

EWA SZCZEGŁACKA-PAWŁOWSKA

**A SHEET OF PAPER SALVED FROM FIRE.
POST-LAUSANNE LYRICS OF ADAM MICKIEWICZ
“DRZEWO” (“A TREE”) AND “WSŁUCHAĆ
SIĘ W SZUM WÓD GŁUCHY...” (“TO LISTEN
TO THE DULL SOUGH OF WATERS...”)**

A Salvaged Manuscript

A sheet of paper with Adam Mickiewicz's private lyrics “A Tree” and “To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...” was most probably salvaged from burning by Aleksander Chodźko. This fact was reported in *Kronika życia i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza (A Chronicle of the Life and Works of Adam Mickiewicz)* together with a reference to the information from Władysław Mickiewicz:

17 or 18 June... c. s, 10 October?

Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Writing of poems “A Tree” and “To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...”

A text with a note: “Written in Saint-Germain” was saved by A. Chodźko, in whose presence Mickiewicz at one time was burning notebooks with his re-written poems. Władysław Mickiewicz, taking into consideration the information about Saint-Germain, thought that the salvaged sheet of paper comes from holidays in 1842.¹

The Mickiewiczs stayed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye from the middle of June till about 10 October 1842; Mickiewicz commuted

¹ Zofia Makowiecka, *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Październik 1840 — maj 1844.*

to Paris from there to give lectures, and also to deal with his duties in the Circle of God's Cause. Two poems written on the sheet of paper salvaged from fire were most probably written during the summer stay in Saint- Germain-en-Laye in 1842. Alina Witkowska wrote:

Mickiewicz liked Saint- Germain-en-Laye [...]. There, he used to have moments of peace and concentration, and he even returned to poetry and wrote "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..."²

Researchers accept this date, although it cannot be ruled out that these poems may have been written during one of the later stays in Saint-Germain (in February 1843, June 1846, and at the end of 1846, as Czesław Zgorzelski³ suggested).

The autograph with the poem was probably lost;⁴ it is very difficult to verify in any sense the editorial findings of Waław Borowy, who described the manuscript as he saw it and in great detail:

This is half of sheet of bluish paper, folded in two (21 X 13,3 cm). A piece of the first page was cut off. The poet wrote at the top of the first page in faded ink a fragment of [...] ["A Tree", E.S-P] and then the next fragment ["To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...", E.S-P] separating them by a little cross. The remaining three little pages were blank.

² Alina Witkowska, *Saint-Germain-en-Laye*, in Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Dorota Siwicka, A. Witkowska, Marta Zielińska, *Mickiewicz. Encyklopedia*, Warszawa 2001, 479. Witkowska was referring to: Maria Dernałowicz, *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Czerwiec 1834—październik 1840*, Warszawa 1996; Zofia Makowiecka, *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Październik 1840 — maj 1844*, op. cit.,

³ Czesław Zgorzelski, *Uwagi edytorskie i odmiany tekstu*, in Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. by Konrad Górski, vol. I, part. 3: *Wiersze 1829—1855*, ed. by Cz. Zgorzelski, Wrocław 1981, 378.

⁴ The autograph (A) before WWII was kept at Stefan Batory University in Wilno. It was the property of the Faculty of Fine Arts. It had been the gift of prof. A. Wrzosek in 1919. It is lost now. All information about it presented here was prepared by Waław Borowy, who had seen it before the war, while preparing it for the 'Parliament Edition' (Wydanie Sejmowe, WS) (rkps BNar II 7499/3, k. 603-604 i II 7500/3, k. 721)". Czesław Zgorzelski, *Uwagi edytorskie i odmiany tekstu*, op. cit. 376-377.

The poet was probably re-writing from a notebook, because next to the penultimate line of the second fragment he added: "[I] cannot decipher)".

The information given above allows us to assume that Mickiewicz 'probably' re-wrote these poems from some notebook. The autograph was composed of four pages (a sheet of paper folded in two). On the first page, at the top two lyric poems were written. A piece of the first page was cut off and the next three pages were blank. Mickiewicz did not take special care with his private writings. He freely gave away his texts as souvenirs or when asked by someone, although he consistently protected them from large audiences (and from publication).⁵ It seems that manuscripts of private texts had greater value for Mickiewicz when he was writing them, in other words during 'extraction' of sense (putting sense in words), and during such moments they formed not so much a space of description as the space of expressing deep states; later such manuscripts could be easily given away when he was asked; but they were consistently not published, and often also hidden. Czesław Zgorzelski wrote about it many times:

The loose sheets of short poems, handed out with regal generosity by the poet to different parts of the world, to people not always close to him, had little chance of being saved. There is no point in trying

⁵ Czesław Zgorzelski wrote: "The poet himself did not care too much about preserving his manuscripts. It is true that he knew their value, he knew what they might become for future generations, but he treated them with loose carelessness, giving them away to friends, or even to people met accidentally. He could not refuse those who asked him for souvenirs. Probably, he was happy with their happiness, which was achieved thanks to so small—it seemed—sacrifice. He took out from his box or a drawer sheets of paper, pieces of paper, copy-books, sometimes he gave them as they were, sometimes—unfortunately—he would take scissors and would cut off a piece of paper with words written on it, or would tear improvidently pages of his copybooks, changing his manuscripts into ephemeral souvenirs, both precious and delicate and susceptible to being lost." *Wstęp*, in *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza w podobiznach autografów. Część pierwsza: 1819-1829*, ed. by Cz. Zgorzelski, Wrocław 1973, 5.

to create the full list of losses we have suffered due to his generosity. We know very little about them.⁶

As the description tells us, the poem “A Tree” was placed at the top of the first page, and directly beneath it, separated by a little cross, there was the text of “To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...”. The lower part of this sheet of paper was cut off, and there is no information about whether anything had been written on it. These two lyric poems are treated marginally in Mickiewicz’s mainstream interpretative tradition, to a large extent because of the fact that they are regarded as unfinished. Waclaw Borowy defined them as “fragments” (urywki), and that is how they have been read and named by Mickiewicz scholars. It should be stressed that their fragmentariness is a carrier of poetic sense, not a disadvantage.

Mickiewicz usually used a little cross to separate certain semantic wholes. The decision of Władysław Mickiewicz (the first editor of these poems) to publish both texts as one poem written in Saint-Germain is worthy of note.⁷ I will return to this decision as it may have hermeneutic value. We are dealing with two poems of a very specific nature, also because of the fact that the autograph is unavailable (presumed to be lost). They were not published in *Wiersze Adama Mickiewicza w podobiznach autografów* (*Adam Mickiewicz’s Poems in the Facsimiles of Autographs*). Therefore, their analysis must be like reconstruction, like detective work; each trace seems to be meaningful, and therefore all editorial details and commentaries should be taken into account. Czesław Zgorzelski wrote:

The author of *Żywot* (*Life*) noted that [...] the poet’s record is “undated, although with the information that it was written in Saint-Germain”, and in the footnote he added information which he did not connect directly with the story of the manuscript of “A Tree”: “Once, Mickiewicz was burning, in the presence of Aleksander Chodźko,

⁶ Ibid., 377.

⁷ Władysław Mickiewicz, op. cit., 168.

a notebook of re-written poems. Chodźko salvaged one quarter [of a sheet] from fire, which devoured many other scraps."⁸

The act of burning such personal poems as "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..." becomes something akin to 'self-burning', and that is why an image of the poet throwing his works into fire is always very moving. At the phenomenological level, that which is burnt is a trace, a sign, an act towards oneself, particularly in the case of personal lyric poetry.

The writing of these two poems can be connected (this hypothesis has also been adopted by Alina Witkowska) with the words of Mickiewicz from the letter written from Paris to Towiański around 12 October 1842:

In the last days of my stay in St.-Germain, 4, 5, 6 October, I was in a greatly elevated spirit; I remembered that I had had such mental states earlier, but then I totally forgot about them and now, strangely, they have returned. It was the feeling of freedom and power, with no thoughts, no direction, no will. In the old days I would have converted them into poetry, now I have been waiting.⁹

This interesting epistolary clue can support the notion that the poems which were dated 1842 were the fulfilment of the plans described in the letter and of the 'unspecified' state of inspiration. The "retur"—as Mickiewicz refers to it—a "strange return", was in his conviction the return to the former states of inspiration, that is of "great elevation of spirit". Zofia Stefanowska presented these epistolary reflections in the following way:

I think that we have here a unique description of inspiration, which has come to the poet after a long period of absence.¹⁰

⁸ Czesław Zgorzelski, *Uwagi edytorskie i odmiany tekstu*, op. cit., 377.

⁹ Adam Mickiewicz, *Listy. Część trzecia: 1842—1848*, in *Dzieła* (Wydanie Rocznicowe), vol. XVI, ed. by Maria Dernałowicz, Elżbieta Jaworska, Marta Zielińska, Warszawa 2004, 104.

¹⁰ Zofia Stefanowska, *Mickiewicz — tradycja i nowatorstwo*, in *Próba zdrowego rozumu. Studia o Mickiewiczu*, Warszawa 2001, 349.

Mickiewicz did not write to Towiański that he had written any poem—supposedly he was convinced that there was nothing to ‘write home about’ (he also did not write anything in his letters about the Lausanne lyrics)—the poems could, therefore, have been written at the time of his letter to Towiański. According to Zofia Stefanowska:

This unusual moment resulted, however, not in poems, but, and it is difficult to speak calmly about it, in words (French words) by Napoleon, with which he had been addressing Frenchmen [...] ¹¹

Mickiewicz added to this letter to Towiański (dated 12 October 1842) words of Napoleon (in the form of a note, he wrote many similar notes), but he did not send any poems to Towiański; in any case, he never did it, probably for various reasons; he consistently hid his personal lyric poems. The intimate character of the late lyric poetry of Romantics seems to be an issue still not seriously considered. The letter from Mickiewicz to Towiański states that this “great elevation”, which could have produced poetry, happened, according to Mickiewicz’s words: “[on] 4, 5, 6 of October” but that he “waited for the direction” and then at night “from the seventh to the eighth” he felt close to himself “the spirit of Napoleon” and wrote (in French) the words as a result of some kind of illumination. The “words of Napoleon” have their ‘direction’ and rhetorical, persuasive strategy, and they “do not fit” with the earlier, epistolary description of the state, which would result in inspiration and poetic output. Maybe, however, Mickiewicz at that time moved toward the lyric mood, which he *de facto* never abandoned. Anyway, what was left was a sheet of paper on which he wrote two poems. A sheet of paper which is salvaged only in commentaries and editorial descriptions, and therefore it is one certain thing among countless hypotheses and presumptions, which, after all, have some value.

The fact of writing of these poems goes against the hypothesis that Mickiewicz, after he had been influenced by Towiański, stopped writing lyric poetry. The lyric poems which were salvaged testify

¹¹ Ibidem.

against this hypothesis. Moreover, from the perspective of lyric poetry (the poetry which might have been burnt, given away or not finished) we can look at Mickiewicz's fascination with Towiański and also at his Paris lectures in a much wider interpretative context. Mickiewicz scholars usually separate the subsequent phases of the poet's life and writings, and the period of his fascination with Towiański is separated from the 'artistic' period of writing poetry. The strong caesura is postulated between Towiański and lyric 'periods', together with the hypothesis that Mickiewicz stopped writing poetry in his 'Towiański period'. This sheet of paper salvaged from fire might be one of many sheets of paper which might have been written down with poems. We should approach the issue of 'lyricism' in a wider context: in the relation with the identity of the poet, which might be expressed in art in various forms and shapes of expressions, not only verbal ones. Mickiewicz's activities within Towiański's circle and also his Paris lectures are characterized by the subjective, not to say lyric, character of statements and the improvisational nature; which was discussed, for example by Wiktor Weintraub.¹² Therefore, things which may appear to be seemingly contradictory may co-exist and cast light on each other.

The manuscript is a whole

The manuscript salvaged from fire is worth analysing for various reasons. First of all, we should look at the manuscript as a whole, composed of two texts, and also consider the proximity of these two poems. Most probably, they were written at the same time, under the influence of similar emotions. They are bound by a similar creative process, and they express a similar internal state, a similar type of tension. The manuscript seems to decide the editorial issues—both texts should be published one after another—in the proximity which is given by the common sheet of paper (not all editions do it); this is an important fact for the interpretation. An analogous problem arises

¹² Wiktor Weintraub, *Improwizacja w świecie romantycznym*, in Idem, *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o profetyzmie Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1998.

from the edition of the Lausanne lyric poems, where texts written on one sheet of paper are ‘separated’, and then placed in a different order and in different proximity, not always in agreement with the sequence of the manuscript (and the poet). The type of analysis which I call ‘notebook’ analysis is the simultaneous analysis in agreement with the creative process, the ways in which the poems were written down by the author, but also taking into consideration other texts and types of activities of the poet in this period.

It could be imagined that these two poems might have been written on this sheet of paper in the following way:

Drzewo
Pisano w St. Germain

I z drzewa wysłużyło już zostać robakiem,
Już świeci się po wierzchu liściem niejednakiem,
Barwistą wróżbą liszki, wierzchołki jak różki
Bodzie w górę i liśćmi przebiera jak nożki,
Gdy wiatr wionie, że nie wiesz, czy dziecko w kolebce,
Czy gąsienica szybko mąca nogami,
Czy wąż []¹³

+

Wysłuchać [się] w szum wód głuchy, zimny i jednaki
I przez fale rozeznac 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...¹⁴

¹³ Adam Mickiewicz, *Wiersze*, in *Dziela* (Wydanie Rocznicowe), vol. I, ed. by Czesław Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1993, 415. “The tree has served long enough to become a worm/It glistens now on the surface with uneven leaves/Colourful prophecy of a caterpillar, tops as little horns/Gores up and moves its leaves as legs/The wind blows in such a way that you don’t know if it is a child in a cradle/Or a maggot quickly moving its legs/Or a snake...”

¹⁴ Ibidem. Let me, remind once again. Waclaw Borowy explained that next to the penultimate line the words “I can’t decipher” appear. Maybe that was the reason we have the breaking of the rhythm (decasyllable) in two final lines.

Did Mickiewicz cut off the piece of paper (blank or with some lines of poetry) from the autograph? We do not know. The sheet of paper was folded in two, and thanks to this four pages were created (Mickiewicz often did this) containing two poems. I do not refer to them as fragments, because their fragmentariness, and in a wider context their 'notebook' quality, conveys a poetic sense and is not a disadvantage, and it does not create a deficit of sense.

Commentators in the most important editions of Mickiewicz assume that the first edition of the poem "A Tree" can be found in *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza (A Life of Adam Mickiewicz)*, but they regard as correct the editorial decisions of Waclaw Borowy, who analysed the autograph. In the first edition by Władysław Mickiewicz these two poems were published as one poem, or rather as a 'sketch' to a poem in this way:

Drzewo.
I z drzewa wysłużyło już zostać robakiem.
Już świeci się powierzchu liściem nie jednakim,
Barwistą wróżbą liszki, wierzchołki jak Różki
Bodzie w górę i liśćmi przebiera jak nożki,
Gdy wiatr wionie, że nie wiesz, czy dziecko w kolebce,
Czy gąsienica szybko mącają nogami.
Wszłuchać w szum wód głuchy, zimny i jednaki
I przez fale rozeznac 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
Nie wyczytasz...¹⁵

"To listen to the dull sough of waters, cold, even/And through waves recognize the thoughts of waters, as if through signs/To let oneself be carried up by winds blowing no one knows where/And count each sound of them in the circular movement/To submerge in the bosom of the river with fishes.../Their eye unmoved like a star."

¹⁵ Ibidem. "A Tree. The tree has served long enough to become a worm/It glistens now on the surface with uneven leaves/Colourful prophecy of a caterpillar, tops

In this edition the words “nie wyczytasz” (“[You] cannot decipher”) form an integral part of the poem: Waclaw Borowy interpreted them differently. He also decided that we are dealing with two poems. As there is no surviving autograph, we can only trust Borowy and his hypothesis that in the parenthesis was written “nie wyczytam” (“I cannot decipher”), which would mean that Mickiewicz had been merely rewriting these poems from another notebook.¹⁶

It could be said that Władysław Mickiewicz made an editorial error in taking these two fragments as one text, but at the same time we should consider his decision as a reader and an interpreter of the manuscript. His decision did not have to be accidental or result from some kind of ignorance. Władysław Mickiewicz probably saw similarities between these two texts written on the same sheet of paper and separated by the poet by a little cross; this similarity is hard to define, but it exists if we take into consideration the sense and the creative imagination of the poet. In the research tradition we can see a movement in the opposite direction—both these poems are published and interpreted separately, as different poems.¹⁷ The co-

as little horns/Gores up and moves its leaves as legs/When the wind blows, so that you don't know if it is a child in a cradle/Or a maggot quickly moving its legs//To let oneself be carried up by winds blowing no one knows where/And count each sound of them in the circular movement/. To submerge in the bosom of the river with fishes/Their eye unmoved like a star/You cannot decipher.”

¹⁶ Maria Prussak wrote about these issues several times. Also, in connection with the poem “Snuć miłość” (“Weave Love”). Publishers still have not sorted out problems connected with the notebook character of the poems, which were not published in Mickiewicz’s lifetime. The first editions of Mickiewicz’s *inedits*, as Stefanowska also wrote about, were edited and corrected according to the aesthetic sense of the first editors. Writing new texts and changing texts is now treated as an editorial anachronism, and is almost extinct [...]. M. Prussak, „*Liryki lozańskie*” i interpunkcja, in Eadem, *Czy jeszcze słycać głos romantyzmu?*, Warszawa 2007, 120.

¹⁷ See. Marian Maciejewski, „*Rozeznąć myśl wód...*” (*Głosy do liryki lozańskiej*), „*Pamiętnik Literacki*” 1964, (3). Re-published in M. Maciejewski, *Wrzucony do bytu otchłani. Liryka lozańska i jej konteksty*, Lublin 2012; Adela Kuik-Kalinowska, *Woda, wiatr i dźwięki świata — „[Wśluchać się w szum wód głuchy...]”*, in *Wiersze Adama*

existence of these poems is meaningful. Władysław Mickiewicz wrote a commentary which shows his attempts at understanding the text and justifying his editorial decisions:

The gradation of all creatures rising from the coarsest of shapes to more and more perfect was the problem which Mickiewicz often pondered, and he probably wished to write a poem *de natura rerum*, but not an atheist one, as is the case with Lucretius's poem, but a Christian one, based on the progression of all creation rising up and achieving higher and higher levels thanks to God's will. Whenever he started writing poetry he was fighting with doubts if he could reveal some truths. Moreover, various obstacles existed: he had to work in Towiański's circle with disciples, serious problems and conflicts with the Polish émigré community, and more and more problems with money.¹⁸

Both lyrics: "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..." were written in the same mental and creative state. They are written in the lyric tone and in the rhythm of the Polish alexandrine (13 syllables in a line). Both are composed of lists and sequences of dynamic pictures, which herald metaphors, both in the external and in the internal worlds. The poet reveals a deep, personal relationship; first of all with himself and some type of readiness for change. He also sees this readiness in different spheres of the observed space. The pictures in these two poems are seemingly accidental, associative, but they consistently reveal a certain spiritual and psycho-physical state (difficult to define in an unequivocal way), which was expressed in the letter to Towiański quoted earlier ("freedom and power, with no thoughts, no direction, no will"). In the poems there is a discernible tension, which is perhaps the result of waiting for some climax, which would express the sense, order and dynamics of metaphors.

Mickiewicza. Analizy, komentarze, interpretacje, ed. by Jacek Brzozowski, Łódź 1998; Teresa Rączka, „Przez fale rozeznać myśl wód”. *O romantycznych przedstawieniach rzeki w twórczości Adama Mickiewicza i Tarasa Szewczenki*, Katowice 2011.

¹⁸ Władysław Mickiewicz, op. cit., 168-169.

This climax, although awaited by the poet himself, was perhaps beyond reach, too simple in the confrontation with the plethora of thoughts and emotions, too shallow and care-free in comparison with the mental state, with the experience of life and of himself. So, the role of the climax is filled (*per analogiam*) by understatement which compresses the impressionistic aspect of the poems, and the lyric intimacy of confession. Understatement is an element which expresses existential sense.

The elusiveness and delicacy of pictures is similar in both poems. They are also 'connected by' personal tone, although expressed in grammatical forms which are non-personal (which seems to be important). In both poems there appears an analogous poetic picture of the wind, which is the equivalent of things dynamic, changeable, because it is changes that these poems are about. The wind, 'eos', is the source of indeterminacy, puzzling, revealing the emotional state and the concrete existential moment, difficult for the author, in a way which is not straightforward:

“The wind blows in such a way that you don't know if it is a child in a cradle”

“To let oneself be carried up by winds blowing no one knows where”

The lack of knowledge is declared and made stronger through poetic pictures. It is not its intellectual dimension that is at stake here, not cognition, but recognition; recognition not of the nature of elements, but recognition which concerns man and finds its 'solution' in poetic pictures. The lyric proximity of the wind and the lack of knowledge expresses cognitive powerlessness; inability to answer questions about the nature of phenomena, and also the nature of oneself.

The wind helps to create, to build the melancholic mood of both poems. In the poem "A Tree" it becomes a part of the description of the eponymous tree, which is only seemingly static. It is even difficult to separate the evoked scraps of pictures from recognitions known only to the poet, but these evocations are adequate, they are contained within the lyric space of intimacy. Dynamism and movement make the pictures in both poems blurred. In a complex process

of reception the qualities and emotions are connected symbolically (synaesthesia), creating a type of fluidity which is difficult to assess. The tree moved by the wind is being transformed when we look at it: [...] *moves its leaves as legs/When the wind blows, so that you don't know if it is a child in a cradle/Or a maggot*". We do not know if the tree is dying for ever, or only for the winter to be reborn according to the cycles of nature.

The wind is also important in the second poem. Here it becomes a spontaneous equivalent of the sough of waters. The poetic picture is constructed thanks to the rhetorical trope of synaesthesia: sounds, touches, feelings, which for some reason cannot be named and which can only be expressed: "listen to", "*let oneself be carried up by winds*", "count". The longings expressed in this way are connected by the person of the poet, who in an impressionistic way presents his condition and also has a premonition and a wish to become scattered, diluted, not in some indeterminacy—but in an experience which is deep, absolute. However, it is difficult to define something which was incommunicable to the poet himself, which could find its expression and sense only in poetic 'concretization'.

This fluidity of associations can be bravely called a lyric stream of consciousness, because it is not impressionistic images which are important here (they seem to be carriers of meaning) but the person and his experience. The described phenomena, framed in poetic pictures, change quickly. As if in a kaleidoscope, they seem to be composed of some fixed elements and according to fixed rules, as if their aims and sense were similar, because they are connected by the condition of the author and his ways and capabilities of perceiving, at a given moment, some dimension of reality.

"A Tree"

The compositional foundation of this poem is formed by layers of associations presented one after another, expressed *in statu nascendi*, in the act of direct perception, visual and aural, started by the central picture of the tree. We do not know at which point the sensual and empirical perception ends and the work of thoughts

and emotions begins. The poet allows a certain kind of ‘suspicion’ in regards to the means of naming his experience, and that is why the (potentially) key words are expressed to himself: “you don’t know”, which has become hyperbolically multiplied by the accumulation of enumerations: “you don’t know, if a child in a cradle, a caterpillar quickly roiling its legs, or a snake...”. You cannot say “you know” of anything. It reminds one of a situation of an attempt to perceive a landscape with closed eyes, or of trying to find out about the shape of a tree from the way it sounds. “You don’t know” forms a semantic dominant: everything is in the state of transformation, and therefore the appropriate level of knowledge is impossible to attain, as it (always) refers to another level of development.

The eponymous tree is presented as if it was an axis of the world, particularly because of the word “snake”, which appears in the poem (bringing about a picture of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, semantically connected with the statement: “I don’t know”). The vertical direction pointed out in the poem by the picture of the tree reveals a specific layer of meanings. The poet avoids explanations, as if impressions were the goal in themselves, and the wind had an important ‘exploratory’ function in relation to his own mood. The poem is open; in the traditional sense it is unfinished. It also has not begun properly, as it starts with the conjunction “and”, as if in the middle of a sentence, a sigh or some statement.

The tree which grows old constitutes the central picture in the poem; the signs of its decay seem to be the following: a worm, “uneven leaves”, “maggot’s colourful prophecy”. “caterpillar”, “snake”. The transience of trees is transferred onto the lyric ‘I’, therefore it is externalized, expressed by the poet *per analogiam* in an introverted way, touching the very nature of the poet’s identity. “Eye” and “ear” are receptors which allow entry inside ourselves; it is through looking and perceiving at external objects that something which is deep can be revealed. Because ‘I’ is the centre of cognition and recognition, the poem, in a direct way, becomes a space of learning about one’s own condition. This is a melancholic picture, because it contains—so often preserved in lyric pictures—dying, decaying, decomposition,

processes connected with transience, death, coming to the end, but also re-birth and new stages of life.

The tree 'incurably' withers away, maybe to renew itself, which would be in concord with the images of a child, a caterpillar (a developmental stage) and a snake (renewing itself through the change of skin). The poet expresses the mood of uncertainty in relation to what he hears, or what he imagines that he hears: as if the signs he is receiving did not give him certainty that they are what they really are. This may be the reason for his avoidance of any summaries, any unambiguous statements. Vanitative picture of the tree (mellowed by diminutive forms) is puzzling in its indeterminacy, its 'notebook' quality. The sense is constructed thanks to the semantic uniformity of lyric associations. It reflects affection, but also melancholy, everything which is included in the experience of *vanitas*. A worm devouring the tree, a caterpillar, a maggot, "glistening on the surface" "uneven leaves" are all attributes of 'vanitative' semantics, important and characteristic, for example, for the art of painting still lives.

Through the prism of the final word of the poem, that is "snake", the tree acquires a higher order of meaning; it becomes the tree of knowledge, or rather of self-knowledge (recognition), although the diminutive forms and details place this picture closer to the personal sphere, not a Biblical or symbolic one. This vanitative aspect of the picture is not restricted to its external attributes. Ultimately, it defines the mental state of the poet experiencing it (the 'notebook' character of this poem allows here for the use of the term the 'person of the poet' rather than the lyric 'I'). What is mythical opens a sphere which is personal. The contemplative eye of the poet and the 'inner eye', cognition and recognition, looking and seeing, a phenomenon and its ontological value, they all have an existential dimension. The vanitative character is embedded in the organic cycle of transformations. It is a condition of life (re-birth) and death. The borders between life-giving forces and premonitions of death are blurred. A maggot, a child, a caterpillar, a snake—this is the world undergoing metamorphosis, when the cycles of life, birth, death, decay and withering must co-exist because they are mutually

interdependent.¹⁹ The poem has no traditional ending or punch line, because poetic pictures seem to be more important. The internal recognition, the experience of one's identity (self), and of the nature of being have been presented through the dynamics of melancholic individual experience, through emotions expressed in the text, through diminutive forms, associations and their emotional lack of order, dynamically changing, sketchily drawn pictures.

“To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...”

“To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...”, similarly to “A Tree”, has the character of lyric poem-whisper. The phrases are melodious and rhythmical, they flow in the apparent peace of lyric pictures. These whispered dreams of the poet have a structure similar to “A Tree”: they show mental contexts, yearning for something which is incommunicable. Listening to waters is to allow to “recognize their thoughts”, being carried by the wind allows one to “count each of its sounds”, “submerging in the womb of the river” is to help one look at it through the eyes of a fish. At the same time each of the impersonal verbs: to listen, to be carried, to count, to submerge is both dynamic and personal, it signifies not only an activity, but also the uncompromising involvement of a person in this activity, identifying it with different phenomena, which may be only apparent, because they are the result of some need to distance oneself from, or maybe even to give up,

¹⁹ Jean-Charles Gille-Maisani correctly recognized the psychological sense of the poem “A Tree”: “It is not certain when a short, unfinished poem by Mickiewicz entitled “A Tree” was written. Mickiewicz is tormented by the problem of individualisation which is taking place—its projection is found in the poem. What a multitude of pictures of transformation we get in seven lines! Let us pay attention to two problems: A. The ethical dimension (“has served”) which is in agreement with the hierarchy of the systems of Saint-Martin and Towiański. B. The transformation is unfinished (the child is to grow, the maggot is to become a butterfly, the snake has to change its skin) and the result is uncertain (“you don’t know if”).” J.-Ch. Gille-Maisani, *Adam Mickiewicz człowiek. Studium psychologiczne*, trans. by Agnieszka Kuryś i Katarzyna Rytel, Warszawa 1987, . 298-299.

one's own identity. There is no way to express it. Marian Maciejewski considered the cognitive aspect of this poem to be the dominant one:

We could [...] speak about learning nature's rule through rational continuation of its unconscious actions. Practically, we are concerned with unification of a subject with a perceived object through acquiring its nature.²⁰

It is difficult to agree with this statement. This is not "unification" of the subject and object for cognitive (rational) aims—the words have been spoken with too private a tone and with too much tension. The identification with the perceived object is only apparent, impossible to attain, and this impossibility is expressed through the accumulation of pictures of various elements. However, there is no unification of the subject with the material aspects of the element. The subject constantly looks for a sphere which would allow for rootedness elsewhere. The integrity of a person, and the awareness of this integrity, makes unification with the material aspect of the elements impossible, and that is why the journey has a mental character, and its quintessence is never-ending search and longing; it is as if we were to knock on different doors and not be able to enter any of them.

In the lyric gradation of activities we can hear tones from Mickiewicz's Lausanne poems, and that is why I call these two poems discussed here "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..." (1842), but also "Jak drzewo przed wydaniem owocu..." ("As a Tree Before it Gives Fruit," 'post-Lausanne poems'). The thing which is characteristic of pre-Lausanne, Lausanne and post-Lausanne poems is such proliferation of seeing, that it allows one to look into oneself and find oneself in the longing. At the same time, in the poems which I have called post-Lausanne ones, a new note can be detected, different from notes of earlier poems.

In the poem "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..." different stages of getting to know oneself are drawn; a bit similarly as is done in the poem "Weave Love", although the tone in this Lausanne

²⁰ Marian Maciejewski, *op. cit.*, 47.

poem is not so 'positive' and does not end with the final achievement of the ideal ("weaving love" is the process of attaining spiritual maturity).

The subsequent stages of "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters..." are indicated by the rhythm of subsequent lines:

1. "To listen to the dull sough of waters, cold, even"
2. "Through waves recognize the thoughts of waters, as if through signs"
3. "To let oneself be carried up by winds blowing no one knows where"
4. "Count each sound of them in the circular movement"
5. "Their eye unmoved like a star"

The wish to "listen to the dull sough of waters, cold, even" is the phrase which defines an activity, which creates anxiety: to listen to something which is dull, paradoxically silent, unchanging, even, steady. The result of this activity is instantaneously evaluated, as if the effect of this activity was predictable, but the very activity of 'listening to' becomes necessary. The constancy of water, its 'coldness' 'evenness' have connections with Lausanne poems (waters grand and pure), but they are not identical to them. The next wish to "let winds carry you, winds blowing no one knows where" and in this movement "count" each sound of them, expresses the wish to move away from a place one is in, and even the wish to be spread over in some chaotic movement described as "circular". "Submerging in the womb of the river" is also 'impossible', because the poem assumes here some kind of being continuously under water.

As I mentioned, the poem is not perfect in the traditional sense of the word. In the context of notebooks this fragmentariness is a sign that the number of activities which ought to be listed could be much longer; that their number is in fact countless, and their listing would not lead to any aim, because they are the aim in themselves. Waters, waves, winds form quite a unified and melancholic picture, and the sense of this type of melancholy is the awareness of 'impossibility' and limitations. The poem expresses recognition, but not so much of its own subjective condition and cognitive limitations which are

the result of it, but more of the person's identity, and therefore we are concerned here not with cognition, but with expressing the most personal and intimate relationship of all: the relationship with oneself.

Marian Maciejewski, in "Głosy do liryki lozańskie" ("Voices about Lausanne Lyric Poems"), wrote about the functions of sensual cognition in Mickiewicz's lyric poetry (and also in this particular poem), and he showed changes in the treatment of these issues, among others, in the poem "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters"):

[...] sensual cognition will be now a preliminary stage, preparing the 'material' for the intellect, because one can learn how to "recognize thoughts of water" only using thoughts, the external shapes will be only signs. "And through waves recognize thoughts of water as through signs".²¹

Or, in a different fragment:

[...] in new, 'mystical cognition'—similarly to the mystical lyric poetry of Słowacki—some selected concrete shapes have importance, as very special type of 'signs'. And so, in the poem I am discussing now it is the concrete aspect of the phrase about a fish looking with the unmoved eye (realism) which is 'shocking' (for a mystical lyric poem).[...]Yes, but this physical or physiological truth creates a stylistic possibility of an association with a star. The poet opens cosmic perspectives for an ordinary thing, and in this way he wants to lift the crucial sense out of it. Metaphorical correlations of the animal world with nature and with the cognitive subject bring about the artistic effect of a call for Oneness in the act of cognition.²²

In fact, it is difficult to find in this poem this preparation of the 'material' for the intellect, because it is not the intellect which matters here. Although thoughts in this poem are intellectual qualities, they are external in relation to the subject ("thoughts of waters"), and to recognize these thoughts is not the same as to acquire them

²¹ Maciejewski, op. cit., 41.

²² Ibidem.

intellectually. This aspect was also pointed out by Maria Cieśla-Korytowska. Maciejewski, it seems, did not value this poem highly. This view is supported by his words of “unification of a subject with a perceived object through acquiring its nature”. He also stated that: “From the perspective of Romantic ideas, this poem represents nothing special”. Moreover, Maciejewski (in the footnote) quoted the pastiche of this poem written by Kazimierz Wyka, and, on top of it, thought that this pastiche was good. It is difficult to agree that:

The author of this pastiche [...] presented the continuation [of Mickiewicz’s poem] which is quite probable. Wyka’s text finalizes the cognitive act in “Schelling’s spirit”.

Why did Maciejewski quote Wyka’s text? The pastiche takes away from Mickiewicz’s poem the spiritual tension, the intimate confession and dramatic effects. Wyka freely takes pictures from both post-Lausanne poems and he interprets and assigns values to them.

[...]
 [Wnurzyć się w łono rzeki z rybami], co płyną
 I złotą łuskę kują, gdy tkwią nad głębiną,
 [Ich okiem niewzruszonym jak gwiazda] spozierać,
 Duszy ruchem ich szukać, kiedy pocznie wzbierać
 I przez potok zagada; w pierś wziąć przyrodzenia
 Każdy listek, robaczek każdy, kiedy się przemienia
 W liszkę, być onym, co w obłoku świata czyta dzieje
 I krzewi w swym sumieniu, co Bóg zewsząd sieje –
 Aż mocą porażony, przestał być człowiekiem
 I z szumem wód przeminie ciemnym, cichym wiekiem.²³

²³ Kazimierz Wyka, *Duchy poetów podśluchane*, Kraków 1962., 29. “To submerge in the womb of the river with fishes/Which swim and forge golden scales as they hover over depths/To look through their unmoved eyes like a star/To seek for them with spirit’s movement when it grows/And will talk over the stream/Into the breast take every leaf/Each warm as it is transformed into a caterpillar, be the one/which reads history in a cloud and grows in/Its conscience which God sows everywhere/Till struck by force/He stopped being man and will pass with the sough of waters/dark, quiet century.”

Wyka's pastiche makes fun of Mickiewicz's original phrases. Cognition in the poem "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters"—despite attempts to do so—is impossible; "unification" of the subject with the perceived object" is not possible, and "acquiring its nature" is also not possible. Mickiewicz's pictures have the force of lyric argument, but their effect is auto-destructive. The mood of the poem is dark: we have "dull waters", the sough "cold, even", winds which "blow no one knows where" "in circular movement", the eye of the fish "unmoved". The world in this poem is valued negatively; it is in a sense inaccessible, almost mute. It seems to be better, though, in the poet's opinion, than the one he wants to escape from, than the inner world of the person, defined and valued in a given, concrete moment of life.

Maciej Maciejewski wrote:

The author of the pastiche, using lexical and visual material from other Lausanne lyric poems "Weave love" and "A Tree", gave quite probable continuation. The text of Mickiewicz-Wyka makes us see this 'poem sequel' as deeply similar to another poem "Nad wodą wielką i czystą" ("Over the Water Grand and Clear").²⁴

Wyka's need to complete the text is very interesting. The 'notebook' character of this poem has been perceived (in the poem's reception) as a fault of the poetic dimension, while this lack of ending, or breaking the phrase half way through play are crucial for it.

In lyric references to the concrete aspects of elements, the position of the poet is introverted. This lyric shows some kind of spreading oneself over the areas of the world one is looking at and which one experiences. The wishes expressed in the poem signify the need for expiation, not for exploration of reality. This centrifugal aspect of the poem leads to recognition, not of the nature of the surrounding phenomena (external), but of recognition of one's own wish to, among others, look with the "unmoved" eye of a fish—an eye different from one's own. This is a deep, expressive metaphor. An eye of a fish is "unmoved", because it does not have an eyelid; it is an eye constantly

²⁴ Ibidem.

open, of a constant angle of vision, and therefore it is an unmovable eye. The word: “[u]nmoved” brings about an important word, “movement”, also in the mental sense of “being moved”. Therefore, an important lyric statement of ontological character is created here: “an unmoved eye”—“like a star”. This is a different eye than the one from “Romantyczność” (“Romanticism”); the poet himself, after all, explores the world in a different way than he had done many years earlier. He does not decide who is right, which option should be chosen, which option is closer to him; we are not concerned here with cognition but with experience. The cognition takes the direction: from a subject to an object of cognition, while experience takes on a different direction (from an object to a self). “An eye unmoved as a star” is the next argument defining the mood of the world being experienced, the mood which forms a logical and moody union with “the dull sough of waters”, which was also “cold, even”, with winds “which blow no one knows where to “submerge[e] in the womb of the river”. The vertical axis connects ‘depth’ (an eye of a fish) with a point in the Cosmos (a star). The vertical line which joins these two points expresses some form of experiencing infinity in the sense in which Stanisław Kostka Kłokocki expressed it in *Pamiętnik Narodowy* (*National Memoir*) in 1819:

Whatever images man creates of himself and of the world, he always sees himself as a finite creature surrounded by infinity.

In all systems we are surrounded by infinity, no matter if these systems are in concord with laws of reason or against them, no matter if the world in them is the wholeness of existence and a union of all creatures, if the world is only a repertory of phenomena touching senses, if the world is the only substance and all creatures are modifications of this substance, or if it is a repertory of all substances closely connected and influencing one another, if the world exists because it exists or if it is the condition of being of a creature independent of it and existing for itself, if this creature is separate from the world, or if it is the spirit of everything.²⁵

²⁵ [Stanisław Kostka Kłokocki], *O idei i uczuciu nieskończoności [Fragmenty]*, in *Idee programowe romantyków polskich. Antologia*, ed. by Alina Kowalczykova,

Here is another fragment corresponding with longings expressed in the poem:

We are, therefore, we also will be, finite creatures surrounded by infinity. From this we can deduce that we will know finite creatures and will not know infinity, because someone who knew about infinity would become infinite. But because our reason gives us the idea of infinity and makes us accept it, we will always know that infinity exists and we will try to reach it through indeterminacy. Having only finite forces we cannot influence infinity, but it will affect us with its bravery; as parts of the infinite whole gifted with cognitive powers we will never be able to distance ourselves from its secret and dull power; [...]. Infinity, or in other words the world which cannot be seen, of which this world is only some specific picture of, or at least, a part of, will never become known to people, but maybe it is an object of unclear recognitions, desires, man's premonitions, and is present and active in very many impressions and activities of man's soul.²⁶

The category of 'indeterminacy' formulated in this way, despite its enigmatic character, allows us to see this need to express this indeterminacy in lyric poetry and is revealed there. Indeterminacy in poems like "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters" was achieved thanks to the 'notebook' character of these poems: breaking of the phrase, rhythm, apparent inconsistency of imagery and meanings, understatements, concealments, metaphors used because of the inability to express ideas and thoughts in a discursive way, referring directly to man's nature.

The poem has the character of a melancholic confession, in which self-cognition is accompanied by a certain type of resignation. This anxious inner activism, flights, plans of impossible journeys with the wind, with waters and waves, become a source of self-cognition. They have been contrasted with some sense of inner

„BN” I, 261, Wrocław 2000, 30. (The commentary to this text was written by Czesław Zgorzelski, *Romantyzm w Polsce*, in *Od Oświecenia ku romantyzmowi i współczesności*, Kraków 1978).

²⁶ Ibid., 31-32.

passivity. They are not journeys to experience the nature of being. They are born, perhaps, from some pain and despair. Both poems discussed here are stigmatized by melancholy, something akin to mourning. The melancholic wish to exit, to be transformed, or even to be scattered over was expressed in one extended phrase, in one sentence. Melancholy was made concrete in the expressive metaphor of an “unmoved” eye of a fish, but this melancholy is deprived of affection and mellowness. It is heightened melancholy, born from self-awareness and a certain sense of loneliness, which Mickiewicz called “free”, according to the words he was to utter: “It is easy to live in the world according to the opinion of the world, it is easy to live in loneliness according to our own opinion, but truly great is the one who in the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness freedom of loneliness”.²⁷

Mickiewicz expressed similar pictures and ideas in the lyric poem from 1832 “Do Samotności” (“To Loneliness”), in which he described this state in the following way: “You are my element!”

Samotności! do ciebie biegnę jak do wody
Z codziennych życia upałów;
Z jakąż rozkoszą padam w jasne, czyste chłody
Twych niezgłębionych kryształów.
[...]²⁸

Both poems show a certain similarity of motives and meanings, but it is the difference which is interesting. This example alone shows that lyric poems which were left in notebooks (“To Loneliness” also belongs to this category) have their specific features, even from an evolutionary perspective. One could venture the statement that a later poem is a return to certain pictures, phrases, arguments:

²⁷ *Zdania i urywki ogłoszone przez Władysława Mickiewicza*, in *Adam Mickiewicz o życiu duchowym*, ed. by. Stanisław Pigoń, Warszawa-Łódź 1922, 123.

²⁸ “Loneliness to Thee I ran as to water/From heats of every day/How delightful it is to jump into your cold, clear coolness/Of your fathomless crystals.”

Tyś mój żywioł: ach, za coż te jasnych wód szyby
Studzą mi serce, zmysły zaciemniają mrokiem,
I za coż znowu muszę, na kształt ptaka-ryby,
Wyrwać się w powietrze słońca szukać okiem?²⁹

We have a clear difference in meanings between these two poems. In the poem "To Solitude" we find an attempt and necessity to lift oneself into the air, in the direction of the sun, while in the poems written later we have "submerging in the womb of the river" and wandering in the air with no clear direction, with no hope of finding a place for oneself. The picture of a bird-fish is an expression of freedom and vital forces, and it can be understood in a metaphorical way. A bird-fish is a creature of two elements; it could be understood in terms of a 'flying' fish (*Exocoetidae*). It seems that the sense of wishes expressed in both poems is different; in both cases, despite the greatly different status of the subject, the elements remain "strange" and "inaccessible". The status of an "exile" defines the existential situation of the poet, and, to be more precise, the recognition (definition) of it. "Loneliness! To thee I run as to water..." is a wish to achieve a certain psycho-physical state, which suddenly (in both poems) leads to an experience deeper than the one predicted by the poet earlier, to the recognition of loneliness, the dimension of which is not defined in temporal terms and is not chosen by the poet (the flight into loneliness from the world and everyday life) but is an existential state, or, in other words, recognition of one's condition as man. This is the condition of an 'exile', because the things the poet goes towards and the things he wants remain inaccessible and unavailable. Even the element of loneliness becomes, in a sense, inaccessible, similarly to the element of water:

I bez oddechu w górze, bez ciepła na dole,
Równie jestem wygnańcem w oboim żywiole.³⁰

²⁹ "You are my element/why these glasses of fair waters/Cool my heart, blur senses with darkness/And why do I have again, like bird-fish/Run into the air, look for the sun?"

³⁰ "And without breath up there, without warmth down there/I am equally an exile in both elements."

Loneliness, despite the whole spectrum of emotions embedded in “To Loneliness” and in “To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters...”, is constitutive for the development of one’s identity, for all attempts to put one’s identity into words.

However, there exists a very thin line separating loneliness as a desired state of freedom, being a refuge from reality, from loneliness which is an exile—I must admit, though, that this is only my free impression. In the poems as they are, the sense is deeper.

Notebook ‘Post-Lauseanne’ Lyric Poems

The lyric poems “A Tree” and “To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters” can be called ‘post-Lausanne’ poems for many reasons. First of all, because they are very similar in terms of poetics to the poems which we call “Lausanne poems”. They depict similar—despite some differences—states of awareness or even of self-awareness of the poet, which Zofia Stefanowska recognized as a “desperate hunger of cognition”. Mickiewicz scholars have already introduced the term ‘pre-Lausanne lyric poems’ (liryki przedlozańskie), referring to Mickiewicz’s lyrics written just after his emigration. Two lyric poems written in 1836, called “great lyrics” by Zofia Stefanowska, were written on the same autograph page (similarly to some Lausanne and two post-Lausanne poems)

In July 1836 there already existed, as most researchers assume, great lyric poems written on one sheet of paper: “Broń mnie przed sobą samym” (“Defend Me from Myself”), “Pytasz, za co Bóg trochę sławy mnie ozdobił”, (“You Ask Why God Has Made me Famous”), “Gęby za lud krzyczące” (“Mouth Shouting for the People”. Probably “Widzenie” (“Seeing”) also existed. These poems— it should be noted—were very different from didactic “Zdania i uwagi” (“Sentences and Remarks”). These poems were torn by lack of certainty, consciousness of one’s sins, a desperate hunger of cognition.³¹

³¹ Zofia Stefanowska, op. cit. 346.

The terms: 'pre-Lausanne', 'Lausanne' and 'post-Lausanne' seem to be justified, and they may turn out to be important in future research on the development of Mickiewicz's lyric poetry. These poems share certain analogies in lyric mood and on the level of the creative process and the process of notation. However, the differences between them are also important. Zgorzelski saw similarities between the lyric poems I refer to as 'post-Lausanne' ones and the poems from the period in Mickiewicz's life when he lived in Paris and Lausanne. The sheet of paper with "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters" had a notation similar to the one used in poem we refer to as the "Lausanne poems". It is not their lyric unification but their affinity which matters here. The way of expression and the way of handling crucial values make us refer to pre-Lausanne, Lausanne and post-Lausanne poems, as to lyric poems *sensu stricto*. Waław Borowy and Leon Płowzewski in the National Edition (Wydanie Narodowe) (1949) placed the poems "A Tree" and "To Listen to the Dull Sough of Waters" next to each other (one after another) in the chapter "Wiersze rózne" ("Miscellaneous Poems"). After the so called "Nowe Zdania i Uwagi" ("New Statements and Remarks"). Borowy's decision was good and his interpretation important, because it concerned poems which should not be separated as far as reading is concerned. In some editions both post-Lausanne poems were placed together with lyric poems from the Paris-Lausanne period. In *Wybór poezji (Selected Poetry)* of Adam Mickiewicz edited by Czesław Zgorzelski and published in 1986, one of the poems ("A Tree") was left out.

The order and place of these poems is different in different editions and it depends on editors' interpretative position; at the same time these choices influence the reading of these poems and offer styles of their understanding. The systems according to which poems are grouped and ordered differ with different editions and different editors, and that is why it seems to be so important to return to autographs and commentaries which have piled up in the process of analysing literature from the historical perspective.

