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"PAN TADEUSZ" – AN ANTIPROPHETIC POEM

Eighteen hundred and thirty two was the year of Mickiewicz's hectic literary activity prompted by a strong prophetic urge. The two major works of that year, *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* and *Books of the Polish Nation and the Polish Pilgrimage*, different as they are, both are works of prophetic inspiration.

Forefathers' Eve, Part Three is at the same time a drama written in prophetic spirit and a drama centered round a crisis of prophetic inspiration. Its protagonist is a poet-seer who knows that he is the Elect and who rebels against God in the face of the persecution of his nation. He cannot reconcile his position of the Chosen One with his impotence in national matters. He feels equal to the task of leading his nation to a different, happy future and he implores God to give him means, supernatural means, to implement that task. When God remains silent his imprecations turn into revolt. However, he is forgiven in Heaven, since his revolt has been prompted by love of his fellow countrymen.

Moreover, the drama contains an actual prophecy presented in the form of a beatific vision of a saintly priest. Poland – we hear in it—will not only be free, but will become the Messiah of nations, and the chastened poet-seer will lead his nation into the Promised Land of liberty and greatness. The past and present sufferings are the necessary stepping stones on the road to that radiant future.

Books of the Polish Nation and the Polish Pilgrimage are a tract written by a man who assumes the role of a spiritual leader of his nation, who discloses to his fellow-émigrés, the "pilgrims", as he calls them, the working of Divine Providence throughout the history of mankind in general and Poland in particular, and who tries to instill into them the idea of their lofty mission and the exacting duties that go with it. Already the biblical style of the *Books* has its clear ideological implications. The stylization implies claims of the text to supernatural authority. The author does not leave us at that. He states these claims quite explicitly. The last chapter of the *Books* starts with the following paragraph:

> These are the Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrimage, not invented, but gathered from Polish annals and from the writings and stories and teachings of Poles

who were godly men and devoted to their Fatherland, Martyrs, Confessors and Pilgrims. And some matters are by the grace of God[1].

A certain approximation of the poetic with the prophetic was quite widespread among the romantics. It was expressed in various ways by such representative writers of the period as, for instance, Friedrich Schlegel, Wordsworth, Shelley, Hugo. It was based on the conviction that there was something divine, supernatural in poetic inspiration, that the poet, while inspired, can see truth hidden to the common eye. Mickiewicz, however, went much farther.

He wanted to influence people not exclusively, and even not primarily, by means of his poetry, but yearned after becoming literally a prophet leading people into action by his sheer spiritual power. His favorite quotation from his favorite mystical writer, L. C. Saint-Martin, which he used to repeat in later years: "On ne devroit faire des vers qu'après avoir fait un miracle"[2], gives some approximation of his particular poetic ethos. Hence the burning passion of Mickiewicz's prophetic strivings overpowers the reader by their sheer force and drive even when he is baffled by the poet's tenets and ambitions.

The greater is our surprise when we find out that the work which closely follows the *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* and the *Books* — it was actually started in the same year 1832 — not only bears no traces of prophetic inspiration but is marked by criticism and rejection of such an inspiration.

The spiritual climate of *Pan Tadeusz* is a far cry from that of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* and the *Books*. It is true that we find some features common to all three works. *Pan Tadeusz* breathes the same passionate patriotism, the same admiration for native tradition and scorn of doctrinaire rationalism that are so characteristic of the two previous works. But all that was expressed in *Pan Tadeusz* in a radically different way, not from the vantage point of an inspired and exacting national leader but from the position of a man who feels one with the world of his fiction, that of common people and their everyday life. The narrator of *Pan Tadeusz* occasionally assumes the pose of a simple, parochial tattler, but more typical for the poem is another attitude, that of a man who, although he sees through the naiveté and shortcomings of his fictional characters, is so enamored of them, so engrossed in the minutiae of their lives, that he is full of indulgence, amused by their antics, and warm toward them. In short, the poem's fictional world is presented through a humorous prism.

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[1] A. Mickiewicz, *Poems by...* Translated by various hands and edited by G. R. Noyes, New York 1944, p. 413. In two places I have changed the wording of the translation in order to make it closer to the original.

[2] *Oeuvres posthumes*, Tours 1807, vol, p. 199. Mickiewicz quoted this sentence in his letter to Kajsiewicz of October 31, 1835, and in his Parisian lecture of January 23, 1844. It is to be found as well in Mickiewicz's translation of selected maxims from Saint-Martin, *Dzieła*. Wyd. Narodowe, vol. 15, p. 134; vol. 11, p. 351; vol. 13, p. 14.

Humor implies the acceptance of reality with all its imperfections, and thus is incompatible with a prophetic attitude.

Pan Tadeusz is antiprophetic for another important reason as well. *In Forefathers' Eve* the protagonist wrestles with God in order to wrench from God the mystery of the future and to secure a different, happy future for his country. The *Books* were written from the standpoint of a man who had a vision of that future, wanted to impart it to his readers and make sure that his fellow countrymen would be worthy of the part Providence allotted them. *Pan Tadeusz*, on the other hand, is an evocation of the world which, although emotionally close and remembered as to minute details, belongs to the irretrievable past. The subtitle of the poem is "the last foray in Lithuania", and the attribute "the last" (*ostatni*) is one of the key words of the poem, reverberating especially loudly toward its end.

The particular charm of *Pan Tadeusz* lies in its specific, delicate balance between a succulent realism of details and the atmosphere of an Arcadian fairy tale. Paradoxically, this Arcadian ambiance becomes prevalent in the last two books, the moment great events of turbulent history break into the poem. It was possible because the poet gave there his very subjective fairy-land version of fairly recent historical events. We are in the Spring of 1812, at the moment the victorious Napoleonic armies are freeing Lithuania from the Russian domination. In fact, Napoleon started his Russian campaign later, in the Summer of 1812, but Mickiewicz wanted the reborn nature to sound in unison with people. These last two books start with a description of the feast of Our Lady in Flowers, a beautiful feast for which we would look in vain in calendars. The conflicts of the poem are being solved in these books, and we take leave of its happy protagonists enjoying their regained freedom and basking in the warm light of the setting sun. The poem obviously gravitates at the end toward the specific fairy tale ambiance of the "good" and "just" world, as it should be[3].

True, there is a minor discordant note in the grumblings of the old squire, Maciek ("The Emperor is bound for Moscow! That is a long road if he has set out without the blessing of God"[4]). But this note is drowned in the overwhelming general optimism. We can share it only provided we meet the poet on the terms of his fictional world and suspend our knowledge that this Spring (or, in terms of plain prose, Summer) of 1812 was followed by the bitter Winter of defeat and dashed hopes. The moment the clock of history strikes a happy note the poet stops its hands. The poetic world of *Pan Tadeusz* belongs to the past which is not only irretrievable but has no future.

This aspect of *Pan Tadeusz* had been stressed already by one of the most acute critics among the poet's contemporaries, the poet Juliusz Słowacki. It was expressed

[3] About this naive satisfaction of our justice and fulfillment yearning as being the basic constituent of the fairy tale world, see: A. Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, Halle (Salle) 1930, pp. 238–246.

[4] XII, 394–395. *Pan Tadeusz*, translated by G. R. Noyes, Everyman's Library, no. 842, London–New York 1949, p. 314.

directly in Słowacki's well known poetic tribute to *Pan Tadeusz* in his poem *Beniowski* ("Thus time went back and turned its face"[5]), as well as, more indirectly, in the fragments of his own *Pan Tadeusz*, partly a pastiche with parodistic elements and partly a counterpart of Mickiewicz's poem, projecting the action from the "Spring of victory" into the Winter of defeat.

In fact, in the whole *Pan Tadeusz* there is only one small passage reminding us that Mickiewicz's poem was written with the same pen that wrote *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three*. The passage refers to the aforementioned Spring of 1812: "The hearts of the Lithuanians were seized with a certain strange foreboding, as if the end of the world were approaching — by a certain yearning and joyous expectation"[6].

The forebodings "as if the end of the world were approaching" having emotional coloring of "yearning and joyous expectation" refer obviously to millenarist beliefs, to the conviction of the imminent end of the old world and the coming of a new epoch, that of "the fulfillment of times". They were quite widespread among German romantics[7] and far from alien to their Polish contemporaries. Słowacki shared them in his later, mystical period, and they found expression as well in Krasiński's *The Legend*[8].

It is telling that these millenarist lines appeared in *Pan Tadeusz* in a lyrical digression of unusually high emotional temperature and having as its subject matter regained freedom. They chime in with the spiritual climate of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three*, but they are an alien body in the whole fabric of *Pan Tadeusz*, where we are so attuned to the ambiance of earthy, everyday life that we gloss them over without realizing the strange mystical connotations of the simile[9].

Elsewhere in the poem beliefs in the supernatural appear scarcely and do appear as elements of the traditional Polish lore. They were introduced as traits characterizing the mentality of some protagonists, as in the case of the Seneschal's astronomy in *Book VIII*. They can serve as well as an element of the stylization of the narrator into an old-fashioned, provincial squire. Thus, introducing the old Maciek the poet says of him: "they [his fellow countrymen] even ascribed to him (though this the priest denied) a knowledge of higher, superhuman things"[10]. All these

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[5] VIII, 132.

[6] XI, 7—9: Noyes' version, p. 278.

[7] See: W. Nigg, *Das ewige Reich*, Eulenbach—Zürich 1944.

[8] Although in Krasiński's case we cannot speak of "joyous expectation", his feelings there being quite ambiguous. See: W. Weintraub, *Dokola "Legendy" Krasińskiego*, [in:] *Krasiński żywy*, London 1959, pp. 175—191.

[9] The best proof can be found in St. Pigoń's commentaries for his edition of *Pan Tadeusz* in the Biblioteka Narodowa series (the last, 4th ed., Wrocław 1962). Professor Pigoń's commentaries are a paragon of thoroughness, meticulous care as to details. The above quoted passage, however, is left there without any comment.

[10] VI, 549—550; Noyes' version, p. 172.

passages have humorous coloring, and any serious commitment of the poet is out of question there.

Pan Tadeusz is antithetic to some previous works of Mickiewicz through auto-parodies as well. The first case of such a parody, I would like to mention, has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the prophetic spirit. But it is indicative of the sturdy common-sense tone of the poem, inimical to any prophetic ethos and, thus, worth mentioning.

In his early lyrics and in *Forefathers' Eve, Part Four* (1823) Mickiewicz embraced the romantic, mystically tinged idea of love as predestined from above, as linking two souls for eternity. Now, in Telimena's harangue (XII, 467—473) such an idea of love is being ridiculed as an empty, pretentious verbiage.

Another case of auto-parody has a direct bearing on our subject. The title of *Forefathers' Eve* refers to folk celebrations in honor of the dead. During these celebrations the peasants gathered in order to invoke the spirits of the dead and to offer them food that would alleviate their sufferings in the other world. *Part II* evokes such a nightly gathering, while *Part IV* — published together with *Part II* in 1823 — contains a spirited defense of the folkrite and of the beliefs that are at the basis of it. In *Forefathers' Eve, Part III*—in fact a separate drama, written and published nine years later — the rite is given only a perfunctory treatment in the last scene. But it retains its clear symbolical meaning, valid for the whole: it stands for close ties between this life and the higher world of the spirits. In the poem *Oleszkiewicz*, belonging to the epic sequel of *Part Three*, Oleszkiewicz, the mystagogue who in Russia introduced Mickiewicz into mystical lore, is called *guślarz*. The name, meaning "wizard", "conjuror", is the same as that by which Mickiewicz denoted the peasant who conducted the Forefathers' rites.

In the light of all that, especially telling is the parody of the rite in *Pan Tadeusz* in which owls, rats, and champagne bottles appear as participants:

> In a moment all within the deserted building of the Horeszkos had returned to its wonted calm. The darkness thickened; the remnants of the magnificent feast lay like that nocturnal banquet to which the ghosts of the departed must gather when evoked at the festival of the Forefathers. Now the owles had cried thrice from the garret, like conjurers; they seemed to greet the rising of the moon of which the form fell through the window on the table, trembling like a spirit in Purgatory; from the vaults beneath rats leapt out through holes, like the souls of the damned; they gnawed and drank; at times in a corner a forgotten champagne bottle would pop as a toast to the spirits[11],

As we see, Mickiewicz made here use of a time honored device of the mock-heroic poem. And it implies mockery.

These auto-parodies are indicative of the tenor of *Pan Tadeusz* and, thus, highly significant, but in the whole fabric of the poem they play a marginal role only. It is otherwise with the problem of pride leading to crime and then overcome in

[11] V, 788—799; Noyes' version, p. 149.

atonement, as exemplified in the leading character of the poem, Jacek Soplica, later Father Robak. There we are at the very core of the poem's moral world.

The problem of pride was at the center of Mickiewicz's moral preoccupations both in his *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* and in a set of remarkable religious lyrics, partly contemporaneous with the drama and partly antedating it. They are known as Mickiewicz's "Roman lyrics", a not very exact name, since not all of them originated in Rome. The problem was an obvious outcome of the poet's prophetic aspirations. The inspired poet-prophet, destined to sway the mass of mortals, is in constant danger of tinging the consciousness of his mission with a spiritual arrogance that would make him unworthy of his mission and, thus, wreck the mission. That is what happens to the protagonist of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three*. In his revolt he is inordinately proud, pours scorn on mankind. That pride is branded in the drama as the work of Satan. But he is spared the ultimate condemnation, and the reader is assured in a prophetic anticipation that he will humble himself before God and become the Paraclete, the man-savior of his nation. The Choir of Archangels announces about him:

> Raise his head. He'll rise from the dust and reach the sky[12].

More forcefully the paradox of prophetic pride in humility is expressed in one of the "Roman Lyrics", *Reason and Faith*: "When I bent before the Lord my wise, thunders commanding forehead like a cloud before the sun, the Lord raised it up to Heaven like rainbow and painted with thousand of rays"[13]. The passage is to be understood only in the framework of specific prophetic ideas. The forehead that is being bent in front of God is not a common forehead. It commands thunders (*gromowładne czoło*). Once it humiliates itself before God it shines with a halo of rays. The "I" of the poem offers his pride to God in order to make it approved by God. And that is exactly what the poet actually says later on in the poem: "Lord, the spirit of humility raised my pride". One cannot help feeling that there is a certain ambiguity there. Is the pride overcome or sanctified by God?

The whole dilemma reappears in *Pan Tadeusz*, but this time with a radically different solution. The person whose life course illustrates it, Jacek Soplica, is, in a way, the main protagonist of the poem. He is the only one character presented in depth. He is as well the only tragic character of the poem. And the action of no other protagonist has as much bearing on the plot as his.

[12] Scene III, v. 246. I am quoting here after Count Potocki of Montalk's translation, *Forefathers', Part III*, London 1945, pages unnumbered, little known but much superior to the one published by Noyes in his 1944 edition of Mickiewicz's *Poems*.

[13]
> Kiedy rozumne, gromowładne czoło
> Zgiąłem przed Panem jak chmurę przed słońcem,
> Pan ją wzniósł w niebo, jako tęczy koło,
> I umalował promieni tysiącem.

Dzieła, Wyd. Narodowe, vol. 1, p. 256. The poem was included in the Noyes' selection, *op. cit.*, pp. 240—241, but the rendering of the above quoted stanza there is very inaccurate blurring its characteristic prophetic implications.

Jacek Soplica, a petty squire, fell in love with a daughter of a magnate. His love was reciprocated, but for the haughty father the idea of their match was unthinkable. The frustrated lover shot the father dead. The fact that he did it at the time when the magnate was fighting the Russians gave his vengeance the semblance of national treason. In order to atone for his crime he took orders and became a Bernardine friar under the telling name of Robak, i.e. "Worm". He devoted his life primarily to two causes. In Russian-ruled Lithuania he was a political emissary, his pet project being the fomenting of a rising at the back of the Russian army once the Franco-Russian war should break out. He worked hard as well in order to end honorably the feud which had been engendered by his crime.

Romantic ideas of love would make thwarted love a sufficient enough motif of Jacek's crime. But Mickiewicz wanted to have it otherwise. He presented Jacek as loving the girl passionately. His crime, however, was committed above all owing to the promptings of the feelings of hurt pride. That is what Jacek himself says in his death-bed confession in front of his arch-enemy, the Warden:

> To avenge myself openly, and tumble the castle into ruins by an assault, I was ashamed, for they would have said that I was avenging myself for my rejection! Warden, your honest heart cannot feel what hell there is in wounded pride.
> The demon of pride began to suggest to me better plans[14].

Later on in the poem we hear the same note even more explicitly:

> Perchance I slew him more through stupid arrogance than through disappointed love: so I humbly became a monk[15].

Moreover, Mickiewicz introduces into the story the motif of leadership as well Jacek Soplica felt his humiliation the more bitterly since he had been the leader of the local squirearchy:

> Me who once, I may say, had made all the district tremble! Me, whom Radziwill[16] had called "my dear"! Me, who, when I rode forth from my hamlet, had led with me a train more numerous than a prince's! And when I drew my sabre, then many thousand sabres had glittered round about, striking terror to the lords' castles. — But now the very children of the peasant boors laughed at me! So paltry had I quickly made myself in the eyes of men! Jacek Soplica! He who knows the feeling of pride[17].

Jacek Soplica dies an edifying Christian death. As far as it is humanly possible, he settles his accounts with the world. Just before he dies he receives the news that the long yearned for expedition of Napoleon against Russia has been decided upon. He dies reconciled with the old Warden, a devoted servant of the old magnate who made revenge on Soplicas his life mission, and he learns from the Warden that his victim forgave him his crime. The betrothal of two offsprings of the feuding families marks the end of the feud. In one respect, however, he dies a failure. He

[14] X, 643–647; Noyes' version, pp. 268–269.
[15] X, 828–829, Noyes' version, p. 275.
[16] Radziwills were the leading Lithuanian magnate family.
[17] X, 690–698; Noyes' version, p. 270.

fails as a leader. The revolt against the Russians which he wanted to foment degenerates into a brawl among the gentry, turns into a foray. God, he muses, did not grant him a success there because there was still an element of pride in his scheme:

> Perchance even now, who knows? Perchance I have sinned anew! Perchance I have hastened too much the insurrection, exceeding the commands of my generals. The thought that the house of the Soplicas should be the first to take up arms, and that my kindred should raise the first banner of the Warhorse in Lithuania! — That thought... seems pure[18].

In the first draft of the poem the idea was expressed more forcefully. The last line of the passage read there: "That thought ... evidently impure"[19].

In keeping with the demands of the plot and the general tenor of the story the leadership ambitions displayed here are on a limited, local scale. It is a far cry from the world shattering, superhuman yearnings of the protagonist of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* and of the prophetic pride in humility, expressed in "Roman lyrics". Nevertheless these ambitions are presented as a mighty springboard for pride and as such discredited.

Mickiewicz scholarship at one time dwelt a lot on the poet's personal experience that went into the making of Jacek Soplica's story. Mickiewicz himself twice fell in love above his social status (he came from petty, impecunious gentry) and both times he was rejected because of it. Because of his possible partial identification with his protagonist the more telling is here his condemnation of the leadership idea, so relentlessly traced down as the source of evil in the story of Jacek Soplica. Once again we are here on the antipodes of prophetic aspirations.

Mickiewicz originally intended to provide *Pan Tadeusz* with a lyrical "Epilog". But he never finished the poem, and during his life *Pan Tadeusz* was being published without it. This fragmentary "Epilog", as it is now generally called, was found after the poet's death in his papers and published for the first time in 1860. Today it is regularly printed with the text of the poem.

In addition to being good, at times poignant, poetry it is a remarkable psychological document, giving us good insight into the poet's state of mind at the time he was writing *Pan Tadeusz*.

Owing to the lyrical character of the "Epilog", its being a sort of "confession", Mickiewicz's antiprophetic stance is expressed there in a more explicit, direct way than in the epic poem proper.

> I longed to pass by — the poet confides there — bird of low flight — to pass by regions of storm and thunder, and to search out only shade and fair weather — the era of my childhood, of my homestead[20].

[18] X, 852—856; Noyes' version, p. 276.

[19] "Ta myśl — widać nieczysta". See Pigoń's commentary in his edition of the poem in the Biblioteka Narodowa series, Wrocław 1962, p. 478.

[20] "Epilog", vv. 20—23. I have substituted Noyes' translation, to be found in his edition, p. XVII, since his version does not render exactly the crucial words "ptak małego lotu" — "bird of low flight", and sentimentalizes the text elsewhere.

The recurrent imagery of flight is one of the most typical of Mickiewicz's poetry. It stands for spiritual strivings and achievements. As such it is always a high flight. Although it became the symbolical vehicle of the poet's prophetic aspirations, its appearance in Mickiewicz's poetry precedes the birth of these aspirations. It is to be found already in one of Mickiewicz's early poeme, his *Ode to Youth* (1820). In the elegy *Musing on the Day of Parting* (1825) the resolution to break with drawing room philandering is clipped with a call: "Let us fly and never lower our flight from then on"[21]. It reappears significantly in his last Polish poem *My nightingale, fly and sing*.

In the last lines of the "quasida" *Faris* (1828) this imagery is given new overtones. The flight is toward infinity, high up into heaven, and it serves to express the ecstasis of might, of achievement. As such it plays a predominant part in the imagery of the two crucial scenes of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three*, the so called "little" and "great" improvisations. In both of them mighty flight stands for exceptional spiritual power, for the feeling of hovering high above common human beings:

> 'tis flight I need —
> from stars' and planets' axle-tree I speed —
> thither, where Nature and Creator join their mesh.
> And I have them, I have them, I have that pair of wings!
> They suffice! From West to East they spread alike.
> With the left on the past, with the right on the future I strike,
>
> and on the rays of feeling Thee-ward fly
> and gaze into Thy feelings![22]

Seen against such background "bird of low flight" acquires a poignant meaning, is laden with the avowal of utter frustration.

Equally significant are the words "I longed [...] to pass by the regions of storm and thunder". *Pan Tadeusz* is an escape from stormy reality into the pastoral of happy childhood reminiscences. "Pastoral oases"[23] are a common feature of the topography of epic poems. No other modern great epic poem, however — with the exception of the equally nostalgic Mistral's *Mireio* — is to such an extent saturated with pastoral elements as *Pan Tadeusz*. The whole Soplicowo acquires there the character of a typical pastoral *locus amoenus*.

Forefathers' Eve, Part Three belonged to "the regions of storm and thunder". In an angry aside Mickiewicz attacked there the poets cultivating pastoral poetry and recommending it as the best suited for the expression of the Polish national spirit which, they claimed, abhorred cruel notes and found its truest expression

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[21] *Dziela*, vol. 1, p. 338.

[22] Scene II, vv. 92–99. I am quoting here from Count Potocki of Montalk's translation.

[23] I am making use here of Renato Poggioli's term; see his *Wierzbowa fujarka*, "Zagadn. Rodz. Lit.", III, 1 (1960), pp. 39–77.

in the idyllic[24]. His gibe there was directed primarily against the poet and literary critic, Brodziński. Now, in the "Epilog" the idyllic Brodziński is mentioned — too generously, to be sure — as a tutelary genius of *Pan Tadeusz*, his idyll, *Wiesław* — as one of its models. Again, the reversal of positions is complete.

The escape into childhood reminiscences — Mickiewicz argued in the "Epilog" — is the only possible solace for the unhappy émigrés:

> To-day, for us, unbidden guests in the world, in all the past and in all the future — to-day there is but one region in which there is a crumb of happiness for a Pole: the land of his childhood![25]

"In all the past" — that is understandable. But "in all the future"? That implies the lack of faith in any brighter future, in short, the negation of the future. Since prophetic poetry is always future-directed and fights for a better future, such a statement has a strong antiprophetic ring. It is true that Mickiewicz envisages in the "Epilog", a different, peaceful, and contented future. But in the context of the poem it is to be understood as a distant future, a future beyond the reach of the poet's contemporaries.

In the *Books* Mickiewicz tried to imbue fellow-émigrés with the conscientiousness of their lofty mission. They were seen there as the elected, the avant-garde of fighters for freedom. They should, the poet-prophet asserted, bear their sufferings proudly, because these very sufferings are the mark of the elect, the pledge for bright future. In the "Epilog" we find a complete reversal of the attitudes, and Mickiewicz passes there a harsh judgment on his fellow-émigrés. Their sufferings are seen there not as ennobling but debasing them ("losing their reason from their long tortures, they spit upon themselves and consume one another"[26]). In the *Books* they were "pilgrims", here they appear as "deserters" (zbiegi) and the very act of emigrating loses any higher meaning, in fact is seen as stemming from cowardice: "Alas for us, deserters, that in time of pestilence, timid souls, we fled to foreign lands!"[27]

The tenor of the "Epilog" is, in general, quiet, resigned, elegiac. The passage on the émigrés stands out against this mild context as passionate, full of burning scorn, and the voice of the poet is harsh and exacerbated. Obviously, we touch a neuralgic point here. The mass of the émigrés whom the poet had envisaged as lofty, self-sacrificing crusaders turned out to be only all too human and they rejected their poet-prophet's bid for leadership. Both the right and the left wing of the emigration turned — for different reasons — deaf ears on the exhortations of the *Books of the Polish Nation and the Polish Pilgrimage*. That must have been one factor contributing to the collapse of Mickiewicz's prophetic aspirations. Another and more important factor was the very nature of these aspirations as expressed in the

[24] Scene VII, vv. 202—208.
[25] Vv. 64—68: Noyes' version, p. XIX.
[26] Vv. 18—19; Noyes' version, p. XVII.
[27] Vv. 5—6; Noyes' version, p. XVII.

works written in 1832. They were so high-strung, so ecstatic that, barring the coming of climacteric events that would give fuel to these feelings, they must have spent themselves quickly.

It should be added that the abandonment of prophetic aspirations was itself of short duration. The poem was hardly finished when the poet — as we know from one of his close friends, Bohdan Zaleski — was expressing his dissatisfaction that it had not been written "half a tone higher"[28]. Even more telling was what Mickiewicz had to say to another of his friends, A. E. Odyniec, in the letter of February 14, 1834. He informed Odyniec there of his resolution never more to write "trifles". But for the fact that *Pan Tadeusz* was so near completion, he would have abandoned it, because his heart was with the planned continuation of *Forefathers' Eve, Part Three* (which did not materialize). We learn from the same letter that at the time of writing it he was immersed in his favorite mystical writer, Saint-Martin[29]. Later on, he even went so far that he considered *Pan Tadeusz* to be a "deviation" among his works[30].

When all that is said there still remain two psychological enigmas: how such a sudden and radical, even if temporary, volte-face was humanly possible? And how a poem which came as an aftermath of such a collapse of cherished, exalted aspirations can have so much of radiance and *joie de vivre* about it?

Like each great work of art *Pan Tadeusz* is self-contained. In order to enjoy the poem the reader does not need to bother about what preceded it and in what state of mind it was written. It is there and speaks its own language. Nevertheless, it makes sense to juxtapose *Pan Tadeusz* with *Forefathers' Eve* and the *Books*. Not only does such a juxtaposition reveal some hidden, unexpected aspects of the seemingly simple poem, but it reveals at the same time to what extent mysterious and unfathomable was the man who wrote it. Mickiewicz shared some characteristic features with Rimbaud. Both were ecstatic, both tried to reach beyond what is possible in human experience, both stopped writing poetry when at the height of their creative powers. In both cases we are fascinated not only by the poems but also by the men behind them. Both give us the shock of coming to grips with something unique, powerful and, in the last resort, inexplicable in human nature.

„PAN TADEUSZ", CZYLI ODWRÓT OD PROFETYZMU

STRESZCZENIE

Pan Tadeusz jest czasem powstania bardzo bliski *Dziadów części trzeciej*, a zwłaszcza *Księgom*. Podczas jednak gdy tamte dwa dzieła mają wyraźny charakter profetyczny, w *P.T.* nie tylko że nie ma profetyzmu, ale poemat postawie profetycznej wyraźnie się przeciwstawia. Jest poematem antyprofetycznym, i to z wielu względów.

[28] *Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli*, ed. by S. Pigoń, Warsaw 1958, pp. 79–80.

[29] *Dzieła*, Wyd. Narodowe, vol. 15, pp. 106–107.

[30] W. Mickiewicz, *Żywot Adama Mickiewicza*, vol. 3, Poznań 1894, p. 481.

Kłóci się z postawą profetyczną humor *P.T.*, ponieważ humor zakłada aprobatę rzeczywistości z jej ułomnościami i brakami, a postawę profetyczną znamionuje niemożność pogodzenia się z tymi ułomnościami.

Jak przystało na utwory profetyczne, i *Dziady*, i *Księgi* są nastawione na przyszłość. *P.T.* jest ewokacją świata, należącego do przeszłości, i to bezpowrotnie zamkniętej. Epitet „ostatni" jest jednym z jego kluczowych wyrazów. Co więcej, w dwóch ostatnich jego księgach historia poddana została swoistej baśniowej stylizacji. Poeta żąda od nas — i pełne to jego poetyckie prawo — wymazania z pamięci naszej wiedzy, że po tej wiośnie (czy, trzymając się prozy historii: lecie) 1812 przyszła i zima 1812 r. Tylko na tej zasadzie gra optymizm tych ksiąg. W *P.T.* mamy do czynienia z baśniową przeszłością zamkniętą bez dalszego ciągu. Rozumiał to dobrze już Słowacki.

Jeden tylko drobny ustęp w *P.T.* ma wydźwięk profetyczny, XI, 7—9:

> Ogarnęło Litwinów serca z wiosny słońcem
> Jakieś dziwne przeczucie, jak przed świata końcem,
> Jakieś oczekiwanie tęskne i radośne.

Cały ten ustęp ma sens tylko wtedy, gdy percypuje się go jako wyraz wierzeń millenarystycznych. Nie bez kozery pojawił się w dygresji lirycznej o najwyższej w całym poemacie temperaturze emocjonalnej, i to pojawił się tylko na prawach dyskretnego, ledwo co tolerowanego wtrętu. Tak nastawieni jesteśmy w *P.T.* na rzeczywistość dnia codziennego, że prześlizgujemy się nad dziwnością tych trzech wersów.

Dziadom przeciwstawia się też *P.T.* przez autoparodię (V, 790—799). Obrzęd *Dziadów*, w którym występują puszczyki, szczury i butelki szampana, to typowy chwyt poematu heroikomicznego, kiedy to wzniosła machina poetycka zostaje zdeprecjonowana przez zastosowanie jej do sfery swą poziomością oczywiście się z nią kłócącej.

Szczególnie znamienne dla antyprofetyzmu *P.T.* jest skompromitowanie w nim w wątku Jacka Soplicy motywu dumy i przewodnictwa. Antynomia dumy-pokory odgrywa kluczową rolę i w *Dziadach*, i we współczesnych im lirykach religijnych, ale tam rozwiązana zostaje inaczej, w kategoriach profetycznych: prorok musi się upokorzyć przed Bogiem po to, aby Bóg usankcjonował jego wybraństwo i wyniesienie się ponad innych ludzi („Podnieś tę głowę, a wstanie z prochu, niebios dosięże"). W *P.T.* antynomia ta pokazana jest w innych wymiarach. Zważmy przede wszystkim, że podczas gdy w ramach tradycji romantycznej, heroizującej i absolutyzującej miłość, wystarczającym motywem zbrodni Jacka Soplicy byłaby zawiedziona miłość, Mickiewicz kazał mu zabić stolnika „bardziej niźli z miłości, może z głupiej pychy". Jacek umiera pogodzony z Bogiem i ludźmi, jego śmierć jest szczęśliwą śmiercią, tym wymowniejsze jest skompromitowanie przez Mickiewicza jego ambicji przywódczych: jego próba zorganizowania powstania obraca się przeciwko niemu, degeneruje w zajazd i na łożu śmierci Jacek ma wątpliwości moralne: „Może i teraz, kto wie? Możem znowu zgrzeszył!"

Podkreśla antyprofetyczną postawę *P.T.* jego „Epilog", i to w trzech aspektach:

1. Motyw lotu należy do najbardziej osobistych i charakterystycznych motywów obrazowania Mickiewicza. Wyraża aspiracje duchowe, w *Dziadach* — aspiracje profetyczne, stan najwyższego napięcia sił twórczych. Na tym tle szczególnej wymowy nabiera samookreślenie poety w „Epilogu": „ptak małego lotu".

2. *W Dziadach, części trzeciej* Mickiewicz w imię poetyki profetycznej potępiał poetykę pastoralną i jej rzecznika, Brodzińskiego. W „Epilogu" Brodziński awansuje do roli patrona *P.T.*, ujętego w kategoriach tej właśnie pastoralnej poetyki.

3. W *Księgach* emigracja pojęta została jako „pielgrzymstwo", ofiarniczy zakon rycerski. Mickiewicz dawał tam wyraz wierze w odkupicielską rolę cierpienia. W „Epilogu" emigracja to „zbiegi", zdeprawowane trudnymi warunkami życia.

P.T. powstał na gruzach profetyzmu Mickiewicza. Ten odwrót od profetyzmu był krótkotrwały. Wiemy z relacji B. Zaleskiego, iż tuż po napisaniu *P.T.* uważał poeta, iż „w całym poemacie potrzeba by podnieść nastrój o jakie pół tonu". Palił się do kontynuowania *Dziadów*. Z czasem będzie uważał, że *P.T.* i *Konrad Wallenrod* „są niby zboczeniami" w jego twórczości.

Spojrzenie na *P.T.* z perspektywy *Dziadów części trzeciej* i *Ksiąg* uwydatnia nowe aspekty poematu i unaocznia zagadkowe antynomie psychiki twórcy tych trzech dzieł.

Szkic niniejszy jest rozdziałem większej całości o profetycznej poetyce Mickiewicza.

Wiktor Weintraub