The present paper sets out to scrutinize the nature of "bad love" – love inseparably connected with suffering and death – in Maria Komornicka’s fairytale “O ojcu i córce” (“On the Father and his Daughter”, 1900) and Zofia Nałkowska’s short story “Zielone wybrzeże” (“Green Shore”, 1909), in order to retrace its correspondence with the psychoanalytic theories. In the two texts under study, the feelings of (sexual) pleasure, satisfaction and affection, continually intertwine with the painful experiences of overwhelming unhappiness, alienation, and loss. Thus love is impossible, (self)destructive, obsessive, abusive and tyrannical. The love-death association in the works of both Komornicka and Nałkowska corresponds with the ideas on destruction formulated by the forgotten Russian psychoanalyst, Sabina Spielrein, and the later theory of the death instinct proposed by Sigmund Freud. The unacknowledged theories of Spielrein will be the basis of the present analysis.

The intention of this essay is to analyze the two Polish literary texts, which have been marginalized by publishers, critics and readers, yet they deserve recognition from English-speaking readers and the critical community. Although the scandal-prone Maria Komornicka recently became a subject of intense, mostly feminist, critique, her “On the Father and his Daughter” remained outside the mainstream. Similarly, “Green Shore” belongs to Zofia Nałkowska’s – largely forgotten – Modernist period of writing. Nevertheless, dubbed by her contemporaries "the first lady of Polish literature," the second author considered in this paper, Nałkowska, remains today a prominent novelist valued for her Interwar and Post-war texts, especially “Medallions.” She is one of the mainstays of Polish women’s writing.

Additionally, this paper offers a comparative interrogation of “On the Father and his Daughter” and “Green Shore.” Despite the fact that these two texts exhibit evident similarities, they have not yet been analyzed in a comparative manner.

Similarly, the texts, which call for a much-needed new reading from the point of view of pre-Freudian and Freudian psychoanalysis, have not been investigated in this perspective to date. This will be done through an analysis of the theme of Eros and Thanatos, which appears pervasively in the works of

---

1. This essay is an extract from my unpublished Ph.D. thesis “The Living Mirror: The Representation of Doubling Identities in the British and Polish Women’s Literature (1846-1938),” defended at the University of Edinburgh.
both Komornicka and Nałkowska, and a reading in the light of the theories of Luce Irigaray.

Before embarking on an analysis of the texts, it is essential to briefly dwell on the history and theory of Sabina Spielrein who introduced the subject of Eros and Thanatos, and the association between love and death to psychoanalysis. In Greek mythology, Eros (Gr. “desire”) was the god of love; Thanatos (Gr. “death”) was a demon personification of death. Spielrein formulated the concept based on her private experiences, and on her work with hysterics and schizophrenics. As early as 1909, she wrote in her diary:

This demonic force, whose very essence is destruction (evil) and at the same time is the creative force, since out of the destruction (of two individuals) a new one arises. That is in fact the sexual drive which is by nature a destructive drive, an exterminating drive for the individual, and for that last reason, in my opinion, must overcome such great resistance in everyone.

In 1911, shortly after becoming a member of the prestigious Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, she presented fragments of her work on love and destruction during one of the famous Wednesday meetings. The speech triggered a heated debate, but was severely criticized by other members of the circle. It did not fit with their contemporary understanding of Eros and Thanatos. Her

2. Various factors contributed to the fact that the name of Spielrein had generally disappeared from the history of psychoanalysis and the Russian thought for over thirty years. She was murdered by the Nazis in 1942 in her native Rostov-on-Don, Russia and buried in a mass grave. The first part of her documents—works, fragments of diaries, and correspondence with Jung and Freud—was accidentally discovered in the basement of the former Institute of Psychology in Geneva in 1977. The recovered documents were edited and published by a Jungian professor Aldo Carotenuto in his A Secret Symmetry. Further discoveries and publications followed. See Aldo Carotenuto, A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein between Jung and Freud, John Shepley (trans.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Coline Covington and Barbara Wharton (eds.) Sabina Spielrein: Forgotten Pioneer of Psychoanalysis (Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003); and John Kerr, A Most Dangerous Method: the Story of Jung, Freud and Sabina Spielrein (London: Vintage 1994).
