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„FRENCH NONSENSE”? THE PRESENCE  
OF GEORGE SAND’S *LEONE LEONI*  
IN MICHAŁ CZAJKOWSKI’S NOVEL *ANNA*

**Among the 19th-century Polish writers** Michał Czajkowski’s biography remains one of the most unique and fascinating – controversial, even called “strange”.<sup>1</sup> To some point, it might be (and has been) interpreted as echoing the literary trope of a tormented Byronic hero. A colorful story of his life overshadowed, especially in the long-term reception, his literary work. Czajkowski’s most recognizable texts, such as *Kirdżali* (1839) or *Powieści kozackie* (*Cossacks Stories*, 1837), were closely related to the romanticized subject of the Cossacks as well as the nostalgic and unknowable space of steppes. His contemporary novel *Anna* (1840) is not entirely free of these oriental connections but focuses mainly on the life of Polish nobility near the Ukrainian Zhytomyr. Even though it never gained as much popularity as other mentioned titles, it provoked a minor scandal.<sup>2</sup> As for today the novel remains nearly forgotten.

One of the most interesting facts concerning *Anna* are similarities and intertextual allusions connecting it with George Sand’s *Leone Leoni* (1835). This French novel appears in *Anna* multiple times and in many functions:

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Chudzikowska, *Dziwne życie Sadyka Paszy* [*Strange Life of Sadyk Pasha*], Warszawa 1971. The title of this book is an allusion to Czajkowski’s work *Strange Life of Polish Man and Woman* (1865). The author’s biography was rightfully presented as full of dramatic turns, controversial political engagements, and fundamental changes concerning his identity such as a symbolic name change and double religious conversion.
- <sup>2</sup> T.T. Jeż, ‘Michał Czajkowski,’ *Przegląd Literacki. Dodatek do „Kraju”* 1886, No. 8, p. 2: „The weakest novel *Anna* made the biggest impression, and that was because this novel, inspired by the author’s memories, was based on true events, and depicted living people. They were presented with their names and gossip was saying, that one of them – a nobleman living near Machnówka – was planning to go to Paris and challenge the author for a duel.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine – K.W.

as an object (a book), as a symbol of a literary trend, as well as inspiration for the main plot points and characters. Judging from the subjects of Czajkowski's previous works, this ostentatious presence might be considered unexpected, but should be seen rather as an attempt at commenting on the appearance of a new literary and social phenomenon, on which Regina Bochenek-Franczakowa stated, "in the '40s George Sand was situated in the center of ideological polemics, her figure, works, and views evoked vivid reactions".<sup>3</sup>

*Anna* was published four times: in Paris in 1840, a year later in Poznań (in two volumes), then – an improved version – in Vilnius in 1851, and finally in the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of the author's collected works in Leipzig in 1867.<sup>4</sup> The last edition turned out to be especially interesting, as the author decided to publish at the same time the manuscripts of his wife Ludwika Śniadecka. He explained in the preface, that the value that brings them together is happiness – the half-happiness felt in the times of his youth which inspired *Anna*, and the full happiness, that came from long, fulfilling matrimony. The decision to combine these two types of literary material could have been coincidental,<sup>5</sup> nevertheless, the presence of Śniadecka's manuscripts in the proximity of a novel commenting on the works of George Sand can be interpreted as symbolic, as it establishes a connection between these two female individualities, both seen as strong and nonconformist. Czesław Miłosz noticed a kind of resemblance between them in his essays *Szukanie ojczyzny* (*Searching for a Homeland*) where he wrote:

Two romantic gals are troubling me: she [Maryla Puttkamerowa – K.W.] and Ludwika Śniadecka. Because I can't accept their exaggerated spirituality and etherealness. Ludwika Śniadecka, an object of Słowacki's affection, was as she was: one of those who treated the customs of her day as masks while looking for the true life, courageous enough to learn about it, and they are both like Stendhal's heroines. Ludwika was to become a lover and adventurer, a political schemer in Istanbul as Sadyk Pasza's wife, and for some reason, I always imagine her smoking cigars like George Sand and speaking in a deep voice.<sup>6</sup>

While fighting the stereotype of an almost noncorporeal image of love interests of the most prominent Polish romantic poets, Miłosz connects Śniadecka with French literature. At the same time, he evokes one of the well-established cultural images concerning Sand: the tradition of seeing

<sup>3</sup> R. Bochenek-Franczakowa, 'Pani Sand, ten geniusz szalony. George Sand w oczach polskich pisarek XIX wieku', *Prace Komisji Neofilologicznej PAU*, 23 (2015), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> This volume was re-published again in 1900.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwika Śniadecka died in 1866.

<sup>6</sup> C. Miłosz, *Szukanie ojczyzny*, Kraków 1996, p. 95.

her as a woman boldly crossing strict gender rules. The origins of this style of thinking can be also found in Czajkowski’s work.

Sand’s *Leone Leoni* was immediately presented and commented on by Polish literary critics, but this popularity did not last for more than two decades. The most convincing proofs of the novel’s importance are two Polish versions of the text: an abbreviation published in 1836 in *Rozmaitości*<sup>7</sup> and a full-text translation by Antoni Filleborn published by Franciszek Sztejnbock in Warsaw in 1844. Their existence is exceptional when one takes into consideration the absence of the Polish versions of more popular Sand’s texts such as *Lélia* or *Indiana*.<sup>8</sup> One recognizable admirer of *Leone Leoni* was Zygmunt Krasiński who reported his feverish, extremely fast reading process in 1844 in a letter to Delfina Potocka, judging: “Never has she [Sand – K.W.] presented herself more of a conjurer of art”.<sup>9</sup>

The precise moment on novel’s fame began to fade can be pinpointed thanks to Józef Kremer’s *Letters from Kraków* (1843), where he made a few comments concerning new French literature and bitterly characterised its moral values as “a puddle of blood and mud”.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, he stated (not without an irony), that from a reader’s point of view commented novels were extremely attractive. This duality is apparent in his summary of *Leone Leoni*:

One shows you a lady, crazy in love with a common thief, notorious liar, impudent criminal who pays back her love with a betrayal, hunger, and violence and finally sells her to a friend who is just like him; – and she? She loves him for that, on and on, constantly, even more. You will find all that written in a beautiful language in *Leone Leoni* by Madame Sand, who is undoubtedly one of Europe’s greatest talents.<sup>11</sup>

Only twelve years later, in the second edition of the same book, Kremer cut out the whole passus containing the quoted fragment and put it in a foot-

<sup>7</sup> ‘*Leone-Leoni*. Powieść w skróconym opowiadaniu podług G. Sand (Leone-Leoni),’ *Rozmaitości* 1836, No. 33–34. No note about the author of the translation. *Rozmaitości* was an appendix to the *Gazeta Lwowska* periodical.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Bochenek-Franczakowa, *Présences de George Sand en Pologne*, Frankfurt am Main 2017, pp. 197–201.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Krasiński to Delfina Potocka, 26/27 III 1844 in: *Listy do Delfiny Potockiej*, vol. 2, ed. Z. Sudolski, Warszawa: 1975, p. 373. Sudolski suspected that Krasiński was writing about the 4<sup>th</sup> tome of the 16-volume edition (*Œuvres de George Sand, nouvelle édition revue par l’auteur et accompagnée de morceaux inédites*, Paris 1842–1843).

<sup>10</sup> J. Kremer, *Listy z Krakowa*, vol. 1, Kraków 1843, p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 170.

note with a comment about it being unimportant and outdated, as the popularity of a specific genre of novels written by authors such as Sand, Eugène Sue or Jules Janin had – in his opinion – irrevocably come to an end.<sup>12</sup>

It is fair to admit that even though Michał Czajkowski rarely wrote about George Sand,<sup>13</sup> his views remained consistent and coherent with the thesis presented by conservative critics, such as Michał Grabowski.<sup>14</sup> In memoirs written in the 1870's a mention of her significance appeared in a bitter context of explaining the unreasonable Polish affection toward France. Besides Madame de Genlis (in Czajkowski's opinion an author known by every Polish matron), Sand is mentioned as the one who is known "even by Polish maidens".<sup>15</sup> Accenting the admiration expressed by younger, supposedly naive, and unexperienced readers was strongly rooted, and in his case lasted for at least 30 years. Jadwiga Piotrowiczowa, who published the most detailed description of Sand's impact on *Anna*, emphasized the didactic and satiric purpose of the Polish novel, but surprisingly recognized that Czajkowski's direct inspiration was not *Leone Leoni* but *Lélia*.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Józef Bachórz defined the way Czajkowski portrays a literary Sand-centric trend in *Anna* as "the malice of the Enlightenment-era satirist".<sup>17</sup> While I partially share this view, I am also convinced, that it does not characterize Czajkowski's ambiguous methods of portraying Sand's work precisely enough.

The action of *Anna* takes place around the 1840s, mainly in the household of the landed gentry torn between post-Sarmatian traditions and modern French cultural influences. This opposition allowed this text to be read as a novel of purpose, which ridiculed foreign taste, as the impact of the new literature on Polish readers is very openly exposed. Already the first chapter contains an important conversation between the parents of the titular protagonist. The couple is talking about the books, that the mother wants to purchase for her daughter: Balzac's *Contes drolatiques*, Janin's *Les Catacombes* (humorously called *Les égouts de Paris*), and George Sand's

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. Kremer, *Listy z Krakowa*, vol. 1, Wilno 1855, p. 165.

<sup>13</sup> Besides *Anna* and Czajkowski's memoirs, I found two very short mentions of George Sand: in the novel *Nemolaka* (Lipsk 1873, p. 249) and the story *Ikbala* from the *Legends* (Lipsk 1885, p. 115).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Grabowski, 'O nowej literaturze francuskiej nazwanej literaturą szaloną (*la littérature extravagante*)' in *Literatura i krytyka*, vol. 3, Vilnius 1838.

<sup>15</sup> *Pamiętniki Sadyka Paszy Michała Czajkowskiego*, transl. A.P., Lwów 1898, p. 215.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. Piotrowiczowa, *Michał Czajkowski jako powieściopisarz*, Wilno 1932, pp. 190–1.

<sup>17</sup> J. Bachórz, *Realizm bez "chmurnej jazdy": studia o powieściach Józefa Korzeniowskiego*, Warszawa 1979, p. 288.

*Spiridion*.<sup>18</sup> The prospect of buying this third title brings the father to a longer deliberation:

[...] “*Spiridion*” par George Sand – if this work is similar to the previous one by its author, this half-man, half-woman, this *George Sand* and *Madame Dudevant* rolled into one – then I must say it takes great courage to let a young lady read it.

– What superstition, *c’est la chasteté, la moralité superfine*.

– Oh, it’s superfine, that’s true. I’ll eat humble pie and confess that I haven’t read any book by this Madame George Sand. But Mr John says that its poison is sweetened and served in a diamond cup. Any that touch it with their lips, cannot pull those lips away. Any that taste it, must drink till the last drop. And that is the end of happiness.

– Oh, what a sermon, what a curse, *quelle barbarie*.<sup>19</sup>

Anna’s mother resembles the heroines of Enlightenment-era satire; lost in her efforts of keeping up with current trends in fashion, design, and culture. From her father’s point of view, Sand’s novels – which he has not even read – are seen as a powerful evil force, the embodiment of the much-criticized Western civilization that remains in opposition to nationality-preserving ways of Polish nobility.<sup>20</sup> Of all the mentioned French books, the one by Sand remains the most controversial to him, which can be seen when he makes another remark concerning the author’s gender: “But this Mister... I’m sorry, I meant this Madame Sand, couldn’t we lose that one?”<sup>21</sup>

Sand’s works appear for the second time in Anna’s private boudoir, where they are presented among other contemporary novels and dramatic works as a part of a symbolic, consciously constructed collection:

In one corner of the boudoir, behind a green oriental curtain, there stood a mahogany cabinet, with already read books on its shelves: Janin’s, Dumas’, Balzac’s, Madame Sand-Dudevant’s, Madame Arnaud-Reybaud’s and the whole French school of moral romance, with the dramas by Victor Hugo at the forefront. Poor Walter Scott, together with Cooper, Moor, and even Byron, all ended up in either papa’s or mama’s libraries – being old and not all that amusing. And no Polish book has ever been laid on these shelves.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In further chapters of *Anna*, there are mentions of Leon Gozlan’s *Cecile la Creole*, incorrectly called a novel, when in fact it was a drama.

<sup>19</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Anna. Powieść*, Lipsk 1867, pp. 2–3.

<sup>20</sup> Because of the context, the mention of *Spiridion*, discussing religious topics and containing a strong critique of the Roman Catholic Church might be considered satirical as well. Anna’s father refers probably to her earlier novels, such as *Valentine*, *Indiana*, or *Leone Leoni*.

<sup>21</sup> M. Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

Anna's chamber remains a field of cultural battle, where the opponents' taking sides were English and French romanticism (while the absence of Polish books remains a vivid proof of rejection). The English romantic literature is considered outdated and traditional, as even Anna's papa keeps a copy of Byron's work in his reading cabinet. The same boudoir is also a place, where the reader sees the protagonist for the first time – lying on her ottoman, completely immersed in the lecture:

Before her an open book, she is reading. Tears as pearls fall from her eyes and sighs escape her chest. The girl's imagination gives life to the quill's creations; she worries, hurts, and despairs over the story, and the life of the book's heroine or hero. She devours page after page with her eye, her thoughts. She won't lose focus, won't look away. There is only the rustling of pages, turned by her little hand, only a soft sigh from her chest, only a tear that falls on the paper. She will finish soon, the pages nearly spent, her face blushes and turns pale in turn. She finished, then pushed the book away like a poisoned drink, half-drunk, whose effects can already be felt in the bosom. She stood up. "What a brute!" She interlaced her fingers. "Poor Leoni".<sup>23</sup>

This detailed description also marks the first appearance of the title *Leone Leoni*. The book is presented not as a memory, not as a topic commented upon or reviewed, but as a piece of work currently being read, discovered, and absorbed with ecstatic pleasure, in a way consistent with the romantic style of the lecture. As Marta Piwińska stated – in the romantic era reading was perceived as an act of clarity and union with the author's imagination, while literature was seen as a source of emotional experience<sup>24</sup>. In Anna's case, impulsive and emotional reaction to the novel's plot and heroines' feelings deeply worries her mother, who solemnly divides life and fiction:

– My love, *ma mignonne*, what is the matter with you?

The girl opened her eyes. "Oh, mama! This poor Leoni, how she loved, how unhappy she was, and this man... so cruel!" Tears run down her face and stifle her words.

– But *mon Ange*, it's just a novel, those things probably never happened.

– Oh, Mum, what are you saying? It happened, it must have happened, read it!" She pointed at the book. – Oh! Men are so cruel, and we are so miserable!<sup>25</sup>

What might immediately bring up suspicion is the fact that Anna constantly calls Sand's heroine "Leoni" instead of "Juliette". That kind of evident mistake might be considered a joke or maybe even Anna's attempt to

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. Piwińska, *Złe wychowanie*, Gdańsk 2005, pp. 65–8.

<sup>25</sup> M. Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–1.

justify the lovers’ union by giving Juliette the surname of her lover.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the portrait of Czajkowski’s heroine literary experience is expected to draw a picture of an overemotional girl, demoralized by books showing her love but also teaching about the cultural differences between men and women. Her method of reading harkens back also to sentimental literature, as Józef Bachórz humorously stated: “In the era between the uprisings [i.e. 1831–1863 – K.W.] the ladies still cried while reading novels, but the novels were more modern”.<sup>27</sup> The most important remaining factor is Anna’s visible urge to compare – or rather identify – literature with life.

The attitude towards Sand’s work seen in Czajkowski’s novel is to some point affiliated with the character’s gender.<sup>28</sup> One can certainly notice a significant paradox here: Polish romantic novels contain an anti-romantic discourse, they even warn against reading romantic novels, especially the feminist version by George Sand. However, these are issues that require separate reflection. In this article, I am interested in a close reading of Czajkowski’s novel. Anna, her mother, as well as Madame Żelowska (their relative and an object of the author’s sharpest critique and ridicule) unanimously admires her work. The only female critic of Sand is Anna’s maid, Dorothy, though her criticism should be read rather as the simple folk (or in this case simple noblewoman) wisdom learned through common sense.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Anna’s father, and her husband-to-be (by family agreement), the Chamberlain’s son Jan Starolacki see her passion for that literary romance as a prediction of danger:

The Chamberlain’s son [...] approached Lady Anna.

– May I ask, what wicked book gave you a reason to cry?

– I’ve read the novel *Leone Leoni* by Madame Sand.

– *Leone Leoni*, repeated the Chamberlain’s son and involuntarily frowned.

– *Leone Leoni*, said the maiden and sighed, and then they were both silent.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> I owe that thought to Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska.

<sup>27</sup> J. Bachórz, ‘Romans w powieści, czyli o wątkach miłosnych w powieściopisarstwie polskim okresu międzypowstaniowego 1831–1863’ in: *Romantyzm a romanse. Studia i szkice o prozie polskiej w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> More on the attitudes of Polish critics towards women’s reading, including readings of George Sand’s novels – cf. A. Paja, “*Puszka Pandory, czyli czego obawiali się dziewiętnastowieczni publicyści piszący o czytelnictwie kobiet*” in *Zalecenia i przestrogi lekturowe (XVI–XX wiek)*, ed. A. Bajor, M. Jarczykova, Katowice 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Dorothy comments: “Reading those French books... [...] Wouldn’t it be better to love openly, to marry? – But no, there must be complications, additions from novels” (M. Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 59).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

The title *Leone Leoni*, repeated between the characters without any added commentary, remains a significant carrier of different meanings and emotions. Starolacki, just like Anna, models his behavior on characters originating from romantic poems such as Mickiewicz's *Farys*, Litawor or Konrad Wallenrod, and even Lord Byron.<sup>31</sup> Living life following literary patterns is openly criticized by him only when it applies to semi-female Sand. It would be obvious that this character's opinion about her novels should be negative, as he was the one, who warned Anna's father about their poisonous power. The surprise is, that he appreciates them highly when they are read by men and considers them dangerous when they are read by women: "Starolacki forgot about Madame Sand, the writer whose books he liked to read, but whenever he saw those books in the hands of a woman, especially a young girl, he was always worried out of his mind".<sup>32</sup>

This patronizing, misogynistic double standard is indisputable. It can be seen also in John's attitude towards Anna, whom he treated not as a lover, but as a student. The moment when he realizes the consequence of his behavior comes when Anna breaks up their engagement. He bitterly comments on this fact: "She was reading Madame Sand, and I tried to make Old Polish matron out of her".<sup>33</sup>

Knowing the plot of *Leone Leoni* was not a necessity for Czajkowski's readers, but it allowed them to predict the further actions of the characters, as the most interesting part of *Anna* comes when the titular protagonist starts to consciously re-enact Sand's novel, following the romantic idea of uniting life and literature. After meeting Count Adalbert Barowicz, she begins questioning life choices made for her by her family and starts actively acting against them. Barowicz's bad reputation and inclination towards gambling make him an evil character, which is emphasized by the fact, that Anna compares him to Leon Leoni and *Lélia*-originated mysterious Trenmore.<sup>34</sup> Adalbert's dubious nature is also suggested through an antisemitic allusion to his possible Jewish heritage and doubtful character of his noble title (probably gained, not inherited). The character's greed,

<sup>31</sup> "John liked the movement in his life; when he read *Farys*, he was sitting on a horse and riding onto the steppes like the madman, because he was Faris at this moment in his life, not in the thought but on a horse, he was Litawor, Mazeppa, Wallenrod even [...]" (*ibidem*, p. 72).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>34</sup> Barowicz's resemblance to Leon Leoni can be observed in the construction of the scenes – for example, the moment when he meets Szwarcwald (brother of his wife) is very similar to Leoni's meeting with Henryet during the ball.



corruption as well as dandy style are an imitation of Sand’s Leoni but remain less controversial and revolting. Czajkowski copied the plot point of the heroine’s wild romance with an unworthy man but softened the scandalizing essence of the original. Barowicz’s essential sin against Anna is bigamy where Leoni lies, kills, steals, and pushes his lover into sexual relations with another man. Anna never becomes Adalbert’s mistress, nor they consummate their marriage, and the crucial consequence of their romance is in its nature legal, not moral, as it is based on a question about the validity of interrupted nuptials and the possibility of divorce.

The fact, that Anna started a romance with Adalbert almost immediately after reading *Leone Leoni* suggests, that her goal was to re-enact the role of Juliette.<sup>35</sup> Real life and literary life are portrayed as two mutually permeating spheres of her imagination – constantly shown as proof of her naivety and sentimentality. When her father opposes the prospect of her marriage with Barowicz, she finds within herself “the will of Leila, the want of Leoni”;<sup>36</sup> she stops reading and starts thinking of herself as a literary character – a woman with both power and desires. This inspiration gives Anna the strength to become more active, efficient, and progressive. Her attitude, combined with a persistent manipulation by cousin Żelowska, results in a secret wedding organized during her father’s absence. Before the nuptials future bride confronts herself with the content of *Leone Leoni* one more time, but this time with a dramatically different result:

She looked at her boudoir, probably thinking how she’d have to say goodbye to it. By chance, her gaze fell upon the novel *Leone Leoni*. This book by Madame George Sand had not, on the day Anna finished reading it, joined the others in her beautiful library, but was still lying on the little table. Why? It had simply been forgotten. Anna hasn’t read it for the second time. Now she stood up, picked it up, flipped through a few pages, shuddered, and sat down again. And for the first time in a very long while, she thought about Starolacki. “He loved me,” she thought. “I liked him, father would have given me his blessing and I would be happy, not knowing love. And now he is unhappy, while I... Father will curse me”.<sup>37</sup>

The quoted fragment should be read as a turning point in the whole novel. *Leone Leoni* still accompanies Anna in her choices, but it stops being an instruction to romance and gains a new role: a prophecy. This scene ech-

<sup>35</sup> Modelling life in accordance with literary patterns is also a characteristic of Juliette in Sand’s novel, who says: “Je devins romanesque, caractère le plus infortuné qu’une femme puisse avoir” (G. Sand, *Leone Leoni. Le Secrétaire intime*, Paris 1847, p. 31).

<sup>36</sup> M. Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 116–7.

oes her previously described style of reading: unintellectual, impatient, and careless but this time it allows Anna to realize the consequences of taking on the role of a romantic heroine. The shuddering can also be seen as an omen of her father's stroke, caused by the shock of realizing her misbehavior: banned marriage and secret away. That leaves Anna – just like Sand's Juliette – morally responsible for the death of her loved ones.

The second reading of *Leone Leoni* should be interpreted as a moment of revelation with a strictly didactic purpose, but it does not stop Anna's marital plan, nor does it invalidate the trust she put in Sand's book. Iwona Węgrzyn stated, that the plot of *Anna* is based on the idea of "maiden disobedience",<sup>38</sup> which is partially correct, as Anna rebels only against her father, while her shallow mother supports her. Even after the wedding, interrupted by the unexpected comeback of her father, she gains strength and moral support from the same book, which she leaves open when she decides to run away from home and reunite with her husband.

Anna's relationship with Sand's novel changes over time – it becomes less emotional, and more reflexive, as from the narrator's point of view she has already begun the process of correcting her behavior. After Adalbert abandons her in the house of her cousin, she returns home to her widowed mother and begins a transformation: surrenders to her dead father's expectations, and eventually to the man previously chosen for her. The end of the romantic adventure is accented by the symbolic closing of her library:

Anna no longer reads French romance novels, but only Polish books. Her beautiful boudoir, this treasure trove of passionate paradigms of love and even more passionate adventures – had been closed off like a plagued city and the keys were handed over to Dorothy. She entered once a week to dust everything down and complain about all those pieces of furniture and books [...]. It was like her [Anna's – K.W.] mother didn't want to rip away the last remnant of a fashionable life, which remained in her home – she didn't order it destroyed, for it was a living memory, which urged her to regret over the past, to do penance, and to improve in the future.<sup>39</sup>

The initial metaphor connecting Sand's novel with poison is emphasized by the ludicrous vision of a bookshelf portrayed as a post-epidemic ghost town. The main protagonist ultimately gets a preachy, moralistic ending. Her impetuous actions are forgotten and forgiven, as she settles into the lifestyle expected of her by her family and social position. Clumsily, the

<sup>38</sup> Cf. I. Węgrzyn, 'Jak zdobyć męża? Herkulesowe prace romantycznych panien na wydaniu' in: *Prace Herkulesa: człowiek wobec wyzwań, prób i przeciwności*, ed. M. Cieśla-Korytowska, O. Płaszczewska, Kraków 2012, p. 496.

<sup>39</sup> M. Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

narrator explains the reasons for her earlier actions using the authority of Michał Grabowski: “Anna now came to know the whole truth about her first lover, a lover not of the heart, but of an imagination inflamed by the sweet, intoxicating poison of Madame Sand’s words, as well as the works of other authors from the school of madness, as one strict polish critic calls them”.<sup>40</sup>

A different kind of transgression refers to Starolacki. The experience of losing Anna as well as his role in revealing Adalbert’s past life changed him into a passionate romantic lover as well as an avenger. Even though he had been aware of the literary origin of those tropes (as he had been reading the works of Mickiewicz and Byron), the transformation came as an indirect result of Sand’s novel’s influence. At the same time, John remains unchanged in his patriotic nature and even toughened up in hatred felt toward *Leone Leoni*, a copy of which he violently cast aside after Anna’s away. In the last part of Czajkowski’s novel, Starolacki could be compared to Sand’s Bustamante – a loyal and faithful companion of Juliette, trying to help her overcome destructive infatuation. Unlike Bustamante, the Polish patriotic nobleman gets the real prize when Anna realizes, that he is her true love. With the sudden death of Count Adalbert, which brings down all the doubts about the validity of interrupted nuptials, the original pair reunites. In the last chapter, the newlywed couple is sitting in Anna’s altered boudoir, next to shelves filled with books written only by Polish authors, and repeatedly, almost mechanically state that “without Madame Sand’s magic you can be happy, love, and be loved”.<sup>41</sup> In this caricatural scene the author’s goal is achieved – Anna is corrected and put in her place as her individuality vanishes and young Starolacki wins her heart and hand in marriage. This fragment can be read also as a reflection of the beginning of the novel, where Anna and Jan repeat between themselves the title *Leone Leoni* – this time however their voices and thoughts sound in ghastly unison.

The number of similarities between *Anna* and *Leone Leoni*, as well as mentions of the latter book in the former, is considerable, and the interpretation of Sand-originated motifs is banal to the point of becoming grotesque. Czajkowski’s strategy ranges from open critique to rather unsuccessful imitation, where the pushiness of the second undermines the clear message of the first as it lacks subtlety. Even the story of Anna and Adalbert is duplicated in the second part of the text, where the reader learns about the earlier life of the Polish count and his affair with Amelie following a familiar pattern: protest by the family, midnight escape, defective wedding

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 217.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 374.

ceremony, and finally abandonment. Furthermore – Adalbert and his first love retraced Leoni's steps and visited Venice.

Czajkowski might have aimed for *Anna* to be satirical and didactic, but it also reveals the envy and the unfulfilled hopes of an author, who could only dream of achieving Sand's popularity. His opinions, formulated in the early 1840s, should be perceived as a fresh take on the French writer's growing fame. *Leone Leoni* is ridiculed but at the same time portrayed as powerful, provoking, and engaging. Czajkowski does not overcome the qualities associated with Sand's novels but works on them on an intertextual level. Because of its plot and characters, it is justified to call *Anna* an example of mad literature. For that reason, Stanisław Tarnowski considered *Anna* the worst of Czajkowski's novels and justly called his method of criticizing Sand's work "driving a wedge with a wedge".<sup>42</sup> Tarnowski saw the text only as a weak imitation, seemingly ignoring the fact that imitating itself was also an important theme in the story – as it allowed the main protagonist to re-live her idol's journey. *Anna*'s storyline undoubtedly manages to recreate the main plot points of *Leone Leoni*, including the gothic novel-inspired love story arc with a poorly written villain (Count Adalbert), a chivalrous but traditionalistic rescuer (Starolacki), and Anna herself, maybe not so innocent maiden. The biggest difference lies in the moral implications of the final chapters of both novels. Juliette abandons Bustamante and decides to run away with Leoni once more. By that choice, she remains free of society's rules, where Anna gets ossified by them.

The early works by French author – among others *Leone Leoni* – had unjustly been seen by part of some critics as devoted only to the topic of romantic love, but they can also be interpreted as a feminist critique of patriarchal family bonds and the oppression of women.<sup>43</sup> This more modern standpoint is presented in *Cambridge Companion to the French Novel* where Margaret Cohen sees *Indiana* as "a brutal indictment of the institution of marriage"<sup>44</sup> and "opening up the sentimental form onto the sufferings

<sup>42</sup> S. Tarnowski, 'Michał Czajkowski,' *Przegląd Polski* 1885/1886, vol. 12, p. 426.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. K. Nadana Sokołowska, 'George Sand: kanonizacja, dekanonizacja i rekanonizacja w literaturze francuskiej a wizerunek pisarki w kulturze polskiej' in: *Literatura. Kanon. Gender. Trudne pytania. Ciekawe odpowiedzi*, ed. E. Graczyk, E. Kamola, M. Bulińska, Gdańsk 2016, pp. 41–8. Nadana-Sokołowska accentuates the role of the new interpretations of Sand's work and reception, such as Béatrice Dider's *George Sand écrivain »Un grand fleuve d'Amérique«* (Paris 1998) and Naomi Shore's *George Sand and idealism* (New York 1993).

<sup>44</sup> M. Cohen, 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century' in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel. From 1800 to the present*, ed. T. Unwin, Cambridge 2003, p. 58.

of women across the social spectrum”.<sup>45</sup> In the case of *Anna* by Czajkowski, the power of literature and an attempt to recreate a situation originating from a favorite novel becomes just as important a topic as romance itself, if not more so. Like Juliette, *Anna* independently creates her path when she breaks the engagement and chooses a revolting romance. At the same time, Sand’s novel dominates Czajkowski’s work and exposes prejudices against female reading. Finally, despite the Polish author’s clear intention to depreciate the main protagonist, the lesson she learns from *Leone Leoni* is the importance of independence and gaining subjectivity, even if her efforts were ultimately in vain. It is also – despite of author’s clear intentions – a story about the provocative power of literature: possibly destructive, possibly naïve, but at its core utterly romantic.



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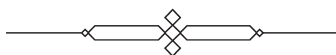
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#### ABSTRACT

The paper aims to present Michał Czajkowski’s novel *Anna* (1840) as a multi-level, intertextual play on George Sand’s *Leone Leoni*. With its action set near Ukrainian Zhytomyr, Czajkowski emphasizes the titular protagonist’s love affair and her unhappy, controversial matrimony. *Leone Leoni* (1835) by George Sand, beside her *Lélia* and *Spiridion*, is demonstratively present in the world depicted in *Anna* as the book accompanies the protagonist in the most crucial moments of her life and determines her actions. However, its impact both on the characters and the plot is ambiguous. Sand’s work (among other French authors) is constantly criticized, and accused of having a seductive influence on the Polish language and culture. This allows *Leone Leoni* to be read as a “dangerous book.” At the same time, *Anna*’s storyline manages to partially recreate the main plot points of *Leone Leoni*, including the gothic novel-inspired love story arc and parent-child relationship dynamics. Czajkowski does not overcome the qualities associated with Sand’s work but seems to succumb to them. Consequently, despite the constant critique of the artistic values of French prose, which permeates the novel, it is justified to call *Anna* itself an example of what Michał Grabowski called “mad literature.”

#### KEY WORDS

George Sand, Michał Czajkowski, romanticism, *Leone Leoni*, intertextuality, novel



<sup>45</sup> M. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 64.