

Classic Poetry Series

Juliusz Slowacki

- poems -

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Juliusz Slowacki(1809 - 1849)

Juliusz Slowacki was one of the foremost Polish romantic poets. He was a revolutionist, and he joined the Polish expatriates in Paris.

Slowacki was extremely conscious of the great literary traditions, and his works show the influence of other authors. His poetic tragedies deal with the conflict of good and evil, particularly in Polish history, and are reminiscent of the works of Shakespeare. Slowacki's *Balladina* (1834) and *Lilla Weneda* (1839) were drawn from early legends. His *Horsztynski* (1840) is known as the Polish Hamlet. *King Spirit* (1847), a philosophic poem influenced by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, reveals his later mystical tendencies and exemplifies his stylistic virtuosity. His epic of manners *Beniowski* (1841) brought the Don Juan theme to Polish literature. Slowacki is considered the national bard.

He died in Paris prematurely of tuberculosis.

Anhelli - Chapter 1

Exiles came to the land of Siberia, and having chosen a broad site they built a wooden house that they might dwell together in concord and brotherly love; and there were of them about a thousand men of various stations in life.

And the government had provided women for them that they might marry, because their sentence made known that they were sent to people the country.

For a time there was among them great order and great sorrow,
for they could not forget that they were exiles
and that they should see their fatherland no more-unless God should will it.

And when they had already built the house and each one had taken up his own work,
except the people who desired to be called wise men, who remained in idleness, saying:
'Lo, we ponder on the salvation of the father-land,' they beheld upon a time a great flock
of black birds flying from the north.

After the birds there appeared a sort of train and caravan,
and sledges harnessed with dogs, and a herd of reindeer with branching horns,
and men on skis bearing spears : it was the whole Siberian people.

At their head, moreover, walked the king of the people, who was at the same time a priest,
dressed according to their custom in furs and in corals,
and he wore a wreath of dead serpents instead of a crown.

Then that ruler, drawing near to the throng of exiles,
said in the language of their own land : 'Hail !

'Behold I have known your fathers who were also unfortunate,
and I have seen how they lived in the fear of God and died, saying ` Fatherland !
Fatherland !'

'Therefore do I wish to be your friend and to make a covenant
between you and my people, that ye may be in an hospitable land
and in a country of well-wishers.

'And of your fathers now is none living except one only, who is already old
and who is well-inclined toward me ;
but he dwelleth far hence in a lonely hut.

'If ye desire that the friend of your fathers be your leader,
I will abide with you and forsake my own people;
for ye are the more unfortunate.'

Yet more that old man said, and they showed
him reverence and invited him to their tabernacle.

And they made a covenant with the people of Siberia,
who departed and settled in their snowy villages ;
but their king remained with the exiles that he might comfort them.

And they marvelled at his wisdom, saying
'Lo, this he hath surely gotten from our fathers,
and his words are from our ancestors.'

And they called him Shaman, for so the people of Siberia
call their kings and priests, who are wizards.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 10

And lo, those exiles in the snowy tabernacle,
in the absence of the Shaman, had begun to quarrel among themselves,
and had divided into three groups ;
but each of these groups thought of the deliverance of the fatherland.

Now the first had at its head Count Scirrhush,
who upheld the cause of those who array themselves in the kontusz and will be
called gentry,
as if they had come anew with Lach into a desert country.

And the second had at its head a gaunt soldier, Skartabella by name,
who wished to divide the land and proclaim the freedom of the peasants,
and the equality of the gentry with the Jews and gipsies.

And a third had at its head Father Bonifat,
who desired to save the country by prayer,
and for the deliverance of the country offered but one means,
to go and perish, not defending one's self-like martyrs.

These three groups then began to be discordant in spirit with one another,
and they began to quarrel over their principles.

And lo, that second group, arming them-selves with axes,
went out into the field, threatening that they would find out from the first of what
sort was their blood;
to the others they would give that which they desired martyrdom.

But before it came to combat,
and while their minds were already heated,
at the advice of one of those of the third group they agreed
that they should decide this matter by the judgment of God.

And that counsellor said to them :
'Lo, let us set up three crosses in imitation of the agony of our Lord,
and on each of these three trees we will nail one of the mightiest knights in each
group ;
and he who liveth longest, with him shall be the victory.'

And the thoughts of these people being as it were in a drunken state,

three knights were found who were willing to suffer death for their convictions,
and to be crucified like the Lord Christ long ago.

So they set up three crosses from the tallest tree that there was in that country,
and three martyrs came forth, one from each group ;
however, they were not chosen by lot, but of their own will.
They were not the leaders of the groups,
but some of the least among them.

Then when the carpenters had set up the crosses on a high snowy mount,
there came a voice from heaven like a whirlwind, asking:
'What do ye?' But these people feared it not.

And they hanged upon the crosses those madmen,
and they fastened their hands with nails;
and he who was on the right shouted, 'Equality!'
and he who was on the left shouted, 'Blood!'
but the one hanging in the middle said, 'Faith!'

And the multitudes stood in silence under the crosses,
waiting what should happen ;
and so night found them in the snow,
and there was a great darkness and an awful silence.

Until at midnight the northern lights spread over the whole half of the heavens,
and fiery swords shot from them;
and all grew red, even those crosses with the martyrs.

At that moment a sort of terror seized upon the multitudes,
and they said : 'We have done ill !
Is it lawful that for our beliefs these men should perish innocently?'

And the crowds were dismayed, saying to themselves :
'Lo, they are dying, and they do not complain.'

They said, therefore, to those who were crucified :
'Do ye desire that we take you down?'
But those answered them naught, being already dead.

And realizing this, the crowds scattered, full of horror,
and none of those who fled turned his head to gaze upon the dead and martyred.
The lights reddened them, and they remained alone.

And just at this time the Shaman and Anhelli returned from their wandering
under the earth and marvelled,
observing against the fiery heavens three black crosses,
and they said in great fear : 'What hath come to pass?'

And coming nearer, they were amazed at seeing upon the crosses dead bodies,
and they recognized in them men whom they knew
then the Shaman seated himself beneath the crosses and wept.

And rising, he said to Anhelli : 'Lo, the spirit of God hath made known to me the
guilt of this people,
and I know why they crucified these men;
but that their bodies may not suffer any new dishonour,
we will take them down and bear them to the graveyard.

'Let them have rest in the earth,
for they gave themselves up to death in good faith,
and this shall not be to their damnation,
but to the wiping away of their sins.
The cross hath purified them.'

So saying, they took them down,
frozen and numb on the crosses,
and bore them away to the ancient burial-place of the exiles.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 11

And when they drew near to the burial ground Anhelli heard the hymn of the tombs,
complaining, as it were a complaint of the ashes to God.

But as soon as the groans arose,
an angel seated on the summit of the hill moved her wings and quieted them.

And three times she did this, for thrice did the tombs lament.

And Anhelli asked the Shaman what manner of angel was this with the white wings
and the dull star on her hair, before whom the tombstones became quiet.

But the old man answered him naught,
for he was covering the bodies of the dead with snow, and was troubled.

And Anhelli, drawing near to that angel, gazed upon her and fell like a man dead.

Then the Shaman, having finished the burial of the dead men,
sought him with his eyes ;
and seeing him nowhere, went up on the hill.

And discovering Anhelli's body, he stumbled over him and cried out with pain;
but perceiving that the youth lived, he was comforted.

He took him thereupon by the hand and said :
'Rise ! It is not yet time for rest !'

And rising, Anhelli looked about him
and hid his head before the Shaman like a man who is ashamed, saying

'Lo, I have perceived an angel like the woman
whom I loved with all my soul when I was yet a child.

'And I loved her in the purity of my heart;
wherefore my tears flow when I think of her and of my youth.

'For lo, I was with her as a tame bird that is afraid,
and I did not even take a kiss from her coral lips, though I was near; like a dove,

I say, seated upon the shoulder of a maiden.

'Today it is but a dream.

Lo, the sapphire heavens and the white stars gaze upon me :
are they the same stars that beheld me young and happy?

'Why doth not a whirlwind arise to blow me away from the earth
and bear me to a quiet country ! Why am I alive?

' Behold, already I have not one hair on my head of those that were there of old
;
behold, even the bones in my body have renewed themselves, but I still
remember.

'And there is not a single jackdaw in the air that hath not slept for one night of
its life in a quiet nest.
But me God hath forgotten. Would that I might die !

'For it seemeth to me that, when I am dead,
God Himself will be sorry for that which He hath done to me,
thinking that I shall not be born a second time.

'Truly, to be born is not the same as to rise from the dead :
the coffin yieldeth us up, but it doth not look upon us as doth a mother.

'Lo, therefore is it grievous to me that I have beheld this angel,
and I could wish to have died yesterday.'

And the Shaman, gazing at the stars, said ' Verily as of old many were possessed
of devils,
so to-day many are possessed of pure angels.

'What shall I do? Lo, I will drive all these souls from their bodies
and give them leave to enter into water-lilies,
and to fly abroad among the rosy stars,
and to dwell in that which is most beautiful, and to forsake men.

'And dost thou know who this sorrowful angel is in the burial-ground?
Behold, she is called Eloe, and was born of Christ's tear on Golgotha,
of that tear which was shed for the nations.

'Elsewhere it is written of this angel-even the grand-daughter of the Virgin

Mary...

how she sinned in pitying the suffering of the cherubim of darkness,
and how she fell in love with one of them, and flew after him into the darkness.

'And now she is an exile as ye are exiles,
and she hath felt deep love for your tombs,
and she is the guardian of the gravestones,
saying to the bones : `Complain not, but sleep !'

'She driveth away the reindeer when they come to pull up the moss from under
the heads of the dead;
she is the shepherdess of the reindeer.

'Accustom thyself to her during thy life,
for she will walk upon thy grave in the light of the moon;
accustom thyself to her voice, that thou mayst not wake when she shall speak.

'Verily, for those who are sorrowful this region is beautiful and not desolate ;
for here the snow doth not stain the wings of the angels, and these stars are
beautiful.

'Here the gulls fly and nest and make love,
not thinking that there is a more beautiful fatherland.'

So he spake and lifted up one of the skulls that lay uncovered ;
and in it were young brother and sister birds.

And they stretched out their little heads through the places where human eyes
had been,
and the bone of the sleeping man was full of complaining woe.

And seizing it, Anhelli flung it in wrath upon the ground,
saying : 'Away, defiled church !'

And a flame, coming forth from the ground, stood before him as in human form,
in a bishop's robe, with a mitre and cross on its head, and all fiery.

And it said with a mighty threat : 'Lo, ye have come to disturb the dead :
is it not enough for dead men to have the whirlwinds above them and oblivion?

'My hands have broken the host, and now I extend them above you and curse
you,
saying: `Be ye accursed, destroyer of tombs.'

'And have I not suffered enough on my throne, supported on my episcopal
crosier,
praying for a country that was to perish like a man condemned?

'When Kimbar evoked Siberia,
and set it before the face of the pale Diet,
saying : ` Behold, here is our cross !'

did I not go into exile like a pure man? 'Who, then, will cast a reproach on me or
my grave?

Lo, I died and they have forgotten me
what more do ye desire of men who have died?

'Ye see this white land : here I dwelt ;
ye see these bones : I have lived with them.

'And this is my bone, this bone that hath fallen to dust.
Men honoured it at one time,
and yet longer ago my mother kissed it,
and today the gull hath woven a nest in the skull and dwelleth there :
give ye peace to the white bird of God !

I knew her mother's mother, where is she?
Where are the finches that flew to dress in garlands of roses the dry trees of
Siberia,
that I might call to mind the apple-trees of my gardens in the land of my fathers
!'

So he complained, and Anhelli begged of him pardon for the dishonour to his
bones, saying :

'Lo, soon I shall come to lie down with you : curse me not.

'I thought that thou didst grieve for the contempt of thy bone-is it, then, a
sanctuary,
now that it is full of birds' screeching? But let it be as God hath willed.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 2

The Shaman, when he had searched in the hearts of that multitude of exiles,
said to himself: 'Verily, I have not found here what I sought;
lo, their hearts are weak and they give themselves over to be conquered by grief.

'In happiness they would have become a good people,
but misery will transform them into men evil and mischievous.
What hast Thou done, O God ?

'Dost Thou not grant to every flower to come to bloom there where
it hath the soil and the means of living proper to it?
Why are these people to perish?

'I will choose, then, one among them and will love him as a son,
and dying I will give to him my burden, and a greater burden than others are
able to bear,
so that in him there may be redemption.

'And I will show him all the sorrows of this earth,
and then will I leave him alone in great darkness
with the load of thoughts and yearnings in his heart.'

Having spoken thus, he called to him a youth by the name of Anhelli,
and having laid his hands upon him, he breathed into him
heartfelt love for men, and compassion.

And turning to the crowd, he said :

'I will go away with this youth to show him many grievous things, and ye shall '
remain alone to learn how to endure hunger, wretchedness, and sorrow.

'But be full of hope;
for hope shall pass from you to future generations and make them alive;
Io but if it dieth in you, then the future generations will be of dead men.

'And that thin of which ye shall think shall be fulfilled,
and there shall be great joy on earth on that day of resurrection.

'But ye shall be in your graves,
and the shrouds shall be mouldered upon you ;
nevertheless your graves shall be holy,

and God shall even turn the worms from your bodies and
shall clothe you in the proud dignity of the dead.
Ye shall be beautiful,

'Just as are your fathers who are in their graves ;
for look upon each one of their skulls ;
it doth not gnash its teeth nor suffer,
but is calm and seemeth to say : ` I have done well.'

'Keep watch over yourselves, for ye are like
'And did there not come forth from the northern lights
an angel when I summoned him from the flames?
Ask my people.

'At my word this snow became blood and this sun grew black as coal ;
for in me there is much of God.

'But tempt me not, asking for miracles ;
for ye are an old people, and to restore you is a miracle.
For that beseech God.

'That He may restore you, I say, and raise io you from the tomb and make of you
a nation
which a second time is laid in the cradle and ' wrapped in swaddling clothes,
that it may grow up straight and not crooked in body.'

Thus spake the Shaman,
and the exiles dared ; not answer him ;
but they promised to keep the covenant with the people of Siberia.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 3

And lo, once on a time at night the Shaman waked Anhelli,
saying to him : 'Sleep not, but come with me,
for there are mighty matters in the wilderness.'

Having put on a white garment, therefore,
Anhelli followed the old man, and they walked by the light of the stars.

And when they had gone a little way they beheld a camp all of little children
and striplings who had been driven to Siberia, and they were resting by a fire.

And in the centre of the throng on a Tatar horse sat a Russian priest,
who had at his saddle two baskets of bread.

And he began to instruct those children according to the new Russian faith
and accord-ing to the new catechism.

And he questioned the children on unworthy matters,
and the striplings answered him, striving to please,
for he had at his saddle baskets of bread and could feed them ;
and they were hungry.

Then, turning to Anhelli, the Shaman said
'Tell me, hath not this priest gone beyond bounds in sowing evil seed
and in staining the purity of soul in these little ones?

'Lo, already they have forgotten to weep for their mothers,
and here they fawn upon him for the sake of bread,
like young whelps; they bark out evil things and those that are contrary to the
faith

Saying that the tsar is the head of the faith and that in him is God,
and that he can counsel nothing contrary to the Holy Spirit,
even when he commandeth things which are like crimes,
for in him is the Holy Spirit.

'Therefore will I use against this priest fire
from heaven to burn him up,
and I will destroy him before the eyes of the children.'

As soon as the Shaman had pronounced the word of his malediction,
that priest caught fire upon his horse and from his breast came flames
which joined together in the air above his head.

And the affrighted horse began to bear him away over the plain ablaze ;
and then, shuddering, flung from him the ashes of the rider seated on the
saddle,
to the last one of them.

And lo, over the charred body of the man
ran sparks like those sparkles on a burnt paper
that wind and wander in various directions.

Then, approaching, the Shaman said to the children :
'Be not afraid ; God is with you !

'The fire terrified you like sleeping doves,
for ye had fallen asleep in a house that was burning
and your bodies had already withered.'

And those children stretched out their little hands to the old man,
crying : 'Father, take us with thee !'

And the Shaman said : 'Whither shall I lead you?
Lo, I go the road of death ;
do ye desire that I take you and hide you under my coat
and scatter you from my skirt before the Lord God?'

The children answered him :
'Take us and lead us by the broad highways to our mothers.'

And all began to cry out with great pride
'We are Poles, lead us away to our fatherland and to our mothers,'
until the Shaman began to weep as he smiled.

And he could not depart, for one little babe had fallen asleep on his cloak,
even on the skirt of his cloak, while he was speaking.

And the Cossacks who had drawn near gazed in amazement at what had
happened ;
and they began to drive the children away from the stranger-people,
not daring, nevertheless, to beat any one of them,

remembering that fire.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 4

And the Shaman passed with Anhelli over the desert ways of Siberia,
where stood prisons.

And they beheld the countenances of some prisoners through the gratings,
gloomy and wan, gazing at the sky.

And beside one of those prisons they fell in with men bearing coffins,
and the Shaman stayed them, bidding them open the coffins.

Then, when they had taken off the coffin lids, Anhelli shuddered,
seeing that the dead were still in chains, and he said :
'Shaman, lo I am afraid lest these martyrs may never rise from the dead.

'Waken one of them, for thou hast power to work miracles ;
waken this old man with the grey beard and the white hair;
for it seemeth to me that I knew him when he was alive.'
But the Shaman, looking down sternly, said 'Wherefore then?
Lo, I will restore him, but thou shalt kill him again.
Verily even twice will I raise him and twice from thee shall he receive death.

'Nevertheless let it be as thou requirest,
that thou mayst know that death protecteth us from sorrows
which have already set out on the way to meet us,
but have found us dead.'

So saying, the Shaman looked down upon the old man in the coffin
and said : 'Arise !' ;, and the body in chains raised itself and sat up,
gazing at the people like a man asleep.

And recognizing him at that moment, Anhelli said :
'Hail, thou man mighty aforetime in council and one of the wisest !

'What, then, befell thee in prison,
that thou didst bend thyself before power and make
that confession of guilt of which we have heard?

'Why didst thou deny thine own heart and thine own past?
With their tortures did they take from thee reason and memory?
What hast thou done !

'Thou hast worked us injury; for today stranger-people say to us :
'Lo, your leaders deny themselves and change their hearts for the nation,
and only little men remain in their constancy. ' ` This constancy of little men is
then stubbornness,
since the foremost men in the nation acknowledge their error,
not even expecting forgiveness.' '

And when Anhelli had spoken thus,
it came to pass according to the words of the Shaman
that the man who had been resurrected groaned ' and died anew.

Then said the Shaman : 'Thou hast killed him, Anhelli,
repeating men's slanders and calumny,
which he knew not before his death.

'Nevertheless I will raise him a second time,
and do thou watch that thou bring him not a second time to his death.'

Having spoken thus, he waked the dead man,
and that man in the coffin raised himself, shedding tears from his opened
eyelids.

And Anhelli said to him : 'Forgive me, for I knew not that I spake slanders and
calumny.

'Lo, I have seen thee in the council of the nation with thy brother,
and I have seen your two heads ever together,
in their whiteness like two doves that fly down together upon millet.

'For it is true that ye flew down like two doves upon the urn of plans
and stripped from the husks the grain of the laws ;
and upon your chaff flew down little sparrows,
chirping of things of less import.

'Forgive me that I compare you to God's birds
and trifling things ; for so your whiteness and simplicity bid me.

'O unfortunates ! Lo, one seeketh rest in a graveyard in Siberia,
and the other lieth under the roses and cypresses of the Seine.
Poor doves, who were separated and died !'

Hearing those words, the man who had been resurrected cried out :
'My brother !' and fell back in the coffin and died.

And the Shaman said to Anhelli :
'Why didst thou tell him of the death of his brother?
Lo, a moment, and he would have learned it from God,
and would have met his beloved brother in the heavenly land.

'It hath come to pass !
Let them cover these coffins and bear them to the graveyard.
And do thou not beseech me more to raise those
from the dead who sleep and find rest.'

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 5

And so the Shaman and Anhelli made their pilgrimage through the sorrowful country

and over the desolate roads and under the roaring forests of Siberia,
meeting men who suffered, and comforting them.

And lo, one evening they walked beside still and stagnant water,
above which grew some weeping willows and a few pines.

And the Shaman, seeing the fishes leaping out toward the evening glow, said :
'Lo, thou sawest this roach that flew through the air and again sank.

'And now she will tell her sisters at the bottom that she hath beheld the heaven,
and she will tell them various things of heaven,
and from that she will have honour among the other fishes.

'Hearing, then, the tale of the heavens,
they will swim into the nets and tomorrow
they will be sold in the market place.

'Is not that a lesson for men and for those who wander like festoons after men
who prattle of God and the heavens,
and so let themselves be snared in the nets of men and be sold?

'But a fatal illness, I tell thee,
is melancholy and excessive pondering within oneself of the things of the spirit.

'For there are two melancholies :
one cometh from strength, the other from weakness ;
the first is the wings of lofty men, the second the stone of men who drown
themselves.

'I tell thee this, for thou dost incline to sorrow and dost lose hope.'

So saying, they came upon a throng of Siberians who were catching fish in the lake.

And those fishermen, having perceived the Shaman, ran up to him, saying :
'Our king ! Thou didst forsake us for strange people
and we are sorrowful, not seeing thee amongst us.

'Tarry through this night, and we will set out supper and spread thee a bed in the boat.'

The Shaman seated himself on the ground,
therefore, and the women and children of the fishermen surrounded him
and put to him various questions,
to which the Shaman answered with a smile, for they were trivial.

But after supper, when the moon arose
and spread her light over the smooth water like a golden highway to the south,

The women and children began to talk more sadly,
saying : 'Lo, thou hast left us and dost work no more miracles among us.

'Therefore we have begun to doubt the things of the faith,
and we doubt even whether there is in us such a thing as a soul.' To this the
Shaman said, smiling :

'Do ye desire that I should show you a soul before your eyes?'

And all the women and children cried out in unison :
'We desire it ! Do so !'

Then the Shaman, turning to Anhelli, said
'What shall I do for this crowd of magpies?
Dost thou wish me to put thee to sleep, and,
having called thy soul from thy body, to show it to these people?'

Anhelli answered him : 'Do as thou wilt;
I am in thy power.'

Then the Shaman, having called one of the children from the throng,
placed it upon the breast of Anhelli,
who had lain down as if to sleep,
and said to that child

'Lo, lay thy hands upon the brow of this youth,
and summon him three times by the name Anhelli.'

And it came to pass that at the child's call
there came forth from Anhelli a spirit having a beautiful form
and varying colours and white wings on its shoulders.

And seeing that it was free, that angel walked to the water,
and along the column of moonlight proceeded toward the south.

Then, when it was already far off and in the centre of the lake,
the Shaman bade that child call the soul to return.

And the bright soul looked back at the summons of the child
and returned lingeringly over the golden wave,
trailing behind it the tips of its wings that drooped in sorrow.

And when the Shaman bade it enter into the body of the young man
it groaned like a broken harp and shuddered, but it obeyed.

And awaking, Anhelli sat up and asked what had befallen him.

The fishermen answered him : 'Master, we have seen thy soul,
and we beg thee be our king !
For the kings of China are not arrayed in such glory
as the soul that is of thy body.

'And we have seen nothing more glorious in ,
the world except the sun, and nothing more brightly gleaming,
except the stars, that are rosy and blue.

'Wings like these have not the swans
that fly in May over our land.

'And we even perceived a fragrance like the fragrance of a thousand flowers
and the breath of lilies of the valley.'

Hearing this, Anhelli turned to the Shaman and said :

'Is this true?' And the Shaman said:

'It is true; thou art possessed of an angel.'

'What, then,' asked Anhelli, 'did my soul do,
when it was free? Tell me, for I remember not.'

The Shaman answered him :

'Lo, it went along that golden highway that the moon spreadeth upon the water
and fled in that direction like a man who is in haste.'

And at these words Anhelli bowed his head,
and after pondering within himself began to weep, saying :

'Lo, it desired to return to the fatherland.'

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 6

When the Shaman had calmed the weeping of Anhelli,
he left the fishermen and set out into the wilderness.

And the moon was still high when they came to the hut of an aged man,
who greeted the Shaman like an old friend. He was one of the exiles of Bar, the
last one.

His hut, shaded by a broad apple-tree full of the nests of doves
and singing with locusts, was secluded and peaceful.

And that old man set before his guests a pewter pitcher, bread and red apples,
and then he began after his wont a talk of olden times and of men already dead.

For he knew not at all that there was a new generation in Poland,
and new knights and new martyrs ;
and he did not wish to know of it, being a man of the past.

And there was in him now no memory
but the memory of the things that had befallen in his youth ;
but of yesterday he knew not and he did not think of tomorrow.

And he supported himself from insects which are called cochineal ;
and from them he paid the tax to the tsar,
and this was the very day for collecting the tribute.

About an hour later there drove up before the hut the toll gatherer,
and having drunk from the pitcher he demanded the matter due him.

That old man then stripped himself of everything, to meet the tax and enrich that
servant.

And having gathered together all, the toll gatherer went out from the hut, saying
'Behold, thou hast an apple-tree covered with fruit, I must take the tithe from it.'

Having spoken thus, he bade his servants shake the old and spreading tree,
but the Shaman said to Anhelli

'Go and stand under the apple-tree, and say nothing to those who shake the tree
until the power of God is made manifest.'

Anhelli went, therefore, and stood beneath a shower of red apples, like a man at peace.

And lo, the apple-tree was surrounded with a great radiance,
and the fruit upon it became stars,
and, glittering brightly, they fell no more.

And the sleeping doves awoke,
thinking that it was already the hour of dawn,
and having preened their feathers
they flew away into the rosy air.

Thereupon the new splendour so awed those toll gatherers that,
leaving all the tax, they made off in terror,
and taking their seats in their carriage they drove away.

And the Shaman, calling to Anhelli, said
'Let us go hence, for the goodman will ask us by what power we do this,
and that is a mystery,
and the meaning of these stars is a mystery.'

So saying, he wrapped himself and Anhelli in darkness, and they departed.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 7

And the Shaman said : 'Lo, now we shall show no more miracles,
nor the power of God that is in us, but we shall weep,
for we have come unto people who see not the sun.

'Neither is it fitting to give them teaching, for misfortune hath taught them more;
nor shall we give them hope, for they will not believe.
In the sentence that condemned them was written : `Forever !'

'Behold, here are the mines of Siberia.

'Walk here circumspectly, for this ground is paved with sleeping men.
Dost thou hear?
Lo, they breathe loudly, and some of them groan and talk in their sleep

'One of his mother, another of his sisters and brothers,
and a third of his home and of her whom he loved in his heart,
and of the fields where the corn bowed down to him as to its lord ;
and they are happy now in their sleep-but they will wake.

'In other mines the felons howl,
but this is only the grave of the sons of the fatherland,
and is full of silence.

'The chain that clanketh here hath a mourn full voice,
and in the vault are various echoes,
and one echo that saith : `I pity you.' '

While the Shaman compassionated them,
there came guards and soldiers with lamps to wake the sleepers to work.

They all arose from the ground, therefore,
and roused themselves, and went like sheep with hanging heads,
except one who did not rise, for he had died in his sleep.

Then Anhelli, approaching those who were going to work with their mallets,
asked one of them in a low voice who this dead man was,
and of what illness he had perished.

Thereupon there answered him a pale man, a prisoner :

'He concerning whom thou dost inquire was a priest;
I knew him, he confessed my wife and my children in the fatherland.

'But when war came he seated himself upon a horse with the cross in his hand
and with zo bare feet,
and when there was firing, he stood in front of the ranks, crying out :
' For the fatherland ! For the fatherland !'

'And the bishop summoned him and gave him over into the hands of the
executioners,
but first in the city square he deprived him of his holy office ;
and the bishop dropped from his hands his crosier, and he swooned.

'And the executioners caught the man of God and thrust him into a strait jacket,
and then they fastened him in it with difficulty, for he was a stout man,
and he became motionless like a thing dead.

'Then they brought him to the mine,
and he pretended that he was glad in his heart,
Io but I saw that he was pale and sad.

'And he gave himself up to despair, and withered like an old tree.
And coming up to him once, I said : ' Fear God ! Why dost thou fret a'

'And he said to me with great mystery, like a man crazed :
' I have forgotten the words of the Lord's Prayer,'
and warning me with his finger to be quiet, he departed.

'And I observed him once when in the dark
he took putrid lead and ate that poison.

'And after a few days a brick red came into his face,
and his body wasted away on his bones,
like the drenched linen of a tent,
and he had eyes that glittered.

'But today I know not how he died, for behold I slept beside him,
and I did not hear that he even groaned.

'But if ye have a heart, pity him, for I know him ; he was an upright man.'

Then Anhelli, turning to the Shaman, said 'He is a self-murderer.'

But the Shaman covered his eyes, and lifting up a morsel of lead from the ground, said

'This lead is the murderer and evil counsellor, for it said :

`Take me and eat me, I am the end and repose.'

'This lead is a cheat, for it gave itself out before he man for God,
who alone endeth suffering forever and putteth the heart at rest.

'And cursed is he who before the least gust falleth to the ground
and is crushed ! He is like a shattered column.

'But before mighty whirlwinds even ye are permitted to fall-ye shall be pitied.

'What then ! Will they deny you consecrated ground?

Who knoweth how a man sleepeth in an unconsecrated grave!

'Nevertheless it is better to die amid a throng of children and grandchildren who
weep,

and to behold the unfolding of the trees in the spring, and to have a quiet hour.'

When the Shaman had spoken thus,

the wretched men surrounded him in a circle and said :

'Thou dost teach well, thou art a man of heart and perhaps one sent from God.

'Lo, therefore, know thou that five days ago a rock fell and blocked one of the
corridors

where a certain old man was working with his five sons,

and the guards do not wish to break it down with powder, saying :

`That is a long task, let him die.'

'And we stand every day before that rock,

listening whether they still live,

but nothing is to be heard in that cave, not even a groan.

'If thou art a man of God, roll away the stone.

Perhaps the father yet liveth or one of his children.

'At least make our executioners marvel, freeing these men, for they will die of
hunger.'

So they brought the Shaman to that rock,

and a great stillness fell; and the Shaman,
raising his eyes on high, prayed.

And a wind rose from under the ground
and overturned the rock, so that there was opened up cavern dark and deep,
and no one dared enter first into it.

So the Shaman, taking a fire-pot,
went into the cave over the shattered stones,
and after him Anhelli and the prisoners.

And a ghastly sight they beheld !
Lo, on the body of the youngest son lay the father,
like a dog that putteth his paws on bones and is angry !

And the open eyes of that father glistened like glass,
and the four others lay dead near by, one beside another.

And the Shaman, looking on them, said 'What have I done?
Lo, the father liveth and his sons have already died.
Why did I pray !'

So saying, he departed from the cave,
and half the multitude followed after him.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 8

And passing further they beheld many men pale and tortured,
whose names are known in the fatherland.

And they came to a subterranean lake,
and proceeded along the shores of the dark water,
which stirred not, but was golden in places from the light of torches.

And the Shaman said : 'Is this the Lake of Gennesaret of the Poles?
And these men, are they fishermen of misfortune?'

Then one of those who sat sorrowfully by the shores of the black water,
with a thoughtful face, answered :
'They allow us to rest, for today is the king's saint's day, and a day of repose.

'Therefore do we sit beside the dark water to think and to meditate and to rest ;
for our hearts are more wearied than our bodies.

'For lo, we lost not long since our prophet,
whose favourite spot this rock was, and these waters were dear to him.

'He was a man pale, with gleaming eyes, gaunt and full of fire.

'And lo, seven years ago there came upon him one night the spirit of prophecy,
and he felt the shock which was in the fatherland,
and related to us through a whole night what he saw, laughing and crying.

'And only in the morning did he become sad, and he cried out :
'Lo, they have risen again, but they cannot roll away the stones from their
graves !'
And having said this, he fell dead.
And we set up to him this wooden cross.

'And two years later new exiles told us what had happened,
and, reckoning up the nights, we found that that prophet had told us the truth :
therefore we wished to do him honour, but he was already in the ground.

'Therefore do we honour this cross, no longer saying :
'Lo, the man who lieth under it was mad and crazed, and deserving of laughter.'
What say ye to that?'

And turning, the Shaman said to Anhelli :

'On what dost thou meditate above this black water? Is it of the tears of the people?

Or dost thou ponder on that prophet? Or on thyself?'

As he spoke, there came a great echo from the explosion of a mine,
and it resounded above their heads, ringing like an underground bell.

And the Shaman said : 'Lo, that is the tolling for the dead prophet !

Behold, there is an angel of the Lord for those who see not the sun. Let us pray.'

And raising his eyes, he said :

'God ! God ! We beseech Thee that our torture may be a redemption.

'And we will not supplicate Thee to return the sun to our eyes,
and the air to our breasts,

for we know that Thy judgment hath been passed upon us
but the newborn are guiltless. Have mercy, O God !

'And forgive us that we bear our cross in sorrow and are not joyful like the
martyrs;

for Thou hast not said whether our torture shall be reckoned in us as a sacrifice;
but tell us that and we shall rejoice.

'For what is life that we should regret it?

Is it a good angel who abandoneth us in the hour of death?

'The heat of our blood is the fire of the sacrifice, and the sacrifice is our desires.
Happy are those who can consecrate themselves for the people.'

And to that the wretched men said :

'Lo, this man speaketh truth; for more unhappy than ourselves is that woman
who followed her husband hither,
and who suffereth for the heart of man.

'Come, and we will show you the damp pit where that martyr dwelleth with her
husband.

'She was a great lady and a princess,
and now she is as the handmaiden of a beggar.

'And unworthy of her pity is he whom she loved ;
for, kneeling before the emperor, he pleaded for his life,

and they gave it to him, despising him.'

So saying they came up close to a wall,
and through the grating they beheld that wedded pair.

The woman was kneeling before the man, and in a basin of water was washing
his feet ;
for he had returned from his work as a labourer.

And the water in the basin was reddened from his blood,
and the woman did not shudder at the man and the blood,
and she was young and beautiful, like the angels of heaven.

That man and that woman were of the tsar's people.

Juliusz Slowacki

Anhelli - Chapter 9

And when the Shaman was about to go forth with Anhelli under the stars,
having comforted some of the prisoners,
he heard a great clanking in one of the corridors.

Turning, therefore, to one of those who followed him,
he asked him what that might be, that clanking of iron and beating?
And the prisoner answered : 'They are punishing one of us.

'Evidently the old man who yesterday refused to work
because of God's holiday, they are making run the gauntlet.'

And the Shaman and Anhelli, having repaired to the place of torture,
beheld in a corridor two ranks of men standing with chains in their hands,
each in the posture of a man who designeth to strike.

And they saw advancing towards them two soldiers with lamps,
and in the centre behind them, stripped to the girdle, a man with a grey beard.

And at every step, as he approached, was heard the blow of a chain
and a second clang coming from the gaunt breast of the old man who was
beaten.

When he was already at the end of the punishment
and there remained to him scarce ten paces or a little more,
Anhelli heard two blows, weaker, as if given by merciful men.

But the old man, on receiving them, fell in a cross upon the ground and was
dead.

So those two young men who had struck him mercifully,
fell upon his shoulders and lay upon his dead body,
calling out, one and the other, 'My father !'

And the Shaman turned away and, looking upon Anhelli,
covered Anhelli's head with the skirt of his own garment.

And he bade himself be borne away by heavenly spirits,
and opening his eyes Anhelli beheld the snow and the stars.

And he was persuaded that the vision of the mines was a dream,
for he knew not how he had come away from them.

Juliusz Slowacki

Pan Beniowski - Final Part Of Canto Five

Surging like a vast current of salmon or sheatfish,
Coiling up and down like an iron serpent
That rears now its torso, now its head,
The armed horsemen breast the prairie grass. --
But hold! my song's device breaks down:
My Muse begs a rest, having drained her cup
Empty of sweet nectar; and so, farewell
To you, on that steppeland rise,

My pair of golden, sun-drenched statues!
My iron ranks wallowing in the grass and herbage!
One needs here the yearning of a Malczewski--
The kind found in men who are half angels.
One ought to sing here; meanwhile I weave fables.
Whenever I stir up the ashes of my homeland
And then raise my hand once more to the harp,
Specters from the grave rise before me--specters

So lovely! So transparent! Fresh! Alive! Young!
That I am incapable of shedding real tears over them:
And yet I lead them in a dance about the valleys.
They take from my heart whatever they like:
A sonnet, a tragedy, a legend or sublime ode.
It is all that I have, all that I cherish and believe in.
Believe in. . . You ask me, my dear reader,
What I believe in? If I told, it would raise a furor.

In the first place, this rhyme which scoffs and reviles
Has a political credo: these are Dantesque regions
You have entered. I believe with a pagan's heart
In Shakespeare's rhymes, in Dante and in Homer.
I believe in the commonwealth of an only son --
In our case it was that surly fellow--Mochnecki!
Though he never stopped spinning his mighty dreams,
He allowed the Dictator to stretch him upon a cross.

I believe that he came into being in human form
And went to the Great Judgment that lights up
Our land; on the way, he dropped in on the Aristocracy
And bided in that flameless Hell for three days;
Then in a little book he passed judgment on his brothers:
Those who are upright and those who feel no shame;
In him I believe, and in his two unfinished books:
I believe in all the saints of our émigré circles,

And in their spiritual communion with our nation;
In the forgiveness of sins committed by our leaders
And the resurrection of our elected Sejm under Herod
Which being a very amusing body will constitute
The best proof of the resurrection of the body--
The supreme instance of bodily resuscitation;
And finally, secure as to the future, I should add
That I believe in the life everlasting of that Sejm.

Amen... This amen chokes me, catches in my throat
Like the amen Macbeth uttered. -- Still, I believe
That like cranes chained to the wing the nations are making
Progress . . . that knights rise out of the bones. . .
That the tyrant cannot sleep when he bloodies the bed
Or robs the eagles of the youngest brood. . .
That fire and serpents and fear are his bedfellows. . .
All this I believe--yes--and in God as well!

O God! Who has not felt You in the blue fields
Of Ukraine where the level plains arouse
Such sadness in the soul that ranges over them! --
When, accompanied by a windy hymn,
The dust which Tartar hordes drenched in blood
Takes wing, shrouds the golden sun in ashes,
Blurs, reddens it, then suspends it in the sky
Like a black buckler with blood-shot eyes --

Who has not seen You, Almighty God,

On that great steppe, under a lifeless sun,
When the mounds on which all crosses stand
Bring blood to mind--or crooked flames;
When far off thunders a sea of bent-grass,
Burial mounds cry out with a terrible voice,
The locust unfurls its black rainbows, and the garland
Of graves melts away into the distance;

Who has not felt You in the terrors of nature:
In the great steppe or on Golgotha's hill
Or among columns surmounted not by a roof
But by a moon and an untold number of stars;
And who in the zest and ardor of youthful feeling
Has not felt that You exist, or, plucking daisies,
Has not found You in those daisies and forget-me-nots?
Yet still he seeks You in prayer and good deeds:

No doubt he will find You -- no doubt he will --
I wish small-hearted men a humble faith
And a peaceful death. -- Jehovah's flashing face
Is of vast measure! When I count up the layers
Of exposed earth and see the bone piles
Lying there like the standards of lost armies
At the foot of mountain ridges -- skeletal remains
That also bear witness to God's being --

I see that He is not only the God of worms
And things that creep and crawl upon the dust:
He loves the booming flight of gigantic birds;
Puts no curb on stampeding horses. . .
He is the flaming plume of proud helms. . . Often
A great deed will sway Him where a tear-drop
Shed on the church doorstep will not: before Him
I fall down prostrate -- for He is God!

Where then is humility's forerunner?--the man
Who contended with me like a god? I seek him still;
I'll cleave his head with a lightning bolt, just as yesterday

I dealt him a blow on the breast. Have you seen him?
His lips are seasoned with wormwood. . . The people
Who believed in him make a show of joy
Yet droop their heads, for they know it was my nod
That brought the Prophet-Bard back to life.

Bit by bit, I tore my heart to shreds,
Forged the pieces into firebolts and hurled them
At his face; each piece boomed like a crag
As if high in the sky I had shattered a god into bits
And now the pieces were raining down. . . I smashed him --
But what have I gained in the eyes of the people today?
The battle and victory took place high in the heavens --
People see nothing in me, but courage.

Indeed. . . My nation! If you had but seen
How lonely and sorrow-laden I was
Knowing that if my firebolt failed to pierce him,
The Lithuanians would seize me in their collective claws;
But then, recalling my nest in the eastern marches,
I beckoned to Kremenets Mountain that it rise up
And put that rabble to flight -- that it stand with me --
Or take up an inferior position beneath me.

For my sad heart breaks into pieces at the thought
That there are no noble-hearted souls taking my part;
That to no purpose do I cast impassioned words
Filled with tears, blood and brilliant flashes
On hearts that remain repellent to me -- I
Who also have a land that is rich in flowering meads,
A native land flowing with blood and milk:
And it ought likewise to love me.

If you -- you! -- are without hearts, then my heart
Shall feel for you; shall forgive without measure.
River Ikwa! Inundate this carpet of green meadows!

You too have renown, for it is as if your lapping waves
Were weighing matters of colossal moment with the Niemen --
It was you who forced old Niemen to confess
My greatness: that we are flowing forward to glory. . .
But he said: Let him go where we go.

But oh my Prophet-Bard! Where are you going?
What harbor beacon lights your way, and where?
Either you founder in the depths of Slavonic atavism
Or with your lightning mind you sweep up
The refuse and drive it at the Pontiff's triple crown.
I know your harbors and coastlands! I shall not go
With you, or go your false way -- I shall take
Another road! -- and the nation will go with me!

If it should chose to love, I shall give it a swan's voice,
That it might sing out its love. If it should chose to curse,
It will curse through me; should it chose to burn --
I shall furnish the heat: I shall lead it wherever God
Would take it -- to infinity -- in every direction.
My name will serve as a vessel for its blood and tears.
My standard shall never play it false: by day
It will shine like the sun, by night, like a fiery cloud.

Ah! So you show up at last, my knight?
Now I shall have at you with my sword!
First I shall show you the sun reflected in my shield,
Then before the sun I shall unbosom you of fear. . .
I shall reveal the falsehood in your latest orison,
And, with that falsehood shown, deal your death blow;
I gaze on your face -- green in the night like the moon --
So have you renounced the power of the sun?

I told you that you were like a Lithuanian deity rising
Out of a holy place embosomed by dark pines;
Clutched in your hand like a celestial moon was a cross;
On your lips, flashing like a lightning bolt, was the word.
And saying this -- am I not the son of song? A king's son! --

I fell. -- And you stepped up -- did you not? --
To place your foot upon me as though I were dead
And I rose -- having merely feigned terror and death!

You will always find me standing before your eyes --
Unshakable, proud and terrible. . . I am not you --
You are not an Eternal Flame. And even if you are
A god -- I at least am a living one!
Ready to lash a graven image with my snaking whip
So long as you drive this world down a false path. . .
I cherish our people more than dead men's bones. . .
I love -- but I am without mercy and tears

For the vanquished. -- Such is my panoply of arms!
And such is the sorcerer's magic of my thoughts!
Though you may oppose me today, the future is mine! --
Victory shall be mine -- beyond the grave. . .
The Troy of your poets shall fall at my feet,
No Hector's courage of yours will save her.
God has charged the future with my defense:--
I shall slay you -- draw your corpse behind me!

And let the ages pass judgment. -- Keep well, my Bard!
With you this song began, ancient deity!
I have laved your bays in a rain of burning words
And shown that a broken heart can be traced
Upon your bark -- your trembling leafage
Reveals a dry rot gnawing at your soul.
Keep well! Foes do not bid farewell like this,
Only two divinities -- upon opposite-facing suns.

Juliusz Slowacki