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**THE WORDSWORTHIAN AND THE BYRONIC ROMANTIC CANON
IN THE “SUPPOSED CONFESSIONS” OF ALFRED TENNYSON**
**WORDSWORTHA I BYRONA KANON ROMANTYCZNY W „DOMNIEMANYCH
ZEZNANIACH” ALFREDA TENNYSONA**

Słowa kluczowe: Alfred Tennyson, William Wordsworth, George Gordon Byron, kanon romantyzmu, poezja konfesyjna

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The problems of the literary canon may well be treated as products of culture (Zgorzelski 11), or as interpretative traditions characteristic of native cultures, which, however, result in lasting axiological hierarchies, such as the ones created by Meyer H. Abrams in his attempt to grasp the paradigm of a “greater Romantic lyric”¹. The heritage of Abrams (*The Mirror and the Lamp*, Oxford: OUP 1953) developed by René Wellek in his theory of Romanticism², in which William Wordsworth’s lyrical poetry constitutes the centre of English Romantic poetry and George Gordon Byron is deliberately excluded, dominated, it seems, British criticism until the 1980’s, when, as Jerome McGann puts it: “The continental vantage exposes the problems in their most telling form. From Goethe and Pushkin to Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Lautréaumont, Byron seems to stand at the very centre of Romanticism”³. The reasons for the long simultaneous existence of two different canons/paradigms of English Romantic poetry may partly be explained by the lack of historicism in critical theories of poetic

¹ http://viscomi.sites.oasis.unc.edu/viscomi/coursepack/criticism_etc/Abrams-Structure_and_Style.pdf [16.03.2020].

² R. Wellek, *Pojęcia i problem nauki o literaturze*, H. Markiewicz (red.), tłum. A. Jaraczewski, M. Kaniowa, I. Sieradzki, Warszawa 1979.

³ J. McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. J. Soderholm, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 237.

style and partly by Byron's own provocative refusal to follow current poetic fashions and his open criticism of Wordsworth's literary stance.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and George Gordon Byron (1788–1824) apparently met only once at the house of Samuel Rogers in 1815⁴. As it has been reported, both of them were deeply aware of each other's eminence as poets, as well as of Byron's earlier criticism of Wordsworth's poetry and his satirical statements of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* starting with the lines:

Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple WORDSWORTH, framer of a lay
As soft as evening in his favourite May,
Who warns his friend "To shake off toil and trouble,
And quit his books, for fear of growing double"

(lines 235–240, vol. I, p. 315).

Already in this fragment, and further in lines 241–254 and 903–905 of the poem, one may observe the basic differences between the poetic projects of the two poets, Wordsworth being the founder of English Romanticism and Byron being the most important representative of the second generation of English Romantics. Byron notices Wordsworth's attempt to found his new poetic style on a rejection of neoclassical poetics and on simple language close to the rustic reality of country people and he ironically states that Wordsworth's aim was "To shake off toil and trouble, / And quit his books, for fear of growing double;" (240). Byron writes further that Wordsworth –

[...] both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;
Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
Poetic souls delight in prose insane;
And Christmas stories tortured into rhyme,
Contain the essence of the true sublime:
Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
The idiot mother of "an idiot Boy;"
A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
And, like his bard, confounded night with day;
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view the "idiot in his glory"
Conceive the Bard the hero of the story.
"Up, up my friend, and clear your looks,
Why all this toil and trouble?"

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

Up, up my friend, and quit your books,
Or surely you'll grow double."

(lines 241–258)

Byron evidently sneers at the idea of intellectual resignation from learning or erudition, but at the same time he notices the emergence of new aesthetic concepts exploring the borders of the human condition, the epistemology of the unknown and the obscure, the reality of madness and the mystical quality of childish innocence. Byron even notices a sort of group predilection grounded in some sort of religious practices which may transform the poet-practitioners into an obscurely infantile lot:

[...]

Yet let them not to vulgar WORDSWORTH stoop,
The meanest object of the lowly group,
Whose verse, of all but childish prattle void,
Seems blessed harmony to LAMB and LLOYD:
Let them – but hold, my Muse, nor dare to teach
A strain far, far beyond thy humble reach:
The native genius with their being given
Will point the path, and peal their notes to heaven.
And thou, too, SCOTT! resign to minstrels rude
The wilder Slogan of a Border feud:
Let others spin their meagre lines for hire;
Enough for Genius, if itself inspire!
Let SOUTHEY sing, although his teeming muse,
Prolific every spring, be too profuse;
Let simple WORDSWORTH chime his childish verse,
And brother COLERIDGE lull the babe at nurse [...]

(903–918)

By 1811 Wordsworth had published the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798/1800) and *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807) which included the "Immortality Ode"⁵, which contains the most important motifs of his poetic creed. As an ode typical for the period of Romanticism, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" introduces an addressee which belongs to the fictional world of the poem (a "Child"), but at the same time is part of the consciousness of the lyric persona. The poem is based on the lyric persona's reflective recollection of his own childhood, but the concrete image of a Child is in the course of meditation endowed with a set of abstract features (the "Creed of Childhood") symbolically embodying poetic creative powers⁶.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

⁶ Cf. M. Modrzewska, "Speaker, Theme and Addressee in Nine Odes by Different Authors", "Focus on Literature and Culture", G. Bystydzieńska and L. Kolek (eds.), Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1994, pp. 33–41.

The poetics of remembrance is interwoven with a lyrical contemplation of idyllic landscape and Wordsworthian epistemological excitement is counterpointed with a deep sense of loss:

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

[...]
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.

Wordsworth's evocation and adoration of childhood is rooted in the New Testament tradition of faith understood as innocence, as well as in his understanding of creative freedom uncorrupted by convention and social norms. The concept of a Child takes on a variety of shapes: "Child of joy" (line 34), "Shepherd-boy" (36), "blessed creatures", "fresh flowers" of the "sweet May-morning" (45), the "Child among his new-born blisses" (86), "Mighty prophet! Seer blest!" (115). In the final lines of the poem Wordsworth draws metaphorical parallels between the Child's sense of immortality and the power and the infiniteness of the rolling oceans, in which the concept of childhood acquires the more abstract features of the "splendour in the grass" and the "glory in the flower" that soothe human suffering "in the faith that looks through death". Thus the contemplation of childhood acquires in the poem the meaning of heightened perception of nature and finding religious inspiration in the "Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves" (192).

It was Wordsworth's conception of nature that made him the central poet of English Romanticism, despite the fact that nature and landscape usually serve the poet as a reflection of the subjective perception of the world, as can be observed in "Daffodils", a poem apparently concerned with flowers, but whose subject is equally or even more importantly the "inward eye" of a lonely wanderer. Still Wordsworth and his poetry became determinant of the Romantic style until the 1980s, as is clear from Rene Wellek's famous definition of Romanticism as "Imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style"⁷.

Wellek's definition naturally strengthens Wordsworth's position as an icon of the English Romantic canon and removes Byron from the map of English Romanticism because of the latter's different view of poetic imagination (as not necessarily a source of poetic inspiration) and his neglect of nature (not necessarily at the centre of his world view). Also, Byron's ironic, antithetical and digressively rhetorical lyric persona does not construct consistent myths or symbols [*Don Juan*, Canto XVII]. However, George Gordon Byron is perceived as an icon of Romanticism on the continent

⁷ J. McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, ed. J.s Soderholm, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 236.

of Europe and those two conflicting ways of defining and understanding Romanticism become a subject for re-definitions in the 1980⁸.

It only became obvious to the English Romanticists in the last decades of the twentieth century that Byron’s literary output, which was recognized in Britain as continuing neo-classical literary traditions, provided literary models which were followed by Romantic artists and writers on the continent of Europe. In his introduction to the two-volume edition of *The Reception of Byron in Europe* (2004), Richard Cardwell explains that “Byron was perceived as a ‘world-historical’ figure who expressed the ‘subjectivity of his age’. [...] His libertarian profile (in his sacrifice for Greece) fuelled nationalist aspirations. Literature needed to express national cultural concerns to create ‘differences’ [...]”⁹. What immediately caught the public attention in continental Europe was Byron’s aura of social and political revolt. His fragmentary and digressive poetry was read as a poetic expression of freedom, and his comicality was understood as the bitter irony of a “troubled soul” (ibid. 8–9). The Byronic motif of “sacred crime” gave infinite possibilities of local character creation and Byron’s mystery plays, with a fallen-angel protagonist, were in harmony with the Manichean aspect of European Romanticism.

The “Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity with Itself” by Alfred Tennyson belongs to his early poetry, first published in 1830 in the volume *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*¹⁰. It exhibits the poet’s affiliation with earlier English Romantic poetry, traceable in the use of motifs, but also in the confessional lyrical style reminiscent of the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, Lord Byron and Wordsworth. The title seems ironic but the poem is written as a Christian prayer which justifies the humbleness of the title. The first two lines of the poem – “Oh God! my God! have mercy now. / I faint, I fall” – suspend the reading process between two planes of reference: the Christian tradition and the tradition of Romantic confessional

⁸ “The contrast between the view of Romanticism that dominated the period 1945–1980 and the nineteenth-century’s view seemed to me equally startling. Once again Byron loomed as the unavoidable locus of the issues. The continental vantage exposes the problems in their most telling forms. From Goethe and Pushkin to Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Lautréamont, Byron seems to stand at the very center of Romanticism. The nineteenth-century English view is slightly different. Though Byron remained an important resource for England and the English, he had emerged as a highly problematic figure. From different Victorian points of view Byron’s famous “energy” (as it was called) seemed one thing – usually a positive thing – whereas his equally famous critical despair seemed something else altogether – typically something to be deplored. Nineteenth-century England therefore kept opening and closing its Byron with troubled irregularity.” *Ibidem*, p. 237.

⁹ R. Cardwell, “An Introduction”. *The Reception of Byron in Europe*, London & New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004, p. 6.

¹⁰ A. Tennyson, “Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity with Itself” (<http://www.online-literature.com/tennyson/the-early-poems/94/> [14.02.2018]; Tennyson, A., 1809–1892, *Poems, chiefly lyrical* (<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3555041>, [16.02.2018]).

poetry. The phrase “I faint, I fall” immediately brings to mind Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind*, which uses the motif of sacrificial death and rebirth in the fourth part of the poem: “As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need. / Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! / I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!”

Tennyson’s lyrical persona is not entirely egotistic about his faith and there are fragments of the poem in which he assumes a plural voice, or speaks on behalf of believers, as in the lines:

Men pass me by;
 Christians with happy countenances –
 And children all seem full of thee!
 And women smile with saint-like glances
 Like thine own mother’s when she bow’d
 Above thee, on that happy morn
 When angels spake to men aloud,
 And thou and peace to earth were born.
 Goodwill to me as well as all –
 I one of them: my brothers they:
 Brothers in Christ – a world of peace
 And confidence, day after day;
 And trust and hope till things should cease,
 And then one Heaven receive us all.
 How sweet to have a common faith!
 To hold a common scorn of death!
 And at a burial to hear
 The creaking cords which wound and eat
 Into my human heart, whene’er
 Earth goes to earth, with grief, not fear,
 With hopeful grief, were passing sweet!

(lines 19–39)

Also the Wordsworthian category of the child is at first treated as a general and plural category spoken of in the third person as a class of phenomena, when after a passage on the immortality of “moles and graves” (lines 40–56) Tennyson comments on the infant’s “spirit of happiness” (67):

Thrice happy state again to be
 The trustful infant on the knee!
 Who lets his waxen fingers play
 About his mother’s neck, and knows
 Nothing beyond his mother’s eyes.
 They comfort him by night and day;
 They light his little life alway;
 He hath no thought of coming woes;

He hath no care of life or death,
 Scarce outward signs of joy arise,
 Because the Spirit of happiness
 And perfect rest so inward is;
 And loveth so his innocent heart,
 Her temple and her place of birth,
 Where she would ever wish to dwell,
 Life of the fountain there, beneath
 Its salient springs, and far apart,
 Hating to wander out on earth,
 Or breathe into the hollow air,
 Whose dullness would make visible
 Her subtil, warm, and golden breath,
 Which mixing with the infant's blood,
 Fullfills him with beatitude.
 Oh! sure it is a special care
 Of God, to fortify from doubt,
 To arm in proof, and guard about
 With triple-mailed trust, and clear
 Delight, the infant's dawning year.

(lines 57–84)

In the above fragment Tennyson describes the "happy state" as a general condition of childhood and the "Spirit of happiness" coming from trust and innocence, but in the next lines he becomes personal again in his complaint:

Would that my gloomed fancy were
 As thine, my mother, when with brows
 Propped on thy knees, my hands upheld
 In thine, I listen'd to thy vows,
 For me outpour'd in holiest prayer –
 For me unworthy! – and beheld
 Thy mild deep eyes upraised, that knew
 The beauty and repose of faith,
 And the clear spirit shining through.

(lines 85–93)

The motif of the child is further on transformed into the Lamb, resembling the Christological figure of the Child-Lamb from William Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*... in the scene of "constant beauty" (167). It is the idyllic landscape, the dwelling place of an ox feeding on herbs, the place of "horned valleys" (169) and "summer heats" (171), where –

[...] in the flocks
 The lamb rejoiceth in the year,
 And raceth freely with his fere,
 And answers to his mother's calls
 From the flower'd furrow.

(lines 173–177)

Towards the end of the poem the pastoral image of childhood and spiritual innocence gives way to motifs of shadow and death. The motifs of darkness are semantically linked with the motifs of slopes and “filmed eyes”, as well as the inevitable doubleness of human life and the human condition in which the creed is undermined with doubt and the weariness of the desolate heart and the “damned vacillating state” (207) of the mature mind.

The state of “not being in unity with oneself”, suggested as the main theme of the “supposed confessions” in the title, is the most conspicuous reference to the Byronic Romantic stance in which the poet rarely assumes a public collective voice. In the fragments of the confessions containing the expression of humiliated personal pride (lines 14–17), the devilishness of the “gloomed fancy” leads the lyric persona to resemble Byron's Manfred, a protagonist torn by contradictory feelings and ideas, who belongs to the Faustian type of the fallen angel. Similarly the protagonist of Tennyson's “Supposed Confessions” speaks of “bitterness” (134), “vexed pools” (150) and a whirling spirit “moved from beneath with doubt and fear” (154–5). “My hope” he says “is gray, and cold / At heart...” (120–121). The poem ends with a plea to God:

[...] Oh teach me yet
 Somewhat before the heavy clod
 Weighs on me, and the busy fret
 Of that sharpheaded worm begins
 In the gross blackness underneath.

weary life! O weary death!
 spirit and heart made desolate!
 damnéd vacillating state!

The contemplation of childhood turns into a contemplation of the grave, associated with the motifs of self-destruction, devilishness and intellectual anxiety. The lamb and the beast in the one person of the poet is the Romantic heritage derived from two conflicting canons of British Romanticism: the Wordsworthian and the Byronic. For a long time these two poets and two types of poetry have been considered mutually exclusive in the reception of English Romanticism. Jerome McGann tried to reconcile their two points of view on man and nature and present Byron in dialogue with his predecessor¹¹. Definitions of Romanticism have also evolved towards less rigid

¹¹ Cf. J. McGann, “Byron and Wordsworth” in *Byron and Romanticism* (2002), pp. 173–201.

formulations and recent theoretical works on English and European Romanticisms, such as the volume edited by Christoph Bode and Sebastian Domsch in 2007 (*British and European Romanticisms*) have set out to prove that the heterogeneous and polyphonic nature of English Romanticism corresponds to the equally “richly diversified and heterogeneous European scene”¹².

Surprisingly, the discrepancy between the Wordsworthian and Byronic Romantic canons becomes visible again in the definitions of Romanticism provided by so-called “eco-criticism”. J. Andrew Hubbel in his article “A Question of Nature: Byron and Wordsworth” rephrases the problem of the Romantic canon and the positioning of Byron in the following way: “...most critics ignore Byron because he does not measure up to the Wordsworthian standards of nature and dwelling”. The author explains the notion of “dwelling” adopted by “eco-poetics” critics, such as Jonathan Bate and James McKusick, in the following way:

‘Dwelling,’ a concept adopted from Heidegger, means to embed oneself within the texture of one’s place, thereby opening oneself to an empirical understanding of the interworkings of the environment as a system. Dwelling is a practice and a theory, a way of being – and a way of knowing. Lines of belonging are established between one’s identity and the physical place, ultimately creating a sense of home. Identification, belonging, and place-meaning are dialogically related to the quality of empirical observation and depth of knowledge that is attained. The greater the length of time spent in one place, the more extensive the dialogic action. For this reason, dwelling has become synonymous with ‘rootedness,’ and an equation has developed between dwelling, environmental sensitivity, and ethical care for one’s place¹³.

This definition of dwelling stands in opposition to the aesthetic enjoyment of travelling and wandering, typical of Byron’s writings. Hubbell claims further that the initial Romantic binary opposition of nature and culture, to which Byron never seemed to have consented, has reappeared in modern criticism as the opposition between eco-centrism and anthropocentrism. Some Romantic writers are now recognized as “proto-ecological thinkers”¹⁴ promoting “re-baptism in the Wilderness”¹⁵ and aesthetic enjoyment of rural community life as opposed to the modernism and techno-rationality of the city, epitomising culture. Byron falls out of the list again. In a comprehensive study by James C. McKusick (2010) *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*, not a single chapter is devoted to this icon of European Romanticism.

¹² Ch. Bode, “By Way of Introduction: Towards a Re-definition of European Romanticism”, Ch. Bode and S. Domsch (eds.), *British and European Romanticisms: Selected Papers from the Munich Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier 2007, p. 8.

¹³ J.A. Hubbel, “A Question of Nature: Byron and Wordsworth”, *Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 41, No. 1, 2010: 1–12 (<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-228662991/a-question-of-nature-byron-and-wordsworth> [24.09.2017], p. 1.

¹⁴ J.C. McKusick, J.C. *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Now, what is the reading of Wordsworth as a poet of “dwelling” and Byron as a “tourist-minded” poet¹⁶ in Tennyson’s confessional poem?

If there is any “rootedness” in Tennyson’s post-Romantic poem, it is rootedness in biblical language and in a sense of community that is not necessarily localized in space but visible in the poet’s use of the grammatical plural and his tendency towards generalization. Tennyson’s lyric persona first of all communicates his loneliness and his misery (lines 8-12) and then his alienation: “Men pass me by” (19). The only place to which he seems to be attached is his own grave or his mother’s grave, and this motif reappears throughout the poem. He finds the sense of community in the “common scorn for death” (34) and in seeing the “red small atoms wherewith we / are built [...] be indued with immortality” (44–56). The movement of which he speaks is the movement of thought and the process of cleansing himself of pride. He utters the stages of this process in lines 137–139:

I think that pride hath now no place
Nor sojourn in me. I am void,
Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.

His “spirit whirls / Moved from beneath with doubt and fear” (154–155) and he remembers the “freshness” (157) of his youth and the images of “constant beauty” (167): flocks and cattle on hills and valleys. In lines 173–177 the most important motifs of space are linked in one image:

[...] And in the flocks
The lamb rejoiceth in the year,
And raceth freely with his fere,
And answers to his mother’s calls
From the flower’d furrow.

In this fragment the biblical image of the rejoicing lamb from the Book of Revelation (21:2)¹⁷, which symbolically signifies the marriage of Christ and his Church, is linked with the Wordsworthian image of childhood innocence and immortality and with the post mortem spiritual existence of the dead mother – speaking from the grave – the “flowered furrow”.

In conclusion I would like to state that both the Wordsworthian and the Byronic types of Romanticism are reconciled in Tennyson’s confessional lyrical style and his Christian-Faustian ambivalence, and the reading of Tennyson must inevitably be conceptual with reference to biblical language and signs. The figurative meaning of Wordsworthian “dwelling” and Byronic “travelling” is the literary heritage of wanderings through concepts and ideas which lead Tennyson towards a sense of personal

¹⁶ J.A. Hubbel, “A Question of Nature: Byron and Wordsworth”, *Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 41, No. 1, 2010: 1–12 (<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-228662991/a-question-of-nature-byron-and-wordsworth> [24.09.2017], p. 1.

¹⁷ <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Revelation-Chapter-21> [14.02.2018].

and linguistic freedom in a world in which the collective voice of modern society is overwhelmingly present and permeated with anxiety.

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Streszczenie

W historii odbioru obu poetów – Williama Wordswortha (1770–1850) i George'a Gordona Byrona (1788–1824) – zwykle przeciwstawiano ich twórczość jako dwa odległe bieguny angielskiego romantyzmu. Wordsworth rozpoznany został jako prekursor romantyzmu w poezji angielskiej, a Byron uznany za najważniejszego przedstawiciela drugiej generacji angielskich romantyków. W wierszu "Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity with Itself" (1830) Alfreda Tennysona oba kanony brytyjskiego romantyzmu – Wordswortha i Byrona – pogodzone zostają w lirycznym stylu konfesyjnym Tennysona i w wytworzonej przez niego chrześcijańsko-Faustowskiej ambiwalencji w taki sposób, że czytanie Tennysona musi nieuchronnie być conceptualne i pozostawać w odniesieniu do języka i znaków Biblii, czyli kodu dobrze znanego zarówno Wordsworthowi, jak i Byronowi. Metaforyczne znaczenia „miejsca i siedliska” Wordswortha i Byronowskiego „przemieszczania się i podróży” jest literackim dziedzictwem pielgrzymowania poprzez idee i koncepcje, które prowadziły Tennysona do poczucia osobistej i językowej wolności w świecie, w którym zbiorowy głos nowoczesnego społeczeństwa jest przygnębiająco obecny i przeniknięty niepokojem. Wiersz Tennysona przejawia afiliację poety z wcześniejszą angielską poezją romantyczną (Wordsworth), którą rozpoznać można w użyciu charakterystycznych motywów, ale przypomina także liryczny styl poezji konfesyjnej Percy'ego Bysshe Shelley'a, Johna Keatsa i Lorda Byrona.

Summary

For a long time the two poets William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and George Gordon Byron (1788–1824) have been considered mutually exclusive in the reception of English Romanticism, Wordsworth being the founder of English Romanticism, and Byron being the most important representative of the second generation of English Romantics. In the "Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity with Itself" (1830) by Alfred Tennyson both the Wordsworthian and the Byronic types of Romanticism are reconciled in Tennyson's confessional lyrical style and his Christian-Faustian ambivalence, and the reading of Tennyson must inevitably be conceptual with reference to biblical language and signs, the code with which Wordsworth as well as Byron was well acquainted. The figurative meaning of Wordsworthian "dwelling" and Byronic "travelling" is the literary heritage of wanderings through concepts and ideas which lead Tennyson towards a sense of personal and linguistic freedom in a world in which the collective voice of modern society is overwhelmingly present and permeated with anxiety. The poem exhibits Tennyson's affiliation with earlier English Romantic poetry (Wordsworth), traceable in the use of motifs, but it is also reminiscent of the confessional lyrical style in the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and Lord Byron.

Biography

Mirosława Modrzewska – is an associate professor of the University of Gdańsk, Poland, where she is currently Director of the Institute of English and American Studies. She is President of the Polish Society for the Study of European Romanticism and teaches British literature as well as theoretical literary and cultural studies. She has published extensively on the works of Romantics, such as Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Walter Scott and Juliusz Słowacki. She has contributed chapters on the reception of Burns Byron and Scott to the Athlone Critical Traditions Series *The Reception of British Authors in Europe*, published by Continuum Press. With Peter Cochran, she co-edited and translated Słowacki’s *Beniowski* for the volume *Polands Angry Romantic. Two Poems and a Play by Juliusz Słowacki* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2009). Mirosława Modrzewska is the author of the Polish section of *European Romanticism* edited by Stephen Prickett (Continuum, 2010), and of *Byron and the Baroque* (Peter Lang, 2013). She has also contributed to the *Pośród nas* series, of which she is co-editor, on modern writers of the Gdańsk area.

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