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Romantics Plotted on Maps

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Marta Zielińska

Romantics Plotted on Maps

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Our essays are dedicated to Professor Alina Witkowska, a pre-eminent scholar and head of the Institute of Literary Research and the Romantics Bureau, who has led both institutions with word and deed for many years, on her 80th birthday.

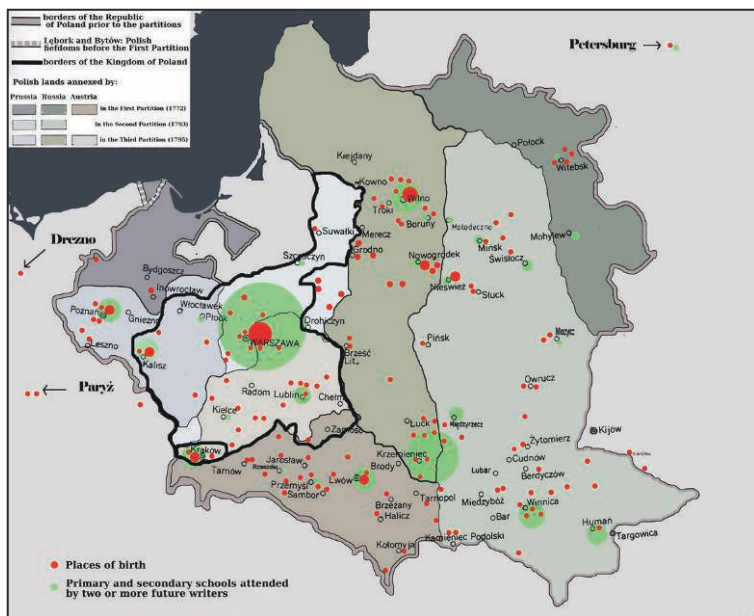
The first map I ever designed was supposed to plot the places of birth and death of Polish Romantics. I instinctively believed that this would allow me to portray the unnaturally long distances separating the starting and ending points of that literary movement. Initially, I assumed that the map would span the entire era and include the most important authors working in Poland (worked out with the help of *Obraz literatury*) and those who decided on emigration. The preliminary list did not include, save for a couple of exceptions, any essayists, historians, and philosophers, that is authors whose output did not include works of fiction. I quickly concluded that charting the fates of all the writers on a single map would only introduce unnecessary confusion in examining that emigration that occurred after the November Uprising, thus the decision to divide the single map into separate charts for each generation. Although it is generally as-

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sumed that three generations make up the Romantic movement, I decided to divide the era into only two generations: one comprising of authors born between 1795 and 1815, the other made up of authors born between 1816 and 1835. Thus, the first generation would encompass everyone that could have participated in the insurrection (with the younger ones obviously providing lesser numbers).

The selection of the background map proved to be another problem as borders across the lands of the former Republic of Poland changed repeatedly between 1795 and 1815. Ultimately, the map I went with was a depiction of pre-partition Poland, with post-partition borders and post-1815 Kingdom of Poland borders marked on it as well. This choice also forced me to mark the places of death, spread all over Europe and a couple of non-European countries, on separate maps; doing otherwise would have only confounded the overall picture I was trying to paint.





Map 4.

Maps drawn up according to these criteria have revealed that, contrary to my intuition, the percentage of first generation writers who died beyond Polish borders is not all that high. Those who lived to old age often decided to return to their homeland, either under amnesty or by making Galicia their new home. Out of 119 writers, only 22% died abroad, 6% in Russia (3% in Saint Petersburg and the rest in exile).

As a result of this discovery, I decided to expand my preliminary list by including all the people who contributed to the intellectual climate of the Romantic period with their works on philosophy, literary criticism, history and their journals and essays. Thus, my register, based on the records of *Nowy Korbut*, grew to 171 names in the first generation (with 52 additional names) and 102 names in the second generation (with 11 additional names). The group comprised of philosophers, essayists, and critics of the first generation turned out to be particularly interesting. Out of that entire group, only 26 people died in Poland, 25 died abroad, one in Russia, and not a single person died in exile. This distribution clearly indicates how important the group was to the overall intellectual landscape of that generation. Out of the entire second generation (102 people), 20 people died abroad (19 in Western Europe and one in Saint Petersburg).

The fact that the second generation counts only half the number people of the first is fairly striking. To illustrate the reasons behind this state of affairs, I decided to mark primary and secondary schools that the future writers attended on the birthplace maps. I did not include any universities as not all

of the authors on my list were graduates, and besides, their ability to receive primary and secondary education decided whether a student would attend university. Therefore, I focused my attention on those earlier level schools. The maps only feature schools attended by two or more people from my lists. In cases where one person attended multiple schools, all school locations were marked on a draft version of the map. Incidentally, it is interesting that in the first generation nearly all of the men attended schools (with Fredro being the exception), whereas only one of the writing women (Paulina Wilkońska) had any formal education. In the second generation, the percentage of formally educated women was much higher.

In the end, I drew up four maps that comprise an image of the entire era. Two of them mark the locations where authors were born and schooled, the remaining two the locations of their death. The maps can be read in a multitude of different ways and I do not really think that my work has exhausted them.

If we compare the birthplaces of the two generations (Maps 1 and 2), we will quickly see that the number of writers, especially those hailing from Lithuania and Belarus, that is the lands belonging to the Russian Partition, significantly fell between generations. For the first generation these lands were practically the cradle of Romanticism, whereas the second generation associated them primarily with the most severe political persecution. We can also observe the growing importance of Warsaw for the second generation. The first map indicates that the first generation clustered around cities with prominent education facilities (Kremenets, Vilnius, Vinnytsia, Uman), whereas on the second map nearly all of these centers are in steep decline (except for Warsaw and Galicia). Daniel Beauvois was right in stating that the groundwork for Romanticism was laid by the ideals of Enlightenment embodied in the fruits of the Commission of National Education's labors. The subsequent demise of the schools is primarily a result of the changes in Russian policy and enactment of much harsher measures of population control, a process that started already in 1815 and that culminated in 1831 with the disbandment of a large number of schools (for example, the staff of the disbanded Kremenets secondary school was transferred to Kiev where they laid the groundwork for the local university).

Sociological analysis is just one use of the maps. They are an illustration of authentic space in which the writers developed. Our task, in this case, would be to demonstrate whether the proportions between imagined space incorporated into Romantic literature reflect this particular state of affairs or contain any other dominants, dependent on imagery imposed on them by the Great Bards. The maps also show that Ukraine was very important to both generations, whereas Lithuania and the Nowogródek Region play a prominent role only for the first wave.

Other reflections can be gleaned from the maps plotting the places where the Romantic writers died (Maps 3 and 4). Aside from emigration, which we have already discussed, we should take note of the fact that in the first generation, only seven people died beyond the borders of Europe.

Another noticeable tendency in both waves of writers is the role of cities as places of final settlement. The first generation map features numerous cities: Warsaw, Krakow, Paris, Lviv, Poznań and Rome; the second wave map is more scarce: there is just Warsaw, Krakow, Lviv and Paris.

All four maps also demonstrate the continuously rising significance of Warsaw as a birthplace and center of schooling and literary pursuits. The opposite tendency, however, can be observed for the countryside.

One other surprising fact on these maps is the relatively low number of people who died in exile. This is proof of the fact that the writers who were sentenced to exile by Czarist authorities either returned to their homeland after serving out their sentence or managed to emigrate. That, however, was not always the case, as evidenced by Wiktoria Śliwowska's *Słownik zesłańców* [*The Deportee Index*]. The fact that there were not that many writers among the total number of deported Poles who died in exile is significant. The same holds true for emigration. The writers simply were not the largest group among the deportees. Although they were highly visible and set the tone of the era, their biographies are not an adequate reflection of the fates suffered by the Polish community.

On the other hand, my maps still do not depict everything I would like them to. I should supplement them with at least another one that will depict emigration and settlement (voluntary or otherwise) of the Polish literary community in Russia.

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