

## On Adam Mickiewicz's Theory of Romanticism

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### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to considering the views of the famous Polish classic Adam Mickiewicz on oriental romanticism. It is known that the Polish poet is considered the founder of Polish romanticism. At the same time, the beginning of this trend in Mickiewicz's poetry was laid by sonnets on eastern themes, which later found continuation in other forms of creativity. The creation of the West-Eastern synthesis was not accidental for his work. The fact is that even before the appearance of the cycle of poems on eastern motives, Mickiewicz wrote two unique articles ("Goethe and Byron", "On Romantic Poetry"), in which he tries to compare not only the poetic principles of two brilliant representatives of German and English literature, who influenced his work, but also to trace the origin and development of romanticism in world literature. These two articles are the object of this study. The analysis aims to determine the basic principles of the Polish poet's approach to the works of Goethe and Byron, to identify his views on the history of the origin and development of the romantic movement in world literature, and thereby establish his principles of Orientalism. The study concludes that the aforementioned theoretical works defined the eastern aspect of Mickiewicz's romanticism and influenced his further work.

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## 1. Introduction

Scholars have assessed the poetry of the famous Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz as romantic. His eastern motifs occupy a special page in this context. The theoretical problems of this aspect have not been sufficiently studied. The attempt undertaken not only restores this gap but also reveals the main messages of Mickiewicz's romantic appeal to eastern motifs.

## 2. Materials and methods.

General scientific research methods (observation, comparative analysis, synthesis) and elements of discursive analysis.

## 3. Results and discussion

In literary studies, the term "romantic orientalism" is often used in the context of the Romantic movement. According to the general opinion of scholars, the classical tradition accepted the interest in the East as a contrast between rational European culture and rational Eastern culture. In the philosophical understanding, rational reason implies abstract-conceptual thinking, man's rational activity. Rationalists believe that

experience without reason has no special meaning. Here, we are talking about the expediency of devices and actions justified by reason. Science and the activities of scientists are examples of rational thinking. According to philosophers, irrationality is beyond reason; it does not have rational qualities and properties and is not subject to logic. The sphere of the irrational usually includes emotions, passions, experiences, intuition, will, various kinds of insights, which are manifestations of the inner world of man. At the same time, modern philosophy, paradoxically, recognizes rationalism and irrationalism.

Now let us return to our term. Interest in the East was based on the development of Eastern philology, knowledge of its social thought and philosophy, travel to Eastern countries, passion for Eastern art, architecture, and Eastern literary themes. In the early period of its development, Orientalism was perceived as an exotic phenomenon. This was when “exotic” implied foreign-language borrowing, taken from the life of another people. In other words, exoticisms denoted foreign-national phenomena, which were conveyed in the national language by means of marking the artistic text. European writers tried to recreate the defining cultural dominant of the speech environment by modeling specific expressive means. Some critics and readers perceived Eastern exoticism as an external manifestation, an unusual, colorful phenomenon that could attract attention. In other words, Eastern exoticism was initially perceived as a formal satisfaction of the needs of society or as an imaginary, idealized world. In subsequent periods, Orientalism became part of Western European literature, filled not only with external qualities, but also with the content of cultural specificity: the use of themes, plots, motifs, and stylistic artistic techniques. It is worth recalling the words of A.V. Mikhailov, who laconically evaluates the eastern theme in Goethe’s poetry as follows: “Goethe’s ‘East’ is an ‘experiment’, a creative synthesis achieved by analytical techniques” (Mikhailov, 1985).

An equally important reason for the emergence of Orientalism was dissatisfaction with Western civilization, the desire for pristine nature, and natural man. For romantics, the eastern theme became an image of an exotic world and the embodiment of other values, such as independence, pride, passion, and courage. In this context, the secrets of romantic irrationality, primordiality, spirituality, wisdom, subtleties of the human psyche, and traits of rebellion were revealed.

In order to substantiate romanticism in the works of Adam Mickiewicz, it is necessary, in our opinion, to turn to the poet himself, that is, to his views on romantic poetry (“On Romantic Poetry” (1821), “Goethe and Byron” (1827)). It is quite interesting that after writing the article “Goethe and Byron” (1827), while in Berlin (1829), he listened to Hegel’s lectures, which he assessed critically and with caustic remarks. At the same time, the poet meets Goethe, goes to Italy, and visits Sicily. His meeting with his idol, Goethe, should be especially noted. However, before moving on to the connections between Goethe and Mickiewicz, we should dwell in detail on Byron, who attracted the attention of the early romantics since his student years. Some researchers, in particular V.D. Spasovich, believe that the first period of his work before 1830 should be considered a Byronist. Here is how V.D. Spasovich describes this period: “The ferment was romanticism, brought to Vilnius from the West, it revived literature, became a living national force, and pushed the nationality onto new, very risky paths. Remarkably, this romanticism was grafted earlier onto Russian rather than Polish literature, that Lenora Burgera (1771), dressed up as “Lyudmila” by Zhukovsky in 1808, inspired the Vilnius students to write their first ballads” (Spasovich a, 1913). This era is called by scholars the era of Polish romanticism, when Mickiewicz’s student life coincided with the progressive

movement of the progressive Vilnius youth ("Filarets", "Philomaths", "Fiery") and with his romantic love for Maryla and Kowalska.

It is to this period (1822) that the passion for Byron's poetry and his translations dates. Already, in these early translations, the difference between the author's and the translator's temperaments is felt. Moreover, as we will note later, while working on the sonnets in the following years, Byron's influence is felt more visibly. Here it would be useful to recall the comments of V.D. Spasovich: "In sonnet X, the shooter, trembling with excitement, with a loaded gun, awaits his rival in love with a bitter smile and the look of Cain. In the Crimean sonnet IV, the Storm, the lonely wanderer thinks: happy is he who has become exhausted (amid a storm) or can pray or has someone to say goodbye to. Byronic sounds are heard in all the sonnets that relate directly or indirectly to the Odessa Danaids. The most Byronic ending of the famous sonnet XII (Rezygnacya) is imprinted in the following way: "And like a ruined temple in the desert, it collapses and perishes: to live in its sanctuary, the Deity does not want, man does not dare." In sonnet XIV, let us cite another place of the same kind: "I am glad to enjoy, but I will not deceive - from pride. Child! I am a dried-up grass - you have only just blossomed, and I have long been withering - your abode is light, mine is a cemetery, darkness - So young ivy grows around green poplars, Giving place to thorns at the coffin columns" (Spasovich b, 1913).

Mickiewicz, in his analytical article "Goethe and Byron", dedicated to "two first-class poetic geniuses", traces their life and creative path, trying to find "general remarks concerning the character and general direction of these two great poets" (Mickiewicz, 1827). He examines their work in the context of ancient and world literature. The Polish poet draws attention to Byron's passion for classical sciences and imitations of Virgil and Ossian. It is no coincidence that the first poetic attempts of the young poet were met with caustic criticism. They caused resistance in the beginning poet, inspiring him to satire.

Naturally, these imitations did not yet reveal the awakening of talent. Another impetus was needed for its awakening. In Mickiewicz's opinion, such were passionate love, the company of friends, and disappointment in them. This alienation contributed to wandering around Europe, observing military events, and traveling in the East. All this lived through inspired him and served as material for conveying in poetic language "the thoughts of a philosopher and the political judgments of an Englishman" (Mickiewicz, 1827). Byron's poetry, responding to the needs of the time and accessible to the perception of contemporaries and the majority of European readers, also found imitators. Mickiewicz attempts to shed light on the thoughts and feelings characteristic of the era described: "First of all, let us note that, in relation to private life, the European, as a person, is distinguished by strong and stormy passions, which, however, manifest themselves differently and more or less strongly, in accordance with the differences in climate, nationality and the laws governing society. Sentimentality in love prevailed in the last century in literature, and in society, suicides and tragic scenes were constantly repeated in England and Italy: there, their cause was melancholy, and here - jealousy. It seems that in our time passion, without losing any of its strength, but meeting more and more obstacles to its expression both in laws and in various everyday calculations and decencies, has begun to refrain from brutal manifestations and, at least in the North, has taken on the character of a gloomy, restrained melancholy, completely different from the pious determination of lovers in the Middle Ages, and from the verbose sentimentality that we see in the heroes of French and German novels. This is precisely how love manifests itself in Byron's poetry" (Mickiewicz, 1827). We see how the Polish

poet scrupulously examines the emotional qualities of a European, his temperament, conditioned by national, climatic, and social conditions. Excessive sensitivity in love, expressed in stormy passions, contradictions, jealousy, sometimes ending in tragedies, in the Middle Ages, was different from modern restraint and manifestation. Byron notes the special role of the individual in both private and public life. This idea, as Mickiewicz notes, is especially clearly seen in the characteristic features of the Corsair.

Next, the Polish poet goes on to compare the creative ideas of Goethe and Byron. Let us turn to the author's reasoning: "Goethe, as a man, as a European, acted to the same extent as Byron under the influence of passions, submitted to the spirit of the times, poured out his feelings, spoke exactly like all his contemporaries, but not at all like Byron spoke and expressed his feelings. Goethe looked at passion as an inspiring element that could enliven his works of art; Byron's passions, on the contrary, like the fate of the ancients, governed his entire life, physical and moral. For Goethe, passions were nothing more than that cup of Salerno wine with which Horace loved to invigorate himself; and they acted on Byron's muse in the same stupefying way as the prophetic smoke of the tripod on the Pythia. Goethe preserved curious details about his childhood in his notes, indicating not only the development of his talent but also the very direction in which it developed" (Mickiewicz, 1827).

According to Mickiewicz, the skills of creating fictional images developed in childhood, later in Goethe, under the stress of talent, turned into creative design. In other words, Goethe's images, reflecting real people in life, were transformed into characters created by his imagination. Of course, most of these arguments concern the passions of the heroes. We see that Mickiewicz differentiates the understanding of love and passion in Goethe and Byron. Mickiewicz is convinced that the reflection of love passion in Byron is more real than in Goethe. Concluding the article, he concretizes his thought as follows: "Goethe, perhaps, would have ordered to sculpt statues of his heroines in the form of ideal beauties, which should not have retained any individual features and details, just as Canova depicted his living contemporaries. Byron would probably have wished to have a portrait of the woman he loved that was less beautiful than the original, but that would faithfully convey the characteristic features of the physiognomy, just as Saint-Priest wanted to have a portrait of Julia" (Mickiewicz, 1827). We will not comment on the poet's conclusions regarding the real or ideal depiction of images, for each thinker has subjective, preferential attitudes. But one thing is indisputable: for Mickiewicz, Goethe and Byron are "first-class poetic geniuses." Let us add to what has been said another remarkable feature of the poets, aptly noted by Mickiewicz. This concerns the poets' style. Byron's language is lively, sharp, and provocative, while Goethe's language is distinguished by its softness and melody. It is known that the two genius poets never met, belonged to different cultures, and wrote in different languages. However, their poetic union influenced the entire European literature.

Here it is appropriate to recall the thoughts of E.M. Butler, who asserts that despite the age difference, Goethe was obsessed with Goethe's work (Butler, 1956). Moreover, during Byron's forced exile, when many took up arms with criticism of his personal life, Goethe "discerned in his personality a genius and a great poet" (Bogusław Dopart).

In the context of our research, it is necessary to analyze the article "On Romantic Poetry." The article begins with a discussion of how many writers patiently await the discussion of their works by expert critics who, having formed subjective premises, will determine their merits. According to Mickiewicz, every artist has the right to choose an

"object of imitation," the side of the school or trend that appeals to him more. His reasoning is not didactic in nature, but is based on his own creativity: "In this way, our intention - to give a general outline of romantic poetry - involuntarily leads us to some general remarks regarding other poetic genres - or, better to say, forces us to cast a general glance at the history of poetry in general, at least as much as the subject of our chosen discussion requires, and as much as the scope of this article allows." He then goes on to provide a historical analysis of ancient literature. Naturally, he focuses on the works of ancient literature. For the Polish poet, Greek literature, due to its uniqueness, absorbed the plots of works that are the product of fantasy and other peoples, but its form is superior. In Greek works, we find works that are amazing in form and plot, where fictional phenomena are described, a fairy-tale world full of miracles, distinguished by unusual nature, wildlife, and bizarre birds. This entire unusual world was close to all people of childhood. "But this fairy-tale world was more extensive, richer and more diverse among the Greeks than among other peoples, because the Greek imagination was livelier and more fruitful than anywhere else, and the Greek language surpassed other languages in flexibility, richness and expressiveness" (On Romantic Poetry). At the same time, according to Mickiewicz, this fact was not enough for a correct assessment of the examples of Greek culture. In his opinion, it was during this period that connoisseurs of literature and art appeared who could appreciate and interpret them at their true worth. Yes, these were elite people, who deeply understood the details of the objects and phenomena being assessed, who had won authority among people with impeccable morality: "Finally, the Greek minds, elevated, inquisitive, hardy, began to seek truth early, tirelessly practiced reasoning, following a diverse and most often original path; in this way the philosophical spirit was awakened, they got used to thinking consistently and deeply, in other words, in this way the mind developed, strengthened and was established. Thus, when all the mental faculties were perfected in strict harmony, and when a lively imagination was moderated by refinement of feelings and maturity of reason, it could create grandeur with simplicity, imagery with variety, and beauty with ease. Gifted with such qualities, the creative talent of the Greek artist turned to the ancient fairy-tale world and soon managed to recreate it anew. He discarded everything crude, monstrous, harsh, cleared out heterogeneous and mixed ideas, connected them, and built from them a harmonious whole. These same ideas, built into a single whole, no matter how abstract or mental they were, were always expressed in a sensual and material form, but in a material form so complete and perfect that it can only be imagined and understood by the mind, or, in other words, ideally. Thus, from the fairy-tale world, the ideal of the fictional world, or the mythological world, was created (On Romantic Poetry).

This mythological world was comprehended by the artist's talent, perfected in certain speculative forms, creating an original Greek style, and being a kind of co-creator of masterpieces. Of course, poets also possessed these abilities. However, unlike their fellow writers, poets could influence a huge mass of people with their art. Mickiewicz notes that Greek poets were closer to the public ("they always sang for the crowd"), they knew their character, feelings, and thus influenced their intellectual growth.

In subsequent periods, changing circumstances brought a rift between poets and the people; they lost their former meaning and purpose for them. Poets moved from crowded squares to luxurious palaces of rulers and nobles, and they sang their deeds and heroism. "Thus, poetry turned from a popular need into an amusement for scholars or idle wanderers" (On Romantic Poetry).



Mickiewicz considers the Romans to be next after the Greeks. However, in his opinion, Roman poetry, being "wild and severe", did not significantly influence the civilization of these peoples and remained warlike and predatory (On Romantic Poetry).

Gradually, Greek poetry, which was originally intended for the people, had a natural course of culture and became the privilege of the Roman aristocracy. The Greek mythological spirit was replaced by its own Roman realities, and the language acquired a Latin coloring. In the Middle Ages, when northern peoples, barbarians with their "cold" mythology and pagan religion migrated to the Roman Empire and mixed with local culture and Christianity, the so-called romantic poetry appeared: "This poetry had its own specific character, moderated only by the local influence of the gloomy and passionate Normans, cheerful minnesingers and sensitive troubadours. The external expression or language, which was a fusion of the northern and Roman languages, was called Romance: hence, later generations called both this poetry and the spirit of the time romantic" (On Romantic Poetry).

The coexistence of Germanic, Scandinavian tribes with the Romans, the clash of established customs and morals with new trends and elements of culture, could not but influence the development of poetry. The result of such an unusual fusion was various schools and types of poetry. The creations of ancient history, its classical examples, remained objects of imitation both in form and content. Improvisations are concerned not only with materials, plots, and their understanding but also with their modification in a subjective way on the part of artists. The types of poetry we have listed, as having appeared in the new order of things in Europe at that time, had to be new and completely different from the ancient ones.

"They developed first of all among the Italians, where classical sciences flourished early alongside folk poetry" (). In order to fully substantiate his arguments and compare the state of poetry, Mickiewicz turns to the neighboring French Romantic folk poetry. First, he emphasizes that the troubadours' songs in the sovereigns' palaces did not enjoy popularity for long. Second, the French nobles and aristocracy were no longer very attracted to common songs. Their culture was aimed at the highest etiquette of an aristocratic society, where everything had to be subordinated to its forms and content. This was a set of clearly defined forms of behavior, implying polite gestures, diplomatic concessions, and a series of ceremonial rituals. Enlightenment also developed during this period. The Italians gradually passed on their passion for ancient history to the French. Greek and Roman political attitudes and moral competencies were adopted in this context. Their imitation is formal; it is oriented towards "the appearance and tone of the ancients" (On Romantic Poetry).

Mickiewicz pays attention to the transformation of the genre of tragedy in French drama. Only the style has been preserved from the Greek classical structure, lyrical pathos, and diversity of characters in French tragedy. Here, the Polish poet reveals the meaning of his understanding of the style of the work, where it has an external character ("clothing") in relation to the content ("body and spirit"). The speech of the Greek heroes was also subject to distortion: instead of majesty, lightness, and flexibility, it acquired a completely different coloring.

The next country to appear in the history of poetry is the one cut off from the mainland by the sea, therefore, "less susceptible to foreign impressions." Thanks to the druids and bards, the English preserved their original mythology. The society also respected folk customs, legends, and folk poets. The preservation of folk poetry later served as the basis for the emergence of the school of Chaucer and the brilliant Shakespeare, whose drama depicts the struggle between passion and reason. According

to Mickiewicz, the subsequent development of secular English literature swept them off the cultural scene, replacing them with Addison and Swift. Despite this, in English literature, there are continuers of the traditions of Chaucer and Shakespeare in the persons of Walter Scott and Byron. If the first dedicated his work to the history of the people, then "Byron in the narrative and descriptive genre is the same as Shakespeare in the dramatic genre" (On Romantic Poetry).

Like all other European literatures, German literature did not ignore the classical and romantic examples of Greek, Italian, French, and English literature. They individually approached the choice of one or another form of representation and content corresponding to their concept. Mickiewicz calls the poetic world of the Germans "an ideal mental world, " a world different from the mythological world. He sees a special reflection of this world in the poetry of Schiller (Mickiewicz, 1827).

#### 4. Conclusion

Thus, Mickiewicz, with his presentation of history, leads us to the idea that romantic poetry is not a new phenomenon in the history of world literature. He calls for recognition that the actual romantic principle should be sought in the medieval poets, and that subsequent literature belongs to different types of poetry. Mickiewicz warns his opponents against incorrect interpretation and distortion of literature: "Some writers see only classicism and romanticism in all poetic literature and recognize the works of all poets from Orpheus to Byron as classical or romantic, distributing them to the right and the left. Then, on the one hand, the Iliad will stand next to the Henriad, hymns in honor of the Olympic heroes next to the odes of the French to posterity, to time, etc.; and on the other, the book of heroes and the Nibelungs will clash with Dante's Divine Comedy and Schiller's songs. Finally, it is difficult to guess where many such works would have been placed at this last judgment, such as, for example, the "Messiah," Petrarch's sonnets, Goethe's "Jerusalem Delivered," "Hermann and Dorothea," and all French poetry (On Romantic Poetry).

With his interpretation of the history of romanticism, Mickiewicz openly opposes the views of Schlegel, Butervek, and Eberhard, who are the founders of the theory of dividing literature into classical and romantic trends. The Polish poet refers to his arguments, which are very weighty and worthy of attention. We can accept them or reject them based on our evidence. However, one thing is sure: Mickiewicz, while presenting the history of the issue, tries to express his thoughts on the history of the development of literature and its theoretical premises.

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