

Małgorzata Cackowska

ORCID: 0000-0002-6855-4646

University of Gdańsk

malgorzata.cackowska@ug.edu.pl

What Does Basia Want from the Polish Society?

The purpose of the paper is to analyse and criticise re-presentations of living spaces of a contemporary child portrayed in a greatly popular series of picturebooks for children about the daily life of a little girl called Basia. The author of the paper characterises the image of Basia's family home as a significant space for the development of a young person in her cultural, social and political aspects, attempting to provide an answer to the question of what this (such popular) message wants from the recipients, from the Polish society? The title from the question is a travesty of the title of a book titled 'What Do Pictures Want?' by one of the most outstanding researchers and theoreticians of visual culture, William J.T. Mitchell, who analyses diverse relations of contemporary viewers with respect to the presentations in images, examining the condition of the modern audience (Mitchell 2015). The critical approach to the series of books analysed in the text outlined in the concluding section follows from realisation of the extensive range of politically unilateral power of reproduction of models that are present in it.

The choice of the series of over thirty picturebooks¹, devoted to the daily life of a modern small, resolute girl written by Zofia Stanecka with illustrations of Marianna Oklejak² as the subject matter of analysis that is thematically closely related to the experience of home, living spaces and organisation of daily life, was primarily dictated by an attempt at discovering the causes of their unprecedented popularity among the population of children and parents (mothers especially) in both small and large cities. The publisher reports that so far, 500,000 copies of the Basia series

¹ The books have been published since 2008 to date. Initially, they were published by the LektorKlett publishing house; a couple of years ago, the title was taken over by Egmont Polska – one of the largest corporate publishing houses. Each of the books is titled 'Basia i...' (Basia and...) – a noun specifying a person or a place to whom/which a given episode is related, for example 'Basia and Mom at Work', 'Basia and Telephone', 'Basia and Freedom', 'Basia and Swimming Pool', 'Basia and Dentist', etc.

² The writer and the artist belong to the young generation of brilliant Polish representatives of works for children.

have been sold, while other sources say that approx. 100,000 books are sold annually. This is quite a high number as for the Polish audience buying books for children, bearing in mind that the life of books for children does not end with the first buyer. The popularity of this domestic production matches the Canadian best-seller about Franklin, written by Paulette Bourgeois with illustrations by Brenda Clark, and the still more popular Belgian series about Martynka, addressed mainly to girls, written by Gilbert Delahaye with the illustrations of Marcel Marlier. The books about Basia, similarly to the aforementioned series, present a universe of children's experiences, yet they do not have the value of an artistic production, but rather assume the form of mass production and greatly differ with respect to design and content quality. A clear progenitor of Basia seems to be a girl known to the Polish audience as Zuzia and to German – in the original – Conni, presented in the series published by Media Rodzina and titled 'The Wise Mouse. Zuzia' comprising approx. forty brochure picturebooks. These books, greatly popular in Germany since the early 1990s, were written by Liane Schneider in cooperation with two illustrators: Eva Wenzel-Bürger and Annette Steinhauer. It may even be assumed that the publication idea of the series about Basia was directly loaned from the series about Conni (see photo No. 1).



Photo 1. Cover of the book 'Zuzia is Learning to Bake' by Liane Schneider, illustrated by Anette Steinhauer of 2012

The series of twenty-four page picturebooks about Basia was initiated eleven years ago as a Polish product with an intention to make it recognizable by the Polish recipients. However, in the course of time the series about Basia adopted a form of a total production³, where the character is not only featured in a series of books,

³ Michał Zając (2000) describes in detail the phenomenon of a total product in the sphere of a cultural production for children.

but also educational cards with exercises, films and games (cf. Sikorska-Celejewska 2010). Today, Basia is also present in a series of audio-books, ‘Basia Teaches’ (‘Basia uczy’) exercise books with counting, writing and reading tasks and colouring books, etc. intended for pre-school children, books with stickers ‘Get to Know Basia’ (‘Poznaj Basię’), which are an abbreviated and interactive version of the selected originals, as well as a series of small cardboard concept books for smaller children titled ‘Basia, Franek and...’ (‘Basia, Franek i...’) (Franek is Basia’s younger brother) with a short narrative about daily affairs of an infant, such as: napkins, going to sleep, getting dressed, but also colours and cars. There are also collections of short stories (for example ‘The Great Book of Basia’ – ‘Wielka księga Basi’, ‘The Great Book of Basia and Franek’ – ‘Wielka księga Basi i Franka’) with episodes from the life of Basia and her family, previously published by ‘Mamo, to ja’ – a very popular monthly magazine for young mothers. Furthermore, there is also a tablet version of the book ‘Basia and Sweets’ (‘Basia i słodycze’) and a board-game titled ‘Basia. Catch The Colours’ (‘Basia. Łap kolory’), an animated film with several episodes and numerous educational aids for working with children at home and at preschool (including scenarios for teachers and librarians). A mug with the image of Basia can also be ordered in the store of the publishing house. The authors enjoy unwavering popularity during author’s meetings which have a performance character and are often held in small towns. Their popularity among parents and children is far greater than the popularity of other artists from this circle.

Each book about Basia’s life is intended as a separate whole, discussing a given subject matter (problem), which is not continued in other parts and can be understood without reading the other books from the series (cf. Photo No. 2).



Photo 2. Series of picturebooks about Basia, photograph from the back cover

The life of Basia and her family is however stretched out in time (it lasts from the summer of one year and happens in the entire following year⁴). It is good to embrace the challenge of reading the ensuing episodes in order to learn this microcosm in more detail. The series started with the publication of four books: 'Basia and Heat in the Zoo' ('Basia i upał w zoo'), 'Basia and Kindergarten' ('Basia i przedszkole'), 'Basia and the New Brother' ('Basia i nowy braciszek') and 'Basia and Christmas' ('Basia i Boże Narodzenie'), which allow us to learn the character of the five-year heroine, her closest family and home. From the content of these episodes, the readers in principle get to know the key issues about the reality of the heroine, and about the fact that in the summer her mother Tosia is pregnant, and her father is working a lot as a doctor in a hospital. Basia lives in a large city, which has a hospital and a zoo (from where she brings Kajetan the turtle home); Basia's elder brother is Janek and in late autumn, tiny Franek is born (with respect to whom Basia experiences ambivalent feelings); she likes going to preschool where she becomes friends with a slightly peculiar girl, Anielka. She also has grandmothers and grandfathers (we do not know their names and it is only in the 'Basia and the Grandparents' ('Basia i dziadkowie') part that we learn that they are her mother's parents, as the father's parents live far away). Her home comprises a kitchen, a larder, a bathroom, Janek's room, Basia's room; the family also owns a car. The family is religious and celebrates traditional Christian holidays (they read the Bible, eat traditional dishes and sing the Catholic carol, '*Bóg się rodzi*').

This is what can be learnt from the text. However, in a picturebook – especially intended for small children – it is only a loom for weaving the important components showing the full life of the characters. This function is performed by the illustrations – which – to a great degree enhance the verbal message. In the pictures, we can see that Basia's family lives at a typical housing estate, in a two- or three-storey⁵ block of flats with ten apartments, on the last floor (cf. Photo No. 3, where we peek into the family's life from outside) in Warsaw (which may be guessed from the marks on the blocks of flat, characteristic for the capital).

Based on the illustrations, we can see that in the apartment, there are two more rooms – one has Franek's crib in it (this is the parents' bedroom, which can be fully seen in the 'Basia and Mess' ('Basia i bałagan') book); the other is a drawing room with armchairs and a sofa and forms an important place in the life of a family⁶. The apartment also has a spacious corridor and a kitchen open onto the drawing room, which is the central place of the family life (mainly the table is visible there). The illustrations are the main carriers of information about the characters' appearance;

⁴ It is the intention of the authors of the project and the publishers to delve into the problems of the five-year old heroine and not to accompany her in further development on account of the target recipients. In other words, Basia will never grow up.

⁵ Neither the illustrator is capable of specifying this issue (Sikorska-Celejewska 2010).

⁶ The readers learn the true significance of the sofa in a later part of the series, 'Basia and Cooking' ('Basia i gotowanie').



Photo 3. Marianna Oklejak's illustration from the book 'Basia and Christmas' written by Zofia Stanecka of 2009



Photo 4. Marianna Oklejak's illustration from the book 'Basia and Mom at Work' written by Zofia Stanecka of 2011

from them, we know that mother has dark hair and wears glasses; Basia also has dark hair, freckles and very often wears a blouse with white and red stripes; her father and Janek have fair hair; Janek is slightly larger than Basia (hence we can assume that he is slightly older than her – Photo No. 4). The girl has a plush teddy-bear with which she does not part – she is always hugging it or it is near her at all times.

In order to try to find an answer contained in the title of the paper, in a further part the author of the paper is going to take a detailed look at the mainly illustrative presentations of the closest, pivotal and pedagogical living spaces of Basia and her family, i.e. these significant places where Basia is learning life (Mendel 2006).

Basia and Living Spaces

Based on the analysis of all books in the series, it may be concluded that the places where the life of the family is teeming and intense have been brought out and play a crucial role in the heroine's experiences, in the formation of her self-awareness and identity. These are: primarily the kitchen (and in the kitchen, the table as a central place), Basia's room (with Basia's bed as the most important element) and the living room (with the sofa and armchairs, books). In opposition to these pivotal locations of Basia's family life are, identified during analysis, numerous represented non-places, which are important for the experiences not only of the main character, but also the recipients of the books from the series. Even though the books have been designed in a way to present diverse, universal problems and aspects of daily reality (sweets, dentist, fashion, refurbishment, bivouac, swimming pool, etc.) in each of them, yet the central place is occupied by the main character's home. In almost every book (with the exception of two – 'Basia and the Library' – where the action takes place in the kindergarten, on the way to the library where the children go in a group and in the library as such – and in 'Basia and Allergy' – which recounts a story during the family's stay in the mountains), the representations of the home, scenes of family life and place of residence are in at least two double spreads (out of eleven in every book), for example in 'Basia and the Swimming Pool', with an episode pertaining to a visit at the pool, yet the majority of situations take place at the character's home. If the issue discussed in a specific book refers to the family (for example 'Basia and Mom at Work'), almost all the scenes show Basia's apartment.

Kitchen and Table

The kitchen in Basia's house is the heart of the family life. It appears in the majority (17/30) of episodes, and this is the place where the members of the family stay most often. The strongest emotions are experienced in the kitchen (the parents' argument which Basia is observing through a cracked door); the kitchen also becomes a place of various activities of other family members (nursing Franek, mother's work, dad repairing the toaster). The kitchen features the most significant place: the table visible from the drawing room. The table itself with at least one family member in a significant pose or performing a meaningful gesture appears as many as thirty-nine times in the series. This is where the most important talks are held and key decisions are made (during breakfast, mother tells the family that she is starting to work from home and after the meal, she sits at the kitchen counter or table to start a methodological textbook for teachers; at another time, a decision is made about going on holiday or refurbishment). The table in Basia's home has a rectangular shape, yet in spite of the family cherishing traditional values, the places at the table occupied by the family members have no hierarchy; the family members often



Photo 5. Marianna Oklejak's illustration from the book 'Basia and Cooking' ('Basia i gotowanie') written by Zofia Stanecka of 2011

take their seats without paying attention to the place, which may testify to the children-centred approach of the parents and abandonment of the typical designation of places (Photo No. 5).

The table is primarily the place where the family meets for meals – sometimes ceremonious – as well as the place where they prepare food together (making gingerbread cookies, dinner prepared by Basia, Janek and father). Negative emotions are also shown by the table (longing Basia, Janek and dad are waiting for mum to return from the hospital; at another time, Janek is angry that somebody – it was Basia – stole his collector's footballer card).

The table also tends to be the place where Basia exercises independence (eats breakfast while everybody is still asleep) or autonomous deeper reflection, when after a too intense day filled with sweets Basia gets up at night to sit for a moment, drink a glass of water and eat a pickle. Under the table, Basia is also able to find a place for drawing to be as close to the parents as possible.

Basia's Room: Bed

The heroine's room has – similarly to the kitchen – high occurrence rates in the series (16/29). Basia's room is relatively clean (with the exception of the aforementioned situation from the book 'Basia and Mess'). There are also several co-residents, but the most important character in the room (and often a bedfellow) is her beloved Misiiek-Zdzisiek, a personified teddy bear, who often takes part in playing. In her room, Basia most often expresses emotions: either in an abreaction and projection-based play (when mother working at home asks Basia not to interrupt her, she is giving similar instructions to Misiiek-Zdzisiek) or in a grateful hug for dad who brings the repaired musical toy to the girl.

The key place where emotions are expressed is the bed. In the bed, Basia covers herself with a blanket and cries when she is envious of her parents' attention when tiny Franek appears at home, or when she gets sick and is deeply unhappy because she cannot go visit her grandparents. At other times, she shares her admiration for the new carer or dreams a lovely dream about a telephone that she desires. In bed, she thinks about sweets and then gets angry when after waking up she realises that this was just a dream. Another time, Basia wakes up happy because the day has come when the kindergarten children go on a scheduled trip to the park and the playground.

The doors to Basia's room tend to be slightly or fully open, especially when Basia has no isolation-type needs.

Living Room, Sofa and Armchairs

The living room, even though it usually is the central place of many modern homes, in the series about Basia and her family is not represented so numerous (11/29). For the family, it is primarily a place of rest, playing together, joint activities of Basia and mother or a place where important things are discussed on the armchair; it functions as a source of emotional warmth (for example when mother explains to Basia how natural disasters change people's lives). The sofa is usually occupied by dad (he tends to be tired after night shifts) and children, especially when they feel the need (very rarely in the entire series) of watching television. The television set in the series is not greatly important and rarely attracts the attention of the family (one episode – 'Basia and TV' – is devoted to it in full, yet it focuses on the disastrous effects of a small child watching an inappropriate programme; additionally, it eventually breaks down and thanks to this, Basia comes up with a great game) (cf. Photo No. 6).



Photo 6. Illustration from the book 'Basia and Cooking'

Various pictures hang on the walls (among others, one resembling the market square in Kazimierz – a town beloved by the residents of Warsaw) and portraits of various persons; there is a piano which Basia's father can play; by one of the armchairs frequently used by the parents is a stand for newspapers with some magazines in it. In the drawing room, the representative function is played by the bookshelf with works of Polish and international classics on the shelves: there is, among others, an album titled 'Hermitage' (written in Cyrillic) and a small collection of classics of international literature (Homer and Plato) and Polish literary canon (Sienkiewicz's *Deluge* and Potocki's works), along with many other illegible titles; there are also albums with photographs and tokens. In the drawing room, there is also a small table under rather modest music equipment where a careful observer will be able to discern what music is listened to in Basia's home. The records kept there include: *West Side Story* and – as far as Polish music is concerned – *Violetta Villas*, famous in the 1960s and 1970s, and *Jerzy Połomski*, an even more old-school artist. This large room often transforms into Basia's playground (a house made of chairs for Basia and Franek, covered with a blanket or a performance on TV, when the real TV broke down), and sometimes into a dance floor for the entire family. All these home objects specify the socio-economic status of the family – one can use them to determine that they are not too affluent middle class (which is testified by the modest fittings of the apartment and the quality of equipment), but they represent intelligentsia family with a significant cultural capital (books, records from the realm of distinctive high culture).

Non-Places

In his concept, Marc Auge determines non-places as the transitive spaces characteristic for hyper-modernity; they belong to nobody, because numerous people who stay there do not have any emotional bond to them, and are not related to one another either. These are, for example, supermarkets, railway stations and recreational areas (Auge, 2012). There are few such spaces in the books (6/29) and – as mentioned before – they are the opposites of home. However, they were masterly shown in the illustrations and they seem to be important experiences in Basia's life; they expand her knowledge about the world, especially the social life and their role in it, and thus they deserve a moment of attention too.

The presentation of non-places reveals Marianna Oklejak's great talent as an observer, who in her illustrations is capable of showing and emphasising the role of the background, using a sylleptic⁷ relation to the text. She also manifests an ex-

⁷ Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott call a relation of an image and a text sylleptic where two or more narratives are independent from one another; side narratives that go in different directions become significant in the entire presentations and acquire different meanings (Nikolajeva, Scott 2001: 12). In the discussed case, the issue refers to the original creation of minor stories in the illustrations by the artist.



Photo 7. Marianna Oklejak's illustration from the book 'Basia and Money' ('Basia i pieniądze' written by Zofia Stanecka of 2011)

cellent sense of humour, which she uses to make these cold spaces warmer (for example, funny name of the supermarket: 'Mega Mag'). Basia gets to know the typical non-places, among others the zone of water recreation, a petrol station, a grocery store, a DIY store, a commercial mall with their characteristic structures and order of movement, temporariness and suspension in time; however, the girl often uses the time for playing (cf. Photo No. 7).

Thanks to the artist, the presentations of these non-places feature a lot of micro-narratives thanks to which in the commercialised, in principle anonymous and crowded space, a careful observer will be able to find man (a lady with a beanpole, a lost, lonely boy and a number of others). Basia experiences these spaces as a certain experimental venues where she can play, using the objects from the display (together with Janek, she turns the knobs; together, they enter the shower cubicles, sit on the toilet seats; at other times, they ride the trolleys or slide on wet floors). With the use of these modes, quite typical for a child, the non-spaces become domesticated, in opposition to the clear distance manifested by the mother who becomes tired with them and who visits them for a very specific purpose.

The picture of the home and the image of a modern family with small children analysed here, along with the space of their life, the places where they feel at home and thanks to which they feel safe and the non-places with which they clash on a daily basis, induces the researcher of the picturebook to ask the following question: what does this message want from us, from the Polish society?⁸

⁸ In the case of the aforementioned German series of books about Conni, the same question could be asked about its significance in the society. I believe that the responses would be similar in spite of the fact – or especially due to the fact – that the German society is culturally diversified, and Conni is a typical representative of the German middle class.

The cultural medium, i.e. the picturebook, has a discourse-based character – its aim is to influence the recipients (children and adults) and to affect stances and behaviour. In their discussion on the reflexes of culture and social relations in books, including books for children, Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith (1991) emphasise that a book is not an innocent medium used only for easy entertainment, but that it is primarily a significant carrier of ideas and ideology. For children, it is a special medium and reaches the children's imagination not only through words but primarily through images. In the case of the books about Basia's world – as shown a number of times – images are capable of creating a message that often says more than words. Hence, it is of essence what type of world is shown in the books, especially when thanks to the power of the series, it refers to a broad universe of possible experiences, triggering huge popularity among adult recipients, young generations of parents, inept and uncertain of their new roles.

In order to be able to fully answer the question of what Basia wants, it is definitely necessary to comprehensively analyse and show many more aspects of the girl's and her family's life, especially the more significant ones, such as the modes of communication, stances and practices of parents with respect to the problems tackled in every episode and related to the daily family and social life. The language of their communication plays a very important role in the entire educational intention of the books. It is a developed code; the utterances of adults and children contain arguments, elements of persuasion, assertiveness and expression of emotions. The utterances of the speakers are usually thought-through, full and constitute an expressive and clearly defined message, strongly resembling the language of coaching. The style of this code requires a deeper analysis, especially on account of the popularity of the series, indicated here, primarily among young parents. The only critical reflection devoted to the literary quality of the text is found in a brief article of Karolina Felberg-Sendecka. The author outspokenly comments on home-coaching, excessively present in the series, the 'arch-middle-class' characters and their problems, daily formatting of the heroes and the readers. Felberg-Sendecka is clearly terrified by Basia's mother 'who talks to her children in a post-humanistic language and behaves like a robot, or a kindergarten teacher who overdosed on coaching' and the fact that such required reading does not raise the children's questions (Felberg-Sendecka 2017: 22–23)⁹. It is impossible not to agree with this opinion, especially in the case of a picturebook where the visual layer and narrative allow the recipient (especially the child who does not yet read) to compile even more significant information about the characters, their style and quality of life. A look at just one aspect – the home and the inhabited spaces – still allows for reaching the conclusions below.

The series about Basia is – similarly to a catechesis – a message showing the testimony of a valuable life to people who have become slightly lost in the modernity

⁹ In Poland, literary critics are very cautious with respect to mainstream publications for children of influential publishers.

that relies on the neo-liberal economy. It reminds us that a family (with the traditional three offspring) and home are the sacred space, a space where the communal and individual identity is born. It shows that within the space of the home, a family has to spend all the moments together (mostly at the table), while parents should devote a lot of time to children. Basia's parents represent elitist middle class with a reservoir of cultural capital: they have higher education, quite prestigious jobs (father – doctor, mother – ex-teacher, nowadays working from home writing methodological textbooks for teachers); they have intelligentsia origin (their parents are architects and doctors). By their style of life, they show a clear tendency for being a traditional family (daily rituals and ceremonious focus on the table, cultivation of religious holidays), they keep a distance to material goods (modest apartment, as well as its fitouts, distance to new technologies, especially used by the children), but they nourish their materialised cultural capital (they own and exhibit significant resources of literary classics and albums of international and Polish art). The family lives embedded in their place (home – apartment) and seems to be happy in it. They live in a large city, where the parents manifest a clear distance to non-places (related to consumption and commerce), instilling the same attitude in their children. Basia's family does not have a surname; the girl's parents are ideal and consistent in every inch and that is why they constitute a familiar, possible to assimilate, domestic and clearly distinctive model.

Using the language of the theory of cultural reproduction, this symbolic, conservative and elitist model of family life attracts modern parents who are aspiring to the middle class and who, having only the economic capital at their disposal, are looking for ennobling mechanisms to legitimise their position and prestige and to stabilise their status (Bourdieu, Passeron 2011). Thanks to the series about Basia, they may feel authorised and may efficiently recreate this scheme of life. Numerous parenting blogs feature opinions (mainly from young mothers), who are in awe of Basia's parents. They wish to identify with them; they admit straightforwardly how they learn (especially from Basia's mother) how to organise home and family life, how to educate (format) children, what type of language to use to talk to children so that they listen to them. However, this clashes with the feeling of struggle under the huge pressure and dissonance with completely other desires of owning and exhibiting one's accomplishments, focusing on oneself and showing a completely different, 'wealthy' lifestyle. This is the duality of the social world characteristic for the middle class striving for advancement.

The popularity of the simple, even though not always obvious in their message, books about Basia captures the symptoms of social problems manifested in the dramatically growing (ir)rationality adopted by the middle class of the Polish society, based on the explosive mixture of conservative and free-market values. These – primarily young parents (buyers of the series) – easily abandon the desire of authentic freedom and become even more subjected to the political manipulation. Through Basia, they look at themselves and consolidate the only just, repetitive choice of the predictable middle style of life. Using the books about Basia, they show their chil-

dren a model world of social relations, subordination, self-discipline and self-recognition with externalised conviction. This is probably what Basia wants...

Literature

- Apple M.W., Christian-Smith L.K., 1991, *The Politics of the textbook* [w:] *The Politics of the Textbook*, eds M.W. Apple, L.K. Christian-Smith, New York: Routledge.
- Auge M., 2012, *Nie-miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, tłum. R. Chymkowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Bourdieu, P., Passeron J.C., 2011, *Reprodukcja. Elementy teorii systemu nauczania*, tłum. E. Neyman, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Felberg-Sendecka K., 2017, *Literatura jak coach, czyli ja i mój wróg*, „Opowiadanie”, nr 6, http://opowiadanie.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Opowiadanie_6_Net.pdf [dostęp: 2.11.2018].
- Mendel M. (red.), 2006, *Pedagogika miejsca*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP.
- Mitchell, W.J.T., 2015, *Czego chcą obrazy?*, tłum. Ł. Zaremba, Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury.
- Nikolajewa M., Scott C., 2001, *How Picturebooks Work*, New York-London: Routledge.
- Sikorska-Celejewska A., 2010, *Basia się spodobała i pomaszzerowała w świat... – rozmowa z Zofią Stanecką i Marianną Oklejak*, Qlturka.pl, <http://qlturka.pl/2015/12/08/basia-sie-spodobala-i-pomaszerowala-w-swiat-rozmowa-z-zofia-stanecka-i-marianna-oklejak/> [dostęp: 15.07.2017].
- Zajac M., 2000, *Promocja książki dziecięcej: podręcznik akademicki*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich.

Source materials

- Bourgeois P., Clark B., 2003–, „Franklin” (seria), tłum. P. Zarawska, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Debit.
- Delahaye G., Marliera M., 1993–, „Martynka” (seria), tłum. A. Woroniecki, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Publicat.
- Schneider L., Stenchauer A., 2012, *Zuzia uczy się piec*, tłum. E. Kledzik, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Media Rodzina.
- Stanecka Z., Oklejak M., 2008–, „Basia” (seria), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Egmont Literacki.

Summary

What Does Basia Want from the Polish Society?

This paper presents an analysis and criticism of the presentation of living spaces of the contemporary child in the hugely popular Polish series of picturebooks about the daily life of a little girl called Basia. The author of the paper describes the image of her family home primarily as a space which is significant for the development of a young person in the cul-

tural, social, and political aspects, and finally tries to answer the question of what this (very popular) message wants from its readers, the Polish society. The question appearing in the title is a travesty of the title of the book *What Do Pictures Want?* by William J. T. Mitchell, one of the most eminent researchers and theoreticians of the visual culture, who analysed various relations between the contemporary audience and representations present in images, searching for knowledge on the condition of today's viewer (Mitchell 2015). The critical approach to the series of books analysed in the text outlined in the conclusion stems from the realisation of the extensive range of politically unilateral power of reproduction of models that are present in it.

Keywords

picturebook, cultural reproduction, middle class, Polish society

English translation: Lingua Lab s.c. (Kraków).

Tłumaczenie zrealizowano dzięki środkom z Programu rozwoju czasopism naukowych Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

The translation was financed with funds made available by the Programme for the Development of Scientific Journals at the University of Gdansk.