

Wojciech Maryjka, “Immortal songs”? Adam Mickiewicz’s writings in the ‘young’ Polish poetry after 1989: A summary

The study raises the issue of the relations of Polish poetry after 1989 to the writings of Adam Mickiewicz. The Author presents the current state of the art and carries out a broad analysis and interpretation of works containing numerous references to Mickiewicz’s creative output. This is particularly the case of the intertextual spaces where one can find allusions, quotations, crypto-quotations, paraphrases, reminiscences, stylizations or pastiche forms alluding to Mickiewicz’s works. By researching these kinds of stylistic devices, the Author can answer questions about the role played in the contemporary poets’ writings by the literary tradition and the mere creative output of the author of *Pan Tadeusz*.

The first chapter of the study, titled *Adam Mickiewicz’s writings in the ‘young’ Polish poetry after 1989. Views - Conversations - Examples*, is on the critical and poetic discussions about Mickiewicz, his role and the forms of the presence of his writings in Polish poetry after 1989. In that part of his study, the Author refers to, inter alia, the significant texts by Piotr Śliwiński, Arkadiusz Bałajewski, Tomasz Cieślak and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek. He also analyses the opinions of the poets themselves, who spoke of their attitudes towards Mickiewicz in the pages of *Krasnogruda*, *Kartki* and *Res Publica Nowa*.

In that chapter, the Author also tries to outline the poems that were, due to the relations to Mickiewicz, most frequently referred to or commented and became manifestos in the verbal tussle about the duty of poetry in the new reality. The Author argues that in the works of Miłosz Biedrzycki, Krzysztof Jaworski, Dariusz Foks or Mirosław Dzień, the role of Mickiewicz was marginalized, or at the most it was ambivalent in character. Mickiewicz functioned as a symbol of Tyrtaean poetry and in the beginning of the 1990s, this meaning was associated with a kind of pigeonholing and ideologically-inspired disregard of some of his writings.

In the second chapter, titled *New “Romanticisms”?*, the Author deals with works, in which the poets refer to Mickiewicz’s ballads, including, in particular, the poem *Romanticism*. In the Author’s opinion, due to the ideology-based and polemical character of Mickiewicz’s poetic manifesto and to its significance for the formation of Polish Romanticism, young Polish poets refer to it in order to define their attitudes as well as their choices in respect of the art and their outlook on the world. For this purpose, they use, inter alia, analogous or similar titles, by which they emphasize the significance of their own works, thus presenting

their writing strategy (*The 21st Century Romanticism* by Stanisław Dłuski, *Romanticism* by Klara Nowakowska and *Romanticism* by Tadeusz Dąbrowski). The study also identifies the role of the literary tradition that can be an important part of today's world. This ballad of Mickiewicz is also an element of the deeper, outlook-related polemics concerning the way of reality perception (*Syntheticity* by Tadeusz Pióro). In this case, Mickiewicz's ballad helped show the dynamics of the changing reality that keeps suggesting new issues to be discussed. The counterpoints to such positive and polemical acts of using Mickiewicz's creative output are examples of Maciej Froński's works. Because, from behind the purely ludic features of his poems emerges a picture of the author who has not done his homework on Romanticism very well.

The third chapter, titled *Returns to Soplicowo*, is on the poets' attempts to stand up to the greatness of *Pan Tadeusz*. In the extensive, synthetic part of his study, the Author presents the former reception of Tomasz Różycki's poem *Twenty Stations* which undoubtedly is the recent years' best known poetical work that alludes to Mickiewicz's epic. To Różycki, the creative output of Mickiewicz makes up the fundamental context. The author of the poem makes use of the poetics of *Pan Tadeusz*, uses a similar work composition framework, introduces analogous motifs, uses similar stylistic tricks and devices as well as numerous and clear allusions. In addition, he maintains appropriate balances, which allows him to create his own vision of reality, in which the beauty and the nostalgic aura are largely determined by the poem of Mickiewicz. That nostalgia is also used by Dariusz Suska in his *Travelling Elegy*. The poet compares the solemnity and romance of the early passages of *Pan Tadeusz* with the description of the degraded space of the family house. He shows that one can yearn for one's own world, a world completely different from the one Mickiewicz yearned for, but still one's own.

The Author uses the world of *Pan Tadeusz* also as a place for the roles of the main characters who have become synonyms of certain characteristics or standards of behaviour. The references to their names made in the contemporary poets' works are enough to attribute a new meaning to specific places or situations. This can be observed in the poems of Edward Pasewicz, Robert Rybicki (where Tadeusz and Zosia appear), Marta Podgórnik, Andrzej Niewiadomski (who allude to Telimena) and Jacek Podsiadło (who refers to Jankiel). The references to Mickiewicz's *Invocation* or the peculiar "summaries" of *Pan Tadeusz*, written in a few strophes (as in the work of Paweł Marcinkiewicz, *Soplicowo*) fulfil a similar function. In the poems of the poets named above, the work of Mickiewicz becomes primarily a source of poetic language; it is a literary example and

sometimes is used to check or improve the poetic technique.

The Author also writes that *Pan Tadeusz* functions as a `text of culture` — a literary work with a certain status and reception, “required reading” and a mean of conveying known ideas. Mickiewicz’s work in just this sense appears i.a. in the poem of Krzysztof Kleszcz, *All of Poland reads? Pan Tadeusz?*, in which the author portrays the current condition of the modern Polish culture that plays down the significance of Mickiewicz and of literature itself. Similar doubts about the current position and role of *Pan Tadeusz* have also been expressed in the poem *Diarrhoea* by Paweł Marcinkiewicz.

In the title of the fourth chapter, *The words that “play”, “glow” and do even more*, the author has used a fragment of Konrad’s *Improvisation* where this character describes the creative process as “inclusion” of thoughts in words which then “fly”, “disperse all over the sky”, “play and glow”¹. So, the Author notes that the creative output of Mickiewicz can function as a treasury of allusions, quotations, crypto-quotations and well-known quotations. Thus, in the particular subsections, the Author presents contemporary poems that testify to the dialogue with a variety of Mickiewicz’s texts, such as: *Forefathers’ Eve*, *To lubię* [*That’s what I like*], *Zima miejska* [*The urban winter*], [*Śniła się zima* [*I dreamed about a winter*]], [*Wysłuchać się w szum wód głuchy...*] [*To listen raptly to the dull swoosh of water*]], *Do***. Na Alpach w Splügen 1829* [*To ***. On the Alps in Splügen 1829*], [*Nad wodą wielką i czystą...*] [*By the big and clean water...*]] Such elements predominate among the other devices used in the poems under analysis. They are spread in a number of works (such as *Mandarynka* by Jacek Gutorow, [*Skoro jesień*] by Marcin Sendecski, *Erotyk Adama* Krzysztof Kleszcz, *Isztar* by Agnieszka Mirahina, *Kotlety* by Przemysław Wątopek, *Katalog* by Jerzy Jarniewicz, *Wtedy tęsknimy* by Robert Król). Sometimes they are a kind of inlay, a basis for situational associations or plays on words. In most cases, these small pieces of texts, the well-known quotations allow the author to depict the quality of the relations of the “young” poetry to the creative output of Mickiewicz and their thoroughly thought bases. These references are pretext in character, making up the essential points of the works: the ballad *To lubię* becomes an element highlighting the mysteriousness of the romantic world (Artur Szłosarek) but also a kind of a poetic ruse to mislead the reader (Zbigniew Machej); *Zima miejska* adds dynamics and colour to the grey reality (Tomasz Fijałkowski), is used to depict the social contrasts (Tomasz Majeran) or is the place of an imagined meeting with Mickiewicz himself (Artur Nowaczewski). And the other winter, the one Mickiewicz dreamed about, becomes a

¹A. Mickiewicz, *Forefathers’ Eve*, Part III [in:] *Works*, vol. 3: *Dramas*, ed. Z. Stefanowska, Warsaw 1995, p. 158.

language code, a strong, perfect poetic and oneiric form that can hardly be broken (Andrzej Sosnowski, Marcin Sendeki). The examples of Lausanne lessons (Jacek Gutorow, Mariusz Grzebalski) show the permanence of the metaphysical look at poetry and existence, whereas the attempts to supplement the work with the first lines [*Wysłuchać się w szum wód głuchy...*] (Marcin Baran) are a sign of the poet's desire to touch the inexpressible. The poems of Jerzy Sosnowski and Jarosław Klejnocki, who have also been goaded by the poem *Do***. Na Alpach w Splügen 1829* into discussion, allow us to look at Mickiewicz as an author raising the fundamental problems of existence. The pretext and text functions are also fulfilled by Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve [Dziady]* and *The Ghost [Upiór]*. In the work of Andrzej Sosnowski, the contemporary rite of *Dziady* takes place in the Internet space, whereas in the poem *Oleander*, its author Marcin Kurek perversely uses the "living-dead" character. This repertoire can be complemented with the work *Warunkowa Maryla* by Marcin Baran, in which the author has used the biography of Mickiewicz and his love poems.

Because the Author looks at all the works mentioned and points out the affinities of the young poets with the works of the Arch-Poet, he can note that the reference sources are various. So, the presence of Mickiewicz's writings in the poetry of the last 25 years is polyphonic and multi-layered in character.

Following Mickiewicz's footsteps also involves attempting to assess their quality and strength. The Author presents evidence to support the theory that the references to Mickiewicz's writings in today's poetry, although, in general, merely allusive and fragmentary, are thoroughly thought creative tactics preceded by deliberate reading. The recognition and acceptance of Mickiewicz and his oeuvre manifest themselves in the use of the strong poetic phrases deeply rooted in Mickiewicz's language, which becomes a signal for discovering the universal character of his creative output. Furthermore, the Author comes to a conclusion that for many of the "young" generation poets, the definition of their attitude to the past and particularly to the "immortal songs" of Mickiewicz is an important attempt to discover their own poetic identities.