. There it findeth rivers of tears,

wherein it may wash and cleanse itself; that it may be so much the more familiar with its Creator, by how much the farther off it liveth from all worldly disquiet."[334]

This motif returns in Saint-Martin as well, who says:

> Now, when Man looks at himself under this aspect, when he considers to what state of disorder, disharmony, debility and bondage, these powers are reduced, in his whole being, – grief, shame, and sadness take hold of him to such a degree, that everything in him weeps, and all his essences become so many torrents of tears. On these floods of tears, represented, materially, by the earthly rains, the Sun of Life sheds His vivifying rays, and, by the union of His powers, with the germs of our own, manifests to our inward being, the sign of the covenant He comes to make with us.[335]

334 *Imitation of Christ* I.20.6, p. 38.

335 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 142.

[*Already as a Child in Our House …*]

A poem included in the Lausanne cycle, dated by most editors to 1838–1840. Zgorzelski narrows down its possible dates to those of Mickiewicz's sojourn in Lausanne (1839–1840). On the other hand, Ksenia Kostenicz proposed including this poem among Mickewicz's very final poetic fragments, which she dated between 1852 and 1855; though she produced no solid evidence to support this claim.[336] The autograph, now in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris, was written on a single sheet of paper alongside three other poems from the Lausanne period; this essentially solves the problem of dating – see the commentary on [*Above the Water Great and Clear …*].[337]

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As with the previous one, this poem belongs to no traditional category in terms of versification. It is built of longer lines, alternating with shorter ones, but the number of syllables is, in fact, different in every single line (9, 5, 11, 3, 14, 7, 12, 15). Metre also differs, but the poem does not read as prose, or an unrhymed, irregular twentieth-century 'Modernist' poem without rhyme or rhythm, but follows its own rhythm and prosody. In the translation, we didn't follow closely the number of syllables, but we represented the prosodic irregularity of the poem.

Previous translations:

"When I was still small," tr. B. Deutsch, in: *Selected Poems*, p. 116.

"Even at home …", tr. C. Mills, in: *New Selected Poems*, p. 78.

1 The first line contains an expression "*w rodzicielskim domu*" (literally, "in a parental house"), which sounds cozy and familiar in Polish, but dry and formal in English, if translated literally. We used the pronoun "our" to convey the tone of this expression.

336 K. Kostenicz, *Kronika życia i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza. Styczeń 1850–26 listopada 1855*), Warszawa 1978, p. 216.

337 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, p. 76, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 328–9.

[*To Fly Away with the Soul …*]

It is a fragment of an unfinished poem, written down on a sheet of paper with other Lausanne lyrics [see the commentary on [*Above the Water Great and Clear …*], just above the poem [*Already as a Child in Our House …*]. Such a place of this text inclined the majority of scholars to a conclusion that it was written in 1838–1840 (Zgorzelski narrowed it down to 1839–1840). The manuscript contains no hints of possible directions in which Mickiewicz might have wanted to develop this poem, or its intended poetic form (or genre). Successive editors have struggled especially with a phrase which is traditionally read "*na listek*" ("on a leaf"): the *lectio* "*na liście*" ("on leaves") would be also justified. What shifts the balance of opinion towards the first version is the use of diminutives in the fragment more generally (e.g. "*domku i gniazdeczka*"). The poem was first printed[338] only in 1911.[339]

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The fragment seems to begin in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines, although the second surviving line finishes before the caesura (intentionally? See commentary on *To Solitude*).

Previous translations:

"Flight with the Soul …", in: *New Selected Poems*, p. 78.

The main feature of the poem is the use of diminutives which are predominant ("*listek*", "*domku*", "*gniazdeczka*"). The Polish language is very fond of diminutive forms, which can express familiarity and emotional attachment as well as disparagement, depending on the context. Diminutives also typically feature in the language of children, and in adults' communication with children. The profusion of diminutives lends the fragment a peculiarly naïve or childlike quality, as well as a sense emotional warmth. In English the only available equivalent would be the qualifier "little" before each of the three nouns in question.

338 Mickiewicz, *Pisma*, ed. J. Kallenbach, Brody 1911, t. 7, p. 69.

339 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, p. 76, critical remarks and variants of the text: p. 329.

For the symbolic significance of a butterfly (oddly enough, not in a diminutive!) as a representation of the soul, see the commentary on [*I Dreamt of Winter …*]

St Teresa writes about the soul: "Oh, to see the restlessness of this charming little butterfly, although never in its life has it been more tranquil and at peace! May God be praised! It knows not where to stay nor take its rest; everything on earth disgusts it after what it has experienced, particularly when God has often given it this wine which leaves fresh graces behind it at every draught."[340]

340 St Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle, Fifth Mansion*, II.6, p. 133.

[*Tree*]

The autograph of this poem has been lost. Until 1939 it remained in the collection of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. It was written on the upper part of a sheet of paper and separated with a cross from another fragment: [*To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …*]. The first printing was issued by the poet's son Władysław Mickiewicz, who mistakenly claimed that both fragments are one 'sketch' for a poem entitled *Tree*.[341] The manuscript was supposed to contain a note that those fragments were written in Saint-Germain, which led Władysław Mickiewicz to date them to 1842. We know, however, that Mickiewicz also stayed there in February 1843 as well as in June 1846, and from November to December 1846. Władysław Mickiewicz suggested that the sheet of paper was saved from burning by a friend of the poet's: "Mickiewicz was burning notebooks full of copied poems in the presence of Aleksander Chodźko. He saved a quarter of them from the fire, which devoured many other sheets." We cannot be sure whether the sheet of paper with the two fragments in question was in fact among these.

In the wake of the first printing, the mistake of the poet's son was repeated in subsequent editions for over thirty years. Both fragments were separated only by Stanisław Pigoń, after a careful study of the manuscript. The fragment in question appeared in a critical edition[342] as a separate poem in 1929.[343]

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The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines.

1 The symbol of a tree, comes, of course, from the Book of Genesis and the two trees of Eden, and remains prominent in the Christian tradition, signifying spiritual or eternal life. Böhme uses this allegory:

341 W. Mickiewicz, *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza*, Poznań 1890–1895, t. 3, p. 168.

342 A. Mickiewicz, *Poezje*, ed. S. Pigoń, Lwów 1929, t. 1, p. 485.

343 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, p. 93, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 376–7.

> Now when I write of trees, plants and fruits, you must not understand them to be earthly, like those that are in this world; for it is not my meaning that there shall grow in heaven such dead, hard trees of wood, or such stones as consist of an earthly quality. No, but my meaning is heavenly and spiritual, yet truly and properly such: I mean no other thing than what I set down in the letter. In that same power grows up and is generated fruit according to every quality and species or kind, viz. heavenly trees and plants, which without ceasing bear fruit, blossom fairly, and grow in divine power, so joyfully that I can neither speak it nor write it down.[344]

Swedenborg says: "In every seed, then, there is an image of something infinite and eternal, an inherent effort to multiply and bear fruit without limit, to eternity."[345] And Saint-Martin points out: "Man is the tree, God is its sap."[346]

Saint-Martin writes:

> He never ceased to water this seed with the spiritual favours he sent into the world through the ministry of His elect, until He came Himself to water it with His own blood. But Man, the tree, still remains charged to produce his fruits, in, by, and through his descendants. The Word could but give Himself for man; He could not cancel the law by which the tree must, itself, freely manifest what it had received in its essences. So it is allowed to advance each day towards the final epoch, when, supposing all its branches had fulfilled the beneficent intention of their redeeming Source, they would have been destined to show the majestic tree of Man, as he appeared in the garden of Eden; and adorned, besides, with the resplendent branches of all his posterity, who ought to second all his efforts, seeing that the work is common to both the children and the father.[347]

344 Böhme, *Aurora* 4.30–33.
345 Swedenborg, *Divine Wisdom and Love*, p. 22.
346 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature*, p. 72.
347 Ibidem, p. 284.

[*To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …*]

An autograph of this unfinished poem was lost and it was, until 1939, in the collection of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. It was written on a sheet of paper at the bottom, divided by a cross from a previous fragment, [*Tree*]. The penultimate line was provided with a note "*nie wyczytam*" ("I can't read it"), which suggest that Mickiewicz was copying the fragment from some unknown notebook and that he wasn't able to read the last words of lines 5 and 6. The first printing was published by the son of the poet, Władysław Mickiewicz, who mistakenly believed that both fragments are "sketches" for the same poem, entitled *Tree*.[348]

The manuscript was supposed to contain a note that those fragments were written in Saint-Germain, which led Władysław Mickiewicz to dating them to 1842. We know, however, that Mickiewicz stayed there also in February 1943 as well as in June and from November to December 1946. Władysław Mickiewicz suggested that the sheet of paper with both fragments was saved from burning by the friend of the poet: "Mickiewicz was burning down notebooks full of copied poems in the presence of Aleksander Chodźko. He saved one fourth of them from the fire which devoured many other sheets." We cannot be sure, whether it was actually the very sheet of paper with the two fragments in question.

In the wake of the first printing, the mistake of the son of the poet was repeated in subsequent editions for over thirty years. Both fragments were separated only by Stanisław Pigoń, after a careful study of the manuscript. The fragments were separated from each other only by Stanisław Pigoń, after a careful study of the manuscript. The poem [*To Listen to the Sound of Water Cold and Still …*] was published as an independent fragment in an critical edition in 1929.[349] The full edition was prepared by Czesław Zgorzelski.[350]

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348 W. Mickiewicz, *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza*, p. 168.

349 Mickiewicz, Poezje, ed. Pigoń, Lwów 1929, p. 485.

350 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, p. 93, critical remarks and variants of the text: p. 378.

The poem is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines. We used free iambic pentameters.

The dominant linguistic feature is the use of infinitives, which we reproduced, except in line 3 ("To give myself to wind"). In the penultimate line there is a peculiar neologism "*wnurzyć*", which we translated simply as "to dive in". In the last two lines, our translation follows the assumption that the lyrical subject identifies with the fish, which is not explicitly stated in the original, but nonetheless is strongly suggested by the entire context of the poem.

[*Just Like a Tree Before It Gives …*]

This couplet was most likely written during Mickiewicz's involvement in the Circle of God's Work (*Koło Sprawy Bożej*), founded in Paris by Andrzej Towiański in 1841. After Towiański was exiled from France (1842), Mickiewicz became his deputy, until the Circle was dissolved in 1846. On the basis of an autograph, Stanisław Pigoń dated the poem to 1843 and this was accepted by the majority of scholars. Mickiewicz placed this distich above his *Nota do Francuzów* ("Address to the French") written in 1843, where he speaks about the Napoleonic idea, the role of France and Towiański's mission (it was probably intended for the French followers of Towiański). The manuscript is in the Mickiewicz Museum in Paris.

The first printing was published by Władysław Mickiewicz, who placed it in *Kurier Warszawski* in 1902 (issue 303). In older critical editions, including the one prepared by Pigoń, the distich was placed next to other unpublished micro-poems which were written in the style of the aphoristic cycle *Sentences and Remarks* (published in 1836). This practice was justified for two reasons. First, the distich is similar to those aphorisms in its content and form; second, it was written around the same time as the unpublished part of *Sentences and Remarks*. Czesław Zgorzelski considers it to be a separate poem, emphasising the fact that the poet did not write it down in a notebook which contains all the other aphorisms from that cycle, "which determines evidently a genetic difference of this separately noted down aphorism".[351]

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The epigram is in the Polish 13-syllable alexandrines.

The curious image of "giving its fruit to seeds" ("*przed wydaniem owocu w zarodek*") seems to link the bearing of fruit with the fact that in a fruit there are seeds which contain the energy necessary for the growth of another tree. The prepositional phrase "*w zarodek*" ("to seeds" or "into seeds"), suggests the movement and dynamism of the situation. The fruit is the climax of the development of the tree and,

351 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, p. 379.

also, the beginning of another tree. In the same way, spiritual fruit seems to be in the breast (or the heart), the centre of the human spirit, where it becomes the seed of something new. The idea of a seed as the centre of the soul appears in *Vision* as well (see commentary to the poem and the *Introductory Study*, pp. 59–61). Mickiewicz also uses it in *Ahriman and Ormusd*, to describe the centre of the respective realms of light and darkness.

Böhme uses this image of growth and transformation quite often, for instance:

> You find nothing else but the Anguish, and in the Anguish the Quality, and in the Quality the Mind, and in the Mind the Will to grow and generate, and in the Will the Virtue [or h Power,] and in the Virtue the Light, and in the Light its forth-driving Spirit; which makes again a Will to generate a Twig [Bud or Branch] out of the Tree like itself; and this I call in my Book the Centrum, [the Center,] where the generated Will becomes an Essence [or Substance,] and generates now again such [another] Essence; for thus is the Mother of the Genetrix.[352]

He also claims "I am the Lord's twig or branch."[353], which is, of course, partly an allusion to "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (Jn 15:5). Saint-Martin writes:

> When physical seeds produce their fruit, they are simply manifesting visibly the abilities or properties which they had received through the constituent Laws of their essence. When these seeds – an acorn for example – accomplishes its individual existence suspended from the branch of the oak which had produced it, it has, as it were, participated in everything that worked upon it in the atmosphere, since it received the influences of the air, since it existed in the midst of all living corporeal Beings, since it was observed by the Sun, the stars, the animals, the plants, men: that is to say, everything in the temporal sphere.[354]

352 Böhme, *Three Principles* 10.40.

353 Böhme, *Aurora* 3.111.

354 Saint-Martin, *Natural Table*, p. 53.

Also, in his last work, Saint-Martin uses a very similar image to the one Mickiewicz employs in his couplet:

> Man is a being, commissioned to continue God, where God is no longer known by Himself: not in His radical divine order; for, there, God ceases not to make Himself known by Himself; for, there, He works out His secret eternal generation. But he continues Him in manifestations, and the order of emanations; for, there, God makes Himself known only by His images and representatives. He continues Him, or, in other words, recommences Him, as a bud or germ recommences a tree, by being born immediately from that tree – without intermedium.[355]

355 Saint-Martin, *Man, His True Nature and Ministry*, p. 162–3.

The Words of Christ

An autograph is unknown; during the Second World War a copy of it was lost. The copy was made by Seweryn Goszczyński (1801–1876), a poet and *émigré*, who was involved, like Mickiewicz, in the Circle of God's Work in Paris. The piece is a result of Mickiewicz's Towianist activism and was, according to Goszczyński, read aloud by its author during a meeting of the Towianists on 14th October 1842. Undoubtedly it was intended for the spiritual consolidation of this group. The text was first printed[356] in 1868.[357]

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The tone of the prose poem, as explained in the *Introductory Study* (pp. 79–80) is solemn and scriptural. In the original it sounds much more archaic to a contemporary reader than in the translation.

356 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Paryż 1868, pp. 205–6.

357 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, pp. 94–95, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 380–1.

The Words of the Virgin

The manuscript is in the National Museum in Cracow. It contains a note by Mickiewicz, precisely dating this piece: "on All Souls' Night 1842", that is, the night of 31st October/1st November. The poet intended to send it for evaluation to Andrzej Towiański and his associates, while the latter was staying in Switzerland, as the poet relates in a letter written on 3rd November 1842: "On the night before the Solemnity of All Saints I was very moved and I wrote a couple of poems in prose about the Most Blessed Virgin, which I will send later to Madame Karolina [Towiańska]".[358] The first printing[359] was published in 1868 together with *The Words of Christ*.[360]

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The biblical context for the prose poem is *Revelation*, chapters 11 and 12, as well as the account of Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38). See the commentary on the *Hymn on the Feast of the Annunciation*. Exquisite images surrounding the scene of the Annunciation can also be found in the 23rd canto of the *Paradiso*, where both violent and gentle elements of the event are seamlessly intertwined by Dante.

358 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, t. XIV, p. 115.

359 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Paryż 1868, pp. 203–4.

360 Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1981, p. 95, critical remarks and variants of the text: pp. 381–4.

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