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“What Does This Instinct Want, What Do I Want Actually?”.

The Affective Dimensions of Witold Gombrowicz’s Short Stories

Summary

The doctoral dissertation investigates selected short stories by Witold Gombrowicz from the perspective of the affective turn in the humanities. The starting point and the main area of analysis are short stories from the collections *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity* and *Bacacay*; however, they are supplemented by an analysis of other selected texts and threads related to the writer's stay in Argentina.

Affect is defined as Deleuzian at its source – and redefined by Brian Massumi – "intensity" visible in the relationship between the characters, the narrator, and the reader. Contrary to emotions, which are stabilized socially and linguistically, affects are often primary; outside the language; they belong to the realm of potentiality and "intensity" realized between bodies, situated on the border between what is representable and what is impossible to represent. This intensity, at the level of individual emotions – such as disgust, shame, anger, or pride – I define, among others, in relation to the theories of researchers such as Julia Kristeva, Mary Douglas, Sara Ahmed, Martha C. Nussbaum, Chantal Mouffe, and Silvain Tomkins. At the same time, I treat affect in an interdisciplinary way: not as a homogeneous term, but as a kind of broad concept that combines the elements of literary, philosophical, sociological, and psychological studies. I define affect in Gombrowicz's prose as all literary representations of experiences related to emotions and senses; deliberate, provocative, and deconstructive breaking of the rules, but also the way how the text itself functions towards the reader. It is a strong emotional "trembling", a way of constructing a narrative based on Deleuze's "logic of sensation"; the possibility of constantly escaping established interpretations, being in constant motion.

The first and second chapters of the work are devoted to the experience of disgust, interpreted both as an individual (in the analysis of *Memoir of Stefan Czarniecki*, *Adventures* and *The Events on the Banbury*) and social (in *Dinner at Countess Pavahoke's* and *On the Kitchen Steps*) phenomenon. Disgust is, without doubt, the foundation of Gombrowicz's anthropology and

epistemology; one of the most primal experiences; it is also a frequently used aesthetic category that allows for an in-depth description of the mechanisms of interactions between the characters and the world. Each time aversion is lined with fascination, constructing the experience that forms the ontological status of the characters and prompts reflection on the instability of the opposition between nature and culture. Disgust is also becoming one of the strategies for shaping the categories of subjectivity and corporeality, the subject of constant transgression and disintegration. The third chapter deals with the relationship between anger, pride, and shame. Throughout his work, the author of *The Diary* constantly fights various kinds of duels and constructs spontaneous responses to polemics. Gombrowicz also presents numerous images of characters driven by anger and resentment. For the writer, anger is – like pride and shame – one of the basic strategies of literary expression. It takes various forms and shades: from subtle irony, through irritation, to strong rage. These feelings have both an individual and a social dimension: anger most often begins with the individual, but its effects are ultimately "transmitted" to the entire community (like in short stories: *A Premeditated Crime*, *Pampelan on the Tube*, and fragments of *The Diary* and *Trans-Atlantic*). The fourth chapter of the work is devoted to the experience of love (written with a question mark) and presents an analysis of *Lawyer Kraykowski's Dancer* and *Virginity*. For Gombrowicz, literature seems to resemble Roland Barthes' "proposition": a challenge, but also a confession addressed directly to the reader. However, this is a paradoxical confession: Gombrowicz's own "inability to love", still resonating in his narrative, is already linked in the texts and the comments surrounding them with the desire for recognition: the will to be loved, the desire for uniqueness and individuality. The last part of the work deals with the affective perception of the writer's work in Argentina: it analyses *Wandering around Argentina*, fragments of *The Diary*, and cultural issues related to the reception of the writer's work overseas.

In this approach, Gombrowicz appears as a writer constantly oscillating between the intellect and the affect: seeing the essence of his philosophy of creativity in being "in-between". For the author of *The Diary*, affect seems to be a "force of life", while the intellect is a way to even greater accuracy of judgments and the effectiveness of the provocation it carries.