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šLiterature of Choromaniacsö<sup>1</sup>. Malady as a metaphor of the crisis of subjectivity in modern Polish literature from the interwar period.

## Summary

Malady as an analytical metacategory can be effectively used to describe the crisis of modern subjectivity, which is one of the leading problems of European literary modernism. Those texts renounce realistic convention of a narrative form and propose formal and stylistic experiments, which is connected with a new type of a protagonist – a hypersensitive individual, often a bit neurotic. Ignacy Fik in an essay from 1935 entitled "Literature of Choromaniacs" described that kind of creativity as "sick and deviant". Research problems I aim at discussing in my thesis include an analysis of texts from history and philosophy of medicine concerning the definitions of "health" and "nonhealth" and therefore how they are reflected in philosophical discourse of modernity and in literature and esthetics. I had also examined to what extent is malady a constitutional category in modernity, and what role metaphors of malady play in modernist literature and esthetics.

This thesis is an attempt to prove, that modern experience of the crisis, that an individual had to face at the beginning of the XXth century, especially in the late 30s, can be examined through the figure of malady. I searched for the symptoms of the mentioned crisis of subjectivity in the works of the writers representing young, avant-garde prose, described by Ignacy Fik as "Literature of Choromaniacs": Michał Choromański, Adolf Rudnicki, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Bruno Schulz and Witold Gombrowicz. I am also referring to the selected writings of the European modernists such as Thomas Mann, Herbert George Wells, Aldous Huxley, Robert Musil, Alfred Kubin and Luigi Pirandello, which enables me to put my considerations in a wider context.

Malady, as a metaphor of the modern crisis of subjectivity, describes a wide spectrum of disturbances of an epistemological, perceptual or ontological character. This erosion of solid and secure forms of social and cultural participation is caused by various factors, and was a major issue in European Modernism. We might borrow Richard Sheppard's three basic aspects of this issue

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<sup>1</sup> Term "Literature of Choromaniacsö" is a word play invented by a literary critic, Ignacy Fik. It is hard to translate, because it not only refers to a surname of a writer Michał Choromański, but also, it consists of the adjective "chory" (sick, ill) or noun "choroba" (illness, disease, malady) and a noun "mania" or a "maniac". It could have been translated as "Literature of ill-maniacsö", but in that case a reference to a surname Choromański would have been lost. For those reasons, I've decided not to translate this term and to use it as "Literature of Choromaniacsö".

thematized in early twentieth-century literature. These are: a changing sense of reality (a change in previous 'conclusions about the nature of physical reality' in the wake of new discoveries in quantum physics and the theory of relativity), a changing sense of human nature (with the popularity of psychoanalysis and theories of the unconscious) and a changing view of the relationship between Humanity and Reality (the arbitrariness and relativism of language, the narrative nature of History and science, and a questioning of the objective paradigm of cognition, the expansion of subjectivity) (Sheppard, 2000).

I was interested in novels, that described that modern crisis and the experience of the unstable world, where all that is solid melts into the air. I've focused on the subjectivity, which is fragile, irregular and nonheteronormative, forced to stay at the margins of the modern world, or who decides to create a premodern, imaginary refuge at those margins, that can be described in term of heterotopia, therefore I was concerned with all the social and institutional practices constructing the rules of participation in that kind of places. I was also interested in the strategies of gaining health, by which I mean gaining a stable identity in a liquid, modern world.

One of the arguments of my thesis is that the medical discourse concerning human subjectivity is strongly related to the philosophical approach to this subject. What is more, I am suggesting, that these two discourses have strong influence on each other, therefore one may be able to describe the dysfunctions of subjectivity and its experience of a crisis by the medical terminology, using metaphors relating to malady, symptoms, dysfunction, disturbances, etc. I am also convinced that the literature may be perceived as cognitive tool, where one may search for the answer how to cope with the discontents of the modern era, which are not only a literary and narrative issues, but have its empirical, actual source in the sociocultural, political and economic background.

This thesis is divided into two parts: a discursive part and an analytical part. In chapters one, two and three, I have focused on presenting main objectives of my thesis.

The first chapter is focused on a malady as a metaphor in literary criticism and journalism of the polish interwar period, including the writings of Ignacy Fik, who had invented the term 'Literature of Choromaniacs', describing young, polish avant-grade prose.

The second chapter is focused on presenting the philosophical concepts of modern subjectivity and a sociocultural reception of its crisis and its experience. "Malady" is used here in the sense of a departure from the Cartesian model of strong entity, which I consider a "healthy" model of modern-era self. This self can be defined as sovereign, centered in the Mind, autonomous, ontologically independent, law-abiding, certain of its place in the world, subordinate to the laws of rationality and utility. I am also referring to the works of Agata Bielik-Robson, her reading of

Harold Bloom *The Anxiety of Influence* and to the Freudian construction of subjectivity. This chapter is supplemented with a literary diagnoses of modern crisis.

The third chapter focuses on the sources of modern mythologies of the malady, which had influenced the depiction of the malady itself in literature, art and language. This chapter is supplemented with the short outline of the medical knowledge and the reception of psychoanalysis in Poland during the interwar period.

Second part of my thesis consists of chapters four, five and six, which are the case studies focused on three basic topics: modern heterotopias of malady, fantasy as an addictive substance and the pathological urge to regain healthy subjectivity.

The fourth chapter is focused on modern heterotopias of the malady: the hospital and a sanatory, including its inhabitants – individuals who are forced to live on the margins of modernity. In this chapter I am reading novels written by Michał Choromański, Bruno Schulz and Alfred Kubin.

The fifth chapter is focused on a fantasy as a drug – mind-altering, addictive substance, which can become a cause of a severe malady. Here, fantasy is often related to a romantic love, which can turn itself into a painful and terminal disease. I am analyzing here a novel by Adolf Rudnicki and Michał Choromański with the narcoanalytical approach of Avital Ronell. This chapter is supplemented with an outline of the social theory of intoxication by Witkacy.

The last, six chapter is focused on the strategies of regaining healthy subjectivity – becoming healthy, autonomous, sovereign subject. In this chapter I am analyzing essays and novels of Witkacy and the writings of Witold Gombrowicz.