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Romanticism towards history

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Abstract: The article concerns the attitude of Romanticism to history: the phenomenon of historicism and its pre-Romantic development, reaching out to the traditions of other cultures and nations, publication of works distant in time and space, the cult of the North and medievalism, interest in pre-Christian times and in the Middle Ages. Another perspective is constituted by relativisation of the point and time of reference in aesthetics, religion and poetic, visual and musical imagination, the emergence of the concept of picturesqueness, which defies clearly defined criteria. The issues of freedom and patriotism, determined by the historical situation of various countries, contribute to the special places in romantic culture held by Greece (its culture, art and eventual decline) and Poland. The article contains fragments of selected works created by Romantic writers and their predecessors from a number of European countries.

Key words: Romanticism, history, historicism, gothicism, monuments of the past, escapism, aestheticism, imagination, literature, painting, music, religion, architecture, freedom, modern sense of nationhood, patriotism, national anthems and songs

Romantyzm wobec historii

Abstrakt: Tekst dotyczy stosunku romantyzmu do historii: zjawiska historyzmu i jego przedromantycznego rozwoju, sięgania do tradycji innych kultur i narodów, publikowania odległych w czasie i przestrzeni dzieł, kultu Północy i mediewalizmu, zainteresowania czasami przedchrześcijańskimi i średniowieczem. Inną perspektywę stanowi relatywizacja punktu i czasu odniesienia w estetyce, religii oraz wyobraźni poetyckiej, malarskiej, muzycznej, pojawienie się pojęcia malowniczości przeciwstawianej jednoznacznie określonym kryteriom. Kwestie wolności i patriotyzmu, wyznaczane sytuacją historyczną różnych krajów, powodują szczególne miejsce w romantycznej kulturze Grecji (jej kultury, sztuki i upadku) oraz Polski. W artykule przytaczane są fragmenty utworów romantycznych pisarzy i ich poprzedników z wielu krajów Europy.

Słowa kluczowe: romantyzm, historia, historyzm, gotycyzm, zabytki przeszłości, eskapizm, estetyzm, wyobraźnia, literatura, malarstwo, muzyka, religia, architektura, wolność, nowoczesne poczucie narodowości, patriotyzm, hymny i pieśni narodowe

The article is a record of the lecture delivered within the cycle entitled *Dziedzictwo romantyzmu* [*The Heritage of Romanticism*] presented at the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow in 2022. The Romantic attitude to history has been discussed here from a comparative perspec-

tive, with reference to various cultures of 19th-century Europe. The article preserves the original, spoken nature of the text. The literary texts are quoted in the original, with English translations provided. The bibliography includes only selected critical texts concerning Romanticism in Europe and the quoted editions of the literary texts.

L'Historia si può veramente deffinire
una guerra illustre contro il Tempo

Alessandro Manzoni

History, as one of the issues relevant to Romanticism, has three main contexts and reasons for that epoch's interest in it. Firstly, philosophical, i.e. the belief in the volatility of history and culture related to the passage of time and the need to learn about what has passed. Secondly, psychological: the desire to escape, in such a restless age, from the here and now; escapism. Thirdly – aesthetic: searching for new sources of artistic inspiration in what was different from the close and familiar.

This does not mean, of course, that the romantics' attitude towards history was limited to the above contexts, but they seem to be the most important. There was also a tendency that was particularly intensified in the period of Romanticism, which was the formation of a modern sense of nationality, of which history was an important element.

The phenomenon of historicism was not a Romantic "invention": interest in history and tendencies to refer to the past, especially the native one, were alive even before the period of Romanticism. An important role was played here by the thought of Giambattista Vico (*Scienza nuova* [*New Science*], 1725), who admittedly recognized a certain repetition of the cycles of history; however, they were different due to the previous ones having been worked through. Thus, he combined the concept of a linear development of history with the idea of a circular course (naturally inherent in nature). It is also worth mentioning historian Edward Gibbon as the author of the multi-volume monograph *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788). Gibbon also presented in his book the historiosophical concept of repetition, but of the development and decline of great cultural formations; thus, his thought was to become one of the models of how history was perceived by the Romantics: of the awareness that not only a great empire, but also a great civilization and great culture could fall.

A significant contribution to the formation of Romantic historicism, however, was made by Johann Gottfried Herder, as a philosopher dealing with, among others, historiosophy, the author of *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* ([*Thoughts on the Philosophy of History*], 1784–1791).

Herder also joined in a wide-ranging literary polemic about Shakespeare. Ancient tragedies (which he valued) were appropriate, in his opinion,

for their times and people, while Shakespeare's remain relevant: they teach, move and educate also contemporary people of the North, because Shakespeare created a kind of summa of humanity, depicting various human characters, and thus he transcended his era. In other words, Herder already preached relativism and historicism in relation to literature and its perception, and also introduced geographical issues as related to the sense of aesthetics and the possibility of proper reception of a given work. He argued, like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, that Shakespeare could be better understood by Germans than by his countrymen, the English:

> Und wenn jener Griechen vorstellt und lehrt und rührt und bildet, so lehrt, rührt und bildet Shakespear nordische Menschen![1]
>
> [And if Sophocles represents and teaches and moves and cultivates *Greeks*, then Shakespeare teaches, moves, and cultivates northern *men*!][2]

Montesquieu (Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu) was one of the first to draw early attention to the diversity of cultures and the possibility of perceiving oneself from a foreign perspective. His *Lettres persanes* ([*Persian Letters*], 1721) presented a satirical picture of France from the perspective of Persians visiting Paris, simultaneously introducing oriental themes and the issue of cultural relativism:

> II y a une chose qui m'a souvent étonné; c'est de voir ces Persans quelquefois aussi instruits que moi-même des mœurs et des manières de la nation, jusqu'à en connaître les plus fines circonstances, et à remarquer des choses qui, je suis sûr, ont échappé à bien des Allemands qui ont voyagé en France. J'attribue cela au long séjour qu'ils y ont fait: sans compter qu'il est plus facile à un Asiatique de s'instruire des mœurs des Français dans un an, qu'il ne l'est à un Français de s'instruire des mœurs des Asiatiques dans quatre; parce que les uns se livrent autant que les autres se communiquent peu.[3]
>
> [One thing has often astonished me, and that is, that these Persians seemed often to have as intimate an acquaintance as I myself with the manners and customs of our nation, an acquaintance extending to the most minute particulars and not un-possessed of many points which have escaped the observation of more than one German traveler in France. This I attribute to the long stay which they made, without taking it into consideration how much easier it is for an Asiatic to become acquainted with the manners and customs of The French in one year, than it would be for a Frenchman to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the Asiatics in four, the former being as communicative as the latter are reserved.][4]

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[1] J. G. Herder, *Shakespeare* [1773], in: idem, *Herders Werke in fünf Bänden*, vol. 2, Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978, p. 214.

[2] J. G. Herder, *Shakespeare*, translated by Gregory Moore, Princeton University Press 2008, p. 32.

[3] Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Lettre persannes*, p. 24, at:
https://philo-labo.fr/fichiers/Montesquieu%20-%2003%20Lettres%20persanes.pdf, access 10.06.2023.

[4] [Charles-Louis de Secondat de] Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, translation and introduction by John Davidson, London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1891, p. 36. at:
https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.97067/page/n49/mode/2up, access 11.06.2024.

This combination of the sense of relativism of culture, depending on time and place (the North and the South of Europe), resulted, sometimes simultaneously, in a return to one's own tradition and the search for aesthetic inspirations within it: in creative work and in the reception of literature and art. One of the sources of discovering the North was (apart from the search for new sources of literary inspiration) the exploration of their own cultural roots by Germanic countries, also a certain kind of exaltation stemming from enthusiasm (the poetry of the skalds was perceived as wild, barbaric, unrestrained), as well as aesthetic reasons – "melancholy" landscapes and climate.

A breakthrough was made by the publication by a Swiss, Paul Henri Mallet, in 1755, in French, of *The History of Denmark* [*Introduction à l'histoire du Danemarc où l'on traite de la religion, des moeurs, des lois, et des usages des anciens Danois*, *Introduction to the history of Denmark, which introduces the religion, laws and customs of ancient Danes*]. In 1756, in turn, *Monuments de la mythologie et de la poèsie des Celtes, et particulièrement des anciens Scandinaves* [*Monuments of mythology and poetry of the Celts, and particularly of the ancient Scandinavians*] was published, which included the first translation of *The Edda* into French, followed by its translations and adaptations in different languages (the Polish translation from the French translation was made by Joachim Lelewel in 1807, *Edda, czyli księga dawnych Skandynawii mieszkańców* [*Edda, or the Book of the Religions of Old Scandinavian Inhabitants*]).

The oldest *Edda*, dating back to the 11th century, found in Iceland in 1643 by an Icelandic bishop, was published in 1665. Interestingly, these findings initially gained recognition not in the Scandinavian countries (in the sense that the literature of these countries did not originate under their influence), but in France and Germany, in particular.

In 1765 Thomas Percy (1729–1811), an Englishman, published a translation of runic poetry from Icelandic as well as *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, containing English and Scottish ballads written in the fifteenth century, supplemented with the results of his research.

James Macpherson took a different approach as an author of the historical work *History of Great Britain and Ireland* in 1771, and also a researcher focused on Gaelic poetry. In 1761, he announced the discovery of an epic work, which he published in 1762 under the title *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, together with Several Other Poems composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal, translated from the Gaelic Language,* later published under the shortened title *The Works of Ossian*.

Although it was quickly discovered that it was a kind of fraud (or at least a deception), the "Ossianic" trend prevailed for a long time. For many pre-Romantics, Celts and Germans, to some extent, replaced the ancient Greeks and Romans; for the Germans, they were also the subject of their ideas about their own Germanic heritage.

In the following years, more publications of this kind appeared. A Dane, Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger, released old Scandinavian *romances*, epic poems, and eventually a novel about the old times, titled *Guldhornene* [*The Golden Horns*], 1803, as well as a contemporary version of the Edda, called *Nordens Guder* [*Gods of the North*], in 1819. A Swede, Erik Gustaf Geijer, presented the poem *Vikingen*, portraying Vikings as ideal Nordic heroes. Esaias Tegnér, on the other hand, published the national poem (actually existing) *Frithjof's Saga* (1820); his Romanticism leaned towards the praise of ancestral heroism.

It is worth noting that with the onset of the Romantic era a similar tendency emerged over time in other nations, including those from the southern regions. For instance, although Spanish *romanceros* had been known before the 19th century, it was during that period that they gained popularity, especially in France. It was believed that they were older than they actually were – romances were thought to be "Mauritanian," of Arab origin, whereas they date back to the time of el Cid, that is the period of the Reconquista. In Portugal, it was Almeida Garrett (João Baptista da Silva Leitão de Almeida Garrett) who in 1843 published early literature in a multi-volume collection called *Romanceiro e Cancioneiro Geral* [*Collection of Romances and Songs*], which included knightly, historical, and other romances, as well as legends (*lendas*).

The motives of the scholars who were discovering the traces of the ancient cultures of the North were different from those of the writers who wrote later, or who tried to create some theories of literature based on the trend of interest in the North (such as Mme de Staël in *De l'Allemagne* [*Germany*], London 1813, Paris 1814). Other nations followed the example of the Germanic countries, referring to their own ancient cultures (often searched for in vain), attempting to find their traces in folk art, or even claiming the heritage of the North as their own – a clearly ahistorical perspective.

Indeed, while the pre-Romantics began placing their works in their respective historical and regional contexts, it was German Romantics and Romantics from other countries, who delved into research on literary history. Among them were, besides Herder and Lessing, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, and others. Historicism understood in such a way did not limit itself to one specific era; however, among all the historical periods, the Romantics showed the greatest affinity for what the pseudo-classicists rejected as "dark and barbaric," i.e. the Middle Ages.

Indeed, the interest in the Middle Ages, called Medievalism, was a distinguishing feature of Romantic historicism: it consisted in interest in both the culture and architecture of the Middle Ages, as well as in conducting literary research, searching for patterns of poetry in the literature of that time, and sometimes incorporating the plot of their own works within such settings. Representatives of the latter direction were, for example:

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (*Götz von Berlichingen*, 1773), Walter Scott (*Ivanhoe*, 1819), Ludwig Uhland (*Ernst, Herzog von Schwaben* [*Ernest, Duke of Swabia*], 1817; *Ludwig der Baier* [*Louis of Bavaria*], 1819), Joseph von Eichendorff (*Der letzte Held von Marienburg* [*The Last Hero of Malbork*], 1830), Prosper Mérimée (*La Jaquerie* [*The Jacquerie*], 1828), Adam Mickiewicz (*Grażyna*, 1823; *Konrad Wallenrod*, 1828) and finally the historical writers of the second half of the 19th century.

A special role was played by Walter Scott, which was related to his predilection for Gothicism (in both senses, of Gothic architecture and *terror Gothic*) and ruins, and, in particular, for getting to know the past, which resulted in his discovery of numerous documents while searching for ballads and songs from the Scottish-English borderlands. However, he set the action of his novels not only in the Middle Ages, during the crusades (*The Betrothed* and *The Talisman*, 1825) – but also in the 17th and 18th centuries: the cycle *Tales of My Landlord* (1816: *Old Mortality* and *The Black Dwarf*), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). In these novels, the important backdrop to the main character's (or characters') storyline consists of historical complications: struggles of political factions, power struggles, religious disputes, and similar events. These novels are predominantly realistic in nature, even when sentimental or Gothic elements appear in them.

Similarly to Scott, some Romantics did not solely rely on their imagination when it came to the past; they often sought concrete knowledge in historical works, chronicles, and used them as the basis for their narratives. One example of this is Victor Hugo, the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* [*The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*], published in 1831. On the other hand, some Romantic writers created the past according to their own imaginations in an arbitrary and fictional manner, sometimes relying on uncertain historical knowledge or their persuasive intentions (e.g., Adam Mickiewicz in *Grażyna*, 1823; Juliusz Słowacki in *Lilla Weneda*, 1840, or *Król-Duch* [*King-Spirit*], 1845–1849). It is also worth noting that the question of defining the time limits of the medieval era, especially for the Romantics, is debatable from our perspective. In some cases, it extended even into the 16th century.

Apart from invoking real historical events within the narrative context, more or less closely tied to reality, there were situations where history served as a mask for contemporary issues. This was especially the case with Adam Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod*. Both possibilities also applied to the reanimation of people from the past (real or fictional characters), which Romantics particularly enjoyed, emphasizing their distinct character from that of the Romantics' contemporary society.

Apart from the escapist tendencies, there were other reasons for the Romantic fascination with the Middle Ages, including the picturesqueness of architecture and medieval customs (knighthood, tournaments, crusades), aesthetic distinctiveness which opened up new avenues for imagination

(magic, sorcery, legends, etc.), especially contrasting with the exhausted classical aesthetics, and the religiosity of the Middle Ages.

Broadly speaking, three types of reasons for the turn of Romanticism towards the Middle Ages can be distinguished: aesthetic, ethical-religious, and emotional-imaginative. They were associated with ways of "rehabilitating" the Middle Ages, similarly to religion, and the aesthetic qualities of nature and culture of those times, not valued by pseudo-classicism.

For the Romantics, the aesthetic role was played by architecture – Gothic cathedrals, both preserved and in ruins, served as settings for narrative action both in the case of "realistic" and "fantastic" works, with particular emphasis on the frenzy they fostered. In architecture, this meant a fascination with the Gothic (creation of the Neo-Gothic style), sometimes also attempts to build residences in this style as well (e.g., Walter Scott's Abbotsford).

In literature, some English and German pre-romantics were inclined towards such settings (troubadour style): Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto. A Gothic Story* (1764), or Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *Ivanhoe* (1819).

In France, medieval romances were translated, such as *Le Roman de la Rose* ([*The Romance of the Rose*], 13th century), the figures of Joan of Arc, Heloise and Abelard, medieval knights up to the 16th century, were invoked. However, it was Victor Hugo who tried to revive the Middle Ages extensively (his *Ballade douzième* [*Twelfth Ballad*], with a fragment of the chronicle quoted as a motto, may serve as an example).

However, it was René de Chateaubriand (*Génie du christianisme* [*The Genius of Christianity*], 1803), who was the precursor of the apologia of the Middle Ages in France. After analysing various aspects of Christian religion and the moral teachings derived from it, he dedicated considerable space to poetry, fine arts, and literature (under this term, he included history, philosophy, and rhetoric), as well as to music (organising them in that order: *poésie*, *beaux-arts*, *littérature*, separately *musique*). His emphasis on the Christian miraculous (*le merveilleux*) replacing ancient mythology, as well as his reflection on the causes of man's predilections for works eulogising the past, are noteworthy. Chateaubriand focuses on the "times of chivalry" ("temps chevaleresques") and, of course, emphasizes the beauty of the Gothic (especially the churches). He also analyses what constitutes the beauty of the ruins, and, in general, historicism.

In Great Britain, the picturesqueness of ruins, abbeys and churches began to be noticed as early as in the 18th century: Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) became interested in the English Middle Ages, and wrote his poems as a supposed 15th-century monk, Thomas Rowley. However, it was Walter Scott who was the first and most important discoverer of the feudal and knightly Middle Ages, although it also appeared in others' works: in John Keats' (*La Belle Dame sans Merci*, 1819, or *Robin Hood*, 1818) with a nostalgic memory of what has passed:

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the "grenè shawe";
All are gone away and past!
(...)
So it is: yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bow-string!
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood-clan!
Though their days have hurried by
Let us two a burden try.[5]

Other English poets also reached back to the Middle Ages, not necessarily of their home country and not necessarily treated realistically, like Robert Southey, the author of a poem dedicated to Joan of Arc (*Joan of Arc*, 1796), the ballad *The Inchcape Rock* (1802), but also of the works related to the Spanish Middle Ages (the story of El Cid), Arthurian legends, etc.

In Spain, the figure of the valiant El Cid Campeador was one of the important heroes of Romanticism: Juan Eugenio Harzenbusch, in the drama *La jura de Santa Gadea*, 1845 [*The Oath in the Church of Saint Agatha*], depicts the conflict between El Cid and King Alfonso VI, based on a legend in which El Cid compels the king to swear before the altar that he had not killed his brother in order to gain the throne. Also another Spaniard, José Zorrilla, was the author of the poem *La leyenda del Cid*, 1882 [*The Legend of El Cid*], published after the Romantic period, in which he described himself in the introduction as "a nineteenth-century troubadour errant" ("el trovador errante del siglo diecinueve"[6]).

In Germany, a positive attitude towards the Middle Ages has been developing since Romanticism: August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his lectures *Über schöne Literatur und Kunst* [*On Belles-Lettres and Art*], 1809–1811), lectured (and wrote) about that era with appreciation. A major contribution to knowledge about the Middle Ages and their literature was made by Ludwig Tieck, both as a translator of medieval texts and as the author of a novel about Frank Sternbald (*Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* [*Frank*

[5] John Keats, *Robin Hood. To a friend*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44483/robin-hood, access 10. 06.2023.

[6] José Zorrilla, *La leyenda del Cid*, 1882 in:
http://www.icorso.com/SIDI/VARIOS/LA%20LEYENDA%20DEL%20CID%20-%20ZORRILLA%201882.pdf, access 11.06.2023.

Sternbald's Journeying Years], 1798), set in the 15th century and related to Albrecht Dürer.

The Middle Ages had a dual character for the Germans: some perceived it as an era in which poetry appealed to the feelings and in which all the values described by René de Chateaubriand prevailed. Here, Novalis with his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* from 1801 is emblematic, with the titular character who is supposed to be a real 13th-century Minnesinger. Others saw this period as picturesque, full of folk legends, miracles, and fantasy, even encompassing elements of sublimity and frenzy, as seen in Ludwig Uhland's *Des Sängers Fluch* [*The Singer's Curse*, 1814], set to music by Robert Schumann. In this work, it is mentioned that the memory of an evil king may vanish if a poet-singer casts such a curse upon him. Neither song (poetry) nor history (book of heroes) should mention his name:

> Des Königs Namen meldet kein Lied, kein Heldenbuch;
> Versunken und vergessen! das ist des Sängers Fluch.[7]
>
> [That king he perished all unnamed in hero-scroll or verse,
> Forgotten, blindly overwhelmed! – so wrought the singer's curse.][8]

In other countries, where medieval culture was not as developed as in the aforementioned ones, different traditions were drawn upon. In Poland, sometimes references were made to prehistoric times (e.g., Juliusz Słowacki's *Balladyna*, 1839, and *Król-Duch* [*King Spirit*], 1845–1849), or elements of medieval culture were "borrowed" from other literatures (e.g., Adam Mickiewicz's *Grażyna*, 1823). Of course, not everyone in Romanticism admired the Middle Ages. Some, like George Gordon Byron and Percy Shelley, were opposed to this movement. Gustave Flaubert also criticized certain writers for presenting a sixteenth-century image of the Middle Ages.

Historicism, of course, was not limited to the turn towards the Middle Ages, although this was highly characteristic of Romanticism. It also sometimes extended to more recent history. Political struggles of the past, revolutions, and fights for freedom allowed for questions to be asked about whether every action in the name of an idea is always justified, regardless of the method used. Does revolution itself represent an inherent value? Does an individual have the right to pursue their own interests contrary to the common good? Does betrayal result in the loss of honour? These questions were sometimes answered through the portrayal of desirable behaviours (*exempla*) or, conversely, undesirable ones. In doing so, historicism went

[7] Ludwig Uhland, *Des Sängers Fluch* [1814], in: idem, *Hundert Gedichte*, ausgewählt und zusammengestellt von Walter Lewerenz, Illustrationen von Carl Hoffmann, Verlag Neues Leben: Berlin, 1988, p. 169.

[8] Ludwig Uhland, "The Singer's Curse," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 1863, vol. 93, issue 571, p. 594; cited after: Alison Chapman (ed.) and the DVPP team, "The Singer's Curse," Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry Project, Edition 0.98.9beta, University of Victoria, 18th March 2024, https://dvpp.uvic.ca/blackwoods/1863/pom_9668_the_singers_curse.html.

beyond escapism or aestheticism, treating history as a "teacher of life" (*magistra vitae*).

Such an *exemplum à rebours*, or an example of a clash with history that destroys an initially righteous individual, can be found in Alfred de Vigny's novel *Cinq-Mars* from 1826. The story is set in seventeenth-century France and, like later works, such as Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio* or Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* [*The Red and the Black*], it explores the theme of the main character's sick ambition. Examples better known to Polish readers are Adam Mickiewicz's *Grażyna* and *Konrad Wallenrod*, as well as Zygmunt Krasiński's *Irydion* (1836). These works were not merely in the nature of historical costume, they did not concern only ethical considerations, but also addressed the phenomenon of historical processes (like *Nie-Boska komedia* [*The Undivine Comedy*], 1835) and revolutions, as well as the fundamental issue regarding Romanticism's relationship with history – freedom and the right to self-determination of a nation, in other words, patriotism.

Freedom, patriotism, and love for the homeland (the land, the birthplace) were especially crucial for artists coming from countries deprived of statehood, conquered, enslaved, or partitioned by earlier or more recent occupiers, in part or in whole.

It was the works of Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, and Poles that were most strongly affected by this phenomenon, although it also influenced many other nations. René de Chateaubriand wrote about patriotism as a kind of privilege bestowed upon humans by Providence, somewhat akin to religious faith, along with friendship and love. In his book *Génie du Christianisme* [*The Genius of Christianity*] from 1802, he described patriotism as one of the most beautiful and moral instincts of human beings, similar to religious faith: "L'amitié, le patriotisme, l'amour, tous les sentiments nobles, sont aussi une espèce de foi"[9] ("Friendship, patriotism, love, every noble sentiment, is likewise a species of faith."[10]). The challenging climatic conditions or poverty of a given country, or even persecution one experiences there, only serve to intensify people's love for their homeland.

Patriotism was often motivated by the desire to revive the memory of old literature and history, as seen in Alessandro Manzoni's novel *I promessi sposi* [*The Betrothed*] from 1827. Manzoni made it clear that his goal was not merely to portray the fate of the characters but also to present the course of events and the history of the homeland, which is more famous than actually known about:

[9] François-René de Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme* [1802], at: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/G%C3%A9nie_du_christianisme/Partie_1/Livre_2/Chapitre_II, access 11.06.2023.

[10] François-René de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity, or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion*, a new and complete translation from the French, with a preface, biographical notice of the author, and critical and explanatory notes by Charles I. White, Baltimore: Published by John Murphy and Co., 1871, p. 95; at: https://archive.org/details/geniuschristiani00chatuoft/page/94/mode/2up, access 11.06.2024.

(...) in questo racconto, il nostro fine non è, a dir vero, soltanto di rappresentar lo stato delle cose nel quale verranno a trovarsi i nostri personaggi; ma insieme di far conoscere, per quanto si può in ristretto, e per quanto si può da noi, un tratto di storia patria più famoso che conosciuto. [11]

[At the same time we cannot avoid giving a general though brief sketch of an event in the history of our country more talked of than understood.][12]

João Baptista Almeida Garrett's aim was similar: in his poem *Camões* (1825) he puts the words "Fatherland, at least let us die together" ("Pátria, ao menos / Juntos morremos"[13]) into the mouth of his protagonist. Garrett reached for the historical figure of the 16th-century poet, the author of *Os Lusíadas* [*The Lusitanians*], to portray the patriotism – of the 16th century, hence earlier than the romantic one – of the character deeply entwined with history. Similar approaches of evoking one's country's past, be it ancient or recent, and people, so as to showcase role models for emulation were, of course, not uncommon.

An example can be found in an Italian writer, Silvio Pellico. He was accused of belonging to the Carbonari, a secret revolutionary society, and was imprisoned by the Austrians. Initially, he was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to imprisonment and he spent ten years in prison. Pellico became famous for his memoirs, titled *Le mie prigioni* [*My Prisons*], published in 1831, and also for his poem *La Patria* [*The Homeland*], published in 1837, in which he argued that patriotism does not lie in "frenzy of war" ("frenesìa di guerra") but in a fervent belief in God and in the fact that the Italians are God's people ("Il popol siam di Dio").[14]

Such role models, however, could be not only individual people, but also other nations and their history: this was often the case with Greece and Poland. It was Greece that became primarily the symbol of the loss of freedom and its later anthem, written in 1823 (in the immediate aftermath of the Greek uprising) as a long poem by Dhionísios Solomós, *Ὑμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν* [*Hymn to Liberty*] recalled the past glory of the Hellenes. William Wordsworth [*On a Celebrated Event in Ancient History*] wrote about Greece – ironically, about the Roman Sovereign declaring Greece independent:

> A Roman Master stands on Grecian ground,
> And to the people at the Isthmian Games
> Assembled, He, by a herald's voice, proclaims

[11] Alessandro Manzoni, *I promesi sposi*, https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/I_promessi_sposi_(Ferrario)/Capitolo_XXXI, access 4.07.2024.

[12] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed,* London: Richard Bentley, 1834 https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/35155/pg35155-images.html , access 28.06.2024.

[13] Almeida Garrett, *Camões*, coordenação Carlos Reis, introdução, nota bibliográfica Helena Carvalhão Buescu, Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, S.A., 2018, p. 222; at: https://imprensanacional.pt/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/AlmeidaGarrett_Camoes.pdf.

[14] Silvio Pellico, *La Patria*, at: https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/La_Patria access 11.06.2023.

The Liberty of Greece: – the words rebound
Until all voices in one voice are drowned;
Glad acclamation by which air was rent![15]

as did George Gordon Byron (*Fair Greece! Sad relic of departed worth!*),

Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
And long accustomed bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylae's sepulchral strait —
Oh, who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas' banks, and call thee from the tomb?[16]

as well as other Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Poles... This does not mean that they considered freedom (in the past) and liberalism (contemporary to the Romantics) as synonymous. Benjamin Constant, in his 1819 dissertation *De la liberté des Anciens comparée à celle des Modernes* [*Comparing the Freedom of the Ancients with the Freedom of the Modern*], stated that in antiquity freedom was understood as participation in the exercise of power and co-responsibility for the state, while in his times freedom meant the freedom of everyone to act for themselves, their own benefits and pleasures (*jouissances*). Alphonse de Lamartine wrote similarly, evoking freedom that was a threat to itself, paradoxically in an era that adored it:

Liberté! nom sacré, profané par cet âge,
J'ai toujours dans mon coeur adoré ton image,
Telle qu'aux jours d'Emile et de Léonidas.
(...) mais aujourd'hui, pardonne à mon silence;
Quand ton nom, profané par l'infâme licence,
Du Tage à l'Éridan épouvantant les rois,
Fait crouler dans le sang les trônes et les Iris;
Détournant leurs regards de ce culte adultère,
Tes purs adorateurs, étrangers sur la terre,
Voyant dans ces excès ton saint nom se flétrir,
Ne le prononcent plus... de peur de l'avilir.[17]

Numerous romantics compared Poland to truly free, but later also enslaved, Greece: Alfred de Musset wrote in his poem *À la Pologne* [*To Poland*] (1830) about the tragedy of the November Uprising and Europe's indifference to it:

[15] W. Wordsworth, *On a celebrated Event in Ancient History* (fragment) at: https://www.poetry.com/poem/42298/on-a-celebrated-event-in-ancient-history; access 11.06.2023.

[16] G.G. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, LXXIII (a fragment) at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5131/5131-h/5131-h.htm; access 11. 06.2023.

[17] A. de Lamartine, *Liberté ou une nuit à Rome*,
https://www.bonjourpoesie.fr/lesgrandsclassiques/poemes/alphonse_de_lamartine/la_liberte_ou_une_nuit_a_rome, access 11.06.2023.

Jusqu'au jour, ô Pologne! où tu nous montreras
Quelque désastre affreux, comme ceux de la Grèce,
Quelque Missolonghi d'une nouvelle espèce,
Quoi que tu puisses faire, on ne te croira pas.[18]

Many others also emphasized the brotherhood of nations fighting for freedom. One such example is Sándor Petőfi, the adjutant of General Bem and the author of the poem-appeal *Talpra magyar!* [*Rise Up, Hungarians!*]. In his poem *Az erdélyi hadsereg* ([*In the Transylvanian Army*], 1849), he recalled General Bem, the Battle of Ostrołęka (*Osztrolenka*), and proclaimed the power of unity between Hungarians and Poles, vowing on the bloody wounds of their oppressed homelands that victory would be achieved:

Mi ne győznénk? hisz Bem a vezérünk,
A szabadság régi bajnoka!
Bosszuálló fénnyel jár előttünk
Osztrolenka véres csillaga.[19]

['Why don't we win? Bem is our leader,
the old champion of freedom!
Osztrolenka's bloody star shines before us with a vengeance!'][20]

The attitude of Polish Romantic literature towards history could fill up volumes, but it is worth noting that the contemporary history of Poland, with its brave attempts to regain freedom through the November Uprising and its overall aspirations for liberty, was elevated to a pedestal by poets from various countries. Many German poets, in particular, celebrated this part of history through their famous "Polenlieder" (poems and songs dedicated to Poland), not only to praise the Poles but also to set them up as an example for their compatriots. They praised the courage and bravery of the insurgents, proclaimed their glory and expressed sympathy for the defeat: some of those texts have been absorbed by Polish culture. As an example, the poem *Die letzten Zehn vom Vierten Regiment* by Julius Mosen, in the excellent translation by Jan Nepomucen Kamiński, became the Polish long-sung song *Walecznych tysiąc opuszcza Warszawę* [*The Brave Thousand Leaves Warsaw*], recalling the famous Fourth Regiment and the departure from Poland of the surviving members after the uprising:

In Warschau schwuren Tausend auf den Knieen:
Kein Schuß im heil'gen Kampfe sei gethan,
Tambour, schlag an! Zum Blachfeld laß uns ziehen!

[18] A. de Musset, *A la Pologne*, at: https://www.poetica.fr/poeme-3132/alfred-de-musset-a-la-pologne/, access 11.06.2023.

[19] Sandor Petöfi, *Az erdélyi Hadsereg* (a fragment), at: https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Verstar-verstar-otven-kolto-osszes-verse-2/petofi-sandor-DFB2/1849-FBA8/az-erdelyi-hadsereg-FC03/, access 11.06.2023.

[20] The translation comes from the article on Józef Bem found at the webpage of the Wacław Felczak Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation: (J), *Today marks the 230th birth anniversary of Jozef Bem, Petőfi's beloved general*; at: https://kurier.plus/en/node/5073, access 25.06.2024.

Wir greifen nur mit Bajonetten an!
Und ewig kennt das Vaterland und nennt
Mit stillem Schmerz sein Viertes Regiment. [...]

Ade, ihr Brüder, die zu Tod getroffen,
An unsrer Seite dort wir stürzen sah'n!
Wir leben noch, die Wunden stehen offen,
Und um die Heimat ewig ist's gethan!
Herr Gott im Himmel, schenk' ein gnädig End'
Uns Letzten noch vom Vierten Regiment!

Von Polen her, im Nebelgrauen, rücken
Zehn Grenadiere in das Preußenland
Mit dumpfen Schweigen, gramumwölkten Blicken;
Ein „Wer da?" schallt – Sie stehen festgebannt: –
Und Einer spricht: „Vom Vaterland getrennt
Die letzten Zehn vom Vierten Regiment![21]

[A thousand soldiers knelt in Warsaw's square,
The solemn oath of battle sternly taking;
They swore, without a shot, the foe to dare,
With bayonets' point their deadly pathway making.
Beat drums! march on, and let our country tell
That "Poland's Fourth" will keep its promise well. [...]

And ah! dear brothers, who to death have gone,
But, dying, from our souls shall perish never;
We, who still live, with broken hearts move on,
Far from our homes, the homes now lost forever;
And pray that God in heaven may quickly send
The last of "Poland's Fourth" a blessed end.

From Poland's confines, through the misty air,
Ten soldiers come, and, crossing Prussia's border,
The sentry challenges with, "Who comes there?"
They stand in silence. He repeats the order.
At last one says, "Out of a thousand men
In 'Poland's Fourth' we are the only ten.][22]

It is also worth mentioning Ludwig Uhland's poem *An Mickiewicz* [*To Mickiewicz*], from 1833, in which the German not only worships the Polish poet, but – similarly to others – introduces the phrase that is well-known to his compatriots, nicely rhyming in German: "Noch ist Polen nicht ver-

[21] Julius Mosen, *Die letzten Zehn vom Vierten Regiment*, in: *Polenlieder deutscher Dichter*, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Stanisław Leonhard, Bd. 1, Krakau: In Kommission bei W. Poturalski, Verlag von J. Piasecki, 1911, p. 100–101; at https://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=7176, access 12.06.2024.

Polish translation by Jan Nepomucen Kamiński see: *Walecznych tysiąc. Antologia niemieckiej poezji o powstaniu listopadowym*, wstęp, wybór i opracowanie naukowe Gerard Koziełek, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987, p. 120–121.

[22] Julius Mosen, *Warsaw, The Last Ten of the Fourth Regiment*, translated by J. F. Clarke https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/poems-of-places-an-anthology-in-31-volumes/the-last-ten-of-the-fourth-regiment/, access 25.06.2024.

loren" ("Poland has not perished yet"), which derived from a 1797 line of Józef Wybicki's *Pieśń Legionów Polskich we Włoszech* [*Song of the Polish Legions in Italy*], the future incipit of the Polish anthem:

> Mitten in der stillen Feier
> Wird ein Saitengriff getan.
> Ha! wie schwillet diese Leier
> Voller stets und mächt'ger an!
> Leben schaffen solche Geister,
> Dann wird Todtes neu geboren;
> Ja! mir bürgt des Liedes Meister:
> „Noch ist Polen nicht verloren!"[23]
>
> [Hark, amidst the solemn hour,
> there was one who touched the lyre
> Hear! A fuller mightier music
> Surges from these magic chords,
> Here's a spirit sings life's renewal,
> What is dead is born again,
> Yes, the Master's song is warrant
> "Poland has not perished yet!][24]

Romantic historicism, treated very selectively here, would be somewhat incomplete without mentioning its contribution to the creation and shaping of the future, particularly the development of national consciousness, which varied to different extents among nations. One of the proofs of this shaping process, based on the vision of past history and the projection of the future, can be found in the national anthems and songs whose texts were brought forth by Romanticism to numerous European countries and regions, composed by the poets of the Romantic era.

This phenomenon is not accidental, nor is it always related to the artistic merits of the poems and songs that acquired such a character. Instead, it is connected, on the one hand, to the awakening or revival of national consciousness, to patriotism, and on the other hand, to their themes. Moreover, it is also linked to the value that Romanticism holds (or held) for subsequent generations – although this is a separate topic. The songs or poems that emerged in the 19th century and were later recognized as national anthems (or which served a similar purpose) formed a bridge between "bygone years and more recent ones." This connection is not always evident, and, in a sense, these works are a legacy of Romanticism's approach to history. Some of these pieces were later set to music and accepted as national anthems in the 19th and 20th centuries. They are too numerous to list in full, but as examples let us mention a few from the 19th century: the Greek, Hungarian, Swedish, Danish, Italian

[23] Ludwig Uhland, *An Mickiewicz*, in: *Polenlieder deutscher Dichter*, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Stanisław Leonhard, Bd. 1, Krakau: In Kommission bei W. Poturalski, Verlag von J. Piasecki, 1911, p. 286–287; at https://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=7176; access 12.06.2024.

[24] Quoted in: Frederic Ewen *Heroic Imagination: The Creative Genius of Europe from Waterloo (1815) to the Revolution of 1848*, New York University Press, 2004, p. 619.

anthems, as well as numerous "national songs," which almost always invoke freedom as the fundamental value defining the essence of a nation.[25]

It is worth noting that references to other nations, their history, community, or shared destinies sometimes appear not only in poetry, but also in national anthems. In the Polish anthem, there is a mention of "Italian land" ("from the Italian land to Poland…"), while in the Italian anthem (in the last part of the full version), Poland is invoked as suffering for the same reason as Italy: because of the violence of a foreign ruler:

> Il sangue d'Italia,
> Il sangue Polacco,
> Bevé, col cosacco,
> Ma il cor le bruciò.[26]
>
> [The blood of Italy,
> The blood of Poland
> It with Cossacks did drink,
> But will burn its heart.][27]

This vision of the influence of the history of the Romantics on further history, including Polish, far from being complete, would be entirely incomplete if we did not mention one more, unusual way of treating history: a loving memory of the past and a conscious outline of a possible future that the author knew was not supposed to come true – at least not during his lifetime.

In comparison to various other romantic attitudes towards history, the conclusion of Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (1834) possesses an extraordinary character.[28] Does this mean that Mickiewicz was optimistic about the future

[25] Denmark – *Det er et yndigt land* ([*There is a lovely country*], 1819) by Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger, from 1844 as one of two anthems (besides the earlier one, one of the oldest coming from 1780 *Kong Kristian*, *King Krystian*, the royal hymn); Greece – *Ὕμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν* ([*Hymn to Liberty*], 1823) by Dionísios Solomós, created on the occasion of the Greek uprising in 1821, in the *demotiki* language (Δημοτική) as the national anthem since 1864; Hungary – *Himnusz – Isten, áldd meg a magyart* ([*God, bless the Hungarians*], 1823) by Ferenz Kölcsey, as the official anthem since 1903, with a ban on singing the words during the communist times, and *Szózat* ([*Appeal*], 1836) by Mihály Vörösmarty, functioning also as an unofficial national anthem; Sweden – *Du gamla, du fria (*[*Thou old, Thou free*], 1844), by Richard Dybeck and also from 1844 *Ur svenska hjärtans djup en gång* [*Once from the depths of Swedish hearts*], by Carl Vilhelm August Strandberg; Italy – *Il Canto degli Italiani* ([*The Song of the Italians*], 1847) by Goffredo Mameli functioning as the official national anthem since 1948, Poland – *Jeszcze Polska nie umarła* ([*Poland Is not Yet Dead*], 1797) functioning as the official national anthem *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła* [*Poland Is not Yet Lost*] since 1927.

[26] Goffredo Mameli, *Fratelli d'Italia*, see: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn_W%C5%82och, access 11.06.2023.

[27] Goffredo Mameli, *Brothers of Italy*, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_Canto_degli_Italiani, access 25.06.2024.

[28] The full title of Mickiewicz's poem: *Pan Tadeusz, czyli Ostatni zajazd na Litwie. Historia szlachecka z roku 1811 i 1812 we dwunastu księgach wierszem* [English translation: Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz or The Last Foray in Lithuania. A Story of the Gentry from 1811 and 1812 Comprising Twelve Books in Verse*, translated from the Polish by Bill Johnston, Archipelago Books: New York 2018].

of Poland? The Epilogue proves that he was not, at least in relation to his contemporaries, which is indicated by the "damning quarrels" of the Polish emigrees. It was that he contrasted with the wonderful, realistic and symbolic image of the final polonaise dance. *Chodzony*, verbatim a walking dance (polonaise), in which neither the dancers nor the couples go around in circles, they do not whirl around each other, but move forward in unison, to the rhythm of beautiful, well-known music – even when the figures of the whole group are circular – because they dance within their own space, which is known to them, and do not head into the unknown or alien.

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