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“The Sickness of the Age” and the Romantic Life-Style

The Romantic revolution was not confined to literature but rejuvenated all other areas of art and life, not excluding manners. The task I have set myself is to attempt to confront the changes in cultural manners that took place during the Romantic period with the literature of the epoch—a task I undertake with the purpose of drawing out a few (and only a few) of the connections between literature and attitudes in morals and manners during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹ The formula contained in the title—“the sickness of the age,” “the Romantic disease”—is employed, in a polemical context, as a signal of the existence within studies of Romantic manners of a specific tradition, up to this point practically the

¹ By “manners” I mean a fixed, conventionalized mode of behaviour accepted by (or recently introduced into) a given collectivity, and subject to its evaluation and moral sanction, or to sanction and evaluation with regard to other value systems prevalent within the given collectivity. I exclude from my considerations manners as a regulator of relationships among individuals or between individuals and their primary groups, and concentrate my attention on the modes of behaviour and action that define the individual’s relation to the community, to the values of collective life. In selecting social morality as my area for study, my intention is to consider it in the perspective of social and professional careers, and I take as my point of departure the assertion widely accepted in sociology that the personality’s “collision” with the social system occurs above all on the level of role-playing. I do not examine the immediate external manifestations of manners—dress, gesture, the minutiae of everyday life, elements which would be indispensable for a full analysis, but which I have set aside: I have severed manners from the concrete detail of their manifestation in order to draw out their meaning, their generalized form, the attitudes and patterns of values they conceal.

only one, which has cast a shadow across all subsequent understanding and evaluation of Romantic manners.

Literature's influence on manners is usually taken to be self-evident, but convictions of such an influence are seldom supported by cogent argumentation — which is understandable in the light of the theoretical and methodological difficulties and problems of documentation that present themselves the moment this task is undertaken. Studies devoted to the links between literature and Romantic manners serve to illustrate these difficulties. I concern myself here with merely one such study, which is in fact the sole one to pretend to be a monograph of the area in question: namely, Louis Maigrón's foundation-laying study *Le Romantisme et les mœurs* (Paris 1910) which arose on the basis of the critique of Romanticism executed after 1870 by the French nationalists.² This study constitutes the sole attempt so far at a total review of the links between Romantic manners and literature, and it does not stop short of synthetic assessment.

The key formula under which the author subsumes Romantic manners is that of "the Romantic disease." The fundamental premise of Maigrón's study is his conception of Romanticism as a movement whose essence is a flight from reality into the various spheres of: Imagination, Feeling, Fantasy, Exoticism, Utopia, Tradition, the Folkloric etc. According to this conception Romanticism is a species of mental aberration manifesting itself in disturbances of the psychic powers. The chief symptoms of "the Romantic disease" were seen to be: a hypertrophy of the imagination, dreaminess, a yearning for the extraordinary, a luxuriation in feeling culminating in neurasthenia, a contempt for the real world, and a rampant egoism leading to revolt against, and violation of, the norms of social life. The pain

² The work one has to deem most typical of this line of criticism of Romanticism—initiated by Thiers, who accused Romanticism of introducing anarchy into social life—is Ch. Maurras's *Trois idées politiques: Chateaubriand, Michelet, Sainte-Beuve*, Paris 1898; in addition to this there is P. Lasserre's monograph *Le Romantisme français. Essai sur la révolution dans les sentiments et les idées au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1907, which enjoyed great fame in its time, and boiled this movement down to the synthetic formula "la maladie romantique." The following works, among others, also follow this trend: R. Canat, *Une Forme du mal du siècle*, Paris 1904; J. Lemaitre, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, Paris 1907; E. Seillière, *Le Mal romantique*, Paris 1908.

of being and the longing for immortality—accompanied by an incapacity for adaptation—engendered by “the Romantic disease” were held to lead in consequence to extravagances in behaviour, disorientation, and even self-annihilation. Romantic literature thus not only rendered the individual unfit to participate in social life but also precipitated a moral epidemic whose outcome was incurable suffering or physical suicide (for instance, the fact of the existence of suicide clubs was cited in support of this argument, and abundant material proofs were drawn from court records).

The many-sided and justified criticism to which Maigron’s study (and the entire movement to which that study belonged) was subjected did not, however, put paid to a certain prevailing stereotype of Romantic manners; a stereotype, incidentally, that to some degree derives from the Romantics themselves.³ When we read in a book published in 1956 that “Werther’s appearance prompted a wave of suicides [...] Chateaubriand’s René devastated several generations,” or that Romantic love is “a disease of the instincts that is rarely fatal and yet recurrently poisons and depresses us”⁴—we encounter the effects of this stereotype. For this reason, a confrontation of Romantic manners with literature must go hand in hand with a reconstruction of those manners and patterns of values themselves, which, in the case of Polish Romanticism, not only do not conform to the prevailing stereotype, but also — and in a fundamental way — subvert it.

Local varieties of “the sickness of the age.” *Werther à la polonaise*

Were one to comb the reality of Polish manners, the situations of people of that epoch, in search of symptoms of the “Romantic disease” characterized by Maigron, one would notice that only a very

³ Compare Goethe’s famous dictum “I term the healthy Classical and the diseased, Romantic” (J. P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, part II). Symptoms of the mood and attitude defined as “le mal du siècle” by Romanticism were analyzed and represented most fully in the works of Rousseau, in Chateaubriand’s *René*, in Sénancour’s *Obermann*, in Constant’s *Adolfe* and in Musset’s *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*.

⁴ D. de Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’occident*, Paris 1954.

few—sporadic and exceptional—types of career comply to the above-mentioned schema, and even then, not unreservedly so.

Drawing upon Polish examples, we can locate such a Romantic life-style in the cases of Ludwik Spitznagel and Tymon Zaborowski. One can term their biographies “Romantic” both in the course their lives took and in the very manner in which these biographies’ protagonists acted out and stylized their own experiences. The distinction is essential, for an omission of this secondary level—the stylization of experiences during the process of their rationalization, verbalization or notation by the experiencing subject — would compel one to classify as “Romantic” biographies such as—for instance—Jan Potocki’s, which is rich in peripeteia open to interpretation as results of Romanticism. Spitznagel’s case is better known and thus does not require exhaustive analysis here: it is sufficient to note that it accords completely with the schemata of the “Wertheriad”: unhappy romantic love and “the pain of being,” conflict with the world resolved by an ultimate refusal of assent.⁵

The case of Tymon Zaborowski, with its characteristics of social and behavioural conflict, appears to resemble even more closely the type of the Wertherian biography. A youth from a monied and well-connected family “fell in love with an impoverished girl, whom he wished to lead to the altar, but pride, aristocracy and misguided parental love’ would not consent to this mésalliance,”⁶ which directly precipitated the poet’s tragic demise—thus F. Boberska⁷ and, after her, Biegeleisen, presented the affair to their times. The author of the monograph on Zaborowski corrects certain factual details (mentions two unhappy passions) and considers the cause of the dramatic step to be of an internal nature, rather than the consequen-

⁵ On the same theme see also—apart from Słowacki’s *Godzina myśli (An Hour of Meditation)*—the memoirs of A. E. Odyniec, *Wspomnienia z przeszłości opowiedane Deotymie (Memories of the Past Related to Deotyma)*, Warszawa 1884, pp. 103, 152; J. Sandhaus, *Ludwik Spitznagel*, “Filomata,” 1938, nr 96, p. 220–232; W. Lachnitt, *Ofiara zielonego fraka i żółtej kamizelki (A Victim of the Green Frock-Coat and Yellow Waistcoat)*, “Kultura”, 1939, nr 21.

⁶ H. Biegeleisen, *Tymon Zaborowski*, “Ateneum”, 1883, vol. 4, p. 539.

⁷ F. Boberska, *Opowiadanie zdarzeń rzeczywistych. Z życia Tymona Zaborowskiego (Relations of True Occurrences. From the Life of Tymon Zaborowski)*, [in:] *Pisma (Writings)*, Lvov 1893, p. 319–329.

ce of external circumstances: the private torments of love, the reading of *Dziady* (*Forefathers*), *Werther* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (one could equally well add *René*), doubts concerning his own creative gifts—"all these direct one to seek the causes of death within rather than without."⁸ Doubtless every one of the external circumstances—the conflict with the environment resulting from the impossibility of satisfying his emotions and entering into marriage, psychic predispositions and, finally, "murderous books"—played a part in the shaping of the poet's fate. The element to which one should assign the essential part was the stylization of external circumstances, together with the interpretation of private experience through categories supplied by the reading of said products of Romantic (and pre-Romantic) literature. Zaborowski's letters give direct and emphatic witness to his continual construction of analogies between his own life and the fortunes of literary heroes.

The romanticizing of biography and epistolography is palpably visible in the way in which the deed of writing to a friend becomes, through the placing of the addressee in the especially intimate role of a confidant, an act of confession, an expression of the personality; it is also apparent on the stylistic level (in the manner in which the utterance is "dialogized"; in the formation of two diametrically opposed speaking subjects, reminiscent of an interchange with a crowd of elders; and in the series of characteristic oppositions: myself as an alien to people; reason and feeling; dream and reality; learning and simplicity; feeling, sentiment, the heart—lifeless practical things; grand—vulgar; non-existent, i.e. dead—essential, alive etc.). Its most central manifestation lies in the crystallization of a situation of irresolvable conflict, a conflict of the type: me versus them (people, "the world"). Biegeleisen was of the opinion that Zaborowski's correspondence bore so distinct a "pseudo-Wertherian sentimentalist character" that one could simply account it part of his works. In this case literature shaped the poet's emotional world, at the same time as it provided the inhabitants of his environment with categories permitting them to understand and classify his actual life. The poet's contemporaries were incapable of

⁸ M. Danilewiczowa, *Tymon Zaborowski. Życie i twórczość 1799–1828 Tymon Zaborowski. His Life and Works 1799–1828*, Warszawa 1933, p. 74.

considering his life-story except in terms of the story of Werther, or of the poetry- and tragedy-laden history of Gustav and Maryla. Thus, with literature's help, an outpouring of individual imaginings on the themes of love, personal happiness, the value of life and the meaning of death led to the foundation, within the sphere of manners, of a new Romantic *emotional culture*, contradicting traditional norms and notions. Its basis was individualism, a conviction of the individual's uniqueness, distinctness, and a belief in his inner mental and emotional world, whose right to fulfilment and self-expression is denied by reality, and whose destruction is irreparable. The absolutization of the feelings of love characteristic of Zaborowski (and glaringly obvious in his correspondence) is just one early variety of this emotional culture founded on the conception of "the man of feeling" and on the defence of his heart's claims. Nevertheless, certified cases of life-long Wertherism have to be seen as exceptional within the confines of our own culture. One should add that the manner of the situation of conflict's resolution did not entail renunciation of the world "as such," but rather a refusal of assent to the existing world's socio-historical shape, which quashed all the individual's proposals. As a rule, however, the fortunes of the Werthers and Gustavs were not cut short in tragic youth but were prolonged—romantically or unromantically.

Further fortunes of Gustav

Maryla na moim łonie
 Słowo „koçham” wyrzec miała!
 Wtem niebo ogniem zapłonie
 I ziemia wstrząsała się cała.
 I z rozpadłej ziemi łona
 Niewiasta w bieli odziana,
 Cierniem laury uwieńczona,
 Cała wyszła zapłakana.
 W jednym ręku miecz trzymała,
 Drugim odsłania swe bliźny;
 Uchodź! uchodź! zawołała,
 Jestem cień twojej ojczyzny!

[Maryla sitting on my lap
 Was to have said "I love"!
 Then fire burned the Heavens up

And all the earth collapsed.
 And from the womb of shattered Earth
 A woman, garbed in white, stepped forth
 Crowned with thorns of laurel
 She came forth full-tearful.
 In one hand a sword she bears,
 With the other shows her scars.
 "Come, o come!" she then declaimed,
 "I am the ghost of your native land."

Thus one of this school's pupils, a reader of the same books, and a contemporary of Zaborowski—Gustav Olizar⁹—portrayed his own metamorphosis from Maryla's lover to the lover of his fatherland. This young Sarmatian and ranking nobleman, who considers himself the acme of old noble traditions, at a certain point in his life transforms himself into a romantic lover and begins to act out the role of Gustaw in his own life. Enamoured, then spurned, he retires from the world "in despair," establishes himself in a specially-purchased "anchorite's cell" in the Crimea, where he vents his passionate sufferings in verse. Olizar himself was solicitous that a legend be woven around these peripetæia, which he termed the "poetic-romantic epoch" in his life. Gustav fell in love with Maryla—the daughter of a Russian general, from whom he was separated not only by a disparity in social position (he, a ranking nobleman, *principis nobilitatis*; she, "a general's daughter"), but also by differences of nationality and religious tradition. The young lady, however, chose a prince and gave her hand in marriage to Sergiusz Volkonsky, the famous Decabrist (we are talking of Maria Rajewska). Olizar acquired the property of Artek in the Crimea (on the site of the present-day Artek) and sojourned there

in the hope that one day heartless Maria, whilst visiting the place she loved, would look with piteous eye—and perhaps, later, regret—on the outcast, the hermit of Ajudah.

The stylization of life according to a poetic model was partly determined by the diarist's situation in the circle of the Rajewskis, Pushkin and Mickiewicz, where he was introduced to the Decabrists—apparently, to set his ideas right.

⁹ G. Olizar, *Pamiętniki 1798–1865 ... (Memoirs 1798–1865)*, introd. by J. Leszczyć, Lvov 1892, p. XX (from the verse *Świątynia boleści – The Temple of Suffering*).

During a couple of years of my sojourn in this desert—he writes in his diary—I encountered no one for days and weeks on end [...] I lived within myself, with painful memories, which nourished the poetic mood to which I surrendered myself. It was then that I wrote the memoirs whose printed portion comprises the fruit of my hermitage. I doubt that I was a poet in the opinion of my readers, but I was one without doubt in the fashion in which I then conducted my life.¹⁰

After the recluse-episode there appears a new chapter in the biography—imprisonment and questioning in connection with the Decabrist affair. The moment he is imprisoned “obiit Gustavus—natus est Conradus.” Olizar’s later fortunes are strikingly analogous to the fate of Konrad the state prisoner. If one is struck by the affinity between the peripetia of Olizar’s life and the fortunes of literary heroes, this is due in part to the additional contribution of the element of autobiographical legend, which is stylized after the Romantic fashion: events in life are transcribed and bent into a pattern drawn from literature, but the biography itself—as Olizar clearly states—was shaped so as to be “poetic.” After 1831 Olizar considered the “heroic-romantic” epoch of his youth closed. He settles down as a jovial noble storyteller, a good fellow and neighbour expending his life in the smoothing out of quarrels between his brother-nobles, in travel and in visiting fellow-neighbours.

As can be seen from Olizar’s biography, the Polish Werther or Gustav rapidly turned into Konrad, the lover of his country, conspirator and state prisoner; if he survived the afflictions native to this kind of “career,” the second, non-heroic part of his biography awaited him. In the case of Olizar the sole overflow from Romanticism into his further experience is a certain philanthropic-liberal variety of concern for the people, plus a tendency to compose rhymes and poeticize his external person. The Romantic gesture did not suit a state of mellow stability, the landowner’s ideal of the quiet life.¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 173–175.

¹¹ The diary of the storyteller and ironist, Stanisław Morawski, unexpectedly presents us with a similar Romantic stylization. In the belletristic autobiographical sketch entitled *Ustronie. Fragment (The Retreat. A Fragment)*, which deals with the period of decline in the author’s life, he depicted himself as hermit whose past is shrouded in mystery and whose life has been scarred by unhappiness, placing

Werther as governor

This bipartite biography, with its division into a “high and cloudy” youth and “an age of manhood-of defeat” (the defeat is either the loss, or the betrayal, of youthful ideals) is even more sharply pronounced in the fortunes of Waclaw of Olesko. He and his biography are merely an example of one of the typical varieties of Romantic life-style. This steward’s son enjoyed a meteoric career: from the lowest-ranking clerk to the governor of Galicia. During his youth he dreamt of medical studies (he could not afford to study in Vienna), later he considered

learning a trade, such as turnery – nothing ever came of it. A book of scant significance, *The Loves of Napoleon*, exerted a powerful effect upon me, [he writes.] Then I conceived the notion of entering the army.¹²

Dreams of success dreamt in the shadow of Napoleon; fantasies of an outstanding career. “*The Sorrows of Young Werther* cost me many a tear” – he confesses. He subsequently falls passionately in love, lucklessly, to distraction, *à la* Werther:

I wept for her, I sighed for her, my heart almost broke on her account [...]. Her hair in a locket and a portrait of Napoleon were my room’s only holy relics.

The role ascribed to love, its placing on one of the highest echelons in his hierarchy of values, determines the Romanticism of this aspect of the biography.

My life was wild and irregular [...] A fertile imagination overruled reason. Subject to melancholy I always wandered sadly, dreamily – not knowing myself what I sought.

The author of these words successfully embodied the Romantic

himself against the background of an Arcadian landscape, on an oasis of happiness called – significantly – the Retreat or “Hermitage.” The lonely man to whom it was not granted to die young was condemned to “bitter pangs of soul.” Here we encounter a retrospective stylization of one’s own fortunes, which, giving way to the pressure of Romantic notions, are enwrapped by the threads of biographical self-mythologization.

¹² Fragments from *Przegląd dzienników moich (A Review of My Diaries)* by W. Zaleski, embracing the years 1819–1833; quoted after A. Piskor, *Romantyczny gubernator (The Romantic Governor)*, [in:] *Siedem ekscelencji i jedna dama (Seven Excellencies and a Single Lady)*, Warszawa 1959, p. 196. (For the fragment quoted see p. 196).

role and played it with great felicity. He stylizes his passing feelings, moods and experiences according to the pattern of "the sickness of the age," accentuating torn unease, despairing thoughts, love's "ecstasy and torment," "nothing but contradictions" — as he himself depicts it:

I can be gay but also intolerable to myself and others, as in the clubs frequented by Julia. My diary contains nothing but her. It is like a collection of letters by Werther or Siegwirth. A thousand idiocies on her account: risking my health, happiness and life. On December 17th I came close to plunging a dagger into my breast.¹³

But the Galician Werther restrains his suicidal instrument. The paroxysm of the Romantic disease engulfed him for a certain time but did not altogether deprive him of "healthy" impulses. Despite real torment and a "riotous" course of life, Zaleski does not neglect his studies, works with fervour, passes his exams with distinction and scrupulously records the level of his income. The situation of the Galician Werther, forced independently to keep his head above the waters of life, eliminated in advance certain irregularities that accompanied this life of consuming diversion; it fostered habits indispensable for his further career. The literary-inspired models of life-style and emotional culture were suggestive and easily assimilated, but Werther knew that he could not allow himself to be shown the door; thus he enhanced the model of his conduct with everything that would ensure success. He was thus compelled to add—among other things—the nexus of habits and duties that leads to the *culture of work*. Without work it would be impossible to obtain a position from which to enter the attractive culture of well-mannered society. Zaleski's further fortunes are as follows: Werther became office-bound, then a governor. Indubitably Romantic elements, strongly pronounced in the period of his youth (the lover's agony, a pull towards folklore, the urge to write) became intertwined here with a modern, bourgeois, and—in fact—non-Romantic industriousness, system, and clerkly scrupulosity, which were to pave this poor wretch's way to the salons of Vienna. It seems that it is not one of two trends (treated as contradictory) that is characteristic of Romanticism but rather the very emergence of that contradiction between two types of conduct (of which one exerted an attractive

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 196, 197, 199, 200.

appeal and the other was a necessity), that is: the emergence of the contradiction and the necessity of resolving it within the individual's concrete social experience during that epoch.

The Romantics' careers

Nevertheless, a career crowned by success is not typical of the Romantic generation in Poland. If one omits the landowning career, which was rather inherited than chosen (and thus resembled the position of the aristocrat), the Romantic generation had the chance of selecting a career of the military type (soldier, conspirator, emissary); the artistic career of the poet, painter or musician; the career of a clerk, private official, or teacher; or employment in one of the learned professions, as a doctor, a lawyer, or a priest. The priest's or teacher's career chosen by people of lower social origin offered neither perspectives of greater success nor the attractions of society. The post-Napoleonic modernization of the state and a hope that the Kingdom would become self-sufficient persuaded young men to undertake specialist studies with a career in the state apparatus in mind. The collapse of illusions induced by the persons of Napoleon, and, later, of Alexander, together with the *déba*cle of the uprising, dislocated many human lives, creating situations of conflict on a mass scale. Characteristic changes also made themselves felt in careers of the military kind. This variety of career experienced its halcyon days during the Napoleonic era: the soldier in prince Józef Poniatowski's army was surrounded by a halo of light, fame and public adulation. When the epic's twilight came, "weapons and hopes were laid aside and everyone in Lithuania and the Crown Lands reverted to the plough. Thoughts of fame and freedom gave way to a struggle for one's daily bread."¹⁴ After 1812 there were added the new disappointments that accompanied the Kingdom's early years; after 1831, when the army forfeited its role as the guarantor of freedom, an officer was admittedly still a fully-fledged member of respectable society, but one whose loss of laurels forced him to step down

¹⁴ G. Puzynina (née Gunther). *W Wilnie i dworach litewskich. Pamiętnik z lat 1815–1843* (In *Vilna and the Manors of Lithuania. A. Memoir of the Years 1815–1843*), ed. by A. Czartkowski and H. Mościcki, Vilna 1928.

from his pedestal. Once dismissed from the army, the officer-aristocrat, possessing neither property nor a trade, was threatened with finding himself completely, and irrevocably, *déclassé* (see for instance the case of Malczewski or the biographies of scores of participants in the uprising); dismissal became an additional source of conflict with the social order. The careers that chiefly attracted the impoverished gentry lay in the learned professions—thus the artist became a positive hero in this period. But, after the partitions, political and public activities, by the very nature of things, were mostly transferred to the field of conspiracy. The epoch's aspirations were compelled to concentrate themselves upon this type of "career" and the modes of activity and evaluation it involved, as people moulded their visions, mental habits, moral norms and social attitudes to meet the requirements of the new socio-historical situation. Literature for its part helped tremendously in the assimilation of the new and in the evolution of novel patterns of conduct to fit these situations.

The Wallenrod's plot. Konrad as emigré and "servant of God"

The childish confession of an age reared in the region of Ovruch, on the fringes of the one-time Republic of Poland, rings differently from Musset's:

Confession. — In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. — In the fifth year of my life, my parents, chamberlains in the region of Ovruch, having eight children to support on a meagre property, entrusted me to close and wealthy relatives [...] who [...] ensured me an education and a career far more lavish than any I could have received from my parents.¹⁵

The social situation briefly sketched here was the motive force behind the fortunes of the subsequent "avenger of the Fatherland," but the consciousness that these fortunes were those of a Romantic hero, the stylization of one's own portrait and history to match their prototypes, Wallenrod and Kordian — these came from literature and were profoundly entered into, internalized, assimilated and adopted as the most adequate means of describing personal experience. Even Karol Baykowski's self-portrait recalls literary models:

¹⁵ K. Baykowski, *Znad grobu*. I. *Spowiedź*, II. *Wyjątki z listów* (*From the Grave's Edge*. I. *Confession*. II. *Extracts from Letters*) Kraków 1891. p. 9.

[...] insofar as on the one hand I possessed a spirit apt to exaltation, it becomes equally hard to imagine how conversely feeble was my character. The more dogged I became in internal wrestling [...] the more [...] I would have preferred, it seems, to have perished in internal struggles rather than ruffle the surrounding peace.

One can apply these traits to Adolfe and René (dreaminess, reflectiveness, tendency to introspection, weakness of character) or to Kordian and Konrad (internal splits, struggles and agonies, a love of the people). The author's entire youth constitutes an arduous battle with Konrad's dilemma:

I am a Christian, so I ought to fulfil Christ's law to the letter—I am a Pole, so I ought to employ every means of lifting my Fatherland's yoke. But how can I reconcile the fact that as a Pole I ought to conspire for the downfall of my Fatherland's foes with Christ's injunction to love our enemies and to do good to them that hate us?

On this occasion the central situation of conflict takes shape on the national and patriotic plane, not in private life. This was no private moral drama visited upon Baykowski alone:

What I endured during these few terrible years, sadly, has been endured and is being suffered by a considerable number of unhappy Poland's sons.

Previous patterns of behaviour proved wanting. Under the pressure of history there emerged new social and moral patterns, a new ethic was born—*an ethic of struggle and revolt, of heroism and sacrifice*. Its most frequent origin lay in literature. The problems of "Wallenrodism" and "Konradism" presented themselves to the generation brought up in the post-partition era as problems of personal choice. On hearing of the disclosure of Konarski's plot and of the subsequent sentence and execution, the sixteen-year-old Baykowski is shocked and decides to resolve his agonizing moral dilemma in a manner common to many of our Romantics, and inherent in the following declaration:

"In our case, such knots cannot be undone but must be cut, after the fashion of Alexander of Macedonia; I am an atheist; democracy is superior to Christianity, and Konarski is greater than Christ". I screamed as if dealt a mortal blow, but the poisoned dart lodged in my heart [...] I heard [...] with a kind of slavish relish [...] that love of the Fatherland means hatred and vengeance towards its foes, and the Fatherland's freedom and power is the freedom and universal rule of the people.

Hatred of, and vengeance on, the foe: the pattern is Konrad's. Konarski and Christ—two figures of suffering and love. Konarski

opposed to Christ: the love is blasphemous, love of the fatherland rebelling against God; again, the pattern is Konrad's. Baykowski's conversion from Christianity to "Konarskism" echoes Konrad's gesture. In formulating his patriotic credo he frames it in categories of hatred and revenge borrowed from *Konrad Wallenrod*. In Baykowski's notebook one can observe the ethic of conspiracy and revolt *in statu nascendi*.

The conflicts accompanying the birth of the ethic of struggle and revolt, of conspiracy and revolution, recur in scores of documents from this epoch. The notions of honour, faithfulness, falsehood, treachery and, above all, the notion of patriotism, are subjected to rethinking and revaluation.

The choice fell on the Wallenrodic version of the patriotic ideal.

This ideal also entailed a readiness for sacrifice on behalf of the liberation of the Fatherland, or shall we say rather, in order to wreak revenge upon its oppressors—not only the sacrifice of life, family, possessions, personal career, etc.; not only that of honour and standing in the opinion of the world, but also sacrifice of one's very soul's salvation.

The problem of Wallenrodism is here not merely a literary one and does not merely manifest itself in the details of interior biography, but also alters the outward course of life. During his studies, the diary's author devoted himself to "schooling [himself] in the character of a conspirator," and he was haunted by plans to assassinate the Czar. On completing his studies he applied—with favourable results—to be accepted into the ranks of the Russian army stationed in Warsaw, seeing in this the most suitable field for Wallenrodic activity. His choice of course may have been influenced by his being a son of a "political criminal" of 1831 and the brother of a participant in Konarski's conspiracy. The choice of role, costume and mask was dictated by literature, which in addition provided: a moral sanction for his choice in life; categories whereby circumstances could be ordered; and evaluative norms and prototypes of action. The thought of revenge soon led Baykowski to the Polish "suicide clubs." For Poland, too, possessed suicide clubs, which, although with other assumptions, ends and modes of action than the French clubs, also often enacted their own rituals, statutes and oaths. During a secret gathering in Baykowski's house, five youths reached the conclusion that:

[...] in our present position all uprisings and conspiracies on a large scale are foredoomed to absolute unlikelihood, and only one thing is feasible, namely the accomplishment of an act of revenge or, as we dubbed it, "a deed of national justice," the plan of which was speedily laid by the five of us. We swore to it under the following two conditions: that no one should be admitted to our secret to the slightest degree, and, secondly, that each of us, on completing the stage of the plot to which he had pledged himself, immediately take his own life.

The intention was that

[...] he who condemns himself unconditionally to death, who walks upon this earth as if a dead man, would have all the more courage to execute his pledge. When everything our plan required was almost ready, and when only three or four days lay between us and the date of execution, three of the five of us withdrew [...] I fell into greater despair than ever, for I doubted everything, even the future of the Fatherland [...] I was pursued by the notion of suicide; I always carried two loaded pistols about my person, for even then I did not wish to die without exacting revenge.¹⁶

With this episode, the heroic part of Baykowski's biography comes to an end. Kordian, shattered by his own powerlessness, flees into exile. The deed of vengeance is confined to the embezzlement of 699 roubles and 50 kopecks from Paskiewicz's chancery till. In exile Baykowski becomes an ardent Towianist: he learns to love his enemies "as himself," in the Christian fashion, and arrives at a position a hair's-breadth short of renegading. Thus yet again a biography is in internal disharmony with itself: during the first half an ethic of rebellion and revenge is devised, and attempts to realize it in actuality meet with defeat; the second half represents a search for a means of transcending defeat through humility and saintliness. This type of Wallenrodic, Kordianic attitude can be considered representative of a large cross-section of the Romantic generation.

The "career" of the conspirator — the emissary, the state prisoner — appears in at least two versions: a heroic-messianic one, culminating—as in the example discussed—in emigration and expectation of the Messiah; and a heroic-martyrological one, ending in Siberia, or in the cells of Schlüsselberg, Kufstein or Spielberg. The second variety of experience was the chief source of the martyrological *ethic of suffering* which validated the meaningfulness of sacrifices

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 15, 17–21, 24–26, 37–39.

endured and found its expression in the February uprising of 1863.¹⁷ The axis around which this variety of fate revolved is, once again, the Romantic conflict with the world, transferred to the plane of patriotic revolt, of a struggle that gives birth to heroic deeds of arms or conspirational action. The defeat of the deed led to an acceptance of the ethic of sacrificial suffering or to a conception of moral perfection and “holiness” as a means of transcending defeat and resolving situational conflicts.

Konrad’s settling of accounts with the past

The problem of Romanticism’s influence on the fortunes of the individual or the collectivity emerged with especial clarity in the aftermath of the February uprising, which was to have implemented Romanticism’s political testament. Its participants, leaders and driving forces were faced with the problem of responsibility for the realization of the Romantic system of values. Grown wiser through his new historical experiences, Konrad once again took up—this time in his life rather than in literature—the moral questions of: revolt; guilt; punishment; and responsibility. The memoirs of Bronisław Szwarc, an activist of the pre-February period, contain an account of his spell of imprisonment in Schlüsselberg and affords a particular variant of Konrad’s monologue that—yet again—documents personal experiences:

And the sick prisoner, in his physical and mental torment, stood before the age-old question: “O Lord, my Lord, why?” A question from across the ages—from Job’s lament [...] to Konrad’s passionate indictment:

Czuję całego cierpienia narodu...
Cierpię, szaleję. — A Ty mądrze i wesole
Zawsze rządysz,
Zawsze sądzisz
I mówią, że Ty nie błądzisz!
 {I live through the whole nation’s suffering
I suffer and I rave.—And You above in joy and wisdom

¹⁷ During this period, and especially during the year of national mourning (1861), the most wide-spread symbols of patriotic feeling became the cross and the crown of thorns: these symbols were often worked into costumes, applied to interior design and decoration, and used in the illustration of books and even in commercial advertising.

Ever govern.

Bring to judgement.

And, they say, are Never-erring]

to Konarski's blasphemy: I don't want Heaven, I spit on your Heaven! [...]

Not for one moment did I consider rebelling, hurling blasphemies at Heaven, not for one second was I minded to surrender [...]

But in my case too that question—Why?—was a difficult and menacing one. Wherein lay my crime, my sin? [...] was I guilty—of the failure? If so, the guilt would always be smaller than a grain of sand in comparison with the real cause of defeat. They summoned three great powers, sold their own country into the hands of Czars, bowed down before the partitioners through the ages, betrayed their own nation for a hundred years—and he who committed none of these crimes is “guilty” simply because he could not extirpate the age-old betrayal with one blow [...] Whoever speaks of our unspotted martyrdom blasphemes [...] we are doing penance for our sins and the sins of our fathers [...] But no! the entire nation is not like that, and we who fought set right at least part of our fathers' errors and advanced by one step the cause of our redemption.¹⁸

The questions are Konrad's, but the answers are borrowed from Słowacki. This new monologue by Konrad in the cell he was placed in in *Forefathers* illustrates the extent to which the manner of solving moral dilemmas among the generation of activists bred on Romanticism was determined by the horizons of Romantic literature.

The career of the Romantic seer

The epidemic increase in the number of people taking up writing during the first half of the nineteenth century can be explained as due to shifts in social structure or as springing from the resultant transformation of the forms and conditions of literary life during this epoch. The motives for undertaking literary composition were usually threefold. One of the forms of the artistic career was the dilettantism derived from the social life of the salons, which I pass over here; I similarly dispense with a characterization of the conduct of close-knit literary and artistic groups, which is intimately bound in with the specificity of the epoch's literary life—for certain manifest forms of conduct were characteristic only of exclusive groups and appear marginal within a wider social perspective. The other

¹⁸ B. Szwarc, *Siedem lat w Szlyselburgu opisał...* (*Seven Years in Schlüsselberg Recounted by...*), Lvov 1893, p. 132–135, 138–139.

two motives influenced the choice of artistic activity, be it as a professional means of acquiring earnings (the unavoidability of work), or—in the second case—as the most effective form of social action available to an individual convinced of his own talent and calling (the creative imperative). One can thus speak of the coexistence of two motives: a sociological one, and one dictated by a world-view, the latter being the most fully developed in the Romantics' correspondence. In the majority of cases, however, and irrespective of motive, *the manner in which the writer's or poet's role was bodied forth had as its prototype the Romantic seer*. In characterizing the various types of seer, researchers usually propose three primarily significant versions: the poet as revelator; the poet as creator; and the poet as leader. The first of these patterns contained by implication a religious *ethic of moral perfection*, humility and sacrifice; the second—*an ethos of creativity and expression*; and the third—*an ethic of the deed*. Depending upon which variant served the artistic biography as a model, one or the other of these values extruded itself as the dominant one. The connection between the patterns and ethical postulates as formulated above, and the stylization of life and autobiographical legend in accord with them, appears exceptionally glaringly in a multitude of the Romantic poets' lives and correspondences; this is the result of the fact that we are dealing at one and the same time with the actors in, and the authors of, Romantic cultural reality. The facility with which—for instance—the poets' biographies arrange themselves in line with literary schemes stems from the Romantics' striving to invest their lives with aesthetic and artistic unity, from their pursuit of concord between life and work, art and action. "You're making up a drama"—the sceptical Pankracy's words to the Romantic Count Henryk in Krasiński's drama *Nie-Boska komedia (The Undivine Comedy)*—these words could, with full justice, be applied to all the generations of Romantic poetry. This urge found one mode of expression in the customs of Bohemia, which nevertheless constituted a transitory, ephemeral phase, for the Bohemian too easily slid into the skin of the philistine he attacked. A further example can be found in the circles of enthusiast(s), who sought to realize in actuality the patterns of conduct posited by their own creations. Out of a number of artistic biographies I have selected only one example of the co-ordination of the creative im-

perative with the injunctions of the ethic of patriotic and revolutionary action—an example representative of young Varsovian writerly circles: the biography of Karol Baliński.

Baliński summarized the romance of his own life in the following abbreviated account of ten of its years:

Orphanage—prison—and prison again—and exile several times—and the joy of return poisoned by pain, and prison again—and then another short spell of Muscovite freedom—and, again, homelessness sweetened [...] by comradeship—and exile again—and homelessness once more.¹⁹

Thus the poet's conflict with the world, present in all his work (on a level at once patriotic and social) articulates itself in the realia of his biography.

The chief good of the 1831 uprising was that [...] it taught us to look neither to ourselves nor to a career (as the world terms it) but to the Fatherland.

In the light of post-uprising knowledge, individualism and creationism, the mainstays of all models of the artist's life up to the year 1830, underwent considerable modification; there arose a conception of poetry and artistic creation as a moral and patriotic deed, together with an independent reading of Romantic aesthetics that postulated a complete correspondence between poetic modes of activity and the remaining parts of the artist's life and activity. Two demands flowed from this aesthetic and philosophy of art: a requirement that the work itself serve life and constitute an act in itself, be not just signification but rather an active intervention in life; and a requirement that the artist's life be in complete harmony with his words and deeds. Since the work was required to endow life with meaning and form, the poet's life became in itself a work of art, a model to be imitated.

Our nation loves its poets—for it the poet is a man who loves, suffers, rages or perishes for the Fatherland (not Konrad is in question here but his creator), which believes in his song as it does in his imprisonment, torture or death—Mickiewicz and Konarski are, for it—one and the same! And woe to him who dares to give his feelings the lie before the nation—woe to him whose life contradicts his song.

Thus the Romantic poets had to “make a drama” of their lives, they—they and all other Romantics—had to love, suffer, rage or

¹⁹ K. Baliński. *Pisma (Writings)*. Poznań 1849. p. XXV.

perish for the Fatherland: that was what life required of poetry and literature of life. A consequent characteristic of the Romantic era was an evident growth of interest in the artist's personal biography, of testing of the poet's life to discern the degree of its unanimity with his work, and an increasing accumulation of biographical legends about him which—arising from literature and nourished by it—themselves then became patterns for imitation. William Blake stylized himself in the role of a prophet, Byron reiterated (at least, according to the biographical legend) the pathos-laden gestures of his great tragic heroes; Mickiewicz—condemned so harshly for his absence from the rebel ranks during the uprising—reasserted his moral authority when his deeds testified in full to the veracity of his work. Just how powerful an effect was exerted by the age's pattern of the Romantic artist's biography is shown by the very phenomenon of the "antagonism of the seers," where two divergent models of the artist's role came into collision, as well as by the reproaches levelled against Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Norwid whenever their contemporaries considered that these poets were failing to meet the requirements of the "role" of national seer, or whenever the poets themselves demolished the legends whose exfoliations enshrouded their lives. The legends woven around the lives of the Romantic seers imposed a specific canon of behaviour: not only upon future generations of poets, but also upon all who aspired to transcend the role and fate of a common—in Słowacki's words—"eater of bread."

Let us consider all our truly Polish societies—wrote Baliński—their base, pillar and lever is poetry! there all are poets, if not in word, then in deed—there all live by poetry—love—brotherhood—and Heaven above!—And they go peacefully to death or exile, for they know that they are wed to Heaven.

A solution to the antinomy present in countless documents (Po—Christian—or artist?) is achieved here through "the ideal's betrothal to Heaven," through a grafting of the religious element onto the patriotic and aesthetic one—of art onto religion and love of the Fatherland—through a sacralization of both the Fatherland and art. The ethic of the deed was identified in this case with the service of any one of these ideals. The deed need not be a soldierly or knightly one: "the knight of the present day" is armed not with steel but with virtue, not with a sword but a poetic lyre; it is not effective force that distinguishes him but emotional strength and spiritual power:

Kto chce walczyć sercem szczerem,
Z kijem będzie bohaterem!
[Whoe'er the fight with pure heart seeks
Will be a hero with a stick]²⁰

But here the ideal of the poetic (moral) spiritual deed begins to lead one astray, especially when Romantic knights burning with Polish ardor marched forth against regular armies, equipped with ropes fit only for washing-lines, with ammunition whose calibre differed from that of the muskets and pistols they had unearthed from their attics, or simply with phials of poison. The literary cult of the gallows, apart from its positive effects, could also have consequences fatal to life (*exemplum*: the desperate attitudes of some of the organizers of, and participants in, the January uprising).

Within the framework of the Romantic poetic and extra-poetic conception of action, the category of the deed had at least two values: the deed was a means to an end and at the same time an opportunity to manifest heroism or some other exceptional stance. Within the ethics of the deed there existed an additional hierarchy: most formidable and most valued of all was the deed of arms, a patriotic act; the artistic and moral act was subordinate. This hierarchy determines the pattern of Byron's biography when he forsakes poetry for Greece²¹ as well as Mickiewicz's when he passes from the exercise of his profession to the recruiting of a legion.

Let us now examine whether in actuality—as Baliński writes —“all are poets, in deed if not in word.”

The Galician journeyman, or the diary of a déclassé aristocrat

The yellow carriage with its four horses, the servants in livery, the stately residence and gracious way of life: by the memoirist's

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. VII, III, VIII, 153 (verse entitled *Dzisiejszy rycerz—The Modern Knight*).

²¹ Even if—as some researchers have suggested—Byron's departure for Greece had other motives than those enshrined in the biographical legend, this very fact would illustrate even more graphically the effective power of a literary pattern that was capable of subordinating real people and their fortunes to its own interpretative vision.

early childhood all these had become merely memories, constituents of a family saga, and the young nobleman who knew himself to be the grandson of king Staś (Stanislas August), when holding an acolyte's candle by the altar, stood in bare feet. His first experience of life demonstrates to him that the notions of noble equality and brotherhood and of the sanctity of familial bonds, acquired at home, are really fictitious misnomers. His glittering connections do not rescue him from penury—he is handed over to study gardening in Medyka like a common peasant. His ruthless exclusion from the social realm to which he was born, his relegation to the lowest rung of the social ladder, his initiation into a novel social situation: all these combined to create the conditions for a new variety of social sensibility, new mental horizons, new aptitudes, habits and aspirations. In the eyes of the lordling turned farm-boy the world was manifest in all its unfalsified immediacy and painfully revealed the hierarchy of its gradations—not only was it divided into heirs and disinherited, but even the garden attendants formed “five societies mutually at war,” and degree was strictly observed even among lackeys and valets. For Łusakowski, however, people soon cease to be classified according to gentility or commonness of birth and begin to divide themselves up into good and bad employers, into the industrious and the idle. At first the author identified himself with the social class to which he was born. But as conflicts multiplied and humiliations and rejections by his relatives became ever more frequent, the old familial and environmental ties collapsed. At the same time, he felt no solidarity with the group to which his material situation and way of life allocated him. A state of isolation and a sense of rootlessness arise—the situation of conflict typical of the Romantic biography. One of the pivotal matters in this biography is the moment of the author's realization that only work can extricate him from the slide into decline. The noble descendent's consciousness arrives at a new value—work—as a means to a success envisaged at first in very modest terms: “I will become a gardener.” From this moment on the climb up the social ladder recommences. “Thus I passed four years in this terrible employment—without holidays [...] wages, family, succour or friendship.”²² “Poverty, work, humiliation”—the exact opposite of the con-

²² S. Łusakowski, *Pamiętnik zdeklasowanego szlachcica (The Memoirs of a Déclassé Noble)*, Warszawa 1952, p. 104.

ditions that once characterized life among the nobility. It is significant that work here assumes a particular meaning and value: for all its concreteness and closeness to the bone (it is arduous, grimy physical labour) it contains an element that is humanizing and even divine. It is compounded of solitude, renunciation, heroism, sacrifice, a moral sense and an aesthetic sense ("Beauty"), and these components lend it a certain Romantic coloration. Numerous passages in the memoirs prove that in Łusakowski's eyes the garden became a realm of exotic wonder, an oasis of longed-for beauty in a world of ugly meanness, an expression of the divine mystery and nature's creative miracles. But these are merely signs of the formation of a new way of perceiving the world. Were it not for the theatre and—yet again—"murderous books" Łusakowski would probably have remained to the end of his life a model gardener in the orangeries of the Archduke Ferdinand d'Este. These books fostered a new awareness, new modalities of social self-definition, diminished the feeling of rootlessness: "the theatre began to awake within me thoughts passing my own comprehension"; "the reading of books inflamed my ambition, and I set myself to perform some variety of great deed." And the time for great deeds arrived. Drawn into conspiratorial activity by people connected with Dembowski, in 1846 Łusakowski was changed back from a gardener into a farm-boy and agitator among the people, after which, in 1848, he became a member of the National Guard in Lvov and a partisan in the area of Sanok. The affair fell through, but it engendered new criteria for evaluating persons (patriot—non-patriot; oppressor—"father to the peasants"), and a new opportunity to identify socially with the aristocratic intelligentsia—in the author's opinion, the most valuable section of the community. This social identification brought in its wake an idealization of the petty, impoverished nobility. Apart from this basic current of instruction in patriotism and citizenship, inspired to an equal degree by history and Romantic literature, this autobiography presents further aspects of "romanticization" inherent—for instance—in the very decision to take up the pen and transcribe one's recollections, and visible also on the level of the style of the memoirs, in the choice of heroes and events, and in the stylization of one's own life and those of one's dearest in accordance with Romantic stereotypes. Łusakowski continually applies the categories of "sacrifice," "homelessness" and "martyrdom" to his for-

tunes, even when the situation hardly seems to favour his doing so:

A gardener in Galicia was a martyr even among martyrs [...] He was tortured [...] and degraded, and indeed had to be a hero in order to endure it—with its ceaseless toil and the struggle with the entire courtly crew, with nature and contradictions.

The Romantic stereotype of martyrdom here served the heroization of his own fate and the interpretation of social relationships. The situation of conflict native to the Romantic biography is here played out above all on the social plane. The memoir's stylization of the figure of the betrothed (later—of the deceased wife) is Romantic, as is the description of his sister Julia's death—akin to a copy of the painting by Delacroix:

At one of the barricades stood my own sister Julia; holding a red flag she urged the people on in their defence; many shots ray out and, half-shattered, the virgin-martyr fell.²³

Łusakowski's biography lacks any direct reference to the large literary schemas, but it reflects the conflict fundamental to the community life and the literature of the era: the conflict between the prospect of a personal career, and a moral and social duty cast in the Romantic mould and formulated in the Romantic categories of devotion, sacrifice and martyrdom. Besides this conflict, the life's central concern is the evolution of an *ethos of work that would be an outlet for man's creative as well as his aesthetic needs*. This interlocking of work with creativity and service is typical of the domain of socialist utopian literature represented by George Sand's novel *Le Compagnon du tour de France*. The metaphor of the wandering journeyman seems aptly to summarize Łusakowski's biography.

In the sphere of the Biedermeier

Analysis of the documents left us by Ewaryst Estkowski—a déclassé nobleman who opted for the teaching profession—uncovers a type of aspiration and ideal of happiness and success in life that belongs to a bourgeois mentality and morality: in particular, to the

²³ *Ibidem*. p. 126. 153. 151. 197.

variant we customarily describe as the habits and mentality of the Biedermeier. The chief constituent of this pattern is the conviction that

only through assiduous toil, through mental self-education, through a virtuous life and self-sacrifice on behalf of one's dearest can one find true contentment.²⁴

The set of values cherished by Estkowski has many affinities with liberal organicist ideals. In his imagination even the figure of Napoleon assumed the form of a massive organicist, mobilizing banks and credit, supporting free trade and the flow of capital, mending roads and bridges and patronizing education and the sciences. Over and above this element, the following are part of the schema: communion with beauty and art, cleanliness and order, wealth and plenty; a positive effect on the growth of material goods and a raising of the level of cultivation; the virtues of moderation; and finally a cult of love, marriage and family life.

The happy man is he who toils and enlightens his soul, learns to know the world and make sacrifices. The mean and indolent cannot pretend to any right to happiness [...] The conditions of happiness upon earth present themselves to one's mind as: the rule of goodness, understanding, satisfaction with little, the seeking of happiness not outside the home but within one's intimate family circle, within oneself, in joyful and noble employment and in the most perfect good-will [...] Love and work are the two prerequisites without which I would not know how to, and could not, live.

This was how the Biedermeier ideal of the happy, virtuous life looked—its public part taken up by organic work, and its private portion a quiet, cosy little home with a round family table in the middle, together with a multitude of minute objects consecrated to loving friendship, tearful memory and life's ornament. This ideal renounced violent opposition to reality and sought to reconcile itself to life. The most Romantic element in the ideal of life and morals as postulated (and realized) by Estkowski—who sought to regulate his own biography thereby—was the element of creativity: “I assert that God experiences His greatest happiness—when He creates.”²⁵ The genius partakes of this happiness during the inspirational moment. Thus he too stylized himself a genius: “I felt within myself

²⁴ E. Estkowski, *Autobiografia. Wyjątki z listów* (*Autobiography. Extracts from Epistles*), [in:] *Pisma pedagogiczne* (*Pedagogical Writings*), vol. 1, Poznań 1863, p. XIX.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. LXV–LXVI.

a force and power almost divine," and he recorded his own states of emotional ecstasy. The prototype and correlative of this habit and attitude lay not in the poetry of the great Romantics, but in the Biedermeier novel.

An attempt at some conclusions

The task we set ourselves at the outset was not to outline the panorama of Romantic habits but to locate a certain number of examples of the emergence of new values in the field of moral attitudes and conduct, as well as to pinpoint the role literature may be said to have played in this process. Our survey permits us to revalue the stereotype of the "Romantic disease" as a—as it were—generator in the area of behaviour and attitudes of a type of person directed away from society and opposed to the community. In any case one cannot speak of Romantic manners as a monolith, for a considerable degree of differentiation obtained among its particular variants, depending on—among other things—the social environment; and there exists moreover a perceptible *evolution*, which one can briefly describe as: *from Wertherism to Konradism to the Biedermeier*. That which fuses the different variants into a common pattern is the role of the situation of conflict ("I" versus "the world"), which had as its historical background the changes in social stratification conditioned by political subjugation, and whose most eloquent expression was the early-Romantic form of individualism. The situation of conflict also contains its opposite: the search for an escape from, or resolution of, the conflict, which lies at the end of various roads in the form of different—more or less Utopian—visions of transforming the world. Excepting the total refusal of assent of "Wertherism," these roads include the less well-worn one of contempt for, and flight from, the world, but the predominant one is that of revolt, with its programme of struggle, activity, creativity and work. The defeat of Utopian and Romantic ideals led in turn to various attempts at explaining the debacle (a search for error, sin, guilt), to various efforts to justify the meaningfulness of the sacrifice and the necessity of suffering (martyrology, heroism, the ethic of suffering), or to a hunt for other means of overcoming

defeat: hopes of a Messiah, moral improvement, resignation, or renewed revolt. This pattern includes: (a) situations of conflict, variously motivated; (b) variously-aimed attempts at resolving the conflict, revolving around the same ideas but arranging them in differing hierarchies, and (c) various ways of overcoming defeat; the pattern recurs in all Romantic biographies and in the works of art cited. Nevertheless, the role played by the situation of conflict is not an invariable quantity throughout all the phases of Romantic literature and behaviour. During the pre-November period the pressure of tradition was still discernable and earlier literary styles were still invested with a good deal of weight—opposed on occasions by fully crystallized revolt or refusal of assent, and on others, by a mere question-mark, by feelings of doubt and uncertainty. After the uprising, as Romanticism crumbled into Messianism or gravitated towards the Biedermeier (or—later—Positivism), the part played by the situation of “the rebel” weakened, and conciliatory tendencies—with their attempts at a *modus vivendi* or reconciliation with the world—came into ascendancy. The same change in orientation can be observed in both literature and attitudes concerning moral conduct, and this evolution casts light upon the frequent internal inconsistency of the Romantic biography. (In any case, one cannot speak of a completely Romantic biography or career; the course of one’s life is, rather, an area in which various cultural patterns are in collision, and thus one ought not to speak in terms of Romantic biographies but rather of historical situations.) Reality engendered a situation and literature supplied a language equipped for the organization and directive rationalization of life’s experiences. In fact, Romantic literature provided the languages and forms of expression for positions of programmatic non-conformity; in this respect the registration of symptoms of this attitude carried out by Maigron retains its validity to a considerable degree, although the general diagnosis of the attitude’s pathological quality recalls the sociological conceptions current then regarding “diseases of the mentality.”²⁶ Such an evaluation

²⁶ Cf., for instance, T. Parson’s conception developed in his classic work *Social Structure and Personality*, according to which the social system is interpreted as relatively stable, and the degree of the individual’s “mental illness” is determined by his non-adaptability or inability to play a role within the system or to meet the expectations his role arouses.

is possible only from a social theoretical standpoint that accepts as its main criterion of behavioural judgement the balance and inviolability of the social system; in the framework of a social theory that respects the rights of social dynamism, a state of total adaptation and inability to assume a non-conformist stance can be deemed equally pathological.

Romanticism thus denotes the period of *the birth of modern values*, which include: an expressive emotional culture; an attitude of social and behavioural rebellion and non-conformity; an ethic of creativity; an ethic of the patriotic, moral and artistic act; and a work-ethic. Among the values privileged within this system the dominant positions are assumed by: patriotism and its accompanying cult of freedom; freedom, understood as choice, realization of one's elected choice, and moral responsibility; heroism as a consequence of the choice of freedom; creationism in the wide sense of a creative attitude; activism, dynamism; work interpreted as a source of value (with emphasis laid upon educational, self-improving and intellectual labour); and individualism—i. e. a belief in one's own uniqueness, gradually modulating into a belief in every man's capacity for exceptional deeds. The set of values presented here permits one to place Romantic morals and manners in the general framework of a culture of expression—the expression of the individual and of the ideal world held within him.

The stereotype of “the Romantic disease” is not only inadequate with respect to Polish or Italian literature, but also fails to fit the variety of French Romanticism represented by—for instance—the name of Victor Hugo. The emergence of a conception of the Romantic hero as “morbid” in his effect upon the reader's imagination can in part be explained by the nineteenth century's inauguration of a fundamental *change in the function of literature as a whole*. Above all, in this era of the printed word, literature and the press became the main (and in the conditions of post-partition Poland, the only) channel for the public flow of information. Secondly, within the framework of a middle-class culture—and chiefly in the area of novelistic literature—there arose far-reaching opportunities for the reader to identify with the literary hero, and this identification set the standard for literature's reception. And, finally, moral life and conduct became tied in with literature and its

patterns on another plane than had earlier been the case (for instance, under Sentimentalism or Classicism). Within the realm of aristocratic manners, whose mode of external expression was provided by Sentimentalism (generally and typically connected with an attitude of consumption and entertainment—the expression of which is an extension of court and salon life), literature had participated in life and morals primarily as a form of diversion or as a source from which could be borrowed “golden thoughts,” components of ballroom decoration and society games, poetic names for children, animals, places and things, and finally, themes for the staging of so-called fêtes, charades and tableaux vivants. This sphere too sees a change in the themes and subjects of tableaux vivants, but the emblematic principle, the principle of painting living scenes for the poetic adornment of life—this remains unchanged until the close of the 'Thirties. Romanticism, however, fundamentally transforms the function of literature in a fashion accurately caught by Camus: “A partir du romantisme, la tâche de l'artiste ne sera plus seulement de créer un monde ni d'exalter la beauté pour elle seule, mais aussi de définir une attitude,”²⁷ whence the correspondence between the fundamental system of values, attitudes and choices fashioned by Romantic literature and those that are manifest in the course of actual lives and receive documentary testimony in autobiographies.

In this paper I have tried to draw out some aspects of this convergence and to show how individual fortunes (in their verbalized and transcribed forms) approximate to the formulae whereby the fates of literary heroes are determined. How complete is this convergence and to what extent is it a consequence of literature's influence on the formation of moral and behavioural attitudes?—the answer to this question has to rest in the realm of hypothesis. My effort has been to collect a certain number of arguments in favour of the hypothesis that Romanticism marked an epoch in which literature, in becoming the main channel for the social exchange of thoughts and circulation of information, first acquired a real say in the shaping of human attitudes and behaviour, exerting an influence that can be grasped evidentially in the sphere of habit, where it inaugurated the modern system of cross-references between social

²⁷ A. Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, Paris 1960, p. 74.

life and artistic speech. Admittedly, earlier literature had also provided patterns of conduct, but within the area spanned by *Żywot człowieka poczciwego* (*The Life of an Honourable Man*) and *Pan Podstoli*, these patterns represented a positive ideal of conformity and issued a series of practical directives—selected by the community's representative with his own social group in mind—which it transcribed in the work in a form ready-made for actual and direct imitation. Romanticism provided a pattern of programmatic non-adaptation, a model of the non-conformist attitude, and addressed itself to a far broader public, to all social groups and communities present and future; it inscribed the pattern within itself in a “metaphorical” form available for assimilation during the process of interpretation. The Romantic work is neither knightly code, nor catechism, nor pedagogic verse—its requirement of the reader is not the detachment of a ready-made recipe but the reconstruction of a model of values implicit in the total structure of the work. The reconstruction of this pattern of values can only be achieved through a reading off of the work's “metaphorical” meanings, through a reconstruction of its concealed models of the situation and the world (thus—for instance—there arose a characteristic misunderstanding during the process of the reception of *Konrad Wallenrod*, as attempts were made to read the work literally, as a “political pamphlet”). The use of an “overarching metaphor” or of “the historicism of the mask” seems to be the natural mode of utterance of literature that provides patterns of non-conformity.

Transl. by *Paul Coates*