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***The Exile's Song* and *It is weary* – American poems by August Antoni Jakubowski**

The subject of this article is the forgotten works of August Antoni Jakubowski, *The Exile's Song* and *It is weary*, discovered on the last pages of a rare 1835 edition of *The Remembrances* from Auburn. After the November Uprising, Jakubowski, an illegitimate son of Antoni Malczewski, was sent to America, where he became the author of *The Remembrances of a Polish Exile* – the first publication about Polish history, literature, and education written in English and published in the United States.

So far, Jakubowski's short life (ended by suicide), torn between two continents, is shrouded in more mysteries and secrets than confirmed facts. Much has been verified through the research of Przemysław Bloch, a New York-based lawyer, together with the author of this article in the United States. *The Exile's Song* and *It is weary* complete the picture of the last American stage of Jakubowski's work. They are a concentrated expression of all his characteristic moods, and testify to the extreme alienation, hopelessness, and despair that he felt. Despite its intimate tone, the work in large measure constitutes a general testimony of the experience of Polish exiles forced to travel across the ocean.

Key words: August Antoni Jakubowski, poems, Polish exiles

And here it is so cold although in the land of Freedom – this is what August Antoni Jakubowski, one of 234 Poles interned by the Austrian government in New York, wrote about his place of exile in 1833. At the age of only 19, he wrote *The Remembrances of a Polish Exile*, the very first anthology of Polish poetry and the first publication on Poland to appear in print in America. Jakubowski managed this feat after a mere 10 months of studying English, a language completely foreign to him before that time. Jakubowski's book gained popularity quickly. Within the span of two years, it was reissued five times,¹ and published among others by Colger Sherman,

¹ The Bloch Family Foundation has copies of all known editions of *Remembrances of a Polish Exile*. Here is the order proposed by Przemysław Jan Bloch:

the most successful publisher in Philadelphia at the time. Despite such a satisfying professional track record,² Jakubowski committed suicide two years later under unknown circumstances. His writings, posthumously prepared for publication by his friend Marcin Rosienkiewicz in 1839, were buried for 132 years afterwards in the archives of the Polish Library in Paris. We may presume that a certain part of Jakubowski's contribution to American heritage still awaits discovery, evidence of which are the poems *The Exile's Song* and *It is weary*, found in a rare edition of *The Remembrances of a Polish Exile*.

Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, in his *Conversations about books*, underlined the uniqueness of Jakubowski's biography and the information gaps that appear therein when it is compared to those of other writers: "Jakubowski (...), since the very beginning, had a strange and bizarre life. First of all, contrary to the Latin legal proverb *mater semper certa*, we do not know who his mother was" (Iwaszkiewicz 5). An investigation conducted by Bogusław Dopart and Przemysław Jan Bloch, a New York lawyer, indicated a high probability that August Antoni's mother, Maria Franciszka Lubomirska née Załuska, was a princess with an extremely noble pedigree.. Most probably, in order to avoid a scandal, Jakubowski was sent to live a foster family shortly after his birth. It was not until he reached the age of 10 that he met his real parents, whom he lost soon after. According to the latest findings, Jakubowski probably did not participate in the November Uprising. He was a victim of the invaders' policy determined at the conference in Műchengrätz; namely, in order to prevent future national liberation revolutions, the Russian Empire decided to imprison people involved in the patriotic movement going on in Prussia and Galicia. The first mass transport of 235 Poles to New York then took place in 1833, with August Antoni on board the ship.³

Besides *The Remembrances*, Jakubowski left 42 poems, mostly of autobiographical nature, which he began writing in his early youth. His works are a poignant voice for the "lost" generation, whose youth coincided with the collapse of the November Uprising and the repressions that ensued – later described by Alina Witkowska (Witkowska 260). Like his father, August Antoni's writings can be classified as black romanticism. Indeed, he comes across as a forerunner of "dark lyricism," a genre which did not reach its peak until the Young Poland era, and which was typified by Julian Maślanka (Jakubowski *Poezje* XXIII). Even the earliest of Jakubowski's works are marked by pessimism. In fact, this was their main feature, and its intensity is virtually unmatched in the works of other Polish romantic poets. His imprisonment aggravated his natural proclivity for pensive melancholy, and turned it into desolation

1. Albany: Packard and Van Benthuysen, 1835, p. 69.

2. Auburn, NY: Allen & Lounsbury, 1835, p. 72.

3. Philadelphia: Adam Waldie, 1835, p. 69.

4. Philadelphia: C. Sherman & Co., 1835, p. 72.

5. Philadelphia: Haswell and Fleu, 1836, p. 69.

6. Auburn, NY: Finn & Rockwell's Steam Power Press, 1850, p. 64.

² Materials from the Historic Northampton Museum, imported by Przemysław Jan Bloch, confirm that August Antoni was employed as a French teacher at the Gothic Seminary, the most prestigious school for girls, throughout 1836 and up to the second semester of 1837.

³ These tragic events are confirmed by the memories of other exiles (Juźwikiewicz 5-6). Also, Julian Maślanka wrote about the life of August Antoni Jakubowski (Maślanka 111-113).

and an obsession with death. The long and dangerous journey to America left a lasting mark, and reminded him of Charon's ferry sailing into nothingness – a sentiment reflected in several of his poems from this period. He was neither able to establish roots in his place of exile, nor find new values. While in America, Jakubowski was tantalized by images of his home, Podolia, which he incessantly longed for. Even in his exotic poems on native culture, August Antoni included encrypted images of his beloved home country, which he missed so dearly. Although Jakubowski attempted to break with the past in a few of his poems, i.e. *Pożegnanie* (Farewell), he was unable to let go. His memories, which first served as a kind of consolation, soon turned into his greatest source of inexpressible suffering. Evidence thereof can be found in Jakubowski's poems, as well as in the foreword to *The Remembrances*. Once on free land, Jakubowski paradoxically felt imprisoned. Ever since he had been detained and separated from his homeland and family, the entire world seemed an existential jail to him, from which the only escape was death. This is also the image that emerges from his forgotten works, *The Exile's Song* and *It is weary*, discovered on the last pages of a rare 1835 edition of *The Remembrances* from Auburn.⁴

These works, although unsigned, are certainly authored by Jakubowski. They are marked by uninterrupted notation, without division into verses, similarly to *poème en prose*. It is difficult to ascertain whether they were originally written in English, or translated from Polish. In any case, these texts complete the picture of the last, American stage of Jakubowski's work. They are a concentrated expression of all his characteristic moods; that is, they are melancholic, morbid, and catastrophic, with astral, patriotic, and floral motifs. The poems are in harmony with a thesis supported by Tzvetan Todorov (Todorov 274). He wrote about the expatriate as a person who, having left his native land, has not found a substitute and is forced to live in a double externality. It should be emphasized that Jakubowski's literary works, despite their personal tone, portray the overall experience of Polish expatriates forced to go overseas. Poles who went to the United States after the defeat of the November Uprising experienced a clash of civilizations, having come into contact with an alien culture. Their sense of alienation, extreme loneliness, and maladjustment to a new reality were described by Remigiusz Sapa (Sapa 87) as the experience of an entire generation. He underlined that the deported Poles were shocked by their abrupt change in status from soldier-heroes or noble patriots to contractors who often had to perform the most heinous physical work for demeaning wages. The New World, seen by Polish immigrants as the longed-for country of freedom, most often became a place of distress rather than a *locus amoenus*.

THE EXILE'S SONG

In what breast shall I drown my tears? Who
will play accompaniment to my weary music?
The voices of my countrymen are hushed by the
tyrant, and the clanking of chains frighten away
hope. And here it is so cold although in the

⁴ Mieczysław Giergielewicz, in his 1971 article published in "The Polish Review," in which he discusses the arrangement of *The Remembrances*, merely mentioned the existence of *It is weary* and *The Exile Song*. He offered no further details about them.

land of Freedom, and here as deserted although
amid the multitude, as the world after the judgment
day. There are here no sighs to mingle
with mine, no tears to kiss my tears. The girls
smile at my stranger's language. Heaven and
earth misunderstand me here. I am alone in
thought, alone in the world. Despair is my only
friend, my only companion. I will fly like a
meteor of the skies, which consumes its life in
its light. I will pour out by degrees my soul in
tears: She shall disappear in feeling, she shall
fly away in song. But, oh! when the music of
my last song is hushed, no breast will echo back
its tones, no eye will sparkle with tears for the
stranger.

IT IS WEARY

It is weary, It is weary to the winds to blow
over the desert, but more weary to the youth to
shut up his feelings in his own heart, to find no
flowers expanding for him, to find no element
in which his thoughts can float.

It is weary, it is weary to the flowers to blossom
in the shade without the light of the sun, but
more weary to the Lover to fly from the eyes of
his Love, and to pour out his heart in tears, and
to pour out his soul in sighs.

It is weary, it is weary to the eagle to live
without a nest, although a wanderer in the heavens, but it is more weary to the exile to
be silent,-
and to pursue his dreary pilgrimage, lonely, and sad; to keep his spirit in the clouds, to
hold converse with the thunder and the lightning,
and like the lightning to burn while all around is
snow.

These works testify to Jakubowski's extreme alienation, hopelessness, and despair, never before expressed in his writings as directly as in *The Exile's Song*. The structure of the poem resonates with the sorrow of not having a soul mate, an empathetic person whom the author could trust with his feelings and reflections. The song of the exile bears no similarities to "the song of immortality" that Jakubowski wrote about in his earlier poems. Indeed, it is more akin to a swan song. The last word of the literary work clearly stands out from the rest of the text, exposing strangeness as the defining element of the immigrant's world. For him, language was not the only barrier, as there were also cultural differences that contributed to a feeling of complete solitude extending even beyond any earthly dimension (hence the metaphor of a lonely planet in the universe). The above-quoted poetic prose, like Jakubowski's other works, evokes images of an alienated individual

which cannot go beyond his own perceptions. The works of the poet's father, Antoni Malczewski, exhibit the same tendency. Like in *Maria* (Malczewski's *Magnum opus*), the heavens remain deaf to the hero's helpless call for divine providence. The place of exile becomes an alien and hostile land, full of despair, without a shadow of hope for better times. It is also the place of anticipated death. Indeed, Jakubowski committed suicide by shooting himself with a pistol. Jarosław Ławski⁵ suspects that Jakubowski killed himself not at his lowest moment, but rather as an effect of "weariness". (Ławski 22). The last English-language work of the poet, *It is weary*, draws from his experience of this mental state. This poem is an expression of complete resignation. It brings to mind the landscape of *Maria*, where "the sight wanders far, and in vain searches the plains," it "drags through (...) space, but stop where it might, / It finds no movement, it gets no respite" (Malczewski 35). Similarly, Jakubowski cannot find anything to live for. He "finds no element in which his thoughts can float" and once again "soar to the upper worlds." Floral images, so typical of Jakubowski, appear twice here – as a symbol of lost happiness and poisoned love. As he wrote in another poem, "The flower of my life was eaten away by maggots."

Just like in *The Exile's Song*, the theme of alienation is also used, as well as the absence of a close person in whom he could confide. Also in the foreword to *The Remembrances*, Jakubowski wrote of the trauma of inexpressible suffering, which was difficult for him to face on his own. He thus once again locks his feelings inside his heart, which ultimately wears him down spiritually. The entire work shows that, for Jakubowski, the greatest pain for an exiled person is to keep silent. The imagery of *It is weary* resembles an epitaph written by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, the patriarch of Polish emigration and a United States citizen who wrote the first biography of George Washington. It reads as follows:

Oh! ye exiles who so long wander over the earth, Where will you find a resting-place for your weary feet? The wild dove has its nest, and the worm a clod of earth, Each man has a country, The Pole has but a grave. (Winter 230)

In both literary works, weariness and homelessness are depicted in a similar manner (e.g. as that of a bird deprived of its nest). Niemcewicz emphasized that the expatriate, as an "alien," does not have a home of his own. The only thing he can be sure of is the grave waiting at the end of his exile. Jakubowski sees death as the only way out of the vicious circle that is the fate of the expatriate. The country of freedom

⁵ Nowadays, Jarosław Ławski is the most prominent researcher of Jakubowski's poetry. See: Ławski, Jarosław. *Bo na tym świecie Śmierć. Studia o czarnym romantyzmie*, Vol. 2, Gdańsk 2008; Ławski, Jarosław. *Malczewski – iluminacje i kłęski melancholijnego wędrowca*, [in:] A. Malczewski, *Maria. Powieść ukraińska*, Białystok 2002; Ławski, Jarosław. *Siedem. O Augustie Antonim Jakubowskim*, [in:] *Nihilizm i historia. Studia z literatury XIX i XX wieku*, ed. M. Sokołowski, J. Ławski, Białystok–Warszawa 2009; Ławski, Jarosław. *To zawsze wielki człowiek, kto największy z ludzi? (Napoleon, Malczewski, Jakubowski)*, [in:] *Literatura – Pamięć – Kultura. Prace ofiarowane Profesor Elżbiecie Feliksiak*, ed. E. Sidoruk, M. Leś, Białystok 2010; Ławski, Jarosław. *Tragiczna i utracona – Ukraina w lirze Augusta Antoniego Jakubowskiego*, [in:] *„Szkoła ukraińska” w romantyzmie polskim*, ed. S. Makowski, U. Makowska, M. Nesteruk, Warszawa 2012; Ławski, Jarosław. *W romantycznym „mroku gwiazd”. Wyobrażenia katastroficzna Augusta Antoniego Jakubowskiego*, [in:] *Poezja i astronomia*, ed. B. Burdziej, G. Halkiewicz-Sojak, Toruń 2006.

for him became an existential prison, like a bird wanting to fly back to its nest only to realize that there is no nest anymore. Jakubowski, being far away from his homeland and family, could not re-establish his roots. He was unable to break free from his obsession with death and inherent pessimism, which only grew while he was in exile in America. Comparing himself to a flower, he confessed in one of his poems:

But in your deepest roots there hides a deadly worm,
Just as mortal as the one that has my memory torn,
It was born with me and with me it will perish (Jakubowski 51)⁶

The world does not reject Jakubowski. Quite the contrary – all the Americans he meets are taken by his amicable and charming nature. The door to a promising literary career is open to him, yet he himself is the one who escapes reality. Even so, *It is weary* is devoid of any traces of defiance, anger, or malediction. Instead, it is ridden with resignation, loss of energy, and a certain acedia.

Jakubowski's English-language works have found their way to the popular imagination. Florian Stasik in his book *Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1831-1864* (*Polish Political Emigration to the United States of America 1831-1864*) quotes the following heretofore unknown, Polish-language poem by Jakubowski as an example of the misery shared by Polish exiles to the United States (Stasik 117):

And it's so cold, though it's a land of liberty,
And it's so dark, though sun shines in the sky,
And this blooming May seems so endlessly empty
As after the Judgement Day or funeral of the world...
They tell me to raise my thoughts to God,
To bend my proud knees into mud,
But my prayers are all distracted by fear,
But with sighs God faded, disappeared.⁷

Unfortunately, Stasik provides only the source of the text: "Muz. Pol. Chic., Rkps 2506 (Rap.)." – he does not cite the title, and we do not know whether this work has been translated by him, or quoted directly. The first four lines are a reference to *The Exile's Song*; the first and the last are direct translations of this American poem. The distich between them is built upon syntactic parallelism, analogous to the very beginning of this piece. Jakubowski employed a similar technique in *It is weary*. The rest of the work quoted by Stasik does not correspond with any other known work by Jakubowski, but it does resemble the deeply personal *Musings IV*. Moreover, it must be emphasised that this is one of the few poems in which Jakubowski evokes the figure of a personified God (if indeed he was the one who finalized the text).

In conclusion, *It is weary* and *The Exile's Song* can be considered part of the last, American stage of Jakubowski's literary output that preceded his death. Jakubowski's prior poetry is characterized by "stormy imagery" (this can also be seen in his

⁶ This poem was originally written in Polish and has been translated by the author of the article.

⁷ This poem was published in Polish by Florian Stasik and has been translated by the author of the article. (Stasik 117).

poems *Alopeus* and *The Wanderer* [Tulacz]). However, in *It is weary* Jakubowski uses lightning as a symbol of self-distraction for the first time. The tragic poet doesn't feel any connection with outside world, and as a result of alienation, is unable to break through his own perceptions. The symbolism in Jakubowski's poems is consistent with the tradition of *Maria*, written by his father, Antoni Malczewski. What is important is that the outside world did not dismiss Jakubowski. On the contrary, the poet had a charming personality appreciated by the Americans he met on his way. It seems that a promising literary career was within his reach, yet it was he who ran from reality. Despite the above, *It is weary* and *The Exile's Song* are not filled with rebellion and blasphemy, but with resignation, feelings of increasing weakness and a sense of approaching death.

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