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THE STORY OF APOLONIA TOCHMAN OR THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN MYTH OF A NEW JOAN OF ARC

Abstract

The article presents the problem of the creation of historical myths using the example of the story of Apolonia Jagiełło Tochman (c. 1825–1867), an alleged participant in the Kraków Uprising of 1846 and the Hungarian Spring of Nations, who came to America with a group of Hungarian insurgents in 1848. Faced with the difficulty of separating fact from myth in her biography, it addresses the problem of the origin of the heroic myth of Apolonia Tochman, whose name is still included in many Anglo-Saxon studies devoted to legendary and historical women warriors. Treating the myth as an unverifiable and ‘immobilised’ formulation that is supposed to say something about the world, as a category of symbolic or factual truths, it attempts to answer the question of whether Tochman’s heroic myth was a product of conscious self-creation, particular interests or social needs and what was the phenomenon of Tochman’s American popularity embraced by American presidents and compared to Joan of Arc, the semi-legendary Catalina de Erauso or the Hungarian heroines of the 1848–1849 revolution.

Keywords: Kraków Uprising 1846, Spring of Nations, Polish emigration, Poles in America, myth of the woman warrior

Portrayed as a heroine of the Kraków Uprising of 1846 and the Spring of Nations (1848–1849),¹ Apolonia Tochman (c. 1825–1867), also known as Jagiełło, is one of the most intriguing figures of Polish political emigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. Welcomed by American presidents and adored by Washington society,

¹ She is mentioned in Hungarian historiography alongside such revolutionary heroines as Mária Lebstück (pseudonym Karol) and Júlia Bánya (pseudonym Gyula Sárossy). For more on women warriors in Hungarian historiography, see Adrienn Gulyás, ‘Honvédnők utóélete a dualizmus korában’, *Aetas*, xxvii, 4 (2022), 42–62.

she gained a reputation as a modern-day Joan of Arc, and her name is still mentioned in Anglo-Saxon studies of women warriors in history.² To this day, however, she has not received a critical biographical treatment, and is practically absent from Polish historiography.³ She is occasionally mentioned as the wife of the November insurgent, lawyer, and emigrant activist Kacper Tochman (1799–1880),⁴ where uncertain information about her participation in the struggle or her

² By “women warriors” I mean women who fought with weapons in an insurrection, war or revolution, being both historical and legendary figures. See also: Jessica Amanda Salmonson, *The Encyclopedia of Amazons. Women Warriors from Antiquity to the Modern Era* (New York, 1991); Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Women Warriors in History* 1,622. *Biographies Worldwide from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Jefferson, 2003), 252; Apolonia Tochman is also mentioned in Clare Pettitti’s intriguing analysis of the 1848 revolution, *Serial Revolutions 1848 Writing, Politics, Form* (Oxford, 2022), 37. To this day, she is portrayed as an Amazon in scientific and press articles.

³ One of the earliest mentions of Apolonia is the entry “Jagiellówna Apolonia” in the Warsaw *Encyklopedia powszechna kieszonkowa* of 1891. However, there is not much biographical information in it, apart from generalities relating to the Hungarian Spring of Nations: “known for her courage and self-sacrifice in dressing the wounded ... she fought alongside the bravest warriors when necessary”. Nowadays, a lot of valuable information on her has been collected by Ewa Nowak in her unfortunately unpublished master’s thesis ‘Kacper Tochman (1799–1880), powstaniec, emigrant, prawnik’ (Kraków, 2018). A small biography of Apolonia Tochman was also included in *Polski słownik biograficzny (Polish Biographical Dictionary)* (Agata Barzycka-Paździor, ‘Tochman (Tochmann) Apolonia (Apollonia, Appollonia) ... (ok. 1823–1867)’, in *ibid.*, liii (Warszawa–Kraków, 2021), 605–6.

⁴ Before arriving in the USA, he was involved in patriotic activities at home. After the fall of the November Uprising, he emigrated to France with General Maciej Rybiński’s corps, and from 1837 he lived in the United States. In 1840 he was granted American citizenship, and in 1845, he was admitted to practice law in the states of New York and Maryland and at the Supreme Court in Washington. He worked with Reverdy Johnson, later Attorney General in Zachary Taylor’s cabinet, and had a law firm in the capital city with Levi Woodbury. Between 1840 and 1844, he delivered approximately 100 lectures on the situation on Polish soil and the history of Polish aspirations for independence. In Washington, he founded the Polish Association (1842) and the Polish-Slavic Literary Society (1846). Between 1845 and 1853, he represented the relatives of Tadeusz Kościuszko in the case of his American inheritance and worked on the Supreme Court judgment of 11 April 1853, which awarded them the estate (c. USD 37,000 with interest). See also: Agata Barzycka-Paździor and Ewa Nowak, ‘Tochman (Tochmann, de Tochmann) Kasper (Kacper, Gaspar, Gaspard) (1799–1880)’, in *Polski słownik biograficzny* (Kraków–Warszawa, 2021), 607–10 (full bibliography there).

attainment of the rank of colonel is repeated.⁵ However, there are doubts not only about her heroic biography, but also about her real surname and background.

Separating fact from myth in this biography poses numerous difficulties, as the archival research for the elaboration of her biography in *Polski słownik biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary] has demonstrated. Nor have Hungarian researchers, who have so far been the most thorough in their treatment of this figure, been able to do so. Although Ödön (Edmund) Vasváry included her in the list of “Hungarian political crooks”,⁶ he refrained from writing a biography because he was unable to process the material critically.⁷ There is still no reliable information about the course of her ‘service’, her affiliation to a unit or her use of a pseudonym, which was usually adopted by women who fought in male guise. It is worth noting, however, that while Apolonia’s biography up to the time of her arrival in the United States is difficult to establish, the American period of her life is different. Recently, the Hungarian researcher Adrienn Gulyás questioned the identity of Apolonia in her article “Jagello Apollónia, egy lengyel–magyar katonanő élete és utóélete”,⁸ but it did not bring in any significant arguments, marginalising the period of her life in the USA, which is so important for the reading of Tochman’s biography.

Given the existing problems with the objectification of Apolonia Tochman’s biography, I propose in this text to examine it from the perspective of the myth of the woman warrior. Thus, it is not just a matter of a common understanding of myth as an unreliable and factually contradictory scientific narrative, and thus of questioning the

⁵ Piotr Derengowski, ‘1 i 2 pułk piechoty Brygady Polskiej w wojskach Konfederacji 1861–1865 (14 i 15 pułk piechoty z Luizjany)’, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, ii (2011), 27.

⁶ Ödön Vasváry, *Magyar Amerika*, ed. by András Csillag (Szeged, 1988), 193; Gulyás, ‘Honvédnők’, 59.

⁷ He published a small article about Apolonia Tochman’s deceit, entitled *Egy régi botrány utóhangja* (*Szabadság*, 6 March 1962), in which he writes that Polish historians studying the emigration, including even “the best of them, Mieczysław Heiman”, had no idea about the whole affair. In this article, he in fact relies on the information of Henri de Ahna, more about whom below.

⁸ Adrienn Gulyás, “...ki száműzetésében is huszárdolmányt viselt”. Jagello Apollónia, egy lengyel–magyar katonanő élete és utóélete’, *Vasváry Collection Newsletter*, 2 (68) (2022), http://vasvary.sk-szeged.hu/newsletter/22dec/gulyas_adrienn_jagello.html [Accessed: 10 July 2025].

credibility of Apolonia's biography. I see the mythical dimension of her biography here in the context of the concept of the truth of a given historical time, as already discussed in the eighteenth century by Giovanni Battista (Giambattista) Vico in *La Scienza Nuova*,⁹ i.e. myth as a carrier of knowledge about the beliefs, the world view and the needs of a particular community in a specific moment in history. Paradoxically, from the point of view of the foundations of historical science, it is therefore not a question of deconstructing and falsifying Tochman's heroic myth, but of asking about its genesis and the mechanisms of mythologising her biography. How did it happen that a virtually unknown 20-year-old became a heroine of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions for the Americans? To what extent was her biography a product of conscious self-creation, of third parties acting for various reasons, or a reflection of the social conditions of the time? How did Tochman's biography fit into the prevailing image of femininity and perception of the role of women at the time?¹⁰ Did the heroic myth of Apolonia symbolise only idealised patriotism or a new model of femininity that challenged the traditional division of social roles between men and women? I treat the myth of the woman warrior as a variant of the heroic myth, whose role is seen not so much in ethical valorisation as in the "demonstration of greatness understood as causality in the world, the ability to change reality according to one's will".¹¹ As Wiktor Werner argues, this myth is very much rooted in the mental needs of people,

who, perceiving themselves as individuals, attribute to themselves (based on their observation of the world) causality or at least the potential for causality in relation to their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. Experiencing, on an individual scale, the dramas of choices ... and the joys and sorrows of their consequences ..., we tend to feel emotionally attached to historical figures (political leaders, military commanders, figures of religion or science) who make these choices on a historical scale appropriate to them.¹²

⁹ Giambattista Vico, *Nauka nowa*, trans. by Jan Jakubowicz (Warszawa, 1966).

¹⁰ For more on "true womanhood", see Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *American Quarterly*, xviii, 2 (1966) 151–74.

¹¹ Wiktor Werner, 'Mity w historiografii, mity historiograficzne', in Ewa Domańska and Jan Pomorski (eds), *Wprowadzenie do metodologii historii* (Warszawa, 2002), 196.

¹² *Ibid.*, 194.

The analysis is micro-historical in nature. In seeking answers to the questions posed above about Apolonia Tochman, a multifaceted approach to the myth is necessary.¹³ Firstly, as a fictional story about the past that finds confirmation in historical images of reality – myth as an (ideological) tool used in the field of social life. Secondly, myth is a “vision of the world and of man” that guides the historian’s research process and, finally, myth is a tool for ‘organising experience’ and making sense of reality/history, with emphasis on the aspects of the content and form of myth.¹⁴ The source base of the article consists mainly of printed material from the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, including publications by the American journalist and social activist Sarah Jane Clarke Lippincott (pseudonym Grace Greenwood), lexicons on women warriors, and the controversial pamphlet by the Bavarian officer Henri de Ahna *The Greatest Humbug of the Day. Maj. Gaspar Tochman and Mrs Tochman (The late Hungarian Heroine)*.¹⁵ Extensive use has been made of the American press of the time, along with a few archival records. It must be emphasised that, especially with regard to the events of the pre-emigration period, all the facts and circumstances presented may be a confabulation of those who wrote about Apolonia, caused by some resentment (dislike or apologia), and, in terms of credibility, these revelations must be approached with caution. However, this does not diminish their research potential for the purposes of this text.

‘HEROINE IN GOOD CAUSE’

Apolonia arrived in America as ‘Miss Jagiełło’ with the first group of Hungarian insurgents to flee the country after the capitulation of Komárom on 27 September 1849.¹⁶ She travelled with Hungarian

¹³ I refer here to the three general functions of myth in history and historiography after Marek Woźniak, ‘Mit historyczny jako przedmiot i narzędzie badań’, *Historyka*, 32 (2003), 66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Henri de Ahna, *The Greatest Humbug of the Day. Maj. Gaspar Tochman and Mrs Tochman (The late Hungarian Heroine)* (Washington DC, 1851).

¹⁶ On 27 Sep. 1849, the terms of surrender were signed and on 2 Oct. 1849 the fortress was handed over to Austrian Field Marshal Jacob Julius von Haynau.

officers led by General László Újházy,¹⁷ the government commissioner in charge of recruiting soldiers, supplies and supervision of the Komárom fortress.¹⁸ It is not known whether she emigrated with them jointly from Komárom, as, according to press reports, she passed through Berlin in October “with two Hungarian officers”,¹⁹ whose identities were not given. By then, she and Újházy were in Hamburg, where a fundraising committee for Hungarian emigrants had been established.²⁰ From there, they travelled to the port of Bremen, where they boarded the steamer “Washington” for England.²¹ During a several-day stopover in London, she accompanied Újházy to a meeting with the American ambassador in office there, Lawrence Abbott, and the American ambassador to Germany, Andrew Jackson Donelson. Then, in November 1849, they sailed from Southampton²² to Halifax in Canada on the steamship ‘Hermann’, from where they reached America. Interestingly, Apolonia had already become an object of interest in the press, first the Wielkopolska²³ and German,²⁴ and then the British. In its issue of 11 November 1849, the *London Weekly Chronicle* published an article with the telling title ‘The Heroine in Good Cause’.²⁵ Its author portrayed Apolonia as a heroine of the Hungarian Uprising (1848–1849), who even after the end of the Uprising wore her adjutant’s sash, according to the saying “once a captain always a captain”.²⁶ It is interesting to note that the author of the article does not treat Apolonia as an exceptional figure, claiming that “Cases of women acting as soldiers were by no means uncommon

¹⁷ László Újházy (1795–1870), landowner, politician, during the Spring of Nations in September 1848 organised at his own expense a detachment and participated in the winter campaign of Artúr Görgei, served as government commissioner in Rozsnyó and from the summer of 1848 as commissioner of the civil government of the municipal part of the Komárom fortress system on the Danube River.

¹⁸ Újházy intended to organise a colony for Hungarian emigrants in the east of America and to obtain American help to free Lajos Kossuth from exile in Turkey.

¹⁹ *Gazeta Wielkiego Księstwa Poznańskiego*, 256 (1849).

²⁰ *Der Neue Passauer Zeitung*, 313 (1849).

²¹ *The Republic*, 231 (1851).

²² *Regensburger Zeitung*, 327 (1849).

²³ *Gazeta Wielkiego Księstwa Poznańskiego*, 256 (1849).

²⁴ *Deutsche Zeitung*, 324 (1849); *Der Neue Passauer Zeitung*, 313 (1849); *Regensburger Zeitung*, 327 (1849).

²⁵ *Weekly Chronicle* (11 Nov. 1849); *Liverpool Standard*, 1412 (1849).

²⁶ *Lady’s Newspaper* (24 Nov. 1849).

during a revolutionary conflict. They wore the uniforms of their corps and fought in the ranks with the same courage as men, and their gender was not discovered until they fell”.²⁷ Indeed, the extent of women’s participation in armed struggle at that time remains difficult to estimate, and many women are still anonymous. There are a few cases of identified fallen women soldiers, such as the Creole woman Sally St. Clair, who was killed at the Battle of Savannah during the American Revolutionary War.²⁸ It is worth noting, however, that the juxtaposition of Apolonia with the other heroines reveals the possibilities for women to assume typically male roles – those of soldiers. This is because war was traditionally seen as an exclusively male domain in which women, as weak, delicate and sensitive beings, could not take part. Alternatively, they could become involved in armed conflict by taking on caretaking roles, organising collections and help.

THE HUNGARIAN FEVER

On 6 December 1849, Apolonia Jagiełło sailed into New York harbour with a group of Hungarian insurgents to an enthusiastic welcome.²⁹ Seen as a heroic warrior, fighting against the tyranny of the Habsburg monarchy, defending the freedom of Poles and Hungarians and their right to self-determination, she became overnight a symbol of heroism, fortitude and the fight for justice. Even before she arrived in the United States, information about the brave Pole had appeared in the American press, and European newspapers continued to follow her fate.³⁰ *The New York Daily Tribune* wrote about Apolonia Jagiełło as a Hungarian heroine of Polish origin, fighting for the freedom of peoples oppressed by Austria. In addition, Americans, mindful of their own experiences with the British during the American War of Independence (the so-called American Revolution), followed the Hungarians’ struggle for

²⁷ *Weekly Chronicle* (11 Nov. 1849).

²⁸ See Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women and the Struggle for America’s Independence* (New York, 2009).

²⁹ *Spirit of the Age*, 25 (1849).

³⁰ *Globe*, 1 Jan. 1850; *Sun* (London), (2 Jan. 1850); *Leicester Chronicle* (4 Jan. 1850); *Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle* (5 Jan. 1850); *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* (5 Jan. 1850); *Advocate* (Dublin), (9 Jan. 1850); *Weekly Vindicator* (Antrim, Northern Ireland), (12 Jan. 1850).

freedom against the Habsburg monarchy with great interest. Hungarian emigrants were welcomed and cared for with openness.

The story of the heroic woman warrior of the Hungarian Revolution became a social sensation from the start, and onlookers besieged her whereabouts.³¹ She enjoyed popularity among various social classes and political factions. In December 1849, at one of the banquets held at “Irving House” residence at 122 East 17th Street, where she was a guest,³² a chocolate sculpture was presented, in the shape of a square tower with the Hungarian flag at the top and an English lion with a crown and French insignia on the sides, and a statue of the heroic figure of Apolonia, girded with a red sash, the symbol of the rank of colonel of the Hungarian cavalry, holding a sword in her left hand and a cap with symbols of freedom, trampling on the Austrian flag. The base of the chocolate decoration was a pile of weapons, swords, cannons, muskets and bullets³³ with the inscription “Es lebe die ungarischen Helden und Heldinnen”.³⁴ At the same time, an exhibition of Apolonia’s military uniforms, which she was said to have worn during the battles, was held in one of the rooms of the residence.³⁵ Together with General Űjházy, she attended all the events organised for the Hungarians. With the help of an interpreter, she spoke at meetings to raise money for emigration,³⁶ although it seems that her mere presence was enough to arouse interest in the subject. The aura created around her as a heroic woman warrior, fighting for the freedom of oppressed peoples, attracted people who wanted to meet someone special. A woman who entered the masculine world, played with death, fought with weapons in her hands, abandoning the common model of a woman fulfilled in the home, in marriage and in motherhood. It is noteworthy here that the admiration for Apolonia did not translate into widespread approval for American women to emulate her deeds and get into the masculine world. The image of Apolonia Tochman as a romantic heroine, exaggerated

³¹ *Gazeta Lwowska*, 12 (1850).

³² 16 Dec., according to Celia Wong, ‘Two Polish Women in the Confederacy’, *Polish American Studies*, xxiii, 2 (1966), 97–101 (at 100).

³³ *Daily Union*, 198 (1849); *The Republic*, 161 (1849). Also, *The Port Gibson Herald*, 21 (1850).

³⁴ Long live the Hungarians. Heroes and Heroines.

³⁵ *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (New-Lisbon, Ohio), (29 Dec. 1849).

³⁶ *New York Tribune* (10 Jan. 1850).

by her participation in almost a hundred battles,³⁷ appealed to the American sense of patriotism and inspired solidarity with the Hungarian insurgents. It is not surprising, therefore, that General Újházy was interested in perpetuating the legend of Apolonia and treated her as an ambassador for the Hungarian cause in America, recognising the fundraising opportunities offered by the sympathy shown to her by the Americans. This is undoubtedly why she was entrusted with the position of treasurer of the committee set up in January 1850 to raise funds to bring the leader of the Hungarian Uprising, Lajos Kossuth, from Turkey.³⁸ Apolonia Jagiełło's performance of this role did not go unnoticed by American observers. A satirical sketch showing her as an inconspicuous woman in a military jacket with a rifle slung over her shoulder, in the company of the bearded General Újházy and his son, surrounded by Americans handing them bags of money, was reproduced in the satirical magazine *The Lorgnette, or Studies of the Town by An Opera Goer*.³⁹ Not much is known about the reaction of the American Polish community to Apolonia's arrival, but on 26 December 1849, Julian Fontana gave her a ring with a pearl surrounded by rubies and the inscription, "To Miss A. Jagiełło from Poles in N.York, 1849".⁴⁰

Miss Jagiełło's popularity was not confined to New York. In January 1850, she accompanied General Újházy to meet the people of Philadelphia, where she was greeted with ovations.⁴¹ As a token of the attention paid to her, she was presented with a box containing a lock of George Washington's hair, which was treated as a national relic.⁴² Apolonia was present in the Washington society, and on 22 August 1850, she was introduced to Millard Fillmore, who had been sworn

³⁷ *John Bull* (London), (5 Jan. 1850).

³⁸ Szeged, Somogyi-könyvtár, Vasváry-gyűjtemény [Somogyi Library, Vasváry Collection], 'Újházy and Jagello', U3:29, <http://ekonyvtar.skszeged.hu:80/?docId=35187> [Accessed: 10 March 2024]; Jenő Pivány, 'Damburghy követ ür', *Századok*, xliv, 6 (1910), 504.

³⁹ A satirical magazine coming out between 1849 and 1850 in New York under the full title: *The Lorgnette: Or, Studies of the Town by An Opera Goer* (New York, 1850) edited by Donald G. Mitchell (1822–1908), publishing under the pseudonym Ik Marvel.

⁴⁰ *Gazeta Wielkiego Księstwa Poznańskiego*, 25 (1850).

⁴¹ Béla Vassady Jr, 'The "Tochman Affair": an Incident in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Hungarian Emigration to America', *Polish Review*, xxv, 3–4 (1980), 12–27 (at 14).

⁴² De Ahna, *The Greatest Humbug*, 4; Keith Beutler, *George Washington's Hair: How Early Americans Remembered the Founders* (Charlottesville, 2021).

in as US President on 10 July of that year. Accompanied by Nathan Kelsey Hall, United States Postmaster General, she was among those who accompanied Fillmore on his presidential tour of the southern United States in September 1851.⁴³ According to *The Cadiz Sentinel*, a daily newspaper published in Ohio, she was even offered a commission in the US Army.⁴⁴ Apolonia Jagiełło's fascinating biography inspired artists. In 1850, the Hungarian composer Endre Szemelenyi wrote a piano piece in her honour *Mad'lle Jagello's magyar quick step*, op. 19,⁴⁵ and the poet William David Gallagher,⁴⁶ who published under the pseudonym "W. D. G", dedicated a poem to her in 1851, *Shall the Sword Slumber*, about the need to fight tyranny.⁴⁷ The American fascination with Apolonia Jagiełło was reflected in the iconographic and artistic works produced during that time. Her daguerreotype portrait in a uniform from the time of the Hungarian Uprising was exhibited at J.H. Whitehurst's Galleries of the Premium Daguerreotypes at 349 Broadway in New York.⁴⁸ Apolonia's influence was also evident in American fashion. During the carnival season, women's dresses based on military patterns and the hat worn by Jagiełło were very popular,⁴⁹ and the New York women's fashion store "Williams" which she visited, attracted many new customers.⁵⁰

A HEROIC BIOGRAPHY AND THE PHENOMENON OF POPULARITY

In April 1850, after the departure of General L. Újházy to the emerging Hungarian colony of New Buda (Iowa), Apolonia moved to Washington,

⁴³ Vasváry, *Lincoln's Hungarian*, 93.

⁴⁴ *The Cadiz Sentinel*, 27 (1850).

⁴⁵ Baltimore, Library of Congress, Music Division, vol. 37, 1849–1850, Endre Szemelenyi, *Mad'lle Jagello's magyar quick step*, op. 19 [Accessed: 19 Apr. 2024].

⁴⁶ William David Gallagher (1808–1894), journalist, poet, author of the anthology *Selections from the Poetical Literature of the West*.

⁴⁷ 'Inscribed, very respectfully, to Apollonia Jagiello', *National Era* (1 May 1851).

⁴⁸ Ezekiel Porter Belden, *New-York: Past, Present, and Future: Comprising a History of the City of New York* (New York, 1851), 45; *Demokrata Polski*, 20 (13 Jan. 1862), 82; *Gazeta Warszawska*, 51 (1862).

⁴⁹ Donald Grant Mitchell (Ik Marvel), *The Lorgnette: or, Studies of the Town by An Opera Goer* (New York, 1850), 50–4.

⁵⁰ Károly László, 'Lerándulás Washingtonba', *Kecskemét*, iv, 26 (1876), 2, quoted after Gulyás, 'Honvédnők', 58, fn. 221.

DC and settled with John Tyssowski, the dictator of the Kraków Uprising of 1846. She continued to act as an ambassador for Hungarian interests. On 21 September 1850, she and Tyssowski attended a meeting with Emin Bey, the first official envoy of the Turkish government to Washington, and thanked him for the support given by Turkey to refugees after the defeat of the Hungarian Uprising.⁵¹ While living with Tyssowski, she met the influential émigré Kacper Tochman, who was helping General Újházyi to win the favour of American politicians for the cause of Hungarian emigrants. On 15 August 1851, she became his wife and took the surname Tochman.⁵² Their wedding in the Catholic church in Harper Ferry (Virginia) was a social event that was noted by the press, both because of Apolonia and because Kacper Tochman was well known in social circles.⁵³ The Tochmans lived first in Washington, and then at the Summer Hill estate in Alexandria, Virginia, which they purchased on 4 June 1853.⁵⁴ Together, they continued to work to help Hungarian emigrants. They were involved in the development of New Buda, as well as in raising funds and gaining the support of the American government to bring L. Kossuth to America. At the request of Jozef Prick, an emigrant from Shumla,⁵⁵ they intervened with President Fillmore and Secretary of the Treasury T. Thomas Corwin regarding the 128 Hungarians who had arrived in New York with him,⁵⁶ and who could not go to New Buda for financial reasons. As the wife of an influential lawyer and politician, Apolonia entered new social circles.⁵⁷ Their residences in Washington and Alexandria were frequented by American politicians, especially

⁵¹ *Southern Sentinel*, 10 (1850).

⁵² James P. Maher, *Index to Marriages and Deaths in The New York Herald*, vol. 1: 1835–1855 (Baltimore, 1987), 198.

⁵³ 'Appolonia Jagiello at the Altar', *Daily Crescent*, 167 (1851); *Richmond Daily Times*, 39 (1851); *Staunton Spectator*, 40 (1851); *Boston Weekly Museum* (4 Oct. 1851). Among others present were guests from the Shannondale Springs resort, where Apolonia had stayed for several weeks before her wedding.

⁵⁴ Dorotheae Abott, 'Arlington's Summer Hill Plantation', *Arlington Historical Magazine*, vii, 3 (1983), 27.

⁵⁵ Now Shumen in Bulgaria.

⁵⁶ *Gallipolis Journal*, 823 (1851).

⁵⁷ Tochman was a person of wide acquaintances and contacts, enjoying authority in American circles, but arousing controversy among Polish emigrants. He was a friend of Jefferson Davis and sympathised with the American Democratic Party, and was one of ten district electors of the state of Virginia to Congress.

Democrats, including Lincoln William Seward, the future Secretary of State, and presidential candidate Samuel Tilden. The Tochmans maintained limited contacts with the Polish community, and little is known about Apolonia's popularity with the Polish emigration. Among Polish émigrés, the Tochmans were friends with Zofia Sosnowska, née Wentz, the widow of Stanisław Sosnowski, a November insurgent,⁵⁸ whose son, Juliusz, often spent summers with them.⁵⁹

Thanks to her marriage, Apolonia gained not only prestige but also a defender and spokesperson for her heroic life story. Several biographical texts were written about her, based on Kacper Tochman's information from her pre-marital period.⁶⁰ It is unclear to what extent they were a faithful translation of Apolonia's statements into English and to what extent they were his own invention and interpretation. In any case, Tochman's information was used by Sarah Jane Clarke Lippincott, a journalist and social activist working in Washington, DC, writing under the pseudonym Grace Greenwood, author of the first American biographical article on Apolonia, which formed the basis for later studies. She also published an extensive biography of herself in the abolitionist weekly *National Era*,⁶¹ in the second edition of the collection *Greenwood Leaves*.⁶² In the early 1850s, Sarah Joseph Hale,⁶³ an American poet, social activist and editor of the opinionated women's magazine *Godey's Lady Book*, also became interested in Apolonia Tochman. Apolonia's biography – essentially a duplicate of Greenwood's – was included in her lexicon, *Women's Record. Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854*,⁶⁴ in the section dedicated to living women. The presence of Apolonia

⁵⁸ Edmund L. Kowalczyk, 'A Polish Family in the South', *Polish American Studies*, iii, 3–4 (1946), 104–7; Mary Harriet White, 'Madame Sophie Sosnowski. Educator of Young Ladies', *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, i, 3 (1966), 283–7.

⁵⁹ Kowalczyk, 'A Polish Family', 105. The name of one of the children raised with the Sosnowskis was John Tochman, but no further information is available about him; he died in infancy.

⁶⁰ See also 'Apolonia Jagiello, the Hungarian Heroine', *Farmer and the Mechanic*, 306 (1850).

⁶¹ Grace Greenwood, 'Apolonia Jagiello', *National Era* (1850), 1.

⁶² *Ead.*, *Greenwood Leaves: A Collection of Sketches and Letters* (Boston, 1852), 93–9.

⁶³ She lived from 1788 to 1879.

⁶⁴ Sarah Joseph Hale, *Woman's Record: Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854* (New York, 1855).

in Hale's work is particularly interesting, as she linked the progress of history with the development of Christianity and the special role in the moral uplift of humanity.⁶⁵ However, religious themes do not appear in Apolonia's biography. It is worth mentioning that, thanks to Hale, an article about her found its way into the English lexicon, *A Cyclopaedia of Female Biography* (London, 1857), published jointly with Henry Gardiner Adams.⁶⁶ Both authors perpetuated a vision of Tochman as an example of the woman warrior that continues to this day.

According to Greenwood and Hale, Apolonia was born in 1825,⁶⁷ and this is the date most often repeated in other studies. However, it has not been verified by other sources, so other dates of Apolonia's birth cannot be ruled out – for example, 1829, as established by her death certificate.⁶⁸ Her mother was probably from Poznań, and her father from Lithuania.⁶⁹ Apolonia herself considered herself to be Polish,⁷⁰ but Tochman emphasised her Lithuanian roots. He claimed that she was a descendant of the Jagiellonian dynasty,⁷¹ coming from a wealthy landed gentry family with patriotic traditions.⁷² After the Austrians discovered her activities, she had to flee Vienna, disguised as a peasant, with a group of country people transporting food for the Austrian army, she reached the village of St Paul⁷³ in Hungary via Pressburg (now Bratislava). She is said to have taken part in the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, X.

⁶⁶ During Apolonia's lifetime, Hungarian studies were still published in which she was mentioned as a heroine. For example, the Hungarian journalist and writer Lajos Uvári in an article entitled *Hölgyhonvédek*, dedicated to the women warriors of the Spring of Nations and included in the commemorative book *Honvédek könyve Szerk* (vol. 1 Pest, 1861), compared Apolonia to the Amazons and juxtaposed her alongside Hungarian Janka Szentpáli. By analogy, she was portrayed similarly by Endre Vargyasa in *Magyar szabadságharcz története 1848–49* (Pest, 1867), 363–4.

⁶⁷ See Kowalczyk, 'A Polish Family', 106.

⁶⁸ Materials of the editorial office of the Polish Biographical Dictionary in Kraków, copy of death certificate of Apolonia Tochman.

⁶⁹ Gaspar Tochman, *National Era*, 266 (1852). The American press also wrote about Apolonia's Lithuanian roots on the occasion of her wedding.

⁷⁰ Letter from Gaspar Tochman to Lajos Kossuth, Washington DC, 6 Jan. 1852, *ibid.*

⁷¹ *Głos Wolny*, 121 (1866); *American Telegraph*, 170 (1851).

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Gulyás, '...ki száműzetésében', 3, fn. 9. According to the author of the article, this does not refer to Szent Pál in Arad County in today's Romania, but perhaps to the island of Szentpál falura (Sânpaul) in Kamoron or Szentpálpustara in Revkamoron.

battles of the Hungarian insurgents against the Austrian army and being promoted to colonel. She allegedly served as an adjutant to General György Klapka⁷⁴ taking part, in mid-December 1848, in his expedition to Raab,⁷⁵ and later being in charge of the military hospital in Komárom. The above information should be approached with caution. Among other things, both authors are incorrect when they claim that she arrived in Enessey on 15 August 1848 and took part in the battle the following day, in which General Franz Wyss was killed. In fact, this did not happen. As Adrienn Gulyás rightly points out,⁷⁶ Wyss died in the battle of Csorna⁷⁷ on 16 June 1849, and it is therefore difficult to rely on the biographical and historical findings of Greenwood and Hale.

A JEWISH WOMAN FROM KRAKÓW'S KLEPARZ

We are also indebted to Kacper Tochman for the publication of Apolonia's heroic biography in connection with the press polemic with the aforementioned Henri de Ahna, author of the pamphlet published in September 1851 entitled *The Greatest Humbug of the Day...* The Bavarian claimed that he had only met Apolonia Jagiełło, like General Újházy, in Hamburg, and that although she had presented herself there as Apolonia Jagiełło in officer circles, it was said that her real name was Apolonia or Juliana Eisfeld.⁷⁸ She was seen in the "Hotel Europe" with the Austrian spy Benesch (Benisch),⁷⁹ who watched

⁷⁴ *Czas*, 230 (1849).

⁷⁵ According to the officer Charles Koebel – Apolonia followed the army with a group of Jewish merchants and was caught near Raab on suspicion of espionage and taken to the military quarters stationed there, where she was eventually released. See statement by Charles Koebel in de Ahna, *The Greatest Humbug*, 9.

⁷⁶ Gulyás, '...ki száműzetésében', 5, fn. 11.

⁷⁷ Hale, *Woman's Record*, 705.

⁷⁸ The question of her identity is further complicated by suggestions from American and Hungarian researchers that her name was in fact Sara (Sarah) Shuster or Apolonia Eisfeld, Julia (Juliana) Eisenfeld or Eisfeldt, which surname is suggested by Vasvary. Some ascribed Jewish origin to her. The former November insurgent and Polish activist in America Henryk Kałusowski wrote of her as "a Jewess from Kraków's Kleparz", while Leonard Saba Sawicki, who lived in Paris, spoke of a Jewish "imposter", and the Bavarian officer Henri de Ahna referred to her as a "Jewess from Vienna".

⁷⁹ Gulyás, 'Honvédnők', 59.

Hungarian revolutionaries and described her in a note to the Austrian government as “a Hungarian heroine going to America”. The press allegedly picked up this information.⁸⁰ De Ahna accused Apolonia of espionage and claimed that she was, in fact, a simple girl who had worked in one of the inns in Kraków’s Kleparz square in her youth. He asserted that some Hungarians had objected to her being taken to America because of her bad reputation, which he had heard about from the officers’ private conversations. De Ahna’s revelations were later confirmed by other Hungarian military officers, such as the aforementioned Colonel Prágay, Lieutenant Colonel Sándor Mednyánszky and Majors Ede Damburgi (Damburghy, Dauneberg), Kornél Fornet, Imre Hamvassy and the evangelical pastor Ágost Wimmer.⁸¹ Many of de Ahna’s allegations were echoed by an anonymous author in the Washingtonian *The Republic*,⁸² who also attacked General Újházy, accusing him of portraying himself as a poor emigrant who had in fact brought a considerable amount of money to the USA. Sarcastically referring to Apollonia as Joan of Arc, he portrayed her as a Polish Jewess living in Komárom in the house of second-hand clothes dealers.⁸³ De Ahna’s publication was the loudest criticism of Apolonia’s heroic life story. The information about Apolonia Tochman’s heroic deeds⁸⁴ in Hungary had been previously denied by Colonel Pragy, quoted by de Ahna, who, outraged by the reception of Apolonia as a heroine in Philadelphia, organised a public meeting in that city in January 1850, at which he, on behalf of some Hungarian emigrants, expressed his opposition to the promotion of Apolonia’s heroic biography. As a result, she is said to have been asked by General Újházy to withdraw from public activities on behalf of Hungarians and to be sent back to New York. Similarly, Pastor Wimmer spoke out against the use of Tochman to promote the Hungarian cause in letters addressed to Kossuth and General Klapka (both dated 16 April 1850).⁸⁵

As a result of the pamphlet, thanks to her husband’s influence and a press campaign, including in *The American Telegraph* (6 September

⁸⁰ De Ahna, *The Greatest Humbug*, 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *The Republic*, 231 (1851).

⁸³ De Ahna, *The Greatest Humbug*, 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3; According to him, she was then sent back to New York by Újházy.

⁸⁵ Vassady Jr, “The “Tochman Affair””, 16, fn. 20.

1851), sixty-seven Hungarian emigrants came to Apolonia Tochman's defence, including those who had fought⁸⁶ in the Hungarian Uprising of 1849 in Komárom.⁸⁷ It is worth noting, however, that this was a group of emigrants from Shumla whom Tochman had supported with his wife, so their impartiality can be doubted. When acting on behalf of the Hungarians, Tochman referred to L. Kossuth's authorisation to represent the Hungarian exiles in America,⁸⁸ which, according to some researchers, had never been granted. This did not prevent him from requesting Kossuth's intervention in a letter of 15 January 1852. According to an excerpt of the correspondence published in the National Era, he wrote:

My wife, then M^{lle} Jagiello, who with other daughters of Poland, as I informed you in a former letter, was engaged in facilitating the transportation of men to your camps, being detected in that work, fled to Hungary. Seventy of your countrymen, now in this country, knew and heard of her there. Some had seen her braving danger in the camp; others in the hospital at Komorn, attending to the sick and wounded.⁸⁹

Unfortunately, we do not know Kossuth's reply. Instead, he quoted the very interesting position of Tyssowski, who, in a letter of 24 December 1849, welcomed Apolonia to the United States as "the heroine of freedom – the only living witness here to the events which occurred in Cracow in 1846, and which are either entirely unknown, or, worse still, misrepresented here".⁹⁰ In his courtesy letter he addressed her with pathetic words: "To us, you are a living word from the land of oppression and mourning and a foreteller of a better future; Moreover, Apolonia's participation in the Kraków Uprising was confirmed by Roman Pracki Lanckoroński, who had fought in it"⁹¹

⁸⁶ According to the author of the anonymous article *Hungarian exiles*, published on 9 Sept. 1851 in *The American Telegraph*, a group of Hungarian exiles had a letter in which Kossuth instructed them to seek help and protection in America through Tochman and his wife, who had a special knowledge of the Hungarian nature.

⁸⁷ According to Vasváry, *Lincoln's Hungarian*, 93.

⁸⁸ Some historians question the granting of the authorisation to Tochman, believing that it was rather his self-proclaimed over-interpretation.

⁸⁹ *Daily American Telegraph*, 27 May 1852; *National Era*, 266 (1852).

⁹⁰ Letter from Jan Tyssowski, Washington DC, 24 Dec. 1849.

⁹¹ M. Tyrowicz, *Pracki Roman (1814 – po 1854)*, in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, xxviii (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków etc., 1984–5), 332.

and recalled that she then used the surname Jagiełło.⁹² It remains an open question, however, how Tyssowski's credibility was affected by his relationship with Tochman, who had helped him settle in America.

Tochman also denied repeated press reports that his wife had made speeches and appeared in a Hungarian military uniform at meetings with Americans. He insisted that the only clothing she had brought from her homeland was the Kraków costume, which, however, she never wore in the USA.⁹³ In addition, in an unequal battle, he tried to discredit de Ahna's revelations, portraying them as the revenge of a jilted man to whom Apolonia had allegedly once been betrothed.⁹⁴ He also took him to court, where de Ahna was initially sentenced to imprisonment, but was eventually acquitted on 26 May 1852.⁹⁵ It is unclear to what extent de Ahna's revelations reached the public and how they affected the reception of Apolonia's heroic biography. Had they appeared before her marriage to Tochman, they may well have had a greater impact. The question also arises as to what extent the speech of Tochman, considered in America to be 'a spokesman for the Polish cause', was motivated by concern for his wife's good name, and to what extent it resulted from a desire to preserve his own image and the legend of the heroic Apolonia among influential people.

AN ORDINARY WOMAN

When analysing the phenomenon of Apolonia's popularity, apart from the period of the so-called Hungarian fever at the beginning of her stay in the USA,⁹⁶ attention should be paid to the accompanying social context. The growing suffragette movement of the time, which demanded equality for women in the family and society, access to education, economic independence and the right to vote, challenged the traditional model of womanhood and its place in society. In parallel with the search for new models, traditionalists became active

⁹² Letter from Joachim Lelewel to Teofil Januszewicz, Brussels, 30 May 1854, in Helena Więckowska (ed.), *Listy emigracyjne Joachima Lelewela*, vol. 4: 1849–1861 (nos. 948–1261) (Wrocław–Kraków, 1954), 210.

⁹³ *National Era*, 266 (1852).

⁹⁴ For more on the dispute, see Vassady Jr, 'The "Tochman Affair"', 15–6, 19, 20–3.

⁹⁵ Just like his supporter Karl Kölbl (Koelbl); see Gulyás, '...ki száműzetésében', 6.

⁹⁶ Mitchell (Ik Marvel), *The Lorgnette*, 50–4.

in defending the existing ones as a guarantee for the preservation of the natural social order.

References to Apolonia Tochman's biography appeared publicly in both contexts, and the fascination with her biography and attitude was not always the same as support for radical social change. Hence, numerous articles focused on describing her appearance and manner, which was a kind of manoeuvre to emphasise her uniqueness, but also an affirmation of traditionally understood femininity. As a result, she found her way into various circles, not only emancipatory ones. Some described Apolonia as a young, beautiful, energetic girl with a slim physique,⁹⁷ others as a plump twenty-seven-year-old with rosy cheeks.⁹⁸ Referring to the aforementioned image of an 'ordinary woman', it was written that she "bears herself with no military air",⁹⁹ and, with her being "quite free from the affection of boasting of her exploits",¹⁰⁰ nothing in her behaviour betrayed who she once had been. Attempts were made to emphasise the then attributes of femininity in her, i.e. a charming smile, delicate and beautiful hands, a graceful figure, a gentle and pleasant voice¹⁰¹ and the feminine manner and tenderness that was to help her work as a nurse in Komárom.¹⁰² It was emphasised that she could have successfully led a quiet life as a mother and wife, but that she gave up this in the name of higher aspirations. However, the literary writer Thomas Picton¹⁰³ wrote differently about Apolonia. Without denying her military career and referring to her as the "Hungarian Joan of Arc",¹⁰⁴ he pointed out that her manners were relatively coarse and somewhat commonplace, but that she nevertheless fascinated ladies of the upper classes.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *The Picayune* (New Orleans), (19 Jan. 1850), Vassady Jr, "The "Tochman Affair"", 14.

⁹⁹ Hale, *Woman's Record*, 706.

¹⁰⁰ Vassady Jr., "The "Tochman Affair"", 14.

¹⁰¹ Hale, *Woman's Record*, 706; *The Republic*, 100 (1850), 1; *National Era*, 266 (1852).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Thomas Picton Milner (1822–1891), colonel, journalist, writer, poet, author of a series of essays (1868–1869), *Reminiscences of A Man about The Town* in the *New York Clipper*, also publishing there under the pseudonym A. Gothamine, Paul Preston.

¹⁰⁴ Apolonia's Hungarian ancestry was only due to the fact that she came with the Hungarians.

¹⁰⁵ Tom Picton, *Fun and fancy in Old New York. Reminiscences of a Man About Town*, comp. and ed. by William L. Slout (Cabin John, MA, 2007), 13.

Ahna, on the other hand, attempted to discredit Apolonia in the eyes of the public by suggesting that she came from a lower social stratum, worked as a barmaid, and had a dubious reputation.

Confronted with the image of an 'ordinary woman', devoted to family duties or feminine activities with which American women could identify, the vision of Apolonia in a crowd of men fighting on the battlefield seemed all the more fascinating, when she was killing her enemies with a flashing sword in her hand".¹⁰⁶ Sitting "like Diana" on a horse, she was believed to be a match for men in battle, a fact which was said to be reflected in the military rank she was given. It was suggested that her leadership qualities would have made her an excellent commander. Writings about Apolonia's participation in the Kraków Uprising of 1846 describe her as one of the "patriots who first planted the white eagle and the flag of freedom on the castles of the ancient capital".¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, however, Hale did not fail to balance this with the opinion that, as a woman, she should be a source of inspiration for men rather than women. With a stereotypical view of femininity, she saw Apolonia Tochman as a source of encouragement and motivation for the fighting men. Greenwood, on the other hand, who called Polish and Hungarian women "a grand race of women",¹⁰⁸ argued, on the basis of Apolonia's fate, that their courage and prowess was not due to their strength and warlike nature, but to their willingness to defend their highest values, such as "home, honour, liberty, and – the love",¹⁰⁹ for which they were willing to give their lives. She explained to the American women: "Loving Poland with a love which had all the strength fervour of a religion and hating its haughty and brutal oppressors with all the intensity of a high and nature when the hour of uprising and fierce struggle at last could she do otherwise than join her brothers".¹¹⁰ The experience of war and the awareness of the enslavement of the homeland were sometimes seen as a burden that her new life in America was meant to help her overcome.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ *Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle*, 39 (1850).

¹⁰⁷ Hale, *Woman's Record*, 705.

¹⁰⁸ Greenwood, *Greenwood Leaves*, 97

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *National Era*, 196 (1850).

On the other hand, Apolonia's struggle for freedom was not only related to political categories, but also to social ones. Even Hale, who did not fully share the views of the suffragettes and considered the home to be the best place for women's self-fulfilment, presented Apolonia's participation in the Kraków Uprising in terms of the struggle for democratic ideas, i.e. social equality and the personal freedom of the peasants, "as inherent rights of all men living on Polish soil".¹¹² Apolonia was seen as an example of the determination and commitment to equality, the elimination of prejudice, and the change of social norms and structures that the burgeoning abolitionist movement was fighting for, to abolish slavery and human trafficking. Apolonia Tochman could be a source of inspiration and strength for other women in overcoming social stereotypical constraints. Relying on the approval of her rebellious struggle, American women activists demanded an analogous approval of the actions of abolitionist women. Shortly after she arrived in New York, *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* noted:

Nobody thinks of charging the Hungarian women with the sin of living 'appropriate sphere', or with the lack of modesty in mingling with a crowd of men; but how have presses and politicians sought an overwhelmed odium those brave American women who have used the noble gift of speeches in defence of millions their countrymen!¹¹³

No evidence has been found of Apolonia's direct involvement in either the suffragette or abolitionist movements. However, it is interesting to note the information in *The Liberator* about her participation with Greenwood in a horseback expedition among several people on 13 March 1851 to the Washington prison, where Daniel Drayton and Edward Sayres, captain of the schooner 'Pearl', convicted of attempting to organise the escape of slaves in 1848, were serving indefinite sentences.¹¹⁴ After Apolonia's meeting with the prisoners, Greenwood wrote: "She, a simple girl, could see no difference between

¹¹² Hale, *Woman's Record*, 706.

¹¹³ *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 16 (1849).

¹¹⁴ See fragment of correspondence of Grace Greenwood, 'The Hungarian Heroine, and Sayres and Dryton, The Hungarian Spirit', *Liberator*, 11 (1851). For more on the Drayton and Sayers case, see Josephine F. Pacheco, *The Schooner 'Pearl' Incident, 1848* (Chapel Hill, 2005).

helping American slaves to obtain their freedom and inciting Hungarian peasants to revolt against the Austrian tyranny – or rescuing Polish exiles, condemned to Siberia”,¹¹⁵ and when one of her female comrades asked her if she could convince herself of systemic slavery, she firmly replied that she would not give an inch on the matter even to divine command.¹¹⁶ Apolonia Tochman’s stance was meant to set an example for American women and explain why they should speak out against slavery; her story was meant to be a testament to women’s involvement in protesting against all forms of captivity.¹¹⁷ In a similar context, Tochman’s name was also invoked by Ernestine Louise Potowski-Rose, an activist for women’s equality and religious tolerance born in Piotrków Trybunalski, at the National Women’s Rights Convention held at Brinley Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, on the 23–24 October 1850.¹¹⁸ Apolonia Tochman’s presence in the consciousness of progressive American circles is evidenced by the words of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911), an American politician and columnist who called for women’s suffrage in the ratification of the new Constitution, who in an essay addressed to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention *Woman and Her Wishes* (Boston, 1853) mentions Apolonia Jagiełło among the outstanding American women pioneers who succeeded in the male-dominated fields of the time: “If Maria Mitchell¹¹⁹ can discover comets, and Harriet Hosmer¹²⁰ curve statues; if Apollonia Jagiełło can fight in one European revolution, ... if Harriot Hunt¹²¹ can really cure diseases, and Lucretia Mott¹²² and Antoinette Brown¹²³ can preach good sermons and

¹¹⁵ See Greenwood, ‘The Hungarian Heroine’, 1.

¹¹⁶ “Not the Lord himself” – *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ J.F. Saddler, ‘Transcending the Boundaries. Grace Greenwood’s Washington’, in David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr (eds), *Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press* (West Lafayette, 2009), 247.

¹¹⁸ Bonie S. Anderson, *The Rabbi’s Atheist Daughter. Ernestine Rose, International Feminist Pionéer* (Oxford, 2017).

¹¹⁹ Maria Mitchel (1818–1898), astronomer, discoverer of the comet (1847) named in her honour ‘Miss Mitchell’s Comet’, from 1865 professor at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

¹²⁰ Harriet Goodhue Hosmer (1830–1908), American neoclassical sculptor.

¹²¹ Harriot Kezia Hunt (1805–1875), American physician and suffragette.

¹²² Lucretia Mott née Coffin (1793–1880), American suffragist and abolitionist.

¹²³ Antoinette Louisa Brown (Brown-Blackwell) (1825–1921), first woman ordained as a mainline Protestant pastor in the United States, suffragist.

Mrs Swisshelm¹²⁴ ... edit able newspapers, – then all these are points gained forever”.¹²⁵

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE FURTHER HISTORY OF THE MYTH

The 1860s were not an easy time for Apolonia. Media attention had diminished, and the ongoing war not only caused separation from her husband. After he sided with the Confederate States in the Civil War (1861–1865) and went to Louisiana to form the so-called Polish Brigade with Colonel Walery Sulkowski,¹²⁶ Apolonia Tochman was arrested in Alexandria on 3 September 1861 on charges of treason and spying for the South. Despite declaring¹²⁷ that she did not share her husband's views and that she remained loyal to the Union,¹²⁸ and stood by her husband because of her marital obligations,¹²⁹ she was imprisoned for several weeks in the Old Capitol Prison in Washington.¹³⁰ She was eventually released after again declaring her dissociation from her husband's views. According to another version, she was merely kept at home under close surveillance for two weeks¹³¹ and was released on 25 September 1861 after the intervention of influential people. Interestingly, her husband no longer served in the Confederate Army, having resigned after the so-called Polish Brigade had been incorporated into Louisiana units as the 13th Infantry Regiment (14th Infantry Regiment from 21 September) on 24 August of that year and because he had not received the promised promotion to general.¹³²

The rest of Apolonia's life is difficult to establish because of a lack of sources or conflicting accounts about her. It is not known whether

¹²⁴ Jane Grey Cannon Swisshelm (1815–1884), radical republican journalist of *The New York Tribune*, publisher, abolitionist and suffragist.

¹²⁵ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Woman and Her Wishes* (Boston, 1853), 8.

¹²⁶ Promoted on 11 May 1861 to colonel in the Confederate army, he commanded one of the regiments of the so-called Polish Brigade organised in 1861.

¹²⁷ *The Leavenworth Tome*, 20 Sep. 1861; Frank Schaller, *Soldiering for Glory: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Frank Schaller, Twenty-Second Mississippi Infantry* (University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 161, fn. 28.

¹²⁸ Wong, *Two Polish*, 99.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³⁰ Jan Drohojowski, *Polacy w Ameryce* (Warszawa, 1978), 89.

¹³¹ Schaller, *Soldiering*, 37; Samuel Phillis Day, *Down South, Or, An Englishman's Experience at the Seat of the American War* (London, 1862), Part 2, 268–71.

¹³² Deręgowski, '1 i 2 pułk piechoty', 29.

she stayed with her husband in Richmond, where he had a law firm on Main Street. It is also unknown what the Tochmans' activities were in relation to Hungarian emigration after 1852. According to Henryk Kałusowski, after the fall of the January Uprising in 1864, Apolonia was involved in assisting Polish emigrants who arrived in New York.¹³³ Due to unpaid promissory notes, she lost the Summer Hill estate on 19 June 1864, which was auctioned off.¹³⁴

After the end of the Civil War, Apolonia Tochman settled in Spotylvania County (Virginia) with her husband, who was the European Agent of Immigration for the State of Virginia. There, in 1866, they purchased some 2,400 acres of land for 20 Polish immigrant families,¹³⁵ where they founded the colony of New Poland in August 1866 at the latest, which, however, collapsed two years later.¹³⁶ It is not known where Apolonia was at the time. She was probably in a close relationship with Aleksander Szyrma, a Polish émigré who was helping her husband to settle Polish colonists in the south.¹³⁷

She died on 18 March 1867¹³⁸ in Manhattan, New York, and was buried on the following day in Trinity Cemetery¹³⁹ (now Trinity Church Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hamilton Heights). She had no children from her marriage to Tochman. According to her death certificate, she died as a result of apoplexy or postpartum convulsions.¹⁴⁰ In fact, her death may have been the result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. As H. Kałusowski reported in a letter to Romuald J. Jaworowski, secretary of the Polish Committee in New York and editor of the *Echo Polskie*, Apolonia died in the postpartum period and it was "Szyrma, and not Tochman, who mourned for her".¹⁴¹ Unfortunately, it was not possible to verify this fact with other sources.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Abott, 'Arlington's Summer', 28.

¹³⁵ *Delaware Gazette* (26 Oct. 1866).

¹³⁶ For more, see Nowak, 'Kacper Tochman', 80–9.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³⁸ In the literature, it is incorrectly assumed that she died in 1866.

¹³⁹ Apolonia Tochman's obituary in *New York Times* (21 March 1867).

¹⁴⁰ Copy of the death certificate in the editorial material of the Polish Biographical Dictionary.

¹⁴¹ Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie [Polish National Library in Warsaw], MS 8920, Letter from Henryk Kałusowski to Roman Jaworowski (letter notes), Washington, 21 May 1869, 20v–21, quoted after Nowak, 'Kacper Tochman', 87, fn. 509.

Ten years after Apolonia Tochman's death, her heroic myth was revived by Loretta J. Velazquez, who fought in the Civil War on the Confederate side, disguised as a man, Harry T. Buford.¹⁴² In her memoir, *The Woman in Battle...* (Richmond, 1876), she considered Apolonia one of the three greatest heroines, along with the semi-legendary Spanish nun and conquistador Catalina de Erauso (1592–1649)¹⁴³ and Joan of Arc. Writing about her extraordinary heroism during the battles in the Kraków Uprising and the Spring of Nations and about the royal blood of the Jagiellons, she declared that she was “the most womanly woman” – losing none of her femininity.¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, Velazquez was so fascinated by the figure of Apolonia that she even travelled to Europe, to Kraków, to visit her hometown.¹⁴⁵ Years later, Apolonia's heroic life story was commemorated in America at the beginning of the twentieth century in the series *Twenty Women Soldiers of The World* in the paper *Lieut. Apollonio Jagiello. Poland's Joanna*,¹⁴⁶ which wrote about Kossuth's recognition of her military career and the great pride this figure brings to Poles.¹⁴⁷ Since then, Apolonia has continued to appear in American and European studies devoted to female heroes, which perpetuate the American myth of Apolonia Tochman.

CONCLUSION

Apolonia Tochman was certainly an enterprising person with an expressive personality, but she was not the one behind the phenomenon of her own popularity, although Béla Vassady¹⁴⁸ called her, unknown by what accounts, “the flamboyant, publicity-seeking Polish woman”.¹⁴⁹ Certainly, young Apolonia's emotional speeches, such as when she

¹⁴² Matthew Teorey, ‘Unmasking the Gentleman Soldier in the Memoirs of Two Cross-Dressing Female U.S. Civil War Soldiers’, *War, Literature and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities*, xx, 1–2 (2008), 74–93.

¹⁴³ Known as Francisco Loyola.

¹⁴⁴ *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures and Travels of Madame Loretta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry J. Buford, Confederate States Army* (Richmond, 1876), 35–6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 527

¹⁴⁶ *The Salt Lake Herald* (4 Apr. 1909).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Vassady Jr, ‘The “Tochman Affair”’, 13.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

thanked the 'Irving House' for the confectionery sculpture, won over the people around her.¹⁵⁰ However, third parties played a key role in creating her heroic legend. Both General Újházyi and Kacper Tochman benefited from promoting her brave history, which cannot be reliably assessed from contemporary sources. For example, the words of Lanckoroński-Pracki in a letter to Joachim Lelewel of 11 April 1854, in which he writes that Kacper Tochman's wife was "that famous heroine of the Hungarian campaign, Miss Jagiełło, ... whom he knew from homeland",¹⁵¹ are puzzling, as is the case with the quoted letter from Tyssowski.¹⁵² It is doubtful that he did not react publicly to the spreading of false information about the Polish heroine who took part in the uprising he led. The creation of the Tochman myth was a complex process, serving particularistic (Újházy's, Tochman's) or ideological interests (those of the women's movement, abolitionism). The popularity and impact of her story were greatly influenced by the American press, which created Apolonia as a woman warrior and gave her recognition by comparing her to Joan of Arc. The origins of the Apolonia Tochman myth can therefore be seen in mystification (manipulation), understood as the formation of an image of the past/personality that shapes the social consciousness according to the current needs of individuals or circles. Tochman's heroic myth is, of course, linked to the problem of creating heroes to serve as examples for a particular social group to follow. Interestingly, the myth of a female warrior created around her was used not only by supporters of social change, and the glorification of Apollonia's heroism and bravery was not associated with a desire to change the patriarchal model of society and the family. As a woman warrior, Tochman thus embodied for traditionalists not so much a new pattern of femininity as an idealised heroic patriotism.¹⁵³ In a way, one can see parallels

¹⁵⁰ *Daily Union*, 198 (1849).

¹⁵¹ *Listy emigracyjne Joachima Lelewela*, 210.

¹⁵² Jan Tyssowski to [Apolonia Jagiełło], Washington DC, 24 Dec. 1849, *National Era*, 266 (1852).

¹⁵³ Legendary and historical figures of the women warriors, ranging from the Greek Athena, the Amazons, Artemisia of Karia, the Celtic Boudica, Yaa Asantewaa to Joan of Arc, appear in virtually all cultural circles, fascinating artists, writers and researchers of the past. The apologetic attitude towards these figures was unrealistic and, for centuries, did not result in any significant change in the division of social roles between men and women.

here with the popularity of the myth of Joan of Arc in America, who functioned as a virtual model of patriotic attitudes until the 1850s, only to become a model of a new femininity – the New Woman¹⁵⁴ over time. Interestingly, despite attempts at criticism (de Ahna, Kalusowski), Apolonia's heroic image has not been overturned and her legend has not echoed in Poland. However, as Wiktor Werner aptly put it, "As long as the myth satisfies these needs [concerning individual needs – AB], its existence (reproduction within the community) is unthreatened regardless of possible criticism (undertaken, for example, from the perspective of a scientific view of the world)".¹⁵⁵ Undeniably, the figure of Apolonia Tochman has entered the public imagination. As one of the few Polish women, she became a universal symbol, a heroine of American suffragettes and abolitionists, inspiring them to fight for social and political equality. It is also worth noting that Tochman's myth with its "war story" also fits into the existing view in historiography of the influence of the radical democratic ideas of the European Revolution of 1848 on later events in America – the abolitionist movement and the Civil War,¹⁵⁶ and the emancipation of women on both continents. On the other hand, in the discussion of the mythologisation of the past, Apolonia Tochman's myth is aptly illustrated by Topolski's statement on the inseparability of myth from science, as well as from culture and human thought.¹⁵⁷

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¹⁵⁴ Dennis Sexsmith, 'The Radicalization of Joan of Arc Before and After the French Revolution', *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne*, xvii, 2 (1990), 125–99.

¹⁵⁵ Werner, 'Mity w historiografii', 187.

¹⁵⁶ Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana–Chicago, 1992).

¹⁵⁷ Jerzy Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię* (Warszawa, 1996), 204.

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