
Krzysztof Trzyb u ś – YOUNG POLAND,
EVERYDAY LIFE AND NORWID

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The book by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn entitled *Rok 1894 oraz inne szkice o Młodej Polsce* [The Year 1894 and Other Sketches on Young Poland] (Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2013) is a seminal publication that is consistently composed as a whole, in both the genre and thematic sense – the sketches it comprises refer to the key problems of the period of Polish modernism. All of them, without exception, confirm the researcher’s maturity and are a convincing testimony to his own individual style that is subordinated to the programmatic need of practicing literary history. The individual stature of the researcher is revealed in the self-presentation of his research activity in the *Introduction*, which seeks a very interesting justification for the choice of “historico-literary sketch” as a form of expression based on the worldview and aesthetic preferences of Young Poland writers who were convinced – as Poreb owicz quoted here – on “the superiority of sketch over a carefully polished work” (p. 15).

The book includes sketches, among others, on the works by Władysław Reymont (the author discusses *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry* against the background of the positivist dispute about the value of “pious wandering”) and Jan Kaspr owicz (*Akordy jesienne*, *Hymny*, love letters), on the concept of Stanisław Wyspiański’s drama and theatre, and on the aesthetic views of Aleksander Wat (a sketch bearing the subtitle *Baudelaire o Watowskim “Piecycyku”*), the paintings by Jan Topass, as well as on the poetry of Aleksander Szczęsny.

Initial sketches, including the title one *Year 1894*, are devoted to the problem of caesura which determines – as the author puts it – the proper beginning of Young Poland. The last sketch on the relationship between works by Baudelaire and Wat poses questions about the logic of the end of modernism. The revision of the periodic boundaries is traditionally one of the most important activities in literary research, it determines the image of the period and the writing of its history, in accordance with the chronological rules and preference for diachronic approaches. Other sketches concern central problems in the aesthetics and worldview of Polish modernism – variation as a method of creating, gnosis and religious themes, the birth of everyday life in literature, the subject of death and love.

They all fit into the chronological sequence of literary events of modernism, tell the history of writers and their individual works as if “in sequence”, developing an outline of the panorama of the history of Young Poland literature. Is this, after the previous book by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn *Mała historia dandyzmu*¹, once again the history of Young Poland – enriched with a wider perspective of phenomena? These two publications share a point-like way of representing the so-called historico-literary process, fragmentary (typical of sketches and essayistic approaches) method of examining a literary period.

The reader of the book by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn admires primarily the fact that the author was able to compose a picture of the epoch illuminated by sketches on individual writers. He also showed himself as a literary historian who knows how to draw inspiration from many theoretical schools, while showing a special attachment to traditional concepts and categories of description; for example, the sketch on Reymont’s *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry* is a kind of genetic reconstruction of this work, related to the worldview disputes of the leading representatives of the Positivist period – Świętochowski and Prus, the reconstruction of the text by Reymont, which carefully reveals the ideological dialogisation of that time. The aforementioned thesis that *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry* should be seen as part of the literature on “nervous age” is a reference to the main stream of considerations in the book which searches for the proper beginning of Young Poland. At the same time, the thesis is a natural and obvious result of the mentioned origins of Reymont’s work.

The author of this book is sometimes a biographer – for example, in the chapter on Aleksander Szczęsny or Kasprowicz’s love letters – here, biography becomes a necessary hypothesis. He also invokes non-literary sources, looking not only into the great writings of their epoch, such as “Chimera”, but he also remembers about Orgelbrand’s encyclopedia when analysing the meanings of the terms “neuroza” and “nerwica” [neurosis].

The book is written in the spirit of correspondence of the arts – the reflection on literature is intertwined with the thoughts on painting of the era (e.g. remarks on the motifs behind Podkowiński’s *Szał* or Malczewski’s *Melancholia*, as well as on the reception of Bocklin’s painting *Isle of the Dead*) and the musicality of its literature (e.g. Chopin as an exponent of the collective psyche reflected in the literature). This predilection for combining observations on different arts has its justification in the original contexts of the time invoked, it conjures up the aura of Young Poland “here and now”, recreating the atmosphere of its artistic everyday life.

¹ R. OKULICZ-KOZARYN, *Mała historia dandyzmu*, Poznań 1995.

I read all the references to the Romantic tradition with great interest; in particular, the commentaries on the poem “*I ciągle widzę ich twarze...*” seemed convincing to me. Wyspiański’s poem was treated there not as a source commentary, but as a work demanding a commentary. Indeed, the thesis that the idea of “huge theatre” should be considered in constant contact with its lyrical foundation, has its justification, as Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn claims, in the tradition of Mickiewicz’s Lesson XVI.

Can the author be accused of having included in his book the sketch on the gnosis in Kasprowicz’s *Hymny* which was published a long time ago, in 1995? It seems that this text gained a new meaning in connection with the chapter on the poet’s love letters. The author’s intention was to examine the persistence of Kasprowicz’s earlier religious attitude, to show its evolution, which is why he returned to that study.

Towards Romanticism leads also *Cudowność wzgardzonych szczegółów*, the sketch on the poetry of Aleksander Szczęśny², who is treated there as Norwid’s “late grandson” brought up in Miriam’s cult of the author of *Vade-mecum*. Fortunately, writing about Miriam the author reached for the dissertation by Marek Buś³, who thoroughly analysed the stereotype of Norwid’s reception that was harmful to the period. Besides, Norwid, as the key to interpreting the aesthetics of everyday life in Szczęśny’s poetry, could even more strongly confirm his usefulness – after all, the word “kurz” [dust], so important for the aesthetics of Szczęśny’s lyrical worlds, has its origin in Norwid’s work, let us just recollect the phrase from *Assunta* (published in “The Scientific and Literary Guide”, Lviv 1907): “Kurzawą drogi ludzie są zbliżani” [People come close to one another because of dust on the road]. Among the motifs related to the poet’s “faraway journey”, we encounter Norwid’s motif of the threshold. Upon reading Szczęśny’s poetry we find ourselves in Norwid’s presented world of “emptiness” and “silence”. Okulicz-Kozaryn quotes:

Wczoraj tu-m jeszcze pustkę ganił będąc w gniewie,
I gardziłem samotnym, startym progiem domu,
Wczoraj; dziś przyszła do mnie cisza po kryjomu
I tak słodko zaśpiewał ptak w zgiętym drzewie. (165)

² The autor of the sketch is a co-publisher of the volume collecting the poet’s works. See A. SZCZĘSNY, *Poezje wybrane*, compiled by R. Okulicz-Kozaryn, M. Ignaszak, Kraków 2000, p. 48.

³ M. BUŚ, *Młodopolski Norwid – “legenda” czy “zagadnienie kultury”?*, [in:] *Stulecie Młodej Polski*, ed. M. Podraza-Kwiatkowska, Kraków 1995.

[Yesterday, I was yet reproving emptiness here while in anger,
And I was despising the lonely, worn out threshold of the house,
Yesterday; today silence came to me secretly
And the bird sang so sweetly in the bent tree.]

From Okulicz-Kozaryn's perspective, *Szczęśny* is an intermediary between Young Poland and the poetry of the Skamander group, alongside Leopold Staff, Feliks Przysiecki and Stanisław Miłaszewski – the poets who (which was emphasised by Kazimierz Wyka) shaped the poetics of everyday life. The author of the sketch reminds us that it was Leśmian who first drew attention to this aspect of *Szczęśny's* poetry and points to the fragment of *Z rozmyślań o poezji* that concerns him:

Po jakichże to przestworzach podróżuje młody poeta [...]?
Po małych ogródkach, po brudnych zaniedbanych ulicach, po zapuszczonych domach, po zaułkach mrocznych, po szybach od słońca złotych. (141)

[What are the spaces that the young poet traverses [...]?
Small gardens, dirty and neglected streets, derelict houses, dark alleys, panes golden in sunlight.]

Okulicz-Kozaryn motivates the idea to make Norwid the patron of this tendency in *Szczęśny's* poetry not only on the basis of his reading of the works of the Young Poland poet, but also based on biographical diagnosis⁴ that recreates the special relationship between Miriam and the debuting writer, the master-student relationship. The results of these reflections about the young creators gathered around the publisher of "Chimera", co-implementing a great plan of finding Norwid's manuscripts and first editions, are also important for Norwid Studies scholars. It is worth citing these reflections here, even if only fragmentarily.

Aleksander *Szczęśny*, both because of his date of birth and because of his genuine interest in Norwid, belonged – like many of his contemporaries – to the "late grandchildren" of the poet. Przesmycki perfectly chose *Klaskaniem mając obrzękle prawice...* for the opening of the eighth volume of "Chimera", dedicated to Norwid. Perhaps he knew that those entering the adulthood and born in the 80s – Roman Zrębowski, later publisher of Norwid, Wilam Horzyca, Stanisław Vincenz would be most enthusiastic about his poetry and thoughts. Miriam could comfortably expose to such demanding poetry the readers ac-

⁴ See R. OKULICZ-KOZARYN, *Aleksander Szczęśny*, [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. XLVII, Kraków 2011.

customed to difficult literature owing to the exploration of Słowacki, Wyspiański, Berent... Norwid, treated much more thoroughly than just a native example of a rejected, cursed poet, became a partner in the discussion about the art, and at the same time a guide in work on forms adequate to the new experience, beyond the scope of previous imaginations and habits. Miriam turned out to be open to the unknown future and potential conflict of tastes, after all, he knew young artists' aspirations through conversations with them, and through personal influence [...] he also infused them with enthusiasm about Norwid.

Thus, Szczęśny was searching for Norwid not only for Przesmycki, but also for himself. He did, however, retain large and respected independence, which once again proves how much exaggerated was the opinion on Miriam as an oracle and dictator. (158)

Okulicz-Kozaryn draws attention to the fact that in Norwid's case, Szczęśny bases his opinion referring to the statement by Stanisław Brzozowski *Cyprian Norwid. Próba* published in "Krytyka" in 1905. As we remember, in this sketch, Brzozowski presented Norwid as a "poet of ruins", which was protested against much later by Kazimierz Wyka. From today's perspective, it is obvious that the author of *Quidam* did not continue the style of poetry initiated with Volney's *Ruins* (Wyka aptly pointed out that this interpretation is misleading), the theme and motif of ruins find original re-working in Norwid's works and are elements of his own aesthetics of ruins (also discernible in the poet's plastic works of art)⁵. It is obvious that Brzozowski's statement was also an expression of appreciation for "Chimera" and its publisher.

According to Okulicz-Kozaryn, Szczęśny's reaction to Brzozowski's statement was the work *Dla wiersza*, which "refers to Norwid both through its structure (the Sapphic stanza, the sign of concealment) and the motif of ruins, and finally, through its polemical character hidden in an elaborate form" (158). According to this commentary, this polemic (indirect, rather allusive) leads in Szczęśny's work to the crystallisation of the "internally contradictory form" (159), and the discursivity borrowed from Norwid's poetry violates the principles of symbolic poetics, which is to be characteristic of other texts by the Young Poland poet. The author of the sketch asks if Aleksander Szczęśny adopted a polemical attitude towards the convention of his epoch from Norwid, or perhaps from other writers of that time – Felicjan Faleński, Włodzimierz Stebleski, or Stanisław Przybysz-

⁵ On this subject, see, among others, Grażyna Królikiewicz's remarks in her study *Terytorium ruin. Ruina jako obraz i temat romantyczny*, Kraków 1993, p. 123f. On the misunderstandings surrounding Brzozowski's qualification, see P. Wierzchośłowski (P. WIERZCHOŚŁAWSKI, *Norwid odczytywany przez Brzozowskiego: "Cyprian Norwid. Próba" oraz "testament Cypriana Norwida"*, [in:] *Dwór mający w sobie osoby i mózgi rozmaite. Studia z dziejów literatury i kultury*, eds. B. Sienkiewicz, B. Judkowiak, Poznań 1991, pp. 190-191).

wski? The answer he gives is, from the point of view of Norwid Studies experts, so intriguing that it should be quoted here, even if only in the following passage:

However, only the author of *Vade-mecum* – recognized by the Young Poland poets as their own and, at the same time, close to them in different aspects through his creative method – could help break the conventions created by the need to explore the human interior, but already lacking the initial strength. Only he could be helpful in attempts to somehow – as if – dehermetise them from the inside. Norwid proved to be important not only in the order of the self-assertion of the epoch – as the stereotype has it – but also on the way of going beyond the limits. (159)

The question about the role played by Norwid's reception in the Young Poland period is important for the state of knowledge about this epoch and Norwid himself – in the latter case it is connected to these hypotheses in the state of research on Norwid's legacy which try to situate Norwid in the symbolist landscape of the history of Polish literature⁶. Undoubtedly, the sketch on Alexander Szczęsny's poetry fits well the mainstream reflection on the vagueness of Young Poland's caesurae in the reviewed book.

The greatest value of the sketches contained in the book is their polemical intention that is already visible in the title, which corrects the traditional caesurae of the period. All these sketches derive from the spirit of the gloss. They are based on a conscientious and patient scrutiny of the current state of research, but they also partly undermine it, often modify its fragments, concerning only the aspect of the phenomenon, the detail among the fundamental issues. All without exception are characterised by philological stylistics, reminiscent of Pigoń's contribution.

Notwithstanding, these polemical corrections sometimes also undermine the completely fundamental theses – as in the chapter *W obronie monotonii* [In defence of monotony], in which, as it is considered the manifestation of stylistic weakness in Young Poland literature, it is assessed as its priceless value, taking on the character of a variation revealing the diversity of this literature. At the same time, this sketch reveals as if the second line of author's considerations and duels – the considerations on the variability of Young Poland literature and art allow their author to better reflect on the reasons for its rejection by Czesław Miłosz. While reading this chapter of the book, one can have an impression that it is exactly Miłosz who is the most important addressee of the whole statement, because his reading analysis begins and daringly ends the chapter.

⁶ See W. RZOŃCA. *Premodernizm Norwida – na tle symbolizmu drugiej połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2013; see also the discussion of the book – E. KASPERSKI, *Pseudo-Norwid, czyli co się komu podoba*, "Studia Norwidiana" 32(2014).

At this point, it is worth paying attention to the exceptional diligence in composing both the whole book and the individual sketches; the multitude of threads is always well-balanced, it exists in mutual references, sometimes taking place in the background of the historico-literary narrative. The reader of these sketches will not notice the multitude of referenced contexts immediately, enough to say that it is only after the last sketch has been read that we are convinced that Baudelaire, a good acquaintance from the earlier publications by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, is the quiet hero of almost all the stories about Young Poland.

One more feature of the author's narrative should be emphasised – it is the unbelievable elegance with which he refers polemically to previous research. In particular, I was impressed with the fragments relating to Jan Józef Lipski's findings concerning Kasprowicz's work, which were full of respect for the achievements of that researcher, but with whose results the author could in part not agree. Reading these sketches, we also never doubt that we are in the world of literature and its researchers, which is the world of great respect, regardless of clearly different opinions of individual researchers.

What I have written so far does not lead to the conclusion that we must accept all the findings of Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn and that his account of Young Poland does not invite a discussion. It would be against the nature of the sketch, which carries with it the Romantic conviction that a fragment is only a promise of learning the whole.

Is the awareness of the fuzzy beginning of Young Poland, about which the author writes (p. 49), not an awareness that opposes any caesura of the beginning, including that proposed by Okulicz-Kozaryn?

My doubts or reservations can be rather seen as questions or additions, often secondary to the main considerations of the author. For instance, it would be difficult for me to agree with the opinion expressed by him that history of literature is currently dominated by the category of historico-literary process (pp. 48-49). It is quite the opposite, in today's history of literature, everything prevails but this category. The discipline is dominated primarily by the large number of personalising approaches, oriented at the poet and his reception, as well as at the critical literary discourse. All the better that Okulicz-Kozaryn's sketches, despite their fragmentism, aim at some kind of an outline of the epoch, if not a synthesis.

Translated by Rafał Augustyn

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MŁODA POLSKA, CODZIENNOŚĆ I NORWID

Streszczenie

Książka Radosława Okulicz-Kozaryna *Rok 1894 oraz inne szkice o Młodej Polsce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2013) jest w tej recenzji rozpatrywana i omawiana jako pewien rodzaj oryginalnej syntezy epoki, która przede wszystkim koncentruje uwagę na płynnych cezurach Młodej Polski, co zwłaszcza odnosi się do jej początków. Ważny z punktu widzenia badań norwidologicznych okazał się pomieszczony w tej książce szkic o poezji Aleksandra Szczęsnego, traktowanego tu jako „późny wnuk” Cypriana Norwida. Cichym bohaterem niemal wszystkich pomieszczonych tu opowieści o Młodej Polsce jest Baudelaire. Książka napisana jest w duchu korespondencji sztuk – refleksja o literaturze splata się z przemyśleniami na temat malarstwa epoki; autor wyczarowuje aurę młodopolskiego „tu i teraz”, odtwarza klimat tamtej artystycznej codzienności.

Słowa kluczowe: Młoda Polska; Baudelaire; Cyprian Norwid; Aleksander Szczęsny; codzienność; Miriam; poeta; poezja; malarstwo; sztuka.

YOUNG POLAND, EVERYDAY LIFE AND NORWID

Summary

The book by Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn entitled *Rok 1894 oraz inne szkice o Młodej Polsce* [The year 1894 and other sketches on Young Poland] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2013) is analysed in this review as some sort of original synthesis of the epoch, which primarily focuses on the fuzzy turning points of Young Poland, in particular in regard to its beginnings. The sketch on the poetry by Aleksander Szczęsny, treated here as a “late

grandson” of Cyprian Norwid, also included in this book, turned out to be important from the perspective of Norwid Studies. The quiet hero of almost all the stories about the Young Poland included here is Baudelaire. The book is written in the spirit of correlation between the arts – reflection on literature is intertwined with thoughts on painting of the epoch. The author evokes the aura of Young Poland’s “here and now”, he recreates the atmosphere of that artistic everyday life.

Summary translated by Rafał Augustyn

Key words: Young Poland; Baudelaire; Cyprian Norwid; Aleksander Szczęsny; everyday life; Miriam; poet; poetry; painting; art.

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Karol S a m s e l – POSSIBLE, IMPOSSIBLE.
DIFFICULT NORWID
IN DIFFICULT NORWID STUDIES

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At the outset, one should probably recall the title of one of the studies by Grażyna Halkiewicz-Sojak, the author of the book *Nawiazane ogniwo. Studia o poezji Cypriana Norwida i jej kontekstach*. I am referring here to one of the researcher’s texts serving as an introduction to the monograph *Monografia Cypriana Norwida – książka postulowana, ale czy możliwa* [The Monograph on Cyprian Norwid – a book postulated, but questionably possible]. It seems that with this very title Halkiewicz-Sojak hit the very centre of what in Norwid Studies not only “is crystallising” as problematic, but also (at the same time) is characteristic of it and immutable¹. I should repeat once again, I am referring here not so much to the

¹ G. HALKIEWICZ-SOJAK, *Monografia Cypriana Norwida – książka postulowana, ale czy możliwa*, [in:] *Nawiazane ogniwo. Studia o poezji Cypriana Norwida i jej kontekstach*, Toruń 2010, pp. 15-24.