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BALL OF TRADITION

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I

The cover of the monograph by Agata Seweryn, titled *Pomiędzy światami* [*Between Worlds*]¹ is very suggestive due to the use of detail from the painting *Whalers* by J.M.W. Turner, which – along with his other works, especially ones foregrounding the sea and ships floating on rocking waves – transports the viewers into another dimension of reality², one that is far removed from a world captured in rigid forms, regular shapes as well as sharp lines and boundaries. One can thus sense that the choice of this painting helped the author express the main themes of her book in visual terms, especially the idea that it is not the easily graspable and obvious that has the greatest importance but rather that which occurs “between worlds,” or more specifically – between epochs and literary trends as well as between the lines. The subtitle of the book concretizes this visual clue. Guided by Turner’s painterly improvisation, readers dive right into *Studia z literatury oświecenia i romantyzmu* [*Studies in the Literature of the Enlightenment and Romanticism*], although – as it should be noted right away – the book makes many intellectual excursions into other historical periods, too. This collection of articles, published (as we learn from the bibliographical note) between 2011 and 2017 in various journals and monographs³, constitutes a book whose unity and character can be properly judged from the perspective of the work as a whole. The first part, titled *Studia interpretacyjne i porównawcze* [*Interpretations and Comparative Analyses*], gathers texts devoted largely to authors who were active during the Enlightenment. This part includes an essay on the tradition of conversations among the dead in works by Ignacy Krasicki, with a small addendum devoted to Norwid; an interpretation of the poem *Do poety starego* [*To an Elderly Poet*] by Adam Naruszewicz; new context-based ideas for reading Stanisław Trembecki’s *Pieśń śpiewana na obiedzie w Sielcach pod Łazienkami dnia 7 września 1788 roku*

¹ A. SEWERYN, *Pomiędzy światami. Studia z literatury oświecenia i romantyzmu*, Lublin 2017. 260 pp.

² The cover features a detail from the 1845 painting *Whalers* by Joseph Mallord Turner, an English painter considered to be a forerunner of impressionism.

³ The author emphasises that all articles were published before, one being submitted for publication when the book was being published, i.e. “Genus iudicale i frenezja. Tradycje literackie ‘Głosu zabitego do sądu’ Franciszka Karpińskiego.” See: A. SEWERYN, “Nota bibliograficzna,” [in:] IDEM, *Pomiędzy światami*, pp. 247-248.

[*Song Presented at the Dinner in Sielce near Łazienki on 7 September 1788*]. The penultimate text in this part of the book refers to a work by Franciszek Karpiński titled *Głos zabitego do sądu* [*What the Dead Man Told the Court*], and the last one regards *Cygani* [Gypsies] by Franciszek Kniaźnin, an opera and libretto, which were used many years later by the founder of the Polish national opera Stanisław Moniuszko. A close examination of this part of the book demonstrates the author's broad horizons and, primarily, her fascination with details. Agata Seweryn clearly emerges as a reader devoted to nuances and particulars of various character, which can either supplement existing literature and the history of how a given work has been read, or indicate new interpretative paths in widely known and commented texts. In some cases, the author strives to establish the literary genesis of a particular text or reconstructs relevant contexts, establishing key historical facts. This happens in the essays *Genus iudicale i frenezja* [*Genus Iudicale and Phrenesis*] and *Cyganie sentymentalni i romantyczni (Kniaźnin – Moniuszko)* [*Gypsies Sentimental and Romantic (Kniaźnin – Moniuszko)*]. In the conclusion to the latter, the author defines the scope of transformations in Kniaźnin's libretto and formulates the thesis that the original character of the eighteenth-century original was in fact obscured in Moniuszko's work.

Essays from the second part of the book – *Ikonografia literacka* [*Literary Iconography*] – have a slightly different character. They are longer and address selected issues regarding the great Romantic poets and their work. The opening essay *Homo bulla w romantycznej nieskończoności* [*Homo bulla in Romantic Infinity*] largely focuses on *Świtez* by Adam Mickiewicz, while two subsequent ones, which discuss questions related to other works, are: *Pozwól tam spojrzeć zawróconej głowie...* [*Let my Turned Head Look There...*] *In the Swiss garden of Słowacki* and *Słowacki i świerszcze* [*Słowacki and Crickets*]. The last of the four texts regards a particular work by Zygmunt Krasiński, the title *Tradycja barokowa w 'Agaj-Hanie'* [*The Baroque Tradition in "Agaj-Han"*] revealing what has interested the author for a long time now – the baroque. Let us recall at this point that Agata Seweryn is also the author of *Światłocienie i dysonanse. O Norwidzie i tradycji literackiej* [*Chiaroscuro and dissonance. On Norwid and the Literary Tradition*] (Lublin 2013), where she aims to determine the influence of the pre-Romantic tradition on Norwid. According to the scholar, this tradition constitutes an important point of reference in any attempts to answer questions about the intellectual and aesthetic richness of his poetry. The baroque tradition, she argues, “is immanently present in Norwid's works [...] especially with regard to contexts activated by the heritage of mannerism and the baroque in general.”⁴

⁴ A. SEWERYN, *Światłocienie i dysonanse. O Norwidzie i tradycji literackiej*, Lublin 2013, p. 12.

The baroque tradition is still within the author's scope of interest. One could say that the second part of the section *Ikonografia literacka* reveals this lasting passion, and even – as in passages devoted to Słowacki's long poem *W Szwajcarii* [*In Switzerland*] and Krasiński's historical novel *Agaj-Han* – becomes foregrounded, determining the reception of given works. Potential profits from reading Norwid in the perspective of the seventeenth-century literary tradition, especially mannerism, was pointed out several years ago by Krzysztof Trybuś in a review of *Światłocienie i dysonanse*.⁵ At the same time, he made an important remark with regard to the “baroque Norwid,” arguing that turning away from Norwid's epoch in studies of his works is erroneous since it diminishes the poet's horizon of ideas and sources of artistic expression. Still, considering his contemporary context to be crucial does not annul Norwid's affirmation of the historical tradition. Hence the claim made by Trybuś in an effort to extend the boundaries of his era: “It would thus be [...] justified to consider the baroque as a Romantic epoch.”⁶ If we agree that it is not the time frame itself that is crucial but certain aspects of both aesthetic and spiritual character, we can assume that this claim is also valid in the case of *Pomiędzy światami*. This could help to discern how the articles gathered in this volume are harmonized, especially in the second part.

II

Upon closer inspection, the first essay, titled ‘*Znać, żeś nieboszczyk*’ – ‘*Wyjrzałem w zaświat*’. *Kilka uwag o tradycji rozmów zmarłych w twórczości Ignacego Krasickiego i Cypriana Norwida* [“*You are dead, indeed*” – “*I've seen the beyond*”. *Several Remarks on the Wors of Ignacy Krasicki and Cyprian Norwid*], immediately sends us back to the question posed many years ago by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa in an important text devoted to possible perspectives in studies of works by Krasicki. She put it in the following terms: “What else can be said about him by scholars in the new century, after learning what their predecessors discovered, gathering the experiences of two centuries of cultural transformations, and attaining the awareness of the ambivalent status of literary history and its methods in different areas of humanities today?”⁷ How can we frame problems so as to avoid repeating the past and engaging in disputes over trifles that do not greatly enrich our reflection on his literary achievements? The author of *Pomiędzy*

⁵ K. TRYBUŚ, *Norwid z epoki baroku?*, “*Studia Norwidiana*” 33 (2015), p. 301.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ T. KOSTKIEWICZOWA, *Krasicki – perspektywy badań twórczości*, [in:] IDEM, *Z oddali i z bliska. Studia o wieku oświecenia*, Warszawa 2010, p. 281.

światami proposes to attempt to re-read texts with the aim to indicate those places that have not been fully illuminated yet. This approach is represented by many historians of literature who abide by traditional models in the humanities. Passages lifted from the shadows can enliven the poetic message, foreground its complexity or inconspicuous character, at the same time justifying the use of the chosen methodology.

Acknowledging the typical and derivative character of the model used in *Rozmowa XXV. Między Nestorem i Hipokratesem* [Conversation XXV between Nestor and Hippocrates], which closely follows the genre of conversations among the dead, Agata Seweryn identifies room for possible supplements. This would be facilitated by the well-known thesis about the unorthodox character of the poet's classicism, which invites us to verify diagnoses made with regard to his writing. The author briefly reconstructs the state of research, recognizing certain possibilities in reflection on humour in works penned by the Bishop of Warmia. His humour was already posed as a research question years ago in the book by Roman DOKTÓR titled *Poeta uśmiechnięty. O wyobraźni komicznej Ignacego Krasickiego* [The Smiling Poet. On the Comic Imagination of Ignacy Krasicki].⁸ The author focuses on selected phrases and poetic choices that resemble descriptions of the spirit world in Leśmian's poems rather than follow eighteenth-century conventions of depicting it, which are more serious and rational. For example, the word "nieboszczyk" [deceased], as defined in Linde's *Słownik języka polskiego*, would not fit the rhetorical category of elevated discourse.⁹ The scholar thus concludes that what appears, at first glance, to place the poem within a specific genre – i.e. special lexis – in fact plays a different role, accustoming one to the topic of death, facilitating distance, and loosening the rigid framework of the composition and its meaning. Perhaps this announces an important change in poetics, which occurred in the subsequent epoch, namely the shift in terms of the lyrical subject as the host of the text, and especially the introduction of Romantic irony, which best serves to communicate the dichotomous nature of humanity and the world. Indicators of irony observable in *Rozmowa XXV* constitute the reason why the scholar chose texts that represent a well-described genre.¹⁰ The addendum devoted to Norwid largely serves, as one may presume, to confirm that violation of traditional genre norms was characteristic for poets of the greatest stature. Since it is impossible to compare his works, e.g. *Vendôme, Do – Henryka, Rozmowa umarłych* [To Henryk,

⁸ R. DOKTÓR, *Poeta uśmiechnięty. O wyobraźni komicznej Ignacego Krasickiego*, Wrocław 1992.

⁹ See: T. KOSTKIEWICZOWA, *Krasicki – perspektywy badań twórczości*, pp. 295-296.

¹⁰ A. ZIOŁOWICZ, *Poszukiwanie wspólnoty. Estetyka dramatyczności a więź międzyludzka w literaturze polskiego romantyzmu (preliminaria)*, Kraków 2011.

Conversation of the Dead], with *Rozmowy* by Ignacy Krasicki – as discussed by Agnieszka Ziółowicz in the absorbing book *Romantycy na Polach Elizejskich [Romantics in the Elysian Fields]*¹¹ – let us only indicate here the thesis formulated by Agata Seweryn with regard to the mannerist means of “utilizing” the classicist poetics by Norwid. Also, in this case it was certainly a way to activate and stimulate readers, which is especially crucial in the context of a dialogic situation.

How is it possible to activate readers with the senile discourse of Adam Naruszewicz (p. 38)? As in the case of Krasicki, we deal here with a poet whose output is heterogeneous and unconventional, deserving to be called “protean as the changeable author who can don various poetic robes.”¹² The ode *Do poety starego [To an Elderly Poet]* thus becomes a pretext for justifying the claim that certain models of describing works by the Enlightenment masters need to be verified. Let us disregard here the questions – signalled by the author – regarding the place of this work in Naruszewicz’s oeuvre and the popularity (greater or lesser) of the topic of old age in literature throughout history. One should rather note that the author attempts to indicate mechanisms governing the piece’s poetic tone, and more precisely – to argue that also the text by Naruszewicz features heterogeneity as the dominant aspect of the poet’s style. The author clearly emphasises – both in the first essay and in this one – the importance of an intra-genre dynamic. She is moved by the “simultaneity of poetic tones” and the frequently “clashing forces” that may surprise one when encountered in a single poem, thus evading any attempts at generalization. For example, she writes: “Upon close reading and set against the backdrop of its cultural context of addressing old age, this seemingly simple and conventional work fascinates with its contradictions, dissonances, and ambiguities. It is both memorable and capable of synthesizing themes often tackled by historians and theoreticians of literature: that irony can be a mask of melancholy, while the rhetorical character of a given piece does not preclude its lyricism” (p. 57).

There is one more essay that corresponds to the first two, highlighting a certain area of research that is characteristic for the discussed book – it is titled *Genus iudicale i frenesja. Tradycje ‘Głosu zabitego do sądu’ Franciszka Karpińskiego [Genus Iudicale and Frenesis. The Tradition of “What the Dead Man Told the Court” by Franciszek Karpiński]*. The background of this work and the moment when it was “released” to the public constitute an important point of reference for the author. Let us also note that this is not the first time when knowledge of extra-literary contexts is considered a necessary precondition for a successful re-reading. However, even this aspect appears secondary in comparison with the

¹¹ Ibid., s. 212.

¹² See: T. KOSTKIEWICZOWA, *Krasicki – perspektywy badań twórczości*, p. 372.

justification of the poem's uniqueness (just like in preceding essays), which is rooted in its complex poetics. Thus, the point is to revise the claim that, whenever we consider Karpiński, we encounter a "poet of soft, subdued tones, harmonised moods, and delicate turns" (p. 83).¹³ As Agata Seweryn notes, "[...] it is the tension between the old and the new, between convention and its violation, between rhetorical utilitarianism and lyric expression, that constitutes one of the most compelling aspects of the poem 'Głos zabitego do sądu'" (p. 91). The poem is also marked by its pre-ballad-like character, buried under the terrifying spirit world and ghosts, which justifies possible comparisons with Mickiewicz. This subject is certainly not new but always worth commenting on. To recapitulate, all three texts share the theme of overcoming poetic conventions and rhetorical devices known from many texts representative of the Enlightenment. Subverting rules and veering from norms are supposed to testify about the innovative character of works chosen by the author, which can thus gain the status of pre-Romantic ones.

The essays *Z Mozartem w tle* [*With Mozart in the Background*] and *Cyganie sentymentalni i romantyczni* share the musical character of their major themes. Both texts refer to opera works, but reasons behind these references are twofold. "Pieśń śpiewana na obiedzie w Sielcach pod Łazienkami dnia 7 września 1788 roku" by Stanisław Trembecki is an occasional poem written to celebrate the twenty-fourth anniversary of the election of King Stanisław August. The second text is a libretto to the two-act opera *Jawnuta* by Stanisław Moniuszko, staged for the first time in Warsaw on 5 June 1860 in Teatr Wielki. The author consistently advises re-reading also in their case, attempting to demonstrate that the "highly conventional" (p. 66) text by Trembecki is not – as Edmund Rabowicz would have it – a tendentious work. The poet is not trying to convince anyone to declare war on Turkey; on the contrary, he argues for peace and family bliss under the reign of a splendid king. This image is supplemented by the fact that Trembecki's *Pieśń* would be sung to the melody of the aria *Non più andrai*, which remains to this day (just like Mozart's entire opera *The Marriage of Figaro*) one of the most well-known and beloved arias in the world. Mickiewicz also cherished it and mentioned on many occasions, which only confirms its longevity and popularity throughout history. Mozart's aria constitutes – the author claims – a detail of great significance because it justifies questions about the rococo joke in Trembecki's poem or about the poet possibly hiding a grudge against the monarch, who not only failed to reward him with a profitable position or a diplomatic function, but also diminished his status by assigning him the task of writing an occasional poem. I would argue, however, that the most apt point is that "Trembecki would take advantage of the right to have any

¹³ Quoted here, just like Seweryn does, after: Tomasz Chachulski, *Franciszek Karpiński*, Warszawa 1998.

musical associations whatsoever” (pp. 78-79). It does not seem justified to interpret this detail from the perspective of the theory of recontextualization or interdisciplinary comparative studies. The fact that the poem was sung to the melody of the aria *Non più andrai* simply confirms the latter’s popularity. It would be difficult to read the words “Niech cię nasze uczczą usta, / Dniu rozkoszny, dniu szczęśliwy, / Któryś na tron wniósł Augusta / I z nim gałązkę oliwy” [Let our lips praise you, / Our lovely, happy day, / When August was placed on the throne / Along with an olive branch] and identify in them a different intention than an apologetic one expressed by a poet who was dear to the monarch. The popular melody could help to quickly accustom the audience to the poem, perhaps even inspiring them, through its energy, to joyously perform it together.

The second musical theme regards Moniuszko’s approach to tradition and its creative use, which makes it possible to draw a certain analogy. Activating contextual associations and reaching out to musical studies on the subject, Agata Seweryn proposes to regard *Jawnuta* as a specific patchwork made by many authors, which is possible to study from the angle of hypertextuality. Still, would the interpretation become more appealing by applying the concepts of hypotext and hypertext, as developed by Genette?¹⁴ It seems that, in practical terms, the author is closer to more traditional studies in the vein of, say, Waław Borowy, who developed a theory of influences and dependencies in literature. They could be also well served by analyses focusing on history and culture, anthropology, musicology, or philology. The panoramic yet brief account of Gypsy’s theme, or more broadly – of Roma culture in Polish literature – and the attempt to shed light on the changes that the work underwent before the final version of the libretto to Moniuszko’s opera was settled clearly confirm this, though these goals are probably not fully realized. Nevertheless, they appear to constitute the most interesting ambition in this text, immediately indicating other possible topics to reflect on, e.g. the use of Roma themes in the opera by Moniuszko and in *Manru* by Ignacy Jan Paderewski (the author does not mention the latter), which would be certainly supported by studies already conducted by musicologists on the paths of development taken by Polish opera in the nineteenth century and at the turn of the twentieth, also accounting for the relation between Moniuszko and Paderewski. We also have at our disposal reliable models of combining literary studies with broadly understood music studies, e.g. the book by Małgorzata Sokalska titled *O inspiracjach operowych w „Irydionie” Zygmunta Krasińskiego* [*Operatic Inspirations in Zygmunt Krasiński’s “Irydion”*].

III

¹⁴ Although the author only uses the term hypertextuality, it seems obvious that she is familiar with the fundamental terms in Genette’s theory, hence the adoption of this specific phrase.

The impulse to search for those places in the text that have so far eluded critics yet are crucial to the understanding of a given piece – a task justified by scholarly ambitions of hermeneutic character – largely determines the approach taken in texts contained in the second part of the book, titled *Ikografie literackie* [*Literary Iconographs*]. The author focuses there solely on works of established status, which have a long history of interpretations, including many excellent ones that remain topical despite the passage of time and the many insights offered by subsequent generations of scholars. It therefore seems obvious that in most cases they enrich the context and only rarely lead to disputes. To repeat once again the view stated in the first paragraphs of this review, they are primarily meant to foreground the extent of the influence of baroque iconography, which shapes Seweryn's interpretation of Romantic works from *Świtez* [*The Nixie*] to *Agaj-Han*. Depending on the commented work we can discern either interest in isolated details or themes that motivate the adoption of a baroque perspective and field of reference, or the ambition to reread entire works from that angle, which can bear on many aspects of a given work.

In *'Homo bulla' w romantycznej nieskończoności* [*'Homo bulla' in Romantic Infinity*], the author discusses the complex symbolism of the sphere, basing on studies in the history of art (Cesare Ripa, Jan Białostocki, Beata Purc-Stepniak) and the history of literature. The painterly and literary contexts comprise a broad panorama of meanings, which have been explored with varying intensity, depending on the epoch and the prevailing artistic trends. Ultimately, they serve to pose questions about the legitimacy of interpretative limitations in readings of Romantic works, where the sphere is usually viewed as a predominantly positive symbol of infinity. Seweryn reminds us that Mickiewicz's ballad *Świtez* can be terrifying and unsettling, especially in moments when there is mention of "otchłań błękitu" [blue abyss] and a man trapped inside a glass ball. She attempts to demonstrate that "[...] the image from *Świtez*, when considered from the perspective of modern iconography, is ambiguous and unclear" (p. 140). The sphere is usually associated with the great Romantic theme of the infinity, developed in various ways and analysed in a plethora of studies, including fundamental works in the area by Zygmunt Łempicki, Ireneusz Opacki, Jadwiga Sokołowska, and later important discussions by Maria Janion, Mirosław Strzyżewski, Bogusław Dopart, and Marek Stanisław. What emerges from these studies is a unique and complex image of humanity and its relation with the world, nature, and cosmos. It is indeed true that there are "different infinities and different abysses" (p. 144), not only in works by Mickiewicz, but also in ones by Słowacki, Krasiński and Norwid. It would be worthwhile to further pursue the thesis that a closer inspection of this topic defi-

nitely reveals the “long-lasting influence of the baroque.” The author encourages research in this vein, making it clear that it would primarily aim to “[...] demonstrate the ‘figure’ or ‘convention’ of Romantic imagination as partaking in traditional iconographic representations. This concerns cultural dialogue, an unceasing dynamic fuelled not by polemics but by the use of established forms and their later reinterpretation” (p. 150). Her remarks and identification of baroque themes are thus meant, I would argue, to support the general goal of searching for points of contact between works by authors from different epochs, and defining the virtues of creative extraction of meanings. This would be confirmed by the diptych on Słowacki, where Seweryn elucidates the criteria of baroque works (after Rousset) and again indicates the strong inspiration of baroque instability, movement, metamorphosis and decorativeness (p. 161), which Słowacki employs with his own special creative flamboyance.¹⁵ Studies of baroque aspects of works by Słowacki have a long history, which includes books and articles by Claude Bacvis, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Alina Kowalczykova, Stefan Nieznanowski, Antoni Czyż, and others. These works constitute a vital point of reference for Seweryn, who notes that the 1839 work *W Szwajcarii* [*In Switzerland*] can lose its Romantic status when read from the perspective of the sentimental tradition. Abounding in themes connected with illusion and water, it appears to be a sophisticated yet unconventional work that draws on baroque emblems yet wilfully renounces the clarity of this tradition. It seems entirely justified to regard the garden and even the outfit of the poem’s heroine from a “baroque perspective” and verify their character from the angle of vanity-related themes identified in this work. This view is also motivated by the fact that it remains within the confines of scholarly reflection about the roots of Słowacki’s poetic imagination, which reach down deep into the seventeenth century. This also facilitates distancing oneself further from the usefulness of biographical explanations that have been often employed in interpretations of the poem, in particular recalling his 1834 Swiss excursion in the company of the Wodziński family, including the young Maria.

Negative connotations are also identified by the author with regard to the theme of crickets, which was often used in the Romantic period alongside other insect-related motifs, also by Słowacki. A natural context for such considerations is offered for example by Antoni Malczewski’s *Maria*. One passage from it, which features the *vermes* theme of insects in a blossoming flower, is one of

¹⁵ This is probably the most widely discussed question related to Słowacki’s works, one that continues to draw the attention of scholars. The author herself indicates the many commentaries on this topic, which today constitute the canon of subject literature in this area: books by C. Bacvis, A. Kowalczykova, J.M. Rymkiewicz, S. Nieznanowski, M. Bieńczyk, D. Siwicka, K. Ziemia, Z. Przychodniak, etc.

the poem's most widely commented elements. As the author rightly notes, it has numerous representations, especially in baroque iconography and literature, where its sources should be traced. Słowacki's crickets are thus not just garden or veranda singers, who while away the time with their song, but can also be rhapsodists standing guard at tombs and coffins. They represent the unfathomable depths of the organic world, occupying cracks in walls and floors. Just like spiders, grubs and mice, they make sounds that "storm the brain." The ambivalence of meanings carried by the theme of crickets can be also noted in many other works by this poet, especially in *Król-Duch* [*King-Spirit*] (Rhapsody III), where this motif is included in reflections on the changeable character of the lyrical subject in works by Słowacki. This is served well by the exposition of the theme of house as a space associated with family, the landscapes and vicinities dear to the poet, and the "ziemiątek" [corner-of-earth] that one longs for the most when dying. "Crickets singing in houses-tombs tell us something important about the subject in texts by Słowacki" (p. 194). His lyrical subject is dynamic and depends on events that determine his psyche, which matures with every experience and becomes more aware of the passage of time and the brittleness of temporal existence.

The last, concluding essay in Seweryn's book (and also the longest) is devoted to the novel by Zygmunt Krasiński. Pseudo-Romanticism (Juliusz Kleiner's term) is replaced here with a baroque character, which the author identifies in descriptions dominated by images of numerous corpses, copious amounts of blood, massacred bodies, and ubiquitous death. According to the scholar, Krasiński's predilection for the baroque emerges clearly in his imagery, which is underpinned with the themes of life as a struggle, or life as a futile battle (p. 208). As Seweryn writes, "it is possible to discern consonance between the frenetic imagination of the Romantic poet and the baroque exuberance – this is its root, its 'chleb macierzysty' [bread matter] [...]" (p. 208). Arguments supporting this thesis sound interesting and lend greater depth to general topics such as Krasiński's fascination with death, its theatricalization and aestheticization, the Romantic myth of the Orient, and Old Polish egotism in nineteenth-century form. The author does not shy away from superimposing a baroque key on all aspects of the work. The main protagonist as well as Zarucki and Maryna are also regarded from this perspective, becoming grotesque in their distinctiveness, and as such simultaneously confirm the truth about the changeability and disharmony of human nature. They are torn with emotions and the unfulfilled desires of body and soul. *Agaj-Han* is like a peacock or a snake undergoing metamorphosis. Maryna approximates Kirke and Armida, at the same time being a holy and good Polish woman who advocates Christian faith among pagans. Krasiński piles up dissonances, not only employing baroque imagery and developing characters on the basis of oppositions, but

also doing so at the level of language, which may appear as leading to expressive excessiveness, especially with regard to metaphors connected with failure, ruins, lurking death, animal instincts, etc. In my own view, using the baroque key helps to realize the ambition to re-evaluate the work, which was regarded even by the author himself as minor, juvenile, and not the best exemplification of his talents.

Knowledge of all essays by Seweryn gathered under the title *Pomiędzy światami* allows me to formulate the following conclusion: in her scholarly practice the author seeks the kinds of places in literary works that could serve as pretext to re-read even ones that have been frequently commented upon by historians of literature. With respect to Enlightenment works, she is particularly drawn to ones that signal their complexity in inconspicuous ways, departing from the period's poetic standards. Thus, it appears that the most fascinating poems are ones that specifically herald future changes in poetics, foreshadowing the arrival of Romanticism. In these specific cases, poetry can be regarded as an example of particularly sensitive matter that is imprinted with the deep desire to ceaselessly overcome genre boundaries. Fatigue can often act as an impulse to transform and change. However, this kind of poetry not only contains traces of renouncing certain patterns, but also confirms, through innovative references and dialogic character, that human self-consciousness is increasing. Seweryn focuses mainly on two directions: the former could be provisionally called "the inclination of the Enlightenment towards Romanticism," while the latter – "the immersion of Romanticism in the depths of the baroque." This general conclusion allows me to regard this publication as representative of broadly conceived literary studies in correlations between epochs, which would confirm the old thesis by Julian Krzyżanowski regarding the alternating character of literary epochs, with strong parallels existing between antiquity and the Renaissance, baroque and Romanticism, etc. One strain of such research can be found in synthetic accounts produced by Henryk Markiewicz, especially in *Dialogi z tradycją*¹⁶ [*Dialogues with Tradition*]. One also needs to recall in this context the works by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa¹⁷, Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa, and Jerzy Pelc.¹⁸ A temporally continuous literary tradition seems to offer an immensely important perspective that introduces order, but fortunately it does not rule out different perspectives. In contrast

¹⁶ H. MARKIEWICZ, *Literatura polskiego Oświecenia w opiniach doby romantyzmu czy Pozytywiści polscy wobec tradycji oświecenia*, [in:], IDEM *Dialogi z tradycją*, Kraków 2007.

¹⁷ T. KOSTKIEWICZOWA, *Oświecenie a barok: miejsca wspólne, miejsca różne*, [in:] IDEM, *Z oddali i z bliska. Studia o wieku Oświecenia*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 179-214.

¹⁸ P. BUCHWALD-PELCOWA, J. PELC, *Kontynuacje i tradycje baroku i sarmatyzmu*, [in:] *Między oświeceniem a romantyzmem. Kultura polska około 1800 roku*, eds. J. Z. Lichański, B. Schulze, H. Rothe, Warszawa 1977, pp. 9-22.

to linear accounts of tradition and causation, it is possible to identify the necessity to regard the literary universe – more often than usual – from an atemporal perspective, abandoning arbitrary discipline. Perhaps the world of tradition is one of a glass sphere, in which every scholarly gesture can evoke an entirely different poetic garden?

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S u m m a r y

The article reviews Agata Seweryn’s book titled *Between the Worlds. Studies in the Literature of the Enlightenment and Romanticism*, accounting for the composition of the book, examining research problems raised in it in greater detail, and discussing essays included in the publication as supplementing existing interpretations of selected Romantic works. Seweryn is argued to draw attention to those aspects that reveal the richness inherent in the discussed works, which are demonstrated as not having been exhausted yet. These works are analysed in the reviewed book by pursuing references to the baroque tradition, or by reflecting on their relationship with normative poetics and rhetoric.

Keywords: baroque; mannerism; Enlightenment; Romanticism; Romantic irony; the nineteenth century; literary tradition; grotesque; infinity.

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