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*Primacy of style as harbinger of liberation of form in modern camp literature. From Sand-Flaubert-Colet correspondence*

Researchers point out several sources of camp, which leads to heterogenous development of this term, which – even nowadays – is subject to cognitive confusion because of these factors. The most solidified and dominant version is the esthetic vision of Susan Sontag, who described camp as a „sensitivity which perceives the world as an esthetic phenomenon”. Przemysław Czapliński in his text „Gry antropologiczne” („Anthropological games”) identify two key turns in the history of modern camp: Oscar Wilde's trial in 1885 and the publication of Susan Sontag's „Notes on camp” in 1964. The author is quite critical to Sontag's gesture, which – according to him – by moving the definition of camp towards esthetic contexts, took away the subversive meaning of camp and ultimately tore it off its queer basis. Czapliński reminds that camp was created as expression of homosexual identity - „in face of sharp oppression – legal, medical, societal, it was formed as a tactic of dealing with persecution through secret exposure of stigmatised identity”. The criticism of „Notes”, which in academic circles was adequate to the fame this text brought Sontag, touched many aspects – it for example concentrated on Sontag's gesture of freely giving away camp to popular culture and middle class (critics and scholars also emphasised the arbitrary and somewhat performative character of Sontag's text).

Still modern camp practices show that it cannot be torn off its source or tradition. The interception of this term by Sontag was partial and ephemeral. It didn't destroy the critical potential of camp or weaken the impulse for social change, which always accompanied it. Camp practices are quite like „waves” of feminism: they function simultaneously, among tensions and arguments – also generational and political ones. In the areas of visual arts or literature, on stage (drag queens or other performative activities) or in social practices – different kinds of camp coexist, and their morphology is determined by origin.

Mark Booth, author of the first publication about the history of camp (the book was printed in 1983), identified several sources of camp, pointing out to decadent phenomena in ancient Rome, mannerism of French court culture in the period of Louis XIV, in dandism of Regency period, fin de siècle esthetism or 1950s pop art. Anyway, Booth is worth reading also because, in his reception and analysis, he returned the dynamic of social resistance to camp: he regarded it – in opposition to Sontag – as a sociological, and not „merely” esthetic phenomenon. Czapliński

in „Anthropological games” justly notes that, according to researchers after Sontag, camp is an attachable category, which means that it „can be attached to any cultural form, and the result is a culturally valuable tension”. Nevertheless, modern camp practices show that there are whole periods of phenomena in history of art and literature, which are particularly susceptible to being camped. Beside examples mentioned by Booth, such as dandism or mannerism, interesting examples can be found in baroque or modernism, which have become particularly inspiring for artists. In the Polish context, modernism was camped by the most influential poets, such as Andrzej Sosnowski or Tadeusz Pióro. Tracing their camp practices, which have their source in European modernism, is crucial for two reasons: because this category was mostly ignored in reception of Polish poetry in general, and because their poetic idioms were most influential: they deeply transformed modern Polish poetry. The beginning of this process is usually recognised in the publication of the famous „blue”, New York issue of „Literatura na Świecie” („Literature in the World”, Polish monthly devoted to foreign literature), where translations of poets from the so-called New York group were printed. These translations – then and later – were done by poets such as Andrzej Sosnowski, Piotr Sommer, Tadeusz Pióro or Bohdan Zadura.

It is meaningful for our analysis that Sosnowski chose a fragment of Gustave Flaubert's „Sentimental Education” as epigraph for his book „Po tęczy” („After the rainbow”): „Quarries were becoming more numerous, until they filled the whole landscape – house-like cubes, smooth as slabs, resting on one another, stacked and jumbled, they resembled unrecognisable enormous ruins of some lost city. Still the very fury of their chaos suggested rather volcanoes, floods, great unknown disasters. Frederic said that they had been here from the beginning of the world and will remain until the end. Rosanette said that »she would soon go crazy« and went to pick heather. Small lilac flowers, nestling to one another, created spots of unequal size, and beneath them, spilling soil formed a black fringe along the edge of sand sparkling with mica”.

Sosnowski recognises camp in this piece of prose. It is crucial, because camp is relational, it originates in the eye of the beholder (the temporal aspect of this intertextual dialogue is meaningful as well: a 21<sup>st</sup>-century author notices camp potential in literature from over a century back). Wioletta Kaźmierska-Jerzy, in her monography „Kamp, glamour, vintage. Współczesne kategorie estetyczne” („Camp, glamour, vintage. Modern esthetic categories”) emphasises this important interdependence: camp resonates well with the past, passage of time implies a change of context in which a work of art is interpreted and can facilitate a camp perspective.

The fragment from „Sentimental Education” which was quoted and used as epigraph, and Sosnowski's poems, are in a camp-like tension to each other: a passage from the novel, intermediated by quotation, put in relation to Sosnowski's poetics, gains a camp character and also camps Sosnowski's poetic project. The special status of an epigraph is worth noticing: it not only gives a certain perspective to the text, but is also meant to constantly accompany it, to cast a light on it in a way.

Flaubert is indeed an author which can be camped particularly easily. Or rather: his literature is particularly fertile in this respect and forms a favourable substratum for this third (after classic and avantgarde) great type of sensitivity in history of art. Camp, as a category which is weakly grounded in theoretic and esthetic discourse, also relational and arbitrary to some extent (Wioletta Kaźmierska-Jerzyk refers to intuitions related to the term's blurred character in this way: „It is something exceptional, something which anyway cannot be understood, only felt. But this feeling, in turn, will never be the same as for other people”), is particularly susceptible to misuse. And still we realise very well what is not camp (as a sidenote, a phenomenon which Piotr Sobolczyk identifies as unintentional camp is worth mentioning: according to Sobolczyk, Adam Zagajewski in his poetry camps unknowingly).

An analysis of letters in which Flaubert describes not only his own literary technique and his idea of a perfect novel, but also refers to contemporary objections to „Madame Bovary” and „Sentimental Education” - easily reveal affinities to camp or even allows considering the author a forerunner of one of the „lines” of camp. Flaubert, in his letters to his friend George Sand and lover Louise Colet proposed a novel which would – in my opinion – resemble the structure of Sosnowski's poems.

In one of his letters to Colet he wrote: „What seems beautiful to me, what I would like to create, is a book about nothing, a book without any internal support, which would only be integrated by the internal power of style, a book resembling the globe, which hangs in mid-air despite not being held by anything, a book almost devoid of a topic, or with an almost imperceptible topic, if it is feasible”. „One should read, reflect, keep remembering about style and write as little as possible, allowing it only when a thought nags us, bothers us and keeps demanding a form until we find one which is close, precise and adequate enough”. (...) „This is why there are no beautiful or no repulsive topics, we could in fact accept it as an axiom on the foundation of pure Art, that there are no topics whatsoever, and style remains the only absolute way of regarding things”. (...) „I would need a whole book to develop these ideas. I will write about it when I grow old and have nothing better to do”.

As we know, Flaubert neither grew old, nor wrote a theoretic book about style or the pretextuality of plot, but he developed his ideas about this topic in her correspondence with George Sand. Flaubert's reflection on the boundary of philosophy and literature was progressive and modern, it heralded camp emancipation of style, a radical departure from plot, a kind of esthetism, which became a radical gesture when it raised barriers or broke off communication with the reader through deconstruction or total atrophy of plot. Flaubert realised it perfectly well.

In one of her letters, George Sand wrote: „I have heard you declare once: I only write for ten or twelve readers”. Still, other letters by Flaubert show that he felt hurt by being misunderstood by critics and rejected by readers. Arguments used at that time are surprisingly close to those used nowadays by unfavourable readers of Sosnowski. I will quote a fragment from a review published by the user Bosy\_Antek at the portal LubimyCzytać.pl („WeEnjoyReading.pl”): „What does it say about anything? NOTHING. Only a void game remains. Jugglery of a poetry so in love with itself that it doesn't even suspect it's gibbering, it's not controlled by anything, it has no chance of reaching anyone. It is in fact not useful to anyone except those which will keep telling others (and getting paid for it, of course!) that this is unique and great literature. But it isn't! This is poetry of empty picturesque gestures. A videoclip without music. Horseback acrobatics in absence of a horse”. Flaubert, too, was accused of forming his prose of nothing but „juxtaposed pretty pictures” or „lovely sentences”.

Another quote which can be considered cognitively meaningful in the context of camp is found in one of Sand's letters, in which she points out certain „superficiality” of Flaubert's writing (camp is also defined as an oscillation between the anthropology of depth and surface): „It seems to me that your school doesn't care about the essence and, in turn, only concentrates on the surface. While it is busy looking for a form, it ignores content too much. It is written for intellectuals. But nobody is only an intellectual. We are, first of all, human beings”.

The influence of Flaubert's reflections is verified, for example, by fragments of Zofia Nałkowska's diaries. As Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska points out, Nałkowska probably started reading Flaubert's novels under the influence of these letters. In 1915 she notes in her diary: „G. Flaubert: Lettres à George Sand. I have been chasing this book for a long time and finally managed to find it. (...) What amazing good it is to get in closer contact with the psyche of this titan of creativity. (...) Realising how much he struggled and duelled with the world of books and people gives me a sense of power and comfort. His thoughts and stances leave me in admiration. (...) Just as the sweetness of being able to communicate with a chosen few about

creativity and artism. Sand, as his chosen friend, gained a lot in my eyes". Nowadays this correspondence is cited as current literary point of reference for example by Darek Foks, an author also familiar to camp-like artistic strategies. Although, in this case camp draws from sources other than modernism, such as American pop culture, particularly film noir.

Flaubert needed an interlocutor as inquisitive as George Sand to express and fully define his views about literature. Their views were built in a discursive way, during substantial arguments. Sand's recommendations about plot or the „moral" value of a novel only deepened Flaubert's radicalism. Their esthetic argument concerned fundamental issues and was regarded by some scholars as a generational argument. Sand emphasised several times how important she considered social function of literature and the author's approach to their own protagonists.

A sidenote, but also a cognitively interesting context of our reflections can be seen in the fact that this kind of literary longing for a liberation of style and attempts to create this kind of literature(s) were described by the Turkish Nobel prize winner Orhan Pamuk in his 2010 essay „Naive and sentimental writer". In reference to Schiller's reflections, Pamuk describes the process of reading as looking for a „centre" of the novel. Familiar scenarios and cultural competence allow readers to try to identify the meaning of the novel, try to grasp its main idea. At the same time they get to know the protagonists and follow the plot, tightening an intimate bond with the text. However, „when the novel achieves this level of complexity and sophistication, not the subject, but the form takes the place of the main object of interest". In other words, it is style which becomes this central point. This is the case of Flaubert and this is one of the peculiar characters of his prose recognised by Sosnowski. And this is, also, what Colet considered the reason for „Sentimental Education"'s disfavourable reception.