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*FATHERS LOVE TO TORTURE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC
READING OF MARIA KOMORNICKA'S FAIRYTALE
"O OJCU I CÓRCIE" AND ZOFIA NAŁKOWSKA'S
SHORT STORY "ZIELONE WYBRZEŻE"*¹

The present paper sets out to scrutinize the nature of "bad love" – love inseparably connected with suffering and death – in Maria Komornicka's fairytale "O ojcu i córce" ("On the Father and his Daughter", 1900) and Zofia Nałkowska's short story "Zielone wybrzeże" ("Green Shore", 1909), in order to retrace its correspondence with the psychoanalytic theories. In the two texts under study, the feelings of (sexual) pleasure, satisfaction and affection, continually intertwine with the painful experiences of overwhelming unhappiness, alienation, and loss. Thus love is impossible, (self)destructive, obsessive, abusive and tyrannical. The love-death association in the works of both Komornicka and Nałkowska corresponds with the ideas on destruction formulated by the forgotten Russian psychoanalyst, Sabina Spielrein, and the later theory of the death instinct proposed by Sigmund Freud. The unacknowledged theories of Spielrein will be the basis of the present analysis.

The intention of this essay is to analyze the two Polish literary texts, which have been marginalized by publishers, critics and readers, yet they deserve recognition from English-speaking readers and the critical community. Although the scandal-prone Maria Komornicka recently became a subject of intense, mostly feminist, critique, her "On the Father and his Daughter" remained outside the mainstream. Similarly, "Green Shore" belongs to Zofia Nałkowska's – largely forgotten – Modernist period of writing. Nevertheless, dubbed by her contemporaries "the first lady of Polish literature," the second author considered in this paper, Nałkowska, remains today a prominent novelist valued for her Interwar and Post-war texts, especially "Medallions." She is one of the mainstays of Polish women's writing.

Additionally, this paper offers a comparative interrogation of "On the Father and his Daughter" and "Green Shore." Despite the fact that these two texts exhibit evident similarities, they have not yet been analyzed in a comparative manner.

Similarly, the texts, which call for a much-needed new reading from the point of view of pre-Freudian and Freudian psychoanalysis, have not been investigated in this perspective to date. This will be done through an analysis of the theme of Eros and Thanatos, which appears pervasively in the works of

1. This essay is an extract from my unpublished Ph.D. thesis "The Living Mirror: The Representation of Doubling Identities in the British and Polish Women's Literature (1846-1938)," defended at the University of Edinburgh.