

Marta Piwińska

"Gorączka romantyczna", Maria Janion, Warszawa 1975 : [recenzja]

Literary Studies in Poland 5, 137-139

1980

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Maria Janion, *Gorączka romantyczna (The Romantic Fever)*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1975.

Gorączka romantyczna is a book in the grand humanist style. Its subject is Romantic culture as an interpretation of reality—not the canonic texts from the years 1820 to 1850—an interpretation whose “epistemological scandal” initiated the modernity to which of late we have been reverting. *Gorączka romantyczna* demonstrates what that culture was, is, and what it could be for and within the twentieth century: how Romanticism can be read after Freud and the Surrealists and why it is valuable to read it in this fashion. For the book is not an impartial one, and this is the source of its intense scientific verve. Maria Janion does not merely examine, interpret, and formulate a new typology for Romanticism, but also evaluates it.

By drawing out the dialogues, the internal contradictions within this tradition, Maria Janion demonstrates its tragic quality and openness. She shows that Romanticism could not hold itself to a static and unequivocal system—not even among its epigones, since they simply accentuated its antinomies and transformed them into stereotypes. Openness, a tragic consciousness and the—as it were—immanent progressiveness of thoughts engaged in mutual debate, are constitutive of modernity and must not be dispelled from it. Maria Janion documents these characteristics in her researches into Romanticism’s role as the Polish national tradition and into the fascinating process of a “prophetic” literature’s transformation into a mass culture. At the same time she examines the universal language of Romanticism, the miraculous. She sees symbolism as not merely a new poetic, but also a new form of Romantic reason, affiliated to imagination and the passions, and thus active and anthropocentric: whence its opposition to the rationalistic “pellucid thought” of positivistically-directed objectivity as well as to the limitations of common sense. The “cosmic quality” of Romanticism is shown to lie in its founding of a place for man in the world, of a human citizenship in nature and, consequently, in history too. This approach is a novel one, especially against the background of political history’s predominance within research into Romanticism. Such studies as *Kuźnia natury (Nature’s Forge)*, *Prometeusz, Kain i Lucyfer (Prometheus, Cain and*

Lucifer) and *Romantyczna wizja rewolucji* (*The Romantic Vision of Revolution*) deepen our understanding of the Romantic attitude of revolt by illustrating its roots in the philosophy of nature and man. And, finally, Maria Janion considers Romantic epistemology, with its directive to seek the manifest in the concealed, the internal in the external, the future in the past. The author presents the hermeneutic sources of this attitude together with the revolutionary dynamism of this style of thought. She also demonstrates its affinities with contemporary thought – with dialectic, depth psychology and (to a certain degree) with semiology.

Having thus outlined Romantic ontology, anthropology and epistemology, Janion examines the phenomena fundamental to Romanticism: the return to nature; the rehabilitation of countercultures; the revolution of youth. She considers them in two perspectives: she views Polish High Romanticism through the respective prisms of European Romanticism and of the “minor” Romanticism within Poland itself (together with the latter’s stages: “post-November”¹ and “pre-tempest”²). This dual perspective defines the wide horizons of the book’s enquiries and lends them their dynamism. Romantic culture is indeed “dialogized” here, created and renewed before the reader’s eyes in various historical situations, in polemics and in auto-interpretations. And this yields a conception as innovative as the study *Romantyzm polski wśród romantyzmów europejskich* (*Polish Romanticism among the Romanticisms of Europe*) or the series of studies of the second and third generations of Polish Romantics. Among these one encounters the first interpretation since Chmielowski’s day of Polish epigonism; an analysis of the genesis of mass culture; and fascinating analyses of the situations and attitudes of the “red” Romantics—Berwiński and Dembowski.

The fundamental notion, continually recurring and driving the book on, is that Romanticism’s value is not merely historical. It can constitute a relevant contemporary cultural stance—one in opposition to the contemporary forms of positivist and rationalist

¹ After the abortive November uprising of 1831.

² Before the renewed revolt of 1863. The term comes from a poem by Mieczysław Romanowski, who characterized his own generation in this fashion, and who himself perished during the revolt.

culture. Romantic culture possesses remarkably powerful humanist values – above all, as a philosophy of man – and its epistemology is more apt to the modern world than closed systems of thought. On the basis of these assumptions Maria Janion has evolved a new synthesis of Romanticism, which she has achieved by viewing it in history, in the present day, and with the future in mind.

Gorączka romantyczna is thus a humanist book in the generous and somewhat forgotten sense of the word – here philology is also philosophy, which probably explains the book's wide social resonance. *Gorączka romantyczna* is an innovation from the specialist viewpoint and opens up new horizons for research. But its novelty, together with the scientific precision of a specialized humanist use of modern methods in the study of literary history, does not hinder the cultural public from seeking in it answers to questions concerning man's place and role in the world. Nor does it deter one from discerning an interpretation of reality that provides a place for freedom and activity – in all their tragedy. This is what Romantic culture offers. And it is this that is lacking from positivist and post-positivist conceptions of man, science and the world.

Sum. by *Marta Piwińska*

Transl. by *Paul Coates*

Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia (Le Romantisme polonais et l'histoire)*, Warszawa 1978, 638 pp.

L'historisme fut la méthode romantique de penser le monde humain, et l'histoire, l'objet de fascination, intellectuelle et esthétique, de la poésie romantique. La découverte de l'histoire constitua l'une des plus attrayantes innovations du tournant romantique dans de nombreux pays, en même temps que le signal le plus frappant du nouveau courant dans la littérature. Cependant, si le romantisme a pu devenir le début de la culture moderne – et tel fut le cas en Pologne, pour le moins – c'était parce que, au cours de son évolution, il a inscrit l'histoire dans le présent et considéré la contemporanéité comme la prolongation nécessaire de l'ancienneté, en voyant le critère de son sens et de sa valeur dans l'avenir. Norwid, en