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***„Kosmos” by Witold Gombrowicz* [recenzja książki, napisana przez studenta przebywającego na Wydziale Filologicznym w ramach programu Erasmus+ w 2020 r.]**

In the 1965, after he experienced the exile in Argentina and took part in the maiden voyage of the Polish transatlantic liner MS Chrobry to South America, Witold Gombrowicz wrote what is widely recognized as one of the most important novels of the 20th century, *Cosmos*. Even if in Poland — due to the Gombrowicz issues with authorities that banned his novel *Dziennik* — his works remained pretty unknown to the public until the first half of 1970, his rebellion to what he called “form” in writing is well known all around the world. In fact *Cosmos* is a huge reflection on the reality and its negation, the building of new meanings, a satire — the title makes it obvious — of the phenomenology of world creation.

The plot begins with this young man called Witold (autobiographical component) and the world in the novel is filtered through his perspective. He’s taking a break from the city of Warsaw and from his family and he meets Fuchs who is also seeking a vacation from his boss Drozdowski. They manage to arrive to a countryside home in Zakopane where a strange family lives and hosts them.

Before their arrival, the two travelers see a sparrow hanging on a tree branch. From this point of the narration everything take a really odd implication. They start to investigate the possibilities and the reasons of that lynching and to develop a strange and obsessive behavior that some postmodern critics may call paranoia. They don’t have any evidence or significant signs but they try to link that sparrow with a mark on the ceiling of their room, the lips of two young women at the countryhouse. The absurd takes place, like in a Borges labyrinthine and intricate narration: the two main characters want to find the pieces of a puzzle that maybe never existed, they represent a world that is just on their minds. Here’s the intention of the writer in creating a parallel subconscious world, an antinomy of the novel. The detectives – or *anti-detective* since they are completely *doomed* and improvised such as Oedipa in the Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* or Samuel Beckett’s *Watt* – can’t resolve their problems but they create more of them. That’s the point of the claustrophobia of the novel in which – if you resist – can find an amazing reflection on the meaning or nature of the meaning, starting from a semiotic Jakobsonian point of view to a narrative one. In fact the novels uses different kinds of tones, from a parodic melodrama to a mystery noir, where the real horror fact is that you can’t escape from the *form* that is the real most wanted, the undefinable killer of the story.

But maybe the puzzle is just a way in which the author tries to create his own new personality, a desire to go beyond, to take a break from the chaos building his own new chaos.

“What was looking for? What was I looking for? A basic theme, a Leitmotiv, an axis, something of which I could take firm hold and use as a basis for reconstructing my personality here?”

*Cosmos,* more than fifty years after its first publications, still smells like an experiment, as a future of the novel and not its past. A non-conventional book that every students of literature, of linguistics but above all of Polish language should read as soon as possible.