

Ars Educandi

12/2015

Wydawnictwo
Uniwersytetu
Gdańskiego

Imaginary

worlds

and dailiness

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Tłumaczenie sfinansowano ze środków Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego na podstawie umowy nr **661/P-DUN/2018** z dnia 13 lipca 2018 roku w ramach realizacji zadania 1 – stworzenie anglojęzycznych wersji wydawanych publikacji w 2019 roku.

The translation was financed with funds made available by the Ministry of Finance and Higher Education under contract No. **661/P-DUN/2018** of 13 July 2018 as a part of the execution of task 1: the creation of English-language versions of the issued publications in 2019.

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Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego

ISSN 2083-0947 / ISSN (ONLINE) 2657-6058

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Introduction

The twelfth volume of *Ars Educandi* is devoted to imaginary worlds. Many of us associate the imaginary with something unreal, sometimes insignificant or trifling. The imaginary is contrasted with the “here and now”, the daily and the significant. The texts collected in this volume offer a different look at the imaginary world. In his introduction to the book *Socjologia światów wyobrażonych: fantastyka, gra, rekonstrukcja jako obszary transgresji* [Sociology of Imaginary Worlds: Fantasy, Games, Reconstructions as Areas of Transgression], Arkadiusz Peisert points out that “society is an imaginary construct, but one to which we refer in our attitudes, choices, and behaviours” (Adamski, Krzywdziński et al. 2015: 11). We live surrounded by a variety of fictions – we are in contact with literature, video games, and advertising. But this is not solely about the media. The imaginary also applies to many other issues, such as social expectations, stereotypes, and – what is important in particular for pedagogues – education (both formal and informal).

Through contact with fiction, we may distance ourselves from our own experience or the current reality. This lets us tidy up our experiences, allows a creative reflection on them, and, finally, equips us with tools of critical thinking about the existing *status quo* (Rodziewicz 2011: 19). The imaginary is an intellectual springboard which introduces a new perspective into one’s life – and as such is worthy of the attention of the representatives of the social sciences. Various fictions accompany our life, becoming – often unnoticeably – an important element of our social life. Novels, films or video games are not only a form of entertainment or artistic expression, but also a way in which the society pictures imaginaries of itself – diagnoses its problems, anxieties, and hopes. Different imaginary worlds may also serve as an important tool for critical analysis of the surrounding reality, a manner of designing new ideas and solutions.

In true Gdansk pedagogical tradition, reflection on the issue of fiction has its source in Romana Miller’s works (Rodziewicz 2011: 13). In her article *Wychowanie przez świat fikcyjny dla świata rzeczywistego* [Upbringing through the Fictitious World for the Real World], the researcher highlighted the significance of the problems and indirectly signalled their vitalness not only from the point of view of pedagogy, but also sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Interpretative possibilities do not end at this point, however. It can be easily demonstrated that the experience of stepping beyond our reality impacts almost every area of human life: from daily matters to extensive historical and political processes.

The researcher’s reflection has its continuators. In December 2006, on the occasion of Professor Romana Miller’s one hundredth birthday, a scientific conference

Upbringing through the Fictitious World for the Real World was held at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Gdansk. It was an opportunity to meet scholars interested in the problems of fiction and the imaginaries, as well as to recall Gdansk research traditions in this scope. We believe that our publication makes a creative contribution to this current of reflection, developing the direction of studies and research set out by Romana Miller and her continuators.

This volume has also been directly inspired by another event: the first scientific conference *Imaginary Worlds and Social Sciences* held at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Gdansk on 12 May 2015. The texts collected herein are the product of this event and result from the reflections of its participants – researchers.

The very event was to constitute an impulse for a reconceptualization of the notion of the imaginary worlds and for an extension of the perspectives of their examination. In consistence with these expectations, the speeches had the character of interdisciplinary invitations to pursue research and analyses, to extend one's research fields. They represented various methodological and disciplinary traditions, and they discussed different threads pertaining to collective, cultural, and artistic life, the junction of science and fiction, as well as the phenomena of broadly understood narration.

Everything was underpinned by the belief that there exists a wide spectrum of connections between the sphere of the imaginaries – symbols, meanings, and tales – and the world normally referred to as real. The contemporary development of new media, in particular computer technology and the internet, additionally strengthens these phenomena, enabling an intense immersion in the virtual space, at the same time facilitating broad and almost unrestrained access to all sorts of products of the spiritual culture: literature, music, film or the visual arts. Never before has such a vast number of people had such an easy access to the global cultural heritage – which we, actually, seem to abundantly take advantage of.

In this way, the twelfth volume of *Ars Educandi* gathers important papers concerning the state of education and the symbolic sphere of the contemporary world.

Artur Jabłoński's text concentrates on the crucial importance of literature for the identity and development of local culture. Analysing Kashubian literature, the author accentuates its role in the process and system of education. At the same time, he turns attention to the use of regional language as a distinguishing trait of a community and its cultural autonomy.

In her paper *Obcy jako inny: różne oblicza obcego w literaturze science fiction* [The Alien as an Other: Various Faces of the Alien in Science-Fiction Literature], Anna Mojsiewicz analyses the quality of being alien as a social category. The author shows social contrasts between the categories of otherness and normality through on the example of the contemporary science-fiction literature, simultaneously carrying out a synthesis bordering on sociology, philosophy, and literary studies.

In his text *Marvel kręci filmy. "Shared universe" jako nowy trend w kinie hollywoodzkim* [Marvel Makes Films. The *Shared Universe* as a New Trend in Hollywood Cinema], Bartosz Murawski analyses a model of film productions that is popular to-

day – especially among the film adaptations of comic books – and its position in the film industry.

Two subsequent articles focus on problems related to human sexuality and its construction. Joanna Pacewicz-Biegańska's text is devoted to one of the manifestations of sexuality present in culture: pornography. The author describes its representations of gender roles and the expectations related to them, and performs an analysis of the social presence of pornographic materials and their importance for contemporary culture.

Subsequently, Maria Woźniak shows human sexuality in the context of late modernity, as a construct developed individually from elements that are readily available in the modern culture. She simultaneously turns the readers' attention to the role of new media as a channel providing alternative models for the building of an individual experience of one's own sexuality.

Paulina Urbańczyk reinterprets the traditional, psychoanalytical approach to the analysis of dreams. Comparing dreaming and the creative artistic process, she demonstrates an analogy between them, proposing that the ability to dream be recognised as one of the basic functions of the human mind – one directly connected with the ability to create and design.

Our (Piotr Prósiniowski and Piotr Krzywdziński's) text concerns the topic of dreams in the context of video games. We demonstrate in what way this particular medium reformulates the representations of dreams available in the symbolic culture, adjusting them to their own channels of transmission and the poetics that mark games.

Małgorzata Siupik undertakes an analysis of stereotypes concerning gender roles in children's literature. She analyses young readers' favourite books in this respect, indicating the role of the ways in which they show gender roles that are also present in the institutionalized forms of education.

Martyna Weilandt – a co-organiser of the conference *Imaginary Worlds and Social Sciences* – analyses the imaginary world in the fan/music idol relation, touching a crucial element of pop-culture: pop music.

The topic of music is continued by Tomasz Lesicki in his text *Proces rytualny i świat wyobrażony na festiwalach muzycznych* [The Ritual Process and the Imaginary World at Music Festivals]. The author describes such events that are important from the point of view of culture as *Przystanek Woodstock (Pol'and'Rock Festival)*, formerly known in English as *Woodstock Festival Poland*) and the *Heineken Open'er Festival*, discussing them as a part of the anthropological and phenomenological paradigm.

The text which is one but last is authored by Ewa Kubicka, who discusses her research concerning the controversial skinhead subculture. She shows skinhead's social perception and the role media coverage plays in its development. At the same time, the author turns particular attention to the way in which sources of knowledge may create a negative image of a community and construct a specific manner in which it is perceived.

The volume is closed with Klaudyna Mikulewicz's review of the book *Digital Literature for Children* edited by Mireia Manresa and Neus Real.

We wish to encourage you to read our texts. We are convinced that the articles creating this volume are an interesting and valuable collection, opening the readers to new ways of perception of the social sciences, culture-related subjects, the imaginary worlds, and the related issues.

Piotr Prósiniowski
Piotr Krzywdziński

Literature

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ARTICLES AND STUDIES

Artur Jabłoński

Pomeranian Academy in Słupsk

Functions of Kashubian literature, its educational potential and the use of electronic media for its promotion

Contemporary researchers define Kashubian literature through the criterion of its language (Kalinowski 2014a). The Kashubs' first attempts at the creation of their literature date to the second half of the 16th century.¹ The alphabet, spelling, and linguistic grammar rules for the Kashubian language were developed by Florian Stanisław Ceynowa in the 1840s. For 170 years, Kashubian literature has been a tool used consciously and purposefully in the process of communication (Treder 2002: 102). The basic function of literature written in the Kashubian language since its very beginnings until today seems to be the preservation of the identity of the Kashubs, who – owing to their bond, originating from their cultural heritage – are a separate ethnic community (Drzeżdżon 2007). The ancient heritage preserved in the very language, customs, beliefs, and symbols, has been reflected in the works of native Kashubian writers.

The identity and myth-creating function

Kashubian literature, like other literary traditions, is to evoke joy, sadness, fear, desire etc. It is to entertain and educate, but above all, it is to help understand the world. It is to a significant degree identity-focused literature, referring to the self-awareness of its recipients. The Kashubian poetry, prose and drama have been introducing their readers to the world of values passed down from generation to generation since times immemorial.

This has been taking place both in the past and today in the face of the external and internal threats to one's own identity. The former apply above all to changes to one's traditional bonds with one's own place on Earth – the territory one lives in (Żelazny 2006) – while the internal threats result from individual choices determined by one's own needs (Żelazny 2006). The main danger for such minorities as the Kashubs is the process of conversion, understood as a more or less conscious change of one's own identity or a non-forced denationalization of the members of minority groups.

The Kashubs' literary narration forging their identity is based on the history, culture, and customs related to the Kashubian tradition. What is particularly significant for it is the symbolic and magical thinking typical for primitive cultures (Kulik-Kalinowska 2014). From the extensive canon of works by Kashubian authors, let us choose for instance *Rozmòwã Pòlòchã z Kaszëbq* [A Conversation between a Pole

¹ *Duchowne piesnie D. Marcina Luthera y jnyšich nabožnich męzow Zniemieckiego w Sławięsky ięzik wilozone Przes Szymana Krofea, sluge słowa Bozego W Bytowie*, printed in 1586 in Gdansk, is believed to be the oldest historical example of Kashubian writing.

and a Kashub] issued in 1850 or *Rozmòwã Kaszëbë z Pòlòchã* [A Conversation between a Kashub and a Pole] from 1868 – both authored by Ceynowa. The first can be described as a “legendary-catechismal” dialogue “aimed at the promotion of the basic knowledge on Kashubs among Slavs” (Treder 2007: 21). The second is a voice introducing Kashubs “into the main stream of the 19th century socially engaged literature”, in which the author “severely criticizes the inequality of the estates, in particular the nobility and clergy” (Treder 2007: 44).

The identity function also marks Hieronim Jarosz Derdowski’s narrative poem *Ò panu Czorlińszcim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachôt* [About Mister Czorlinski Who Went to Puck for Fishing Nets] dating back to 1880, works by Towarzystwo Młodokaszubów (*Young Kashubs Society*) headed by Jan Karnowski, Leon Heyke and Aleksander Majkowski as well as the literary achievements of *Zrzeszińcy* – a poetic-ideological group operating during the interwar period, whose members included Aleksander Labuda, Jan Trepczyk, and Jan Rompski.

Must-reads created at that time include Aleksander Majkowski’s 1938 novel *Żëcé i przigodë Remusa* [Life and Adventures of Remus] (Majkowski 1938) and Jan Rompski’s play *Wzénik Arkónë* [The Resurrection of Arkona] completed in 1939 (Rompski 2009). Daniel Kalinowski writes about the first of these works that “in its multitude of threads and the presented system of values it grows from the Kashubian folk tradition”, but that “the second interpretative space in terms of importance” of Majkowski’s novel “are elements of the romantic worldview”, which can be sensed in particular “in the aura of the literary creation” of its main protagonist, who wants to mobilise Kashubs to fight for their own identity (Kuik-Kalinowska, Kalinowski 2009).

A similar understanding of writing marked Jan Rompski, who felt obliged to kindle a spark that would trigger his compatriots – immersed in historical oblivion and indifferent to the values flowing from their own culture – to act. For the author of *Wzénik Arkónë*, it was the national idea that was the saving power in the fight for a revival and continued existence of the Kashubian community. Rompski’s play takes place in Rugia, in the ancient Slav gord of Arkona, which has a symbolic meaning. The spirit of the place is to be resurrected in our own times, so that Pomeranians-Kashubs enter “The Road to the Reborn Arkona of Today” / “Na drogã do nowi dzys Arkónë” (Kuik-Kalinowska 2009: 48).

Both the above works are also excellent examples of the myth-creating function of literature. The motifs, figures, and images recognisable for Kashubian literature have been developed within it throughout all the years of its existence (Kalinowski 2014a). Basically, they are the source of its power and creation, since they create a rich structure of meanings.

Myths and identity narration are not unknown to the post-war authors either, as well as the authors writing today. Among the many names there are above all – Jan Zbrzyca, Jan Drzeżdżon, Stanisław Janke, Krystyna Muza, Ida Czaja, and Jaromira Labuda. It is worth taking a look at Drzeżdżon’s 1993 novel *Twôrz Smãtka* [Smãtk’s Face] (1993). In my opinion, the key to its interpretation is the essay *O etniczności* [On Ethnicity] that the author wrote a year before the publication of the novel, just a couple of weeks before his death (Drzeżdżon 2007). “We may say” – he wrote – “that the twentieth century brought about the death of the national ideologies, since peoples were

internally destroyed by imperialism. Therefore, their place will be taken by ethnic societies together with their mythologies, and they will probably turn out to be extremely proficient at culture-making" (Drzeżdżon 2007: 40). It is with this hope, embodied in the figure of a little boy, that Drzeżdżon concluded his last novel.

Also, Artur Jabłoński's novel *Namerkôny* [The Marked One] published in 2013 (Jablonski 2013) fits the literary tradition. Daniel Kalinowski argues that it is an attempt at enlivening myths to reach non-literary goals (Kalinowski 2014b), while Adela Kożyczkowska writes about this work in the following way:

Built and continuously rebuilt by Amandus [the main protagonist – A.J.], his identity is an interesting effect of an unsolvable and perpetual conflict between man and culture. On the one hand, people need culture to subjugate and control nature and to indicate different scopes and types of relationships within the community, while on the other – it has an oppressive effect on people, as it tries to immobilise them. Subjugate them. Politicise them. (Kożyczkowska 2013: 202).

Today, Kashubian literature reflects like a mirror the changing cultural awareness of the youngest generation of its creators and recipients. Literature tries to "domesticate" the global phenomena penetrating with great impetus the Kashubian cultural space. In poetry, it is most clearly noticeable in works by Hanna Makurat (2010, 2011), Gracjana Potrykus (Pòtrékùs 2012) and Mateusz Tytus Meyer (2013), in prose in the literary pieces by Grzegorz Schramke (2006) and Wojciech Myszk (Mëszk 2014), and in drama in the plays by Roman Drzeżdżon (2009) and Adam Hebel.² For a couple of years now we have also been able to talk about a return of the Kashubian magazine column, which was developing during the interwar period (Kalinowski 2014c). This genre is currently represented by Roman Drzeżdżon and Tomasz Fopke (Drzeżdżon, Fopke 2010).

Educational potential of Kashubian literature

The teaching of the Kashubian language in schools began in September 1991 (Mistarz 2014). The first Kashubian schools were established in Głodnica, in a commune of Linia (a primary school) and in Brusy (a general education upper secondary school). They were founded under the regulation of the Minister of Education of 1988 on the teaching of the mother tongue to children and youth of non-Polish nationalities, which in 1992 was amended by the regulation of the Minister of National Education on the organization of education facilitating the maintenance and development of the national, ethnic, and linguistic identity of students belonging to national minorities (Mistarz 2014). According to September 2014 data from the Educational Information System, the Kashubian language was taught to 18,000 students in 393 schools, including 291 primary schools (14,492 students), 112 lower secondary schools (2,766 students), and 27 upper secondary schools (742 students; *Zgłoś dziecko na język kaszubski* [Enroll your Child for Kashubian Classes] 2015).

² His play *Smãtkòwò spiéwa* was staged by the Zymk theatre twice: in Luzino on 18 March 2011, and in Gdynia on 22 June 2011. Adam Hebel is also the author of a scenario for the latest adaptation of Lech Bądkowski's play *Sąd nieostateczny* [The Non-Final Judgement] staged by the Neokaszubia theatre in the Kashubian Concert Hall in Wejherowo.

It should be remembered that in the 1970s as a result of repressive measures of the Polish state, the Kashubian language was not only eliminated from social communication, but its generational transfer was also severed. Since children speaking Kashubian at school experienced discrimination from a considerable share of teachers, the parents – guided by their concern – resigned from communication in this language at home. Towards the end of the 1980s only a dozen or so percent of young people could speak the Kashubian language (Mistarz 2014). This is the reason school education is so important for the revival of Kashubian, which started after the democratic transformations in Poland in 1989. It is to integrate the local community, bring up children and youth in the spirit of Kashubian patriotism, raise ethnic awareness, and, consequently, develop historical and cultural awareness (Grucza 2007).

At the initial stage of school teaching, Kashubs did not have their own textbooks and used teaching programmes developed by individual teachers themselves. In 1990, following the endeavours of *Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie* [Kashubian-Pomeranian Association], a collection of excerpts from Kashubian literature gathered by Tadeusz Lipski was published – it was prepared with the teachers of the Polish language in mind (Lipski 1990). The literary texts offered in this collection constituted a review of the achievements of Kashubian writers until 1989. Two years after the publication of the book *Remusowi króm. Wypisy z literatury kaszubskiej dla nauczycieli języka polskiego* [Remusowi króm. (Remus's Shop) Excerpts from Kashubian Literature for Teachers of the Polish Language], there appeared the first textbook for teachers of Kashubian: *Kaszubski język literacki. Podręcznik dla lektoratów* [Kashubian Literary Language. A Textbook for Language Teaching]. The book was developed by Róża Wosiak-Śliwa and Marek Cybulski from the University of Gdansk and also contained fragments of classical texts from Kashubian literature (Wosiak-Śliwa, Cybulski 1992). For the purposes of teaching at school at Głodnica, the teacher employed there, being also a Kashubian poet – Jaromira Labuda – translated Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling* into the Kashubian language (Andersen 1996).

However, there were no new literary texts by Kashubian authors, and in particular literary prose. Kashubian environments reacted to this shortage by organising the Jan Drzeżdżon National Prose Competition in 1995. The competition, organised until today, turned out to be a worthwhile initiative. In 1996, the publication house Szos, partly using the works entered for the competition, published an anthology of contemporary Kashubian prose *Dërchôj królewionkò. Antologia dzysdniowi prozë kaszëbsczi* [Dërchôj królewionkò (Live on, Princess). An Anthology of Today's Kashubian Prose], featuring texts by 28 authors. For 16 of them, the book was a debut (Pryczkowski 1996). The editor of the anthology, Eugeniusz Pryczkowski, wrote in the introduction:

The book is to respond to the needs of regionalists, actors, teachers and children, who deal with the development of the Kashubian word through recitation, writing, and the search for their own roots in the mother tongue, stories and legends. In particular, this book is to come to the assistance of the facilitators from "Rodnô Mòwa" [Mother Tongue] Kashubian Prose and Poetry Recitation Competition, the final of which is held every year in Chmielno (Pryczkowski 1996: 5–6).

It was as late as in 2001 that the world saw the first Kashubian textbook with exercises *Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Podrëcznik do jëzyka kaszubskiego z ëwiczniami* [Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze (Kashubia. Land and People). Kashubian Language Textbook with Exercises] written by Danuta Pioch, a teacher, for grade 1–3 children in mind (Pioch 2001). The publication of the book was followed by many subsequent textbooks and collections of excerpts from literature – obviously reflecting the possibilities and potential of Kashubian environments. At the moment, schoolchildren use their own Kashubian textbooks at every stage of education – from the first grade of primary school through lower secondary school all the way up to upper secondary school.³

Kashubian literature created for the purposes of the school or – to be more precise – the “school recipient” has become an almost separate phenomenon (Kalinowski 2014c). No longer sufficient are lists of readings or textbooks being a collection of excerpts from Kashubian literature. Teachers themselves have started to create literary texts. Examples include the publication *W krôjnie Grifa. Tëatrowé scenarniczi* [In Gryphon’s Land. Theatre Scenarios] – a collection of thirty Kashubian play scenarios, meant to be used by both teachers of the Kashubian language and regional theatre groups (Pryczkowska, Wejer, Formela 2012). In this collection, as Daniel Kalinowski pointed out:

one may sense care (...) which supports pupils and students on their way to further identity development. This is because the world of theatre, through its ability to evoke the mood of joy, fondness, and respect, as well as the atmosphere of sadness, aversion, or disapproval, supports the creation of one’s personal attitude to the external world. Drama techniques may also show in an attractive way identity-related and ethnographic testimonies to spiritual culture (Kalinowski 2014c: 127–128).

Another item with a similar nature and purpose is a collection of theatrical lesson scenarios *Ûsôdzczì na wdôr...* [Works in Memory of...] (Baska-Borzyszkowska 2013). Their author, Felicja Baska-Borzyszkowska, reached for the classics of Kashubian literature, using their texts to write her own collages of small theatrical forms. They too are to encourage young people to a different, more active participation in the world of Kashubian tradition.

Another example of the use of Kashubian literature in the process of the education of children and youth is the comic book. Piotr Dziekanowski, a publisher and journalist from Bytów, is the father of the idea, a facilitator and a strong advocate of the use of the potential of this form of literary message and it is owing to him that the town is becoming the Kashubian capital of the comic book. Recent years witnessed the publication of his three works: the historical comic book *Szczeniã Swiãców* [Puppy of the Swiencas] was published in 2009 (Kucharski, Natrzecy 2009), the photo comic book *Arbata* was printed in 2012 (Natrzecy, Rolbiecki 2012), and *Akademiô błotowëch żółwiów* [The Acade-

³ Textbooks for primary schools include: D. Pioch, *Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Podrëcznik do jëzyka kaszubskiego z ëwiczniami* [Kaszëbë. Zemìa i lëdze. Kashubian Language Textbook with Exercises]; D. Pioch, *Zëcé codniowé na Kaszëbach*; D. Pioch, *Najô domôczna*; D. Pioch, *Z kaszëbsczim w swiat*; T. Czerwińska, A. Pająk, L. Sorn, *Z kaszëbsczim w szkôle*; J. Labùda, *Zôrno mûwë: podrëcznik do ùczbë jãzëka kaszëbszczégò dlô pòczãtkùjącëch*; J. Labùda, *Zdrój słowa* [The Spring of Words]. The textbook for the lower secondary school is D. Pioch, *Òjczëstô mûwa*, and one for the upper secondary school is F. Baska-Borzyszkowska, W. Myszk, *Kaszëbë. Jô w kaszëbsczì, kaszëbskô w swiece*, parts 1 and 2.

my of Pond Turtles] – a story of the adventures of two little turtles that demonstrate the power of friendship – was issued in 2015 (Kucharski, Nowotnik 2015).

The use of electronic media

Considering the limited circle of readers of Kashubian literature – which is related to the relatively recent introduction of the Kashubian language to the system of education, and so to a still considerably common phenomenon of a certain illiteracy among the adult users of the Kashubian language – the present-day channels of its dissemination: electronic media, audiobooks and e-books are important for Kashubian literature.

Among the first ones to turn attention to this fact were the creators of the Kashubian television programme *Rodnô Zemìa* [Fatherland] (Prëczkòwsczi 2003). It was as a part of this programme, broadcast for two years (2000–2002) by the Gdansk branch of the Polish TV, that with children’s participation as a part of lessons of the Kashubian language thirty lyrics to songs were created; together with musical notation, they were published in the book *Piesnie Rodny Zemi* [Songs of the Fatherland] in 2003 (Fópka, Prëczkòwsczi, Stachùrszczi 2003).

Worthy of special attention is the *Kaszubskie Bajania* [Kashubian Storytelling] project that has lasted since 2011. It is a social campaign carried out jointly by the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association and Radio Gdansk. As the founders of the Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej (Kashubian Fairy Tale Academy) write on its website: “The Academy was established with children in mind, so that they become familiar with the cultural heritage of Kashubia from their earliest years”. Another goal of the campaign is to raise the public awareness of the role of reading to children (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011). As many as four records have already been published under a joint title *Najpiëkniejsze bajki i baśnie kaszubskie* [The Most Beautiful Kashubian Fairy Tales and Fables], and some well-known Kashubian artists, creators, researchers, journalists, self-government officials, and priests, including Danuta Stenka, Maciej Miecznikowski, Rudi Schubert, Krzysztof Skiba, professor Jerzy Treder, professor Józef Borzyszkowski, Fr. Marian Miotk and the runner Angelika Cichocka, have lent their voice to them.

As a part of the *Kashubian Storytelling*, meetings with children are held in kindergartens, children’s homes, and hospitals. During these events, the guest speakers read fairy tales and talk about Kashubian customs and traditions. An important part of the social campaign is the Fairy Tale Family Festival with games, plays, competitions, and performances of children’s groups (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011). A book with a CD prepared by the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdansk is also worth mentioning. Texts for the collection *Ôpòwiédz mie bôjkã. Opowiedz mi bajkę* [Ôpòwiédz mie bôjkã. Tell me a Story] were selected by Dušan-Vladislav Paždjerski, a Slavist from the University of Gdansk (Paždjerski 2010).

A Kashubian literary protagonist has also become a character in a video game *Stark Remus* [Grandpa Remus]. The game was created in 2012 by the foundation *Aby Chciãto sië Chciëć* co-financed by the Kartuzy district. During the game, the player helps grandpa Remus in his spring cleaning, learning the basic Kashubian nouns as they go along. The game already has its second, much extended version, and enjoys an unwavering interest of children, teachers, and parents (Akademia Bajki Kaszubskiej 2011).

In turn, as a part of a private initiative of Kaszubska Agencja Artystyczna established by Tomasz Fopke, two audiobooks with classics of Kashubian literature were released. In 2013, the audience were offered a CD with Hieronim Jarosz Derdowski's narrative poem *Ò panu Czorlińszim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachòł*. Two years earlier, Aleksander Majkowski's novel *Żęcë i przigodë Remusa*, read by Fopke, was published.

We still need to remember that it was not Fopke who faced the challenge of reading Majkowski's novel for the first time. At the beginning of the 1990s, actor Zbigniew Jankowski's pioneer reading of the entire text was recorded for the "Radiowy Magazyn Kaszubski" *Na bôtach ë w bôrach* [Aboard Boats and in Forests] prepared by Dominik Sowa and Leszek Szmidtke. The recording was subsequently issued on cassette tapes and for this reason today it is practically impossible to listen to it in home conditions. The same can be said about the tape *Gòdci ëi wice* [Tales and Jokes], released in 1991 by the *Tatczëzna* magazine, which contained literary stories told by Józef Roszman and Roman Skwiercz. Also, in the 1990s Radio Gdańsk adapted for its purposes Jan Drzeżdżon's short stories from the book *Zwònnik* [The Bell Ringer], which were interpreted by Artur Jabłoński, and *Winnie-the-Pooh* translated into Kashubian and interpreted by Bożena Szymańska-Ugowska. These recordings, having been broadcast on the radio, remain kept in the archives of Radio Gdańsk.

Established in 2004, Radio Kaszëbë, broadcast by Stowarzyszenie Ziemia Pucka, at some point aired both audiobooks prepared by Tomasz Fopke (*Ò panu Czorlińszim, co do Pùcka pò sęcë jachòł* and *Żęcë i przigodë Remusa*) as well as *Figle gnieżdżewszich gbùrów* [Jokes of Rich Farmers from Gnieżdżewo], authored by Jan Patok and interpreted by Fopke. This recording is available on the Soundcloud music and podcast streaming platform which is used by the radio (Patok 2014). It is also there that one may find an audio play based on Jablonszczi's novel *Namerkòny*, which Radio Kaszëbë aired as a series in 2014. The recording involved ten speakers, who often impersonated two or three characters (Jablonszczi 2014). For Radio Kaszëbë, fragments of the novel *Żòłti kam* [The Yellow Stone] were read by its author, Stanisław Janke. They are also available at Soundcloud (Janke 2014).

In the 170 years long history of Kashubian literature, its identity function appears purposefully, often as a part of a deliberate ideological project (Kalinowski 2014a). Writers try to answer the basic question of every human being coming into the world. The question concerning one's self, one's identity, has always posed a great challenge. Like in the past, Kashubian literature still wants to help people find their own place in the world. Present day technologies, including electronic media, are excellent tools of assistance in this task faced by literature. They are also helpful in the educational processes. Their appropriate use may strengthen the power of the message of literary texts, and, consequently, the power of the identity-related reflection of the Kashubs.

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Summary

Functions of Kashubian literature, its educational potential and the use of electronic media for its promotion

For over 170 years now, that is from its early beginnings, the primary function of the literature written in the Kashubian language has been preserving the own voice of the Kashubs who thanks to ties derived from the cultural heritage, constitute a distinct ethnic community. The themes, figures or images characteristic of the Kashubian literature as a source of its strength and creative power, form a rich structure of meanings responsible for the myth-making factor in its literary output. As in a mirror, the contemporary Kashubian literature reflects the changing cultural self-consciousness of the youngest generation of writers and readers. Literature is trying to “tame” the global phenomena, which force their way vehemently into the Kashubian cultural space.

Kashubian language and literature were included on a permanent basis in the educational system in the early 1990s. However, there was a lack of new literary texts of Kashubian authors, and especially ones written in prose. The reaction of the Kashubian circles was organizing a Jan Drzeżdżon National Prose Competition in 1995. It was not earlier than in 2001 that the first textbook with exercises was published. *Kaszëbë. Zemia and lëdze. Podręcznik do języka kaszubskiego z ćwiczeniami* was written by the teacher Danuta Pioch for the children from classes I–III of the primary school. Since then there has been a real boom for the next school textbooks and extracts from literature – of course one reflecting the scale of Kashubian circles and their potential. A separate phenomenon can be observed, namely Kashubian literature created for the needs of school curricula or rather for “the school audience”.

Because of the limited number of Kashubian literature readers, which results from the quite recent introduction of Kashubian to the educational system and fairly common illiteracy among adults, the most important for the Kashubian literature are modern channels of its distribution: electronic media, audio books and e-books. A Kashubian protagonist has also become a character from a computer game *Stark Remus*. Modern technology, including electronic media, are also helpful in educational processes. Their proper use can enhance the effectiveness of the message of a literary text, and thus the power of the identity consideration of the Kashubs.

Keywords

Kashubs, Kashubian literature, identity, education, electronic media

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The Alien as the Other: Various Images of the Alien in Science Fiction Literature

The Other terrifies and fascinates, and crosses the boundaries the Self would not dare to cross or would not even recognise. Finally, the Other invariably also hides in Us. Although the Other has always been accompanying us, he/she has effectively been escaping any attempts at definition and understanding. Edmund Husserl described this special position of the Other when writing that the Other is available solely in his/her unavailability, thus situating him/her in atopy, i.e. in a non-place, to which the Self does not and cannot have any access (Waldenfels 2002). Science fiction literature draws inspiration from this unique dependency and equips the figure of an extra-terrestrial with the features of the Other. In science fiction, the Alien adopts many images.

When analysing the notion of a stranger or a newcomer, Bernhard Waldenfels introduces a categorization of alienness. The author identifies the daily alienness we experience for example in relation to our neighbours. There is a certain impassable barrier between us that determines the boundaries of our hearths, thus defending our privacy. However, neither my neighbour, a passer-by on the street, nor the shop assistant sheltered behind his counter destroy my familiar world – they do not threaten its structure, since they fit in with it themselves. Another category is the structural alienness we experience in contact with cultural differences. Finally, Waldenfels identifies radical alienness:

It applies to everything that remains outside all order and confronts us with events, which question not only a specific interpretation, but the very “possibility of interpretation”. [...] The radically alien can only be interpreted as a surplus, an extravagance crossing the existing horizon of sense (Waldenfels 2002: 34–35).

In this paper, I wish to follow the way in which science fiction uses the alien to talk about problems that are ontological – related to an attempt at defining humanity, ethical – accompanying a reaction to the Other, and epistemological – concerning the question of whether it is at all possible to understand the Other. Discussing the above issues, I shall use three examples of the creation of an alien: they come from Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg’s *Robot* (1973), Orson Scott Card’s *Speaker of the Dead* (1986) and Stanisław Lem’s *Solaris* (1961). I shall present the functions the figures of aliens play in the above-mentioned books.

Waldenfels points out that Familiarity cannot exist without Alienness, since to determine the boundaries of Familiarity, we also need the Alien and the Other that we might situate in the space “outside”. Therefore, we may say that Familiarity is created through contact with Alienness. Waldenfels refers to the Freudian notion of identification in a similar way:

[...] I become myself owing to the fact that I refer to others. I become what I am, since I identify myself with a part of my parents, my ancestors, with a group, with the *social self* in William James’s sense. [...] the other is perceived as that which is excluded from our collective sphere and separated from collective existence, and therefore that which is not shared with others. In this sense, alienness is tantamount to the lack of belonging to a certain “us” (Waldenfels 2002: 17–18).

Bearing the above relationships in mind, let us have a look at the protagonist and narrator of *Robot*, a robot called BER-66. Snerg’s character – a robot constructed by an alien race – wanders through the bomb shelter and the city of Kaula-Sud, kidnapped by mysterious Supercreatures, searching for a definition of humanity and a road to it. The story of this protagonist – a robot constructed by way of an antithesis and searching for humanity in himself – makes one reflect on the definition of the human being, the border between the familiar/human and the alien/non-human, and finally on what it is that makes us people. Both the robot character and the innards of the Mechanism in which he was constructed are built via imaging based on the play of opposites and on surprising similarities between the natural, authentic, and the mechanical and secondary. The accumulation of epithets related to the organic world in the description of the interior of the Mechanism makes one see that the assembly line carrying the subsequent copies of robots resembling BER-66, just like him bearing the appropriate serial numbers instead of names, does resemble – as rightfully pointed out by Rafał Nawrocki – the female reproductive system. The transportation of the protagonist from the insides of the Mechanism to a bomb shelter by Kaula-Sud is preceded by his several-month long stay in an isolated dark chamber – the period of BER-66’s adaptation and adjustment to life in human society. Moreover, the production line down which the transparent cylinder of BER-66 moves, is a tunnel finished with a tight duct leading upwards – from where the protagonist is literally pushed into the external world (Nawrocki 2011).

Referring to George Simmel’s and Max Weber’s observations, Richard Lehan in his book *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, points out that the fear of redundancy or the absence of meaning and anonymity of human life ceaselessly accompany modern people (Lehan 1998). The situation of BER-66 seems to be an illustration of the fear against becoming lost among the masses: the creatures created by the Mechanism are not born, but are produced; they do not have names – only serial numbers. However, the Mechanism’s products live like people, they experience human senses, and even (at least one special specimen) feel doubts as to the purpose of their existence and their identity. Scott Sanders notes that the above fear is expressed in post-war science fiction through the blur-

ring of the boundary between people and machines: people can be controlled, machines can think (Nawrocki 2011).

The fragment referred to above is just the beginning of BER-66's rambling through the complex of Kaula-Sud and the wide-ranging bomb shelter extending under it. The mysterious world into which BER-66 is thrust, leads to a complete alienation of the protagonist. He not only fails to understand the principles operating in the shelter or comprehend the fantastic phenomena he witnesses, but he also cannot confide his doubts and observations to anyone. He is an alien, and at least theoretically endangers the shelter community. All the more, the threat of denunciation enforces extraordinary alertness on the robot as well as quenches his natural curiosity. Waldenfels asks what alienness begins with. Does it take its beginning in my own perception of myself as alien to others, or of others as alien to me? "The answer depends on where we place our measure of normality: in our own world or in the world of others" (Waldenfels 2002: 41). The situation of BER-66 would suggest the first case; after all, he is a spy working for the Mechanism and the Supercreatures that kidnapped the Kaula-Sud city from the Earth. Nevertheless, the situation soon changes.

Herbert George Wells in *Mind at the End of Its Tether* expresses a pessimistic belief that the human species has reached its end (Lehan 1998). In the world of the *Robot*, his thesis not only has a symbolic dimension, but it also takes on a real shape when BER-66 discovers that the inhabitants of the shelter are gradually replaced with robots similar to himself. The mechanisation of people, and the consequent annihilation of the subjectivity of the individual are complete. The fear of losing one's humanity in the face of one's loss in the postmodern juggernaut or yielding under the oppressive system takes on a concrete form: here, people are replaced with machines resembling them to such a degree that it becomes impossible to tell them apart. The reality collapses, giving place to Baudrillardian simulacrum.

It is also a critical moment for our protagonist, who decides to rebel against the Mechanism, regardless of whether he is one of the faulty products or one of the last people living in the shelter. The act of the machine's rebellion against his creator is a very popular theme of science fiction works, but in *Robot*, the motif of rebellion is reversed, since here, it is the Mechanism which is the constructor. Opposing it, BER-66 stands on the side of the human race "together with its numerous strengths and weaknesses" (Wiśniewski-Snerg 1977: 7), thus making a choice. Patricia Kerslake in *Science Fiction and Empire* notes that the Other/Alien who cannot be differentiated from the Self, is most fearful (Kerslake 2007). In the current situation, however, one should ask a question who really is the Other endangering Our integrity and existence? The protagonist takes the people's side, while the society living in the shelter turn out to be an extension of the Mechanism. What initially seemed to be a part of the Self, now has the characteristics of the Other, while the Other/Alien, i.e. BER-66, achieves the status of the Self.

The picture of the relationship between the Self and the Other shown through the *Robot* is an opposition based on the dichotomy of the pair human–non-human, with human behaviours understood as ones marked by a humanistic attitude,

striving to maintain subjectivity and individuality, and non-humans questioning the subjectivity of individuals. We may draw such conclusions after having a look at the non-human robots, just pretending to be people, and non-human inhabitants of the surface of Kaula-Sud, reduced to the level of “animal animals” (Wolfe 2003: 110), and serving solely as a resource. Therefore, being a human being is not given to us a priori. On the contrary: the humanity in the *Robot* lies in the active process of the constant becoming of a human being through the cultivation of behaviours developing or sustaining humanistic subjectivity and a simultaneous limitation of behaviours against human individuality and uniqueness. It is not difficult to notice that this is a highly anthropocentric attitude – however, it determines an exceptionally important role to the Other, since we become Ourselves only in an identification of and confrontation with the Other.

Walter Benn Michaels points out that Orson Scott Card’s universe is also based on the dispute between Otherness and Familiarity, but the *Speaker of the Dead* discusses the motif of the Other in a different way. According to Michaels, the conflict between the two races portrayed in the novel results from irreconcilable cultural differences, which – as he stresses – seem to be the only insurmountable abyss. The ideological antagonism is not universal or eternal, as the worldview can be changed. If in turn we look at the problem of conflict between two different species from the perspective of ethics (and we shall thus attempt to interpret the text as one talking about interpersonal conflicts based on the opposition between the Self and the Other in a metaphorical way), the underlining of physiognomic differences between representatives of these species is basically a testimony to the insignificance of the role that these differences play within a single species. Nevertheless, we shall not escape the culture in which we were brought up and a part of which we are (Michaels 2000). As a result, the conflict between two cultures invariably involves a danger of valuation, and it is then that we feel most tempted to privilege our own culture and try to domesticate the alien culture.

Speaker of the Dead focuses on the relationship between the terrestrial colonists of the planet Lusitania and its native inhabitants that people call “the piggies”. The relationship is strongly marked by the belief of the supremacy of human civilisation, which rejects the culture of the piggies – built on their unique bonds with the native flora and fauna of the planet. Monika Bakke, when referring to Charles Taylor’s observations, identifies two types of the non-human: one originating from the divine, and one coming from nature, “from which people were separated or even isolated and considered to be the finest beings among all forms of life. This is also tantamount to the expulsion of the animal element from human life and a simultaneous lack of respect for the world of animals, plants, and other forms of life” (Bakke 2010: 23). The piggies are perceived as lower, more primitive creatures, dangerous to people. The reason for this is the lack of understanding of their civilisation and a belief that the Other – the Alien – is worse than the known and Familiar.

The author presents the silhouettes of xenologers who fulfil a function similar to the anthropologists or ethnologists on Lusitania; they are to collect comprehen-

sive information on the piggies and study their culture. The knowledge is indispensable to answering the question whether the piggies belong to the category of framling, i.e. people from another world, ramen – people of another species, or varlese – animals people cannot really communicate with. However, the xenologers' research leaves a lot to be desired. They focus on the introduction of human technical novelties that – as the protagonists believe – will make the life of the small inhabitants of the Lusitanian forest easier. As a result, their intervention almost ends with a catastrophe after they upset the balance of Lusitania's environment. The piggies are actually a secretive race, passionately defending access to their secrets, which does not make research any easier. Nevertheless, the Lusitanian xenologers focus on the domestication of the alienness of the piggies rather than on attempts to understand or respect it. This resembles a situation described by Cary Wolfe in his article "*Animal studies*", *Disciplinary and the (Post)Humanism*, in which he turns attention to the role of society in the neutralization of Otherness. Civic society absorbs its individual, different members, "holding together different classes and interests by providing their members with recognition [...] claiming the synchronicity of the unique and the universal, and the global reach of Western notions of 'heterogeneity'" (Wolfe 2013: 131). Similarly, the terrestrial protagonists of the novel in a gesture of a benevolent permissiveness that liberal humanism often adopts in relation to structural Otherness (Wolfe 2013) try to include the culturally different piggies that are also different as a species into the circle of rational beings, i.e. people. Meanwhile – as Waldenfels shows – the domestication of the Alien is essentially its annihilation, since it leads to the change of the Alien's status from the Other to the Exotic (Waldenfels 2002). This is not just about anatomical differences, but above all cultural differences between the terrestrial and the Lusitanian civilisation; the differences that xenologers consider irreconcilable with the terrestrial civilisation.

The piggies perform an extremely cruel – in the opinion of the terrestrial researchers – ritual murder of two persons. The scenes of the crime showing the massacred bodies of xenologers who must have been subjected to vivisection before giving up the ghost, shock – since they constitute a realisation of the anthropocentric fear of the non-human Other as: 1) the negative features of the human subject which were heretofore projected onto animals are shown by the piggies, and 2) the human subject is reduced to the level of "animal animal" as a result of a methodically (and not brutally) performed surgery.¹ This motif also deals with the idea of a friendly or hostile extra-terrestrial. As pointed out by Gregory Benford, in relation to the alien, the category of a friendly or hostile partner is basically contradictory (Benford 1987). Friendly or hostile attitudes are notions which apply only to people; therefore, an attempt to ascribe one of them to the piggies is yet another instance of the domestication of the other, and thus of depriving them of the status of the Other. The solving of the mystery of the xenologers' death confirms

¹ Monika Bakke (2010) writes more extensively on the problems of anthropocentrism in relation to the non-human in the chapter *Kłopoty z antropocentryzmem* [Problems with Anthropocentrism].

this postulate. In reality, the mysterious murders performed on the researchers were not premeditated crimes, but a result of a radical difference between people and the piggies. For the piggies, a ritual murder is actually a ceremony of passage from the so-called second life to the third one. After a skilfully performed vivisection, a tree constituting another fully conscious form of life grows from the piggy's dead body. For a piggy, the third form of life is the highest honour and a sign of maturity, since they can procreate only in this form. The murder committed on the xenologers was therefore their honouring and an attempt at admitting them to the tribe. There would be no crime if the relationship between people and piggies was based on partnership. Having a basic knowledge of human anatomy and physiology, the piggies would not commit the murder. Their contacts, however, were different: they were a unilateral examination of an object by a subject, and the only attempts at the anchoring of the knowledge acquired by men – as aforementioned – gave no positive results due to the researchers' ignorance and their sense of superiority.

People's reaction to Alienness seems to be highly problematic. On the one hand, it is indispensable for Familiarity, since it shapes it. On the other hand, when faced with the Alien, people try at all costs to domesticate or reduce Otherness to mere Exoticism. Meanwhile, the unwavering faith in anthropocentrism prevents the acknowledgement of a pathway other than human; the apparent appreciation of the piggies, an attempt at their inclusion into the human family as representatives of the ramen class (people of another species), is nothing else but elimination of the difference. According to Michaels, the question which arises after we have read *Speaker of the Dead* is above all whether two strikingly different cultures are able to coexist without dooming one of them to annihilation (Michaels 2000).

Is therefore contact with those who are truly and radically Others and understanding them at all feasible, or are we doomed to eternally looking at the Alien through a distorting mirror of anthropomorphisation, thus annihilating their unique, impenetrable Alienness? Stanisław Lem's book *Solaris* wrestles with providing an answer to this question. The novel presents the figure of an alien who exceeds human possibilities of comprehension to such a degree that it becomes impossible even to communicate with it. The Solaris Ocean is an intelligent organism that Earthmen have been examining for years, but despite the development of a research field called "Solaristics", i.e. the knowledge of Solaris, it remains inscrutable, and all attempts at establishing any meaningful contact keep proving futile. The Solaris Ocean is an embodiment of radical alienness.

According to Waldenfels, one of the most difficult problems to be solved in contact with the truly Other is the asymmetry in the Self/Alien relationship:

This is because the alien is also specifically marked by being non-synchronized with the Self, and if it at all is, then to a very unsatisfying degree. [...] alienness does not exhaust in the fact that there exists something exceeding our power of disposal; rather, the experience of the alien starts with an alien claim that precedes our own initiative. What should be said and done is never the same as what can be said and done (Waldenfels 2002: 9).

“As Lévinas shows, [the absence of synchronisation – A.M.] does not consist [...] in that the roles in the dialogue are given in a unilateral way, but in that the claim and the answer do not coincide” (Waldenfels 2002: 131).

In *Solaris*, an example of the above are the guests whose presence makes the life of the explorers of the planet unbearable. They are projections of the protagonists’ innermost and most humiliating guilt or perhaps also desires. Two of them are so embarrassed by their guests that they do not allow them to appear to the rest of the research team, and the presence of one of the guests leads as far as to the suicide of one of the team members. The protagonists are afraid of confronting whatever makes them feel disgusted about themselves and ruins the order of their internal world. In other words, they are afraid of confrontation with the Other in themselves. However, how can we understand the fact that all attempts at contact with the undoubtedly intelligent being result solely in mental torture inflicted on the protagonists by the ocean? Here, we are returning to the lack of synchronisation: what people perceive as a torment inflicted by *Solaris*, is probably something totally different to the ocean itself. Researchers of Lem, headed by Professor Jerzy Jarzębski, interpret this phenomenon as a criticism of anthropocentrism and a sad conclusion on the possibilities of human beings (Jarzębski 2003). To understand the intention of the ocean, the researchers of *Solaris* would have to look at it through the eyes of the being they examined, putting away their human reasoning and human logic. Putting it in a nutshell, they would have to leave themselves aside, which – as demonstrated by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. – is impossible, since “Consciousness can never make an object out of itself for objective observation” (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 1985, p. 13). This observation is consistent with Wolfe’s postulate on an attempt to “reject any typical comprehension of the system [for the benefit of – A.M.] (...) a deconstruction of one’s own central comprehension” (Wolfe 2013: 136). As a result, the world shown by Lem seems to be – as David Ketterer put it – a hall of mirrors, in which one may only see his/her own distorted reflection (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 1985). Thus, we are returning to the Husserlian conviction of the Other’s elusiveness. Patrick Parrinder points out that the very awareness of the Other’s existence gives us nothing without contact. Although we can talk about its certain form if we take into account Harey: *Solaris* and Kelvin’s joint product, we are still unable to see anything going beyond the framework of the projection of human consciousness (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 1989). During attempts at objective examination or comprehension of not only the Other but also the Self, anthropocentrism emerges again as a highly faulty tool.

Let us note that in all the above-discussed works the basic reaction to Otherness is curiosity motivating the protagonists to examine the secret hiding in the space unavailable to the Self and the subsequent horror with the Otherness. Next comes hostility or an attempt at the domestication of the Otherness – it is worth pointing out that both reactions try to disarm the Other through elimination (understood literally or through the inclusion of the Otherness into the domain of Familiarity). The blame for the above must be placed on the anthropocentrism inscribed into the humanistic thought. It is also worth recalling that in the case of BER-66, rebellion against the oppressive Mechanism determines the robot’s humanity and can

therefore be interpreted almost as a manifesto of a humanist faced with a threat of losing their humanity in the postmodern reality. Like Bernard Rieux in *The Plague*, BER-66 tries to find a chance for the saving of humanity in the face of inevitable disaster – the annihilation of the people in Kaula-Sud. Significantly, *Robot's* protagonist does not originate from the human species – despite being an ideal copy of the human physiognomy and psyche, he is only a robot. As aforementioned, the above is an expression of the belief that you are not a human being, you become one. The reaction to the Otherness as presented both in *Speaker of the Dead*, and in *Solaris* is not that clear-cut. Both works criticise anthropocentrism for the awkwardness in its attempts at comprehending not only Otherness, but also Familiarity, recognizing the reason behind the failure to become familiar with the Other and the Self in the absence of the possibility and (above all) an absence of the will to reject the human perspective. This problem, particularly visible in *Solaris*, also concerns the world presented in *Speaker of the Dead*. After all, the xenologers dealing with the piggies try to study this alien race, referring only to themselves, and in isolation from the natural Lusitanian environment, incorrectly interpreted as identical with that of the Earth solely on the basis of a superficial similarity between the two biospheres. In the case of *Solaris*, the very fact of being a human being, having a human psyche, and therefore also subconsciousness, is an impenetrable barrier. This leads to a sad conclusion that the dialogue between the Self and the Other is impossible until people are guided by their anthropomorphic belief in the superiority of the human being above all other beings. We need decentralisation or rather an extension of the humanistic subject to also cover non-human Otherness. It seems that the development of the posthumanistic thought provides a chance for a subject-based interpretation of the Other, since it is posthumanism which postulates moving away from “a lonely and thus impoverished – since reduced to himself/herself only – human being” (Bakke 2010: 87). The human being constitutes neither the ultimate goal nor the final result of evolution, but is just one of its Stages. Therefore, being a human being may have nothing to do with belonging to the human species (Hollinger 2009). The conclusion of *Speaker of the Dead* also suggests this solution: a happy end is possible only when the terrestrial colonists on Lusitania, having appreciated the Otherness of the colonised planet, begin to see themselves as an element of the Lusitanian landscape, rather than its architects, and as a result they break all their relationships with the Earth.

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Summary

The Alien as the Other: Various Images of the Alien in Science Fiction Literature

The Other simultaneously terrifies and fascinates; the Other crosses boundaries which the Self would never dare to cross or, in some cases, would not even be able to recognize. Finally, the Other resides also within the Self. Drawing inspiration from this unique relationship between the Other and the Self, science fiction literature ascribes the qualities of the Other to alien characters. In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate how alien characters are employed in science fiction in order to discuss ontological questions of defining what humanity is, ethical questions regarding the reception of the Other, and epistemological ones regarding the human capability of comprehending the Other. I will support my line of argument with examples of the depiction of alien characters from *Robot* (1973) by Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg, *Speaker for the Dead* (1986) by Orson Scott Card, and *Solaris* (1961) by Stanisław Lem as well as their functions.

Keywords

alien, Other, Self, relationship

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Marvel Makes Films.

The Shared Universe as a New Trend in Hollywood Cinema

Ant-Man (directed by Peyton Reed), the twelfth part of the film series featuring superheroes called the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), premiered in July 2015. It has already been made public that Marvel Studios will be adding more elements to their profitable franchise for at least a few years to come. The studio's plans include two to three new releases per year, and, as the studio announces, completing the next projects will go on till the end of the second decade of the 21st century (Cecchini 2015).

The enormous financial success of the Marvel blockbusters along with the legions of devoted fans have led to a new fashion in the Hollywood cinema: production studios aspire to have their own *shared universe* modelled on the Marvel standard – an extensive, fictional universe which serves as a setting for a series of films not necessarily closely related to each other.

Warner Bros. studios, together with DC Comics publishing house, which belongs to the same corporation (Time Warner), started building their own shared universe known as the DC Extended Universe with the film *Man of Steel* (2013, dir. Zack Snyder). The magical world of Harry Potter will also expand – a new film trilogy, unrelated in plot to the main series, is in development. Universal, on the other hand, having no rights to famous superheroes, made use of the catalogue of classic monsters and decided to create a Monster Universe around them. The first film of the series is *Dracula Untold* (2014, dir. Gary Shore). These are just a few examples of the Hollywood studios' plans, selected from numerous press reports (Collinson 2015, Parrish 2015).

It is almost certain that in the upcoming years big-budget cinema industry will follow suit and adopt the shared universe aspect, so it is worth becoming familiar with the features of this strategy. And the best way to approach this is by analysing its flagship example – the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The shared universe – an outline of the issue

The shared universe is a concept that has developed best in the comic books published by the two largest companies in the industry: Marvel Comics (the so-called Marvel Universe) and DC Comics (DC Universe), although earlier literary

examples can also be found. The term owes its growing popularity primarily to fandoms, i.e. fan groups of original stories, but also films and series based on the comic books issued by the previously mentioned publishing houses.

In short, a *shared universe* is a fictional world shown in books, comics, movies, serials or games, which is shaped by many creators at the same time. Their works are equivalent and complementary to each other, and the events and characters they describe are only fragments of a larger fictitious reality with its own mythology, history and laws. The authors developing the *shared universe* must take into account the events presented in other works so as not to compromise the foundations of the common world and risk its decomposition (TV Tropes 2015).

When, in the mid-20th century, critics from the “Cahiers du Cinéma” magazine introduced the auteur theory to the film discourse, they pointed to the director as the person who gives a motion picture their characteristic, recognizable style (Helman 2010). In the case of the *shared universe*, the role of the author is taken over by a producer appointed by the studio, whose role is to oversee particular projects. The director’s influence is limited – he is supposed to implement the concept mapped out by producers, and his film should be compatible with the framework developed in the series. It is the producer who determines which people will be contracted to carry out the project, the direction the series is heading, and the style it is to adopt. Therefore, a *shared universe* is not an effect of the reflection and work of an author-director, but it develops basing on the decisions of the studio and the corporate ecosystem to which it belongs.¹

To indicate how the *shared universe* differs from the ordinary fictional world presented in movies we will use an example. Quentin Tarantino’s films are set in a single universe, and attentive viewers will recognize references to the director’s/screenwriter’s other works, which he has placed in his movies (Coolidge 2013). He supervises the content of the films he directs, and decides how they will be linked. He is an author in the classic understanding. His films may be produced in various studios, but the director-author retains full creative control over his works – it is he who is their linking agent.

The situation is different in the case of the *shared universe*. Individual works are created by various directors and screenwriters, and the way they are interconnected is determined by the producers and marketers. The studio keeps creative control over the production process and it is a link between particular parts of the series. Thus, although in both cases we deal with fictitious worlds created in various cinematographic works, the fundamental differences lie in the production process and business circumstances.

Copyright, which belongs to film studios, is another key issue. Most often, the studios own the licenses for film adaptations of literary works or comic books, in this way safeguarding the right to the characters or stories described there. Obviously, original projects not necessarily adapted from previously published texts,

¹ The functioning of the Hollywood film-making model and corporate interdependencies have been discussed by Marcin Adamczak (2010: 29–74).

may also appear within a *shared universe*. Sometimes it comes down to bizarre situations and frictions when, for example, a particular word may not be used, or some events, core in the original text, cannot be alluded to in a film.

Unlike conventional film franchises, the *shared universe* is not limited by the chronology of events or the storyline of one character. It is the presented reality that acts as a link of the individual plots in the series, and not the characters, although their significance should not be underestimated. Consequently, the stories presented in individual episodes do not have to maintain continuity. This non-linearity allows to present events that occurred parallel to each other in successive chapters of the series. The *Star Wars* series, which currently consists of six films, may be considered an example of a conventional franchise.² Their plot can be shown chronologically on one timeline, whereas in the *shared universe* there may be many lines, and they will occasionally cross within the so-called crossovers.

An important aspect of the shared universe is the transmedia narration,³ which tells stories on various media platforms, such as feature films, TV serials, computer games or related comics or books. They are all legitimate sources of knowledge about the presented reality and they all equally participate in its creation. In contrast, for example, to the *Harry Potter* series, where films and games were based on particular parts of the novel which constituted their foundation, *shared universe* narratives complement each other, instead of adapting the same story to the needs of various media.

The *shared universe* has recently been so popular in Hollywood primarily because it is a great source of income for the film studio, with minimum risk at the same time. Successive premieres of the series have become widely commented upon events in popular culture, and the characters themselves go far beyond the screens of the cinemas and home TVs. The prosumption phenomenon⁴ occurs when fans create their own variations on movies and characters (fanfiction, music videos, graphics, etc.). Although such activities often balance on the edge of copyright infringement, they actually act to the studio's advantage in terms of both advertising and marketing, but also ramping up interest in the upcoming productions.

By diversifying the content to various media, studios are able to reach a wide audience, and further multiply their sources of income. An important aspect is also *merchandising* – i.e. the sale of toys and gadgets related to films – as well as extensive franchises, which greatly inspire interest and, hence, demand. In the

² The series consists of: *Star Wars*, 1977, directed by George Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back*, 1980, directed by Irvin Kershner, *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi*, 1983, directed by Richard Marquand, *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*, 1999, directed by George Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*, 2002, directed by George Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*, 2005, directed by George Lucas. Another part of the saga is coming up. It will appear in cinemas after this text is submitted for publication.

³ The concept was introduced by Henry Jenkins (2007).

⁴ The term was introduced in the academic discourse by Alvin Toffler (1997). More about contemporary prosumption and its relation to the popular culture can be found in *Prosumpcja. Pomiędzy podejściem apokaliptycznym a emancypującym* [Prosumption. Between the Apocalyptic and Emancipatory Approach] (Siuda, Żaglewski 2014).

time when film studios are merely divisions of international corporations, films often become advertising channels for other parts of the company.⁵ Ultimately, the fictitious world has a much greater capacity for expansion than the adventures of the character, whose plot potential can be quickly exploited. This opens up an opportunity for studios to stretch in time these wide-ranging series of films that are no longer dependent on actors or creators.

The Marvel method

The MCU is the flagship model of the *shared universe*: it is a world created on the basis of characters from comic books issued by Marvel Publishing. It currently comprises twelve feature films, five short films (added to Blu-ray releases), as well as three serials. The series is supplemented with accompanying comic books extending the storylines presented in the movies. It is this franchise, created by Marvel Studios, belonging to the Walt Disney Company, that is the very model in today's Hollywood cinematic industry, imitated by producers associated with other studios.

However, before the Marvel film studio was created, the publishing house focused on the comic book market, and licensed rights to film the adventures of its characters to other companies. As early as in 1944, in the era of the so-called film serials, adventures of Captain America produced by Republic Pictures were released in episodes and shown in movie theatres. Then Marvel's superheroes made it to television for many years, where popular – albeit kitschy – serials and films were produced, including the adventures of Spider-Man and Hulk (Dillard 2014a).

The first feature film based on characters from the Marvel Comics collection was not made until 1986. This was *Howard the Duck*, directed by Willard Huyck. The film, which was produced by George Lucas himself, turned out to be an artistic and financial flop. A comic book adaptation which was appreciated both by critics and viewers was made only in 1998. It was *Blade*, directed by Stephen Norrington, produced by Amen Ra Films and distributed by New Line Cinema. The "Golden Age of Marvel Movies" (Dillard 2014b) began with this film, and was reinforced with *X-Men* (directed by Bryan Singer, produced by 20th Century Fox) two years later. *Blade* was also the first movie licensed to an outside production company by Marvel Studios.

The division of Marvel Entertainment responsible for film production acted only as a co-producer in the first years of its operation; proper production and distribution was carried out by other companies. The situation changed in 2008 when *Iron Man* was released (directed by Jon Favreau): the first movie produced independently by Marvel Studios (Dillard 2014c). Initially, outside companies dealt with the distribution. However, in 2009 Marvel Entertainment was purchased by The Walt Disney Company and thus both the production and distribution of films could be handled by the same corporation (Marvel.com, 2009).

⁵ The details of the marketing system in Hollywood are discussed by M. Adamczak (2011: 39–49).

The “godfather” of the whole series is Kevin Feige – the head of Marvel Studios since 2007. We owe him the idea of transferring the universe from the comic books issued by the publishing house onto the screens in movie theatres. And it is him who, in the context of earlier considerations, can be deemed the “author” of works associated with the franchise in question.

It all started with a review of the copyright for the characters that are still in the possession of Marvel, and which have not been licensed to other companies. It turned out that although most of the most popular superheroes had been sold to other production companies, the studio retained the rights to those less recognizable ones, comprising the Avengers group⁶. Consequently, a decision was made to attempt a production about Iron Man. The motion picture proved successful, advancing the character of Iron Man to the list of the most popular Marvel heroes.

The scene after the final credits (so-called *aftercredits*) featured Samuel L. Jackson in the role of Nick Fury, who was telling Tony Stark (played by Robert Downey Jr.) about the Avengers initiative. The comic book fans were utterly delighted. It appeared that Marvel was setting out for something spectacular – an adaptation of a comic story that so far had seemed impossible.⁷

The next film was *The Incredible Hulk*, released in 2008 and directed by Louis Leterrier. Several times the film mentioned the character of Tony Stark (Iron Man) and the events presented in the previous film of the studio. And Robert Downey Jr. himself appeared in the *aftercredits*. This was one of the first, if not the very first case in the history of cinema, when a film that was neither a sequel nor a reboot referred to events presented in another production and took them into account.

The motion picture *Avengers* (directed by Joss Whedon) was released in 2012. It was preceded by the previously mentioned films about Iron Man and Hulk, as well as movies about Thor and Captain America. All these superheroes, played by the same actors (with one exception – Edward Norton was replaced by Mark Ruffalo as Hulk), appeared together on screen and created a great spectacle, which turned out to be a huge financial success of the studio. And at the same time this production put an end to the so-called “first phase” of the MCU, which received the subtitle *Avengers Assembled*.

Ant-Man, a film mentioned at the beginning of the article, concluded the second phase of MCU. This chapter featured the popular characters known from earlier episodes, like Iron Man, Thor and Captain America. But the audience was also presented with new superheroes: Guardians of the Galaxy and the said Ant-Man. The productions that followed confirmed Marvel’s position as a leader in the superhero cinema segment, and the MCU series itself has become the most profitable franchise in the history of the film industry (Box Office Mojo 2015).

In 2010, Marvel opened a division (Marvel Television) with a goal to produce TV serials. They are also part of the MCU, often developing subplots which originated in feature films. Three serials have been produced so far: *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*,

⁶ I am citing the following documentary: *Marvel Studios: Assembling a Universe*, 2014, ABC Studios.

⁷ Until then it seemed impossible, primarily due to financial reasons. There was also no idea how to fit so many iconic comic book characters into one film without marginalizing their role.

2013, and *Agent Carter*, 2015, for ABC television, as well as *Daredevil*, 2015, for Netflix. More series are being planned.

The strong position of the studio and its anchoring in Walt Disney corporate structures allowed it to openly enter into competition with other motion pictures studios and consequently dominate the sector of superhero films. It started with regaining the previously sold character's copyright. In this way *Daredevil*, *Punisher* and other less prominent heroes returned to Marvel (Jackson 2013). Marvel also managed to cooperate with Columbia Pictures, part of the Sony corporation, which owned the rights to adapt the adventures of the most popular superhero of the Marvel publishing house, namely *Spider-Man*. Hence, a film which is set in the MCU will be produced by Marvel Studios, and then it will be distributed by Columbia Pictures (Fritz 2015).

Competition with the other rival on the market, 20th Century Fox, belonging to the corporation of Rupert Murdoch, has been going less "smoothly". That studio has been assembling its own shared universe based on the Marvel superheroes linked with the X-Men group; it also owns the rights to the *Fantastic Four*.

One of the contentious issues is the rights to the superhero siblings of Quicksilver and Scarlett Witch, who appeared both in the film produced by 20th Century Fox: *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, 2014, directed by Bryan Singer, and in Marvel's super-production: *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, 2015, directed by Joss Whedon. They are members of X-Men and Avengers as well, so both studios have the right to these characters. However, a problem regarding their characteristics occurred: in comic books they are mutants, children of Magneto. Yet Marvel was not allowed to mention this in their film, because the rights to the comic concept of mutants and the Magneto character are in the hands of Fox (Kendrick 2015). So Marvel decided to make use of comic books to provide their new biography, according to which they are no longer mutants but rather Inhumans (a group covered by the Marvel copyright), and their father is no longer Magneto (Steinbeiser 2015). Thus, the comic prototypes approached their film incarnations.

The competition between Marvel and 20th Century Fox has its "casualties", too. In a short time the publishing house ceased to issue comic books about the *Fantastic Four* (Schedeen 2014) and got some of its popular superheroes killed: *Wolverine* (Franich 2014) and *Deadpool* (McMillan 2014). It just so happens that the rights to these characters belong to Fox, which is preparing movies based on their adventures...

The features of the Marvel Cinematic Universe

Although the copyright and financial aspects play a huge role in the construction of Marvel Cinematic Universe, the films themselves have developed a distinctive style and established a number of recognizable conventions.

Marvel movies resulted from transferring the format known from comic books into the medium of film and television. The most important superheroes have their own movies (or even series of movies) just as they are protagonists of their own series of comic books, occasionally appearing in a minor role in a story of

another character. Still, they meet on equal terms in large MCU crossovers, that is, in the Avengers movies.

Independent crews are responsible for various productions, so the studio is not limited by chronology and thus is able to produce successive episodes simultaneously. The stories themselves are not closely related, and only individual scenes make reference to other parts of the cycle. The essential rule is that every movie or serial must be an autonomous entity, but it also needs to fit into the common universe.

The ensuing releases of the series are scheduled for several years in advance. Such a long-term strategy helps to identify the direction in which the history of the universe is to develop. The crew responsible for making a particular film knows how to tell the story, so that it would be an introduction to the events presented in the following movies.

Due to the studio's long-term plans, actors playing the superheroes are also contracted for several productions ahead. Robert Downey Jr. has played the character of Tony Stark / Iron Man six times so far, Chris Evans has played Captain America five times, and Chris Hemsworth has been Thor four times. The importance of background characters is also growing, because they constitute an important part of the universe despite the lack of their own films. And so Samuel L. Jackson appeared as Nick Fury in seven films and a few episodes of the series *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, Clark Gregg played Agent Coulson in four feature films, two short films, and is one of the protagonists in the above mentioned serial, and Scarlett Johansson has been Black Widow four times.

The atmosphere of MCU films and their general stylistics are consistent with the trend known in Polish film studies as the Cinema of the New Adventure (Szyłak 2011: 5–19). These are great shows, full of action and humour, in which superheroes defend the world from menace. The plot usually ends with a bombastic finale when the protagonists triumph and the forces of evil are overcome. This is how MCU films follow the blockbuster strategy (Jajko 2015: 23–39).

With every new production Marvel creates genre hybrids as well, mixing well-known patterns and imageries with superhero motifs. Films about Iron Man are a variation on the science fiction cinema, productions with Thor are part of the fantasy trend, Captain America is a character from a war movie (part one) and a spy thriller (part two), *The Guardians of the Galaxy* is a kind of space opera, and *Ant-Man* is a heist movie. Therefore, the audience receives something new every time, although it fits into the generally recognizable stylistics of the series.

An integral part of each of the MCU movies is extra scenes during closing credits (*midcredits*) and after them (*aftercredits*). Representatives of the studio joke about this: "Marvel has taught viewers to stay in the cinema until the credits have rolled" (Marvel Studios: *Assembling a Universe* 2014). Furthermore, it has become a tradition that Stan Lee – the originator of most of Marvel's superheroes – guest stars in different roles in each film (in a so-called cameo).

MCU is also a flagship example of transmedia narration. The world is being expanded not only in feature films, but plot threads are developed in serials, short films, and related comic books. In the future, animations and video games might also be added.

What is next?

The shared universe model, which has been developed and refined by Marvel Studios, is a high ideal for other Hollywood producers. Due to the huge profits that this business strategy brings to the studios, we can be sure that the term *shared universe* will be often heard in the years to come. This is the more so in that it is not only new series that take this direction of development, but also classic franchises are being modified to meet new standards. Certainly, viewers around the world will be given new products that they already know perfectly well.

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The Content of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (in chronological order)

Feature films

- Iron Man*, 2008, director: J. Favreau, screenwriters: M. Fergus, H. Ostby, A. Marcum and M. Holloway, producer: A. Arad and K. Feige, USA.
- Incredible Hulk*, 2008, director: L. Leterrier, screenwriter: Z. Penn, producers: A. Arad, G. Anne Hurd and K. Feige, USA.
- Iron Man 2*, 2010, director: J. Favreau, screenwriter: J. Theroux, producer: K. Feige, USA.
- Thor*, 2011, director: K. Branagh, screenwriters: A. E. Miller, Z. Stentz and D. Payne, producer: K. Feige, USA.
- Captain America: The First Avenger*, 2011, director: J. Johnston, screenwriters: C. Markus and S. McFeely, producer: K. Feige, USA.
- The Avengers*, 2012, director and screenwriter: J. Whedon, producer: K. Feige, USA.
- Iron Man 3*, 2013, director: S. Black, screenwriters: D. Pierce and S. Black, producer: K. Feige, USA, China.
- Thor: The Dark World*, 2013, director: A. Taylor, screenwriters: C. Yost, C. Markus and S. McFeely, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Captain America: The Winter Soldier, 2014, directors: A. and J. Russo, screenwriters: C. Markus and S. McFeely, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Guardians of the Galaxy, 2014, director: J. Gunn, screenwriters: J. Gunn and N. Perlman, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Avengers: Age of Ultron, 2015, director and screenwriter: J. Whedon, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Ant-Man, 2015, director: P. Reed, screenwriters: E. Wright, J. Cornish, A. McKay and P. Rudd, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Short films

Marvel One-Shot: The Consultant, 2011, director: Leythum, screenwriter: E. Pearson, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Marvel One-Shot: A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to Thor's Hammer, 2011, director: Leythum, screenwriter: E. Pearson, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Marvel One-Shot: Item 47, 2012, director: L. D'Esposito, screenwriter: E. Pearson, producer: K. Feige, USA.

Marvel One-Shot: Agent Carter, 2013, director: L. D'Esposito, screenwriter: E. Pearson, producer: K. Feige, USA.

All Hail the King, 2014, director and screenwriter: D. Pearce, producer: K. Feige, USA.

TV series

Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., 2013, producer: ABC, USA.

Agent Carter, 2015, producer: ABC, USA.

Daredevil, 2015, producer: Netflix, USA.

Summary

Marvel Makes Films. The Shared Universe as a New Trend in Hollywood Cinema

The shared universe is a business model that is effectively gaining popularity in the Hollywood film industry. This article attempts to explain this phenomenon, as well as describe its features, advantages and disadvantages. Practical aspects are exemplified by the Marvel Cinematic Universe – a series of films produced by Marvel Studios.

Keywords

film industry, Hollywood cinema, transmedia storytelling, media franchises, copyrights

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Pornography as an Imaginary World of Female and Male Sexuality

In reality, pornography is but the paradoxical limit of the sexual.
A “realistic” exacerbation, a maniacal obsession with the real.
J. Baudrillard

There are many publications discussing the threats of pornography, such as doctor of psychology Victor Cline’s book *Pornography Effects: Empirical and Clinical Evidence* or Jerry Kirk’s *The Power of the Picture: How Pornography Harms*. These works talk about addiction to pornography, about the fact that it leads to deviation, aggression, and violence, that it distorts the image of the sexual act and can destroy interpersonal relations. This is all true, but why is this so? The current paper is a reflection on the phenomenon of pornography. It is worth mediating on its gist. Is pornography a phantasmagorical film created to seduce the audience and introduce it to an unreal, imagined world? Or is it simply art showing various types of sexual intimacies that are varied in many different ways? It is also worthwhile to have a look at types of pornography. One of the best known classifications was developed by David Alexander Scott. He divides pornography into:

- soft-core (or soft) pornography – materials showing heterosexual erotic scenes without violence, e.g. scenes of nudity with sexual expression, deviation marked by a small degree of sophistication, or sex between two consenting adults (Scott 1985);
- hard-core (or hard) pornography – with deviant behaviours, violence, paedophilia, zoophilia, perversions: materials displaying non-typical sexual behaviours, such as orgies, rapes, or sadomasochism (Scott 1985).

This paper concerns the pornography presenting solely heterosexual intercourse, categorized as soft pornography.

Although pornography has been known for ages and today everyone knows what it is, it is very difficult to construct its precise scholarly definition. From the etymological point of view, the word “pornography” is tantamount to “indecent drawings” (from the Greek: *porne* – indecent, *graphos* – to draw, a drawing) (Krawulska-Ptaszyńska 2003: 14).

Today, a popular type of pornography is short videos shown on websites. However, it is worth remembering that this form of pornography is relatively new.

In the past, for obvious reasons, there were only the abovementioned “indecent drawings”. Scholars interested in the phenomenon of pornography undertake attempts at defining it, but so far they have not managed to arrive at a single universal definition. Anna Krawulska-Ptaszyńska understands pornography as “all productions focusing on displaying sexual activity and/or the genital sphere, presumably made to stir sexual excitement in a specific circle of recipients, and actually stirring such excitement” (Krawulska-Ptaszyńska 2003: 15). Here, we may question the consideration of the sexual excitement as a determinant of pornography, since not all the productions designed to stir sexual excitement do stir it, and sometimes excitement can be aroused by something which was not meant to do so, for example a scene from a non-pornographic film or a work of art (sculpture, painting, etc.). Wendy McElroy offers a more concise definition: “explicit artistic depiction of men and/or women as sexual beings” (McElroy 1995: 51). This definition can also be questioned, since every man and every woman can be considered explicitly sexual beings at any moment. What is more, the category of art is very subjective – according to one person, such a presentation of women and men may be artistic, while another person will not see it as such. Another definition was authored by Władysław Bernard Skrzydlewski, who claims that “pornography is all the productions which are believed to sexually excite a normal human being” (Skrzydlewski 2003: 83). Here, in turn, we have a suggestion that if sexual excitement is present, then a given phenomenon is pornography, while after all such an assumption is imprecise. I think that it is so difficult to define pornography because it is related to one’s sensitivity. The obscenity of a given image, film, or advertisement is subjective – what some see as pornography, is perfectly natural for others. The following statement seems to be true:

Pornography is defined in the first instance by its function – which is to turn the user on, leading to sexual activity such as intercourse or masturbation. This is not to say that images which are not pornographic cannot be erotic (sexually arousing), or that all pornography arouses (McNair 2002: 40).

In my opinion, the above is the most accurate attempt at defining this equivocal phenomenon.

Today, pornography is a problem of a huge scale due to the availability of the Internet. Just a dozen or so years ago, not many people had such a free access to pornographic materials, and to acquire them they often had to exercise an effort, or even risk embarrassment – when borrowing a VHS tape with a pornographic film or buying a pornographic magazine at a kiosk, we were not as anonymous as we are now, sitting in the comfort of our own homes and reviewing a broad range of pornographic sites (McNair 2002). According to Stanisław Kozak’s research, more than 40 million people globally regularly visit pornographic websites, with 20% of men and 12% of women doing so in their business hours. The research has also demonstrated that the largest group of persons watching pornography is very young people between ten and seventeen years of age (Kozak 2007: 85). The

Internet is so “pornified” that there are more websites under the entry “sex” or “porn” than under the entry “God” (Piłśniak 2005: 41). This constitutes a particular danger to young persons who are curious about the world and become easily excited about things that are “banned”. Children are a very easy target for people disseminating pornography – Anna Wrona’s study demonstrated that in 2008, 80% of children were exposed to pornographic materials on the internet, and 50% of children received links to pornographic sites in their email messages. A large share of the subjects reported that the above were not single incidents (a couple of times – 36%, many times – 29%). Almost a half of the subjects (49%) who received a link to a pornographic website once or many times in their email messages, actually used the link (29% – many times) (Wrona 2009: 315). Young people, only just shaping and becoming familiar with their sexuality, should not watch scenes, in which sex and human sexuality are distorted and deformed to a maximum extent. Today, however, it is impossible not to come in contact with pornography, since it is present in the mass media – there are many advertisements, video clips and TV series oscillating around pornography, and the border keeps being moved further on. Hence, it is worth talking about it with young people. However, such a conversation should not consist in imposing bans, but on distancing the minors to what popular culture has to offer.

It is worth looking into the image of the woman in pornographic materials. First, we need to point out that in the heterosexual, soft pornography, it is most often the woman who provokes the sexual activity. It is she who squirms and wriggles in front of the man, asking and encouraging him to have sex with her. At the same time, she shows that she is ready to succumb to any practices and ideas that may come into the man’s head. Pornography

is sexual pleasure, not in fact of the male, but of the female, and usually presented in a very particular way. These are tales of women ecstatic in their sexuality, but always under the sway of the phallus. Women whimper, pant, and quiver, but the men are silent, orchestrating the events which come to pass (Giddens 1993).

Female sexuality is therefore totally objectified and subordinate to the man. In heterosexual, soft pornography, women play the role of toys in men’s hands. Anna Krawulska-Ptaszyńska writes that in pornography, the female figures are deprived of humanity and presented as worse than men (Krawulska-Ptaszyńska 2003: 24). In this type of pornographic materials one may easily notice the women’s passivity. Activity is the men’s domain, while women are only objects on which the activity is focused, to which they are entirely subdued. “The pornographic show is however marked with the man, leaving just a narrow margin to the woman and her role” (Hajkowski 2012: 3). This is so since pornography is by assumption targeted at men and it is usually one of them who dominates during the intense sex, stripped of any feelings or emotions, while the woman is shown extremely stereotypically – as a person designed to satisfy the male desire and all the man’s profligate fancies (Giddens 2006: 154).

In the category of pornography in question, the image of men is created in an opposite way. The man is the main protagonist, the master of the situation, who decides about what the sexual act will be like. This is an unusually strong, overbearing, well-built and sexually-fit figure, one deprived of emotions and any scruples. For him, women are attractions, something that can be used and discarded without a problem or consequences. Additionally, the presentation of his bodyliness is also very special. Classical male protagonists of pornographic films have extremely extensive and muscled chests, legs, and arms. They are embodiments of strength and power. Their unnaturally large genitals play a very important role, since it is the main attribute of the man. They are their owners' pride and an object of desire for women. The size of the male privy parts decides about the man's masculinity and value and the female admiration and fascination. Such a male representation may have a negative influence on young boys' thinking about their bodies. This is normally manifested in an excessive care for the outward appearance – a fixation on musculature (bigorexia), an addiction to steroids or other chemical substances stimulating the growth of the muscle tissue, and the complex of a "small penis" are only some of the problems of the contemporary teenagers. Where does such a strong drive towards having a perfect body come from?

Young people, looking at such unnatural portrayals of women and men, receive a distorted image of femininity and masculinity. Boys may interpret pornographic scenes in such a way that all the women and girls feel like having sex all the time and one may do anything with them – whatever the imagination suggests. Here, there is no respect for the partner, her needs or preferences. At the same time, the girls may think that in an intimate situation, they need to consent to everything – whatever the partner wants – and that they should always be ready and willing to have sex. Moreover, they may arrive at a conviction that during the sexual act, the partner has the right to do anything with them, even humiliate and rape them, since the image of men in pornography promotes the ensuring of pleasure without respect for the other person's feelings, using power and aggression. Men are shown as tyrants who are extremely ruthless when sexually excited.

The very sexual act is presented in a very unnatural, staged and often vulgar way. There is no space for feelings or care for the partner during sex. What is important is solely the satisfaction of one's own desire. Skrzydlewski wrote that:

[...] people's naturally intimate sexual behaviour is deprived of the intimacy – often brutally – by pornography. In pornography, love virtually does not exist, or at least it does not have any significance. Every person who is a partner is treated as an object – as an object satisfying one's sexual desires rather than a person having dignity. This is very often combined with aggressive, brutal, and vulgar sexual behaviour. Pornography also shows changes of sexual partners as something normal, and does not show the frequent and tragic real effects of the presented sexual behaviours (Skrzydlewski 2003: 85).

The inconsistency Skrzydlewski mentioned is very characteristic for pornography. Pornography is a single-dimension, single-thread phenomenon – it shows only the very sexual act, and is silent about its consequences for one's life. Young

people are often unaware that such behaviour carries the risk of the loss of one's value, dignity, and respect for oneself, the contraction of various sexually-transmittable diseases, and, finally, an unwanted pregnancy. Pornography keeps absolutely quiet about such things.

Brian McNair, the author of the book *Striptease Culture. Sex, Media and the Democritisation of Desire*, points out that in pornographic materials:

desire is always seen to be present ('no' usually means 'yes'). In pornography the constraints, commitments and responsibilities which structure real-life sexual relationships – the demands of marriage and child-bearing, for example – are nearly always absent. The pornographic world is an ideal one in which – while the user is immersed in it, at least – life is reduced to the mechanics of the sex act (McNair 2002: 40).

Just like McNair maintains, pornography is cut off from reality, because it presents sex only and does not contain more threads than the sexual act itself. This is probably what most attracts and interests the recipients of such materials. But this is also a danger, as this "ideal world" about which McNair writes above very often addicts and covers the picture of the real world. Young people should know that the sex in pornography is not realistic – that it is only a vision of the director or producer, and that in reality it may be totally different. This is about the building of a distance to pornographic scenes, so that they do not affect teenagers' real lives.

An extremely interesting publication consistent with the topic of this article is Lech Nijakowski's *Ciało w zwierciadle pornografii* [The Body in the Mirror of Pornography]. The author describes ways in which the human body is shown in different types of pornography and discusses the consequences of this phenomenon. "Pornography affects its recipients at a deeper level. By presenting bodies that seem to be healthy and well-groomed, it shows consistency with the discourse of biopower, demanding constant self-care" (Nijakowski 2015: 31). Additionally, Nijakowski busts myths related to the issue of pornography. One of such myths consists in the disregard of pornography as research material for the academic world and considering it as a topic which is not very serious or valuable for social life researchers.

However, pornography is a full-on phenomenon – it refers to many spheres of life, representing the conscious and the unconscious social trends. It readily reacts to changes in lifestyles, transformations of norms, values, and attitudes to social taboos, and the appearance of new forms of economy. It is not an ideal mirror – it distorts and overstates many phenomena – but when looking at it with an eye armed with a scholarly magnifying glass, we may notice many truths about the society producing and consuming a given pornography (Nijakowski 2015: 32).

Therefore, it is worth looking at the changes and phenomena taking place in this area, and examining social opinions concerning the perception, consequences, and manifestations of pornography in today's world.

I undertook such research in April 2015. I conducted it among MA students of pedagogy, of both sexes, studying at the University of Gdansk. It was a qualitative

study – the students were to answer one open question, which provided a wide field for reflection and an extensive statement. The question I asked the students was: “What in your opinion is the image of men and women in pornographic materials/films?” The respondents wrote their answers on sheets of paper I had prepared beforehand. The study was aimed at checking the students’ perception of women and men starring in pornography.

111 persons participated in my study, with nine failing to provide their answers, explaining that they had never had anything to do with pornography. This is puzzling: is it possible for a person of more than 20 years of age to never see, be it for a short moment or accidentally, pornography in today’s world? Perhaps it was only an excuse behind their unwillingness to talk about the topic. Other respondents unanimously claimed that the images of both women and men are artificial and untrue. Many answers described the external appearance of the people starring in pornography:

In pornographic films, I always notice a great artificialness and untruthfulness: huge penises, the artificial faking of orgasms by women. In both the female and male images, we may see something like an “animality” understood as animal copulation, sometimes brutal, since the women are most often humiliated and treated like objects, like objects that can be used. I think that the bodies of both sexes are very artificial and untrue, for film purposes. As I said earlier, this reminds me of an orgiastic ritual, always finalized with men’s ejaculation.

A new type of an ideal female is created. Women should be slim, and have huge (artificial), impossibly firm breasts and buttocks. As we know, such a body cannot be acquired through genes or physical exercise – this leads to increasingly frequent visits of women to plastic surgeons, since “normal” women develop complexes, and sometimes even depression.

Women are (usually) shown as enslaved to men. They subordinate all their actions to the men. Such women most often have surgically enlarged breasts, are depilated, liberated, able to engage in all sorts of sexual “plays” and ready to be humiliated. Men are shown as mighty individuals having control over women. Male bodies are muscled, their genitals are substantial and they are amazingly fit.

The respondents turned attention to the illusory outward appearance of the protagonists – visible at the first glance. What is more, the second statement highlights the problem of the cult of the beautiful, young body. This phenomenon is present not only in pornography, but also in broadly understood media, which promote the struggle for a very slim figure, ideal shape, and flawless body.

Here, we are dealing with a problem that was earlier noticed by the already mentioned sociologist – Lech Nijakowski, who spoke about the “discourse of bio-power” in pornography. The respondent pointed out that the above leads to often dangerous and risky surgeries and depression caused by the constant attempts to achieve the unachievable ideal.

Another important issue noticed by the respondents was the different treatment of female and male actors starring in pornographic films:

Female intimate body parts are shown more often and in full, while male ones are hidden, invisible. There is more permission to show naked women than men.

Men in pornography do not have to be handsome, they may be fat and ugly, but will take any woman like an object anyway.

Perhaps this is because most pornographic materials are targeted at men – that is why they mainly focus on female bodies (which must be attractive and encouraging).

We can see that the respondents – just like Lech Nijakowski – notice the tendency to show human physicality as a “candy body” creating a “fairy tale representation”:

Men are shown as muscled dominators with huge privy parts. Women are humiliated, treated as objects, and look very artificial – with an artificial suntan, breasts, nails, hair, strong makeup, and not resembling people we meet on the streets at all – they have ideal bodies without any fat, cellulite, or stretch marks, firm bodies...

I believe that men in pornographic materials are created as dominators, while women are shown as submissive beings who are to satisfy men’s whims. The women are often after many plastic surgeries. One can see that they fake orgasm even if they do not really feel all the activities are pleasant.

In my opinion, the images of women and men in pornographic films are artificial. Men are always muscled machos, while women are helpless, huge-breasted chicks ready for everything. They are humiliated.

The respondents very clearly specified (although they were not asked to) what frequent use of pornography may lead to:

When watching such films, men may have huge expectations of women in the bedroom. They expect too much of women, sometimes not giving anything in return.

When watching such things, young people create and perceive a reality which does not exist – and then they are disappointed. Relationships break up since people have too high expectations towards their partners.

Youth watching pornographic films think that this is what sexual intercourse is like in real life, that sex always ends with orgasm, that the partner is always ready, that men and women always have model-like bodies. It is an entirely false image, one that misleads young people.

I shall finally cite four further quotations, talking about what the women’s role is reduced to (most often) in pornography:

In my opinion, the image of women in pornographic films/materials is created to show them as sexual servants or slaves. Women are designed to satisfy the phantasies and needs of the “master and commander” – in this case man/men in pornographic films. Men play the role of the rulers who may do whatever they want with their female slave who is supposed to succumb to them. Men emanate their power and masculinity, while women are shown as submissive or unable to take a decision, while simultaneously profligate.

Women are treated like objects with which one may do whatever one wants: also humiliate and use violence against them, for which they will even thank the person doing it.

Men are beneficiaries of the services women are to provide to them.

Women are shown as men’s toys. Even if a woman happen to play the dominating role, this results from the man’s convention. She is a toy obediently satisfying all man’s whims and having no possibility to object (“Is he pulling my hair? I shall bear it for some time”).

Students of pedagogy can see the dangers pornography involves and notice the possible dangerous consequences such as excessive sexual expectations towards a partner, breaking of relationships, or lack of respect for women/men.

The respondents clearly state that the outward appearance of the protagonists of pornography is artificial and untrue, and are aware that porn actresses often undergo plastic surgeries. What is more, they know that the sexual act presented in pornographic films does not necessarily look like one in real life – the “sex is staged, becoming very artificial”. The statements often included threads discussing the humiliation of women and treating them like objects, like toys, like men’s property. All these reflections testify to the maturity of the respondents.

It is a positive conclusion, all the more so in that the respondents will probably work with the youth of today and it will be their duty to direct young people in such a way as to be distanced to the world presented by pornography. This is because the problem of pornography shall not vanish – it will possibly grow, since the phenomenon “represents the secrets of private sexual desire in all their taboo-breaking, transgressive exoticism. It is, by definition, a violation of public morality and taste – an affront to community standards in the sphere of sexual representation, whatever they may be” (McNair 2002: 42). The attractiveness of pornography lies in its breaking of the taboo, and it will last as long as it is broken. My study clearly demonstrates that the respondents are distanced to pornographic materials, but they are a group of students displaying high awareness and general knowledge. However, it is highly probable that when conducted on other social groups, the study would show their lower level of awareness and that the results would be unsatisfactory.

This paper can be summarised by a thought by Gail Dines, the author of the book *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. She said that “Porn is now so deeply embedded in our culture that it has become synonymous with sex to such

a point that to criticize porn is to get slapped with the label anti-sex" (Dines 2012: 36). It is hard not to agree with the above; it is terrifying to think that someone may consider the images and scenes seen in pornography as the equivalent or embodiment of real sexual life. We should talk as much as possible about the fact that pornography is not synonymous with sex, and that it presents it in a different light, that it shows the sexual act in an artificial way – without any emotions, feelings or beauty, which should normally be present during sex. It is worth discussing these issues with the youth, since young people are the most sensitive group and because of this they are most exposed to the "pornographic falsehood" of the human sexuality it presents.

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Summary

Pornography as an Imaginary World of Female and Male Sexuality

The article raises the problem of pornography as a phenomenon which distorts thinking about human relationships and sexuality. The text is an attempt to show how unnatural is the image of women and men in pornographic images. In addition, it presents its own

research concerning how pedagogy students perceive the way that shows how men and women are portrayed in pornography. This article aims to prove that the pornographic materials promote an unreal image of both male and female sexuality, which is a big social and pedagogical problem, deforming young men's thinking about the important sphere of sexuality and the creation of partnerships with another person.

Keywords

sexual act, women, men, pornography, sexuality

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Constructs of Sexuality in the Context of Imaginary Worlds

Constructs of sexuality

Sexuality is an extremely complex umbrella term, which covers elements constituting an integral sphere of every human life (Weeks 1986). These include, among others, the categories of eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, procreation, gender and gender roles, identity, and sexual orientation (WHO, BZgA 2010). Their meanings are formed as a result of an interaction between “biological, psychological, social, economic, political, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors” (WHO, BZgA 2010: 19). The body, which is the biological base, can become eroticized.¹ The circumstances and main actors involved in this process are defined by the culture that an individual belongs to. People experience their sexuality on the basis of scenarios and patterns created by social relations, and biology serves as a set of possibilities that gets transformed through these relations (Weeks 1986). What people understand as sexual is therefore a matter of cultural negotiation,² shared meanings and common ideas that construct the framework of intersubjective imaginary worlds. Consequently, elements of sexuality (including, particularly, the rules of how a body should look, behave, and even what it should feel) are often referred to in arbitrary terms, rooted in the historical and socio-cultural context (Kochanowski 2013).

¹ Mariola Bieńko (2004: 73) emphasizes that “eroticism differs from sexualisation in a way that it is a set of innate natural reactions of an organism to stimulation of its certain parts. Sexualisation, on the other hand, is a learned erotic response to another person or other external object.” However, it should be noted that these terms are often used interchangeably.

² For example, if a man touches a woman’s breasts, depending on the context, circumstances and attributes assigned to the role being played at that moment (Goffman, 1959), it can be understood as either an erotic act or not. As the reality of everyday life is shared and institutionalized, if a man is wearing a white coat and has a stethoscope, this touch will probably not be considered erotic and most likely a woman in this situation will be undergoing a breast examination by a doctor. If this man is the woman’s partner and they are in their bedroom, the touch will presumably be deemed a form of foreplay. Obviously, this scenario may vary depending on the given culture. Hence, this is a rather simplified illustration for the assumptions of social constructionism and how sexual meanings are shared within imaginary worlds.

Imaginary worlds are created thanks to the cultural patterns existing on a supra-individual level. These patterns become a basis for mental projections and individual attempts at reconstructing socially shared meanings, while individual actions can be recognized and understood only in relation to the cultural context and to the intersubjective imaginary worlds which they are a part of (Weeks 1986).

An extremely useful tool in theoretical discourse on sexuality is the perspective of sexual scripting (Simon, Gagnon 1984), based on the assumption that human sexual activity is a result of processes taking place on three levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts (Simon, Gagnon 1984).

The historically determined socio-cultural context defines cultural scenarios that are "instructional guides that exist at the level of collective life" (Simon, Gagnon, 1984: 53). A possible "lack of congruence between an abstract scenario and a specific situation" is resolved at the interpersonal level, which accounts for managing interactions with others (Simon, Gagnon 1984: 53). On the intrapsychic level, which is in charge of the reflective, internal dialogue of an individual (Simon, Gagnon 1984), subjective imaginary worlds, understood as intimate narrations of self, are co-created and recreated.

The content of the socio-cultural patterns determine the acceptable categories in which sexuality is negotiated. Therefore, it is of great importance to look at the context of the discussed issue.

The essence of context

The reality of late modernity features a new social quality that contributes to the breakdown of traditional social structures, authorities and reference groups (including their values, norms and the social control inscribed in these structures). This new quality is also characterized by the pluralism of the mutually influencing cultures, fragmentation and episodicity of social life (Bauman 1993:7). Modernity, therefore, becomes a source of uncertainty for individuals and causes a loss of predictability and stability that leads to an identity crisis. Consequently, the structural pressure on self-realization becomes more compelling, which contributes to the need to develop individualistic attitudes. Individualization, which results from the ability of the information society members to make informed choices, also becomes an opportunity of self-creation (Giddens 2006). In this context, identity becomes a reflective project, "something that must be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens 1991: 52). Modernity offers a great number of models available in the "cultural supermarket" that individuals can choose from (Mathews 2002).

The context of choices and constructs of intersubjective images is created in Poland in relation to the contemporary consumer culture (transformed from the capitalist culture of producers), which constitutes pleasure as the basic category of the social reality (Melosik 2012).

The media content³ plays a significant role in this process. Being a part of the consumer context, it co-creates a reality in which achieving pleasure becomes one of the main goals. It also creates in people the illusory conviction that this pleasure can be achieved by inventing your “self” at will, shaping your identity⁴ basing on the innumerable models⁵ and products available in the cultural supermarket (Mathews 2002) and hence, your becoming whoever you want to be.⁶ However, the process leading to achieving pleasure⁷ may often be long and arduous. Therefore, it does not comply with the pervasive culture of immediacy. In the face of such a social reality, constructing one’s sexuality becomes a difficult task.

In such an environment, transferring some elements of self-construction to the virtual world enables almost the immediate realization of the promises which were created in the media and subjected to individual negotiations. It is possible to create or recreate alternative⁸ versions of the self⁹, choosing from the myriad of elements available virtually. One can modify both the dream self (for example, fulfilling all culturally imposed requirements of corporality) as well as the “real” self (for example, rejecting the necessity to fit into a socially imposed model of identity and sexuality).

³ Thus the media create reality instead of presenting it. They shape and model society, and individual life becomes an imitation of what is presented in the media. As a result, the social reality and the media (imaginary) reality get confused, which contributes to a rise of a culture of staging (Melosik 2012).

⁴ Identity meant as a way to understand yourself and what matters are relevant to you (Giddens 2006).

⁵ Being, however, a part of the social system of segregating sexuality, we can still distinguish the dominant and preferable model of experiencing sex in our society: and this would be sex in a heterosexual, monogamous, and preferably long-term (if not marital) relationship between a woman and a man (Kochanowski 2013).

⁶ Our imagined ideal “self” is not entirely our autonomous choice, and its construction is based on the dominant models shown by the media (Kochanowski 2013).

⁷ “Achieving” satisfaction has been used in a simplified way, we should rather speak about “striving for” satisfaction, because “an individual is never able to get fully satisfied. The category of unfulfillment and attrition is inherent in the ideology of consumption” (Melosik 2012: 32).

⁸ The complexity of sexuality mentioned above has a significant influence on the creation of alternative versions of the self. This construct is an umbrella term covering such elements as: “sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.” (WHO, BZgA 2010: 17). It also includes numerous options for expressing and experiencing sexuality in thoughts, desires, fantasies, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, interactions, activities, practices, roles and relationships, and their cultural and social representations (Waites 2005). Notably, however, all these components of sexuality are not experienced and expressed simultaneously (WHO, BZgA 2010). Significant in this respect is the relational nature of the complementary elements of sexuality (including the relationship between particular elements with the general structure of individual sexuality) such as actions, desires and fantasies.

⁹ Although late modernity offers innumerable options for experiencing sexuality, the socio-cultural context conceives models of sexuality which, gender-wise, we are supposed to strive for. They are internalized to the extent that they are often acted out in fantasies. Constructions of self are created on their basis while escaping to the imaginary worlds.

The internet as a platform for fulfilling needs and realizing identity constructions

The internet is a tool that – due to its ever-expanding offer – allows the realization of individual needs (getting support, consolation, security, recognition, self-fulfilment, etc.), including those of love or sex. The internet is a platform that allows you to acquire and verify information through access to expert discourses, but it also enables the purchase of services and products. Being the source of endless sexual scenarios¹⁰ and ways of their implementation, it responds to the needs of almost every user.¹¹ It makes it possible to materialize individual desires and fantasies, gives the opportunity to acquire theoretical knowledge, get to know other users' opinions derived from their experience, and eventually see what a particular fantasy might look like (e.g. specific sexual position, or improved body), which can influence the decision to realize it in the real world.¹² The results of a survey conducted in 2010 by professor Izdebski (2012) on an unrepresentative sample of 10,016 internet users showed that almost one third of the interviewed had sexual intercourse with a person they had met on the internet (30.5% of the men and 27.1% of the women), and most often these were people aged 26–30. What is more, the increase in the use of applications such as Tinder and Grindr, which are platforms created to facilitate the search for sexual partners, is also important.

The internet is also becoming an integral part of social life. More and more often the activity on social networks – such as Facebook or Instagram – is classified as one of the fundamental elements of identity constructions, especially among young people, who are at an age when searching for their own identity involves experimenting with it (Castells 2001). These experiments are possible at the interpersonal level, where the scripts are integrated as a result of individual negotiations of the cultural scenarios offered by social institutions at a collective level (Wiederman 2015; Simon, Gagnon 1984). The emergence of alternative forms of realizing sexual scenarios constructed on the basis of the specificity of virtual context is also not surprising. Simon and Gagnon defined cultural scenarios that are general instructions indicating the context and particular nature of virtual interactions, possible roles and the relations between these roles. Internet interactions reduce the possibility of sensory perception, but offer at least partial anonymity and a sense of security, which makes it possible to mute the internalized mechanism of

¹⁰ Including the most sophisticated ones or even those prohibited by law, sometimes being on the verge of paraphilia and serious disorders of individuals who approve of such content. These scenarios definitely go over the limit of acceptable sexual behaviour, which is based on the assumption that the individual's choices in sexuality are conscious, safe and are carried out with the consent of all involved.

¹¹ In 2012, more than half of Poles declared that they regularly use the internet (CBOS 2012), and it can be assumed with a high probability that currently this percentage is higher.

¹² The knowledge collected in this way can also affect the decision to cancel the plan of realizing a fantasy.

social control for the time of choosing and acting out scripts at a redefined interpersonal level. The intrapsychic level as well enables the symbolic reorganization of reality in order to fully realize the innermost dreams of an individual (Wiederman 2015). The virtual equivalent of everyday life with the use of innumerable tools (e.g. Photoshop¹³) allows individuals to materialize improved concepts of themselves, ranging from small adjustments /corrections, to creating themselves from the proverbial scratch. In the process of creating the virtual “self”, they can make you look older or younger, add flesh to certain parts of the body or make them appear thinner, completely change their outfit, etc. . The imagination seems to be the only limit here. In addition to the possibility of a virtual materialization of subjectively understood “better” (or “worse”) versions of the “self” at the body level, this world allows an equally far-reaching interference with one’s identities¹⁴ and biographies.

In relations based solely on internet contact, the boundaries of “freedom” in inventing oneself practically do not exist. This process of self-creation takes place with a relatively little effort and is most often subjected to acceleration, which facilitates the reproduction of the instant culture – the culture of immediacy¹⁵ (Ściupider-Młodkowska 2013). This means that it is not only easier to maintain a coherent vision of the “self” and a stable front stage (Goffman 1959), but basically immediately after imagining the new attribute of the “self” one may move on to its implementation – even if this new image of the “self” would be impossible to realize (immediately) in the real life. Therefore, in the virtual world it is easier to “feel at ease” and in a quick, “safe” (anonymous¹⁶) way satisfy one’s needs, “including the needs of affection and sex” (Ściupider-Młodkowska 2013: 308).

The internet therefore also provides countless opportunities for realizing sexual scenarios. Pornography is one of the channels offering these scripts. It is discussed primarily in connection with the aspect of “flooding with sexual content” (Izdebski, Niemiec, Wąż 2011: 64) as well as with free access to unreal sex, which involves bodies realizing, determining and recreating the cultural pattern of attractiveness. Indeed, pornography very often shows exaggerated, inaccurate images, and by reducing a human into the role of an object and by glorifying sexual sensations, it ignores the emotional sphere (Zabielska 2009). This objectification,

¹³ Graphic software used, among others, for editing photos.

¹⁴ Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical theory may help to explain the reality of imaginary worlds. The interaction order is based on the regulations of a particular portal/application. The interference in the “self” may probably look different in the case of an application or portal which aims to bring about a meeting with another user in the real world. The truth is that the more you interfere and manipulate with the virtual “self”, the more unreal is your virtual facade. As a result, maintaining the coherent self-image in case of personal contact becomes more challenging (Goffman 1959).

¹⁵ “In an instant world, where a goal must be achieved immediately, the sphere of emotions is also strongly accelerated. In such a structure, human behaviours, artificially stimulated by technology, become accelerated, adjusted to achieve immediate needs” (Ściupider-Młodkowska 2013: 313).

¹⁶ Anonymity allows you not only to freely manipulate with the front stage, but also to replay the whole process of “self” creation in the context of sexuality, and other elements that make up individual attractiveness, such as uniqueness (hobbies, interests, certificates, education. . .). You can write your whole story from scratch.

however, also takes place at the level of the virtual acting out of everyday life. Let us just note three elements that significantly affect interpersonal relationships: progressive individualization, moving everyday life to a virtual level and the culture of immediacy. Getting used to acquiring “tailor-made” parts may change the requirements for future partners, including the sexual ones, which results in their objectification on the basis of the filters from our expectations.¹⁷

The internet objectifies people who create their own imaginary world, offering them illusions of subjectivity, agency and decision-making. A person who presents themselves in a particular way, usually basing on the dominant model of attractiveness, becomes a ready-made product looking for someone who meets their expectations.¹⁸ When people assess the photos and profiles of other users, they expose themselves to being treated according to the same categories. Thus the virtual world, being an imaginary world, combines innumerable possibilities with countless threats.

Conclusion

The major significance of subjective and intersubjective analyses of imaginary worlds for the construction of sexuality is an indication of the diversity of forms and ways of experiencing and negotiating sexuality. Presenting this diversity may contribute to undermining the dominant understanding of sexuality in binary, dichotomous, emotionally-charged categories. Throughout all the levels: the sexual scripts shared on the collective level, playing one’s role on the interpersonal level, and individual fantasies of the intrapsychic level, the construction of sexuality should not be limited to the material aspect of the real world only. The conditions of late modernity also enable re-constructing sexuality and its constituent elements in the virtual world. The internet functions not only as a source of knowledge but also as a space that is an imaginary world itself. On the one hand, it supplies an infinite number of sexual scenarios and provides tools that enable modification of our real bodies. On the other, it allows a complete detachment from the sexuality of the real world and transition to the illusion in which it is possible to transform, repair, and even create oneself anew. Although the rules governing imaginary worlds give an individual an impression of subjectivity, agency, and choice in a myriad of possibilities, at the same time they entail individual risk, which may be another multidimensional aspect worth investigating.

¹⁷ It also gives the opportunity to consciously expose the body to market laws: the value of an individual increases depending on the level of acceptance of the posted photos, affecting the bids for defloration.

¹⁸ Despite this risk, the situation is somewhat different for people with non-heteronormative sexuality, where the internet is often the only “safe” space which creates an opportunity to meet a partner.

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Summary

While discussing sexuality we are referring to a multidimensional sphere of elements that construct everyday social life. These elements are influenced by a number of factors, including those derived from imaginary worlds. The sphere of imagery is therefore directly linked to sexuality. Symbols, meanings, stories and desires are all parts of intersubjective imaginary worlds and their negotiations are possible by means of, inter alia, the new media, and the internet in particular. Not only is the latter a key opening the door to the world of countless opportunities of pursuing and negotiating sexuality. Reality can be “fixed”, or even created from scratch. Imaginary worlds, therefore, can be understood in two ways: as intersubjective worlds: patterns and meaning shared at the collective level, as well as the subjective worlds, which are implementation of these patterns and meanings from an intrapsychic level.

Keywords

sexuality, social constructivism, internet, social scripts

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Creative Stories of the Night. Neglected Dreams

I

The individual worldview perspective is influenced by the individual manner in which the world is understood and imagined. Although, to a large extent, we use stock formulas, stereotypical thinking, and symbols with unchanging, culturally ingrained meanings, it is we who are the creators of culture and imaginaries- and a special place among the creators of individual and collective symbolized imaginaries is taken by artists.

However, the imaginary worlds are not solely developed as a part of artistic work, since we all fantasize and dream, creating our own fiction, our own personal myths.

Dreams happen to everyone and should be of interest to all individuals caring about their own psyche and imagination, and they probably are of interest, although only in passing and for a moment. It is enough to mention the discipline of science dealing with dream studies, to have our interlocutors immediately look at us with scepticism (something along the lines of an esoteric perspective in research methodology, etc.) and, after feeling doubt, feeling the need to tell us about their own dreams. This behaviour is all the more interesting in that it refers us to the perception of dreams or the attitude to them of the majority of dreamers. It seems that the irresistible willingness to share one's oneiric experience is related to the sense that the often illogical night stories may have some meaning. On the other hand, the entire intimacy present in dreams is protected and hidden by an army of metaphors, symbols, or simply figurativeness, owing to which the dreaming may liberally discuss the very private world of imaginaries of which they do not feel like the owners or creators, and which they do not identify with. Only, they are still sort of theirs.

In this article, I shall remind the readers about dreaming as the basic symbolic activity of the mind. Showing theories concerning places of collective dreams and artistic fiction, I shall ask whether the disregard of our own dreams could be understood as ignorance of our personal imaginaries, and experience and understanding of the world. One is tempted to say: dreams are lies that may whisper a certain truth and contribute to self-discovery.

I shall show several foci of the extensive topic of the relation between the symbolic dreaming (representing) and artistic creation against the background of self-discovery and I shall also reflect on how the knowledge of persons connected with literature and art may influence the exploration of dreams, and whether we may ap-

proach our own profile of dreaming if we treat dreams as works similar to artefacts. This article aims at relieving the interpretation of dreams from the burden it acquired from psychoanalytic theory. I shall compare literary works and artefacts as such with dreams to show that self-discovery trips can be commenced by means of play. In this game playing, we may use relaxation instead of fighting or wrestling with the heavy veils of censorship or defensive mechanisms in dreams. The bibliography used in the paper is not exhaustive, and the text itself is preliminary – it is a sketch rather than a finished whole. After all, dreams are sketches themselves, and this paper is aimed at intoxication with the freedom from fear of our own “demons” – therefore, I allow myself this nonchalance.

This publication concerns imaginary worlds – can we suggest a more general topic for the humanities, when we assume after Schopenhauer that we have nothing else than that?

There are many theories concerning literature and art – likewise, dream research perspectives also abound, starting from psychoanalysis, existentialism, phenomenology, Calvin Hall’s quantitative approach, and ending with parapsychology or esotericism. All the theories understand the functions of dreams in their own ways, although the symbol is a significant notion almost to all of them. Here, I shall focus mainly on psychoanalytic theories of dreams and the relations between artistic creativity and dreaming.

There are many links between psychoanalysis and art. Sigmund Freud interpreted literature – he used it to explain mental processes. It is there that he found complexes on which he built his basic theses. There are different varieties of the psychoanalytic interpretation of art. Extreme simplification may boil them down to two forms of work with texts: structural and genetic ones (Fiała 1991). The first method is like psychocriticism (Mauron 1976) – it focuses on obsessive fantasies and motifs repeated in various artefacts. The second method bases its analyses of a literary work on its author’s actual biography.

Let us begin with fantasies. It seems that we all have them: we picture ourselves aboard a plane during a trip to the unknown, we see ourselves as successful, ruling, happy, and we design soothing hypotheses, which most often concern future events and alternative solutions. This type of daily fantasizing refers us to the classical interpretation of Freud’s pleasure principle and the fulfilment of wishes. But what makes ordinary fantasies different than literary works and dreams?

According to psychoanalytic theories, imagination, creative impulse and dreams have the same source, i.e. broadly understood unconscious fantasies. Freud believed that the creative impulse was recreated in the plot of literary works. Therefore, it seems that regardless of the type of work (surrealistic, naturalistic or poetic ones), unconscious fantasy may be ordered by a conscious creative thought and presented with the help of narration, which in such a reference is always symbolic¹ in consist-

¹ We must remember that Freud, Fromm and many others used the word “symbol” primarily in reference to constant, archetypical – similarly as in the thematic criticism approach – images in dreams such as the sun, fire, water, etc. I use the notion of a symbol in a broader meaning, where the displacement-metonymy is a type of symbolic representation. If, for example, I easily break a golden

ence with the dynamics of the so-called displacement – where the symbol replaces mental content.

Apart from being sources of aesthetic experience and cognition, literature and art may also be incentives for self-discovery. Non-scientific treatment of dreams overlooks their self-analytical function. When dreams are perceived as “a special form of our thinking” (Freud 1913) and, after all, a creative activity of the mind, the absence of interest in dreams is an insult to imagination.

The creative process of a writer or artist is related to their contact with their own imaginaries and with ordering them. According to Freud, “the artist’s phantasy must lose its egocentric character to become compatible with art” (Freud 1959),² i.e. be worked with tools of a conscious creative act. At the same time, “The psychological novel in general probably owes its peculiarities to the tendency of modern writers to split up their ego by self-observation into many component-egos” (Freud 1925) – into heroes.

Since artists tend to touch unconscious thinking in a creative impulse, why do they not present their feelings in a direct way and write psychological papers, lecture us on theory? First, not every work is a description of deep psychological content or is such to everyone. When artists touch upon the psychology of these issues, their work resembles a reconstruction in memory of something that emerges only briefly and hazily to boot – being an impulse, it is intense, but vague. Perhaps in consistence with psychoanalytic interpretation, artists aim at creating whatever has already taken place in the artistic impulse, taken place “as if”,³ and which can only emerge with the help of the language of art, since only the artistic tongue – symbols, displacements, metaphors – may present something which remains not entirely clear to the subject-author. It is only matter which can be a way of telling about it – the matter which is always open to the polysemy of interpretations. It is a kind of a gift for readers, who sometimes also experience the pleasure which “proceeds from the release of tensions in our minds” (Freud 1925). The unconscious thought initiating the creative process may therefore remain uncalled directly, although it calls into being a world of artistic plot and results in the liberation from tension – just like in the case of dreams, where the content, not yet expressed in words, becomes the material for images.

In a classical psychoanalytic approach, the dream is a fulfilled wish beyond the super-ego principles, and it originates from the work of the dream thoughts. “For it is entirely correct that the dream can represent [...] a resolution, a warning, reflection, preparation, an attempt to solve a problem [...] but [...] all these things are true only of the latent dream thoughts, which have been changed about in the dream” (Freud 1974: 195). And it always expresses the fulfilment of dreams, as Freud assumed on the basis of his practice and by placing the main attribute of children’s dreams to the dreams of adults.

chain in my dream and I connect it in my interpretation with a similarly finished relationship, such a representation also has a symbolic, metaphorical nature.

² Hence, Segal claims that the creative process requires a rejection, a “modification of the pleasure principle” and “some facing of the depressive position”. This makes the plot more complex. She also states “What is the essence of what Freud so beautifully, I think, calls ‘the dream thought’? I think Freud originally had in mind simply the repressed wish, disguised in the dream”.

³ In the context of dreams, Segal discusses the “as-if” reality.

Freud offered a thesis that the process of symbolization and the creation of a dream as such results from defensive mechanisms, which displace, distort and move away the intention of the dream thought. This overnegative approach possibly requires a delicate weakening, because since the unconsciousness is for us entirely abstract, but it still wants to take a voice in dreams, then it must use some means, some language. Obviously, we may imagine that dreams (I am focusing on metaphorical, creative, symbolic dreams) could be less confusing and easier to explain.

Challenging Freud's concept, Calvin Hall, a cognitivist and a dream researcher, understood dreams as simple rather than complex processes. He believed that all dreams are simply a series of symbolic images which express concrete ideas, concepts, and imaginaries (Hall 1953: 184–186), and that the symbolic nature of dreams results from the way of imaging, something similar to the Adlerian "style of life", rather than censorship and resistance.

However, when we notice that – as is common knowledge – the unconscious is not conscious of itself, we are after all aware of the fact that it is unfamiliar to the consciousness and wants to express the thoughts/impulses which the consciousness no longer remembers, which it has not yet thought or which it still considers "unthinkable". Trying to communicate its own intention, it uses images that are symbolically associated with the intention, putting them together to form coherent plots. Additionally, the unconscious not only uses the material which has been seen, heard and experienced, but it can also create (if it is not just an illusion) new worlds, places, persons, and events. We might think that dreams choose symbolic rather than literal representations to clothe in meanings the things which often have not yet simply been thought, contexts that are new to the consciousness or are unfinished thoughts. And as a part of this attempt, being *de facto* not understood itself, and having no necessary representations and mediations, the unconscious uses not only defence mechanisms, the work of a censor, resistances and instances limiting the flow of messages, but also simply innate, pure, prototypical creativity, the basic, creative imaging. Is this because it is not too easy to agree that newspace in dreams is only a product of resistances? Do we have to defend ourselves so much against ourselves in every dream⁴? Is it not often a style and form of representation, a type of metaphor, rather than censorship? It would seem that it is only a new, semantically softened version of the ego's defence against the contents that have been repressed – with the help of defence mechanisms or creativity (perhaps only as a way to express them). What is strongest in the theory of distortion is the moment when affective accents are shifted during a dream, which is aimed at censorship and the effect of not understanding (Freud 1995).

Going back to the egoistic nature of phantasies, smoothened by the symbolism of the creative process, we may wonder whether the phantasy itself may concern mental properties of the entire communities (since it is the communal aspect which seems to provide works with the quality exciting the readers beyond the boundaries of cultures and epochs, i.e. making it a masterpiece), or whether artists reach the communal nature solely through the quality of the elaboration of the phantasy.

⁴ Cognitivists also believe that the symbol discloses rather than hides.

It is probably a union of the two elements: something very significant in the supra-individual context and the genius intuition of the artists, who clothe their experience of the creative impulse in spotless aesthetic representations. Masterpieces – offering messages beyond the time and individuality⁵ – were also of interest to the father of psychoanalysis – let us recall for example his analyses of the output of Leonardo da Vinci or Dostoevsky.

The plot of a literary or artistic work is therefore more complex than that of the nature of the phantasy itself. This is because the creative process wraps it with decorations, and extends, deepens, and stretches, developing the primary thought, while a strong participation of the consciousness in the elaboration of dream messages is not possible (clear dreams are a rarity). Here, it is not the artist who works through the content of unconscious phantasies, but the dreams⁶ and only later can the latter become the subject of analysis. Freud clearly differentiated between the work of dream thoughts and the dream as such, which resembles the relation between the creative impulse and the literary plot.

It is not literature which is like a dream, but the work of the artist experiencing a psychoanalytically understood creative impulse⁷ which resembles the work of the dream: especially when we take into account the natural impossibility of literal representation. From the perspective of psychoanalysis the goals here are different though: the artist tries to detail, to give structure to the thought contained in the creative impulse, while through its impact on the dream thoughts, the censorship of the dream conceals and “distorts” – as Freud put it rather negatively – their original meaning, offering a symbolic representation. The artist wants to come closer through the representation, to conceal the dream. In this approach, psychoanalysis assumes a certain self-control, self-awareness of the censorship, which is to function in consistence with the intention identified by Freud.

And can it perhaps be that the psychic apparatus really needs to reflect on experience during one’s sleep, that it wants to offer solutions, sooth, make wishes come true, acting like artists or writers from the model presented? The dream intentions appear at the gates of the dream as impulses, and their author – the unconscious – is not aware of them, since it is unconscious of its own existence. With a partial participation of consciousness – a bit like an artist – it tries to express the content of experience through images and, above all, to express the accompanying emotional values. This is because, as Freud put it, “the robbers, to be sure, are imaginary, but the fear of them is real” (Freud 1913), “the affective content [of a dream]

⁵ Jung writes about works created on a subconscious impulse in the following way: “[...] we should have to conceive of something of a supra-personal character that transcends the range of conscious understanding in the same degree as the author’s consciousness is withheld from the development of his work. We should expect a certain strangeness of form and shape, thoughts that can only be apprehended by intuition, a language pregnant with meanings, expressions that would have the value of genuine symbols, because they are the best possible expressions of something as yet unknown – bridges thrown out towards an invisible shore (Jung 1976).

⁶ Hence, a clear gap in the giving of meaning to valuable day-dreaming and night dreams of little importance in Gaston Bachelard’s writings.

⁷ A relation of the creative impulse needs to be connected with the content coming through from the unconscious to the conscious level.

has remained free from the distortion which has befallen the conceptual content" (Freud 1913).

Not all theoreticians of dreams, or the source and form of dreams, are so "poetic". After all, the reasons behind non-banal dream stories do not have to be that lofty. Some researchers see the reason behind the bizarreness and absence of logic in dreams in the limited participation of thought dynamisms. For example, Jan Mazurkiewicz divides thought processes into lower, pre-logical ones, and the better developed frontal-logical ones. He tries to show that the logical thinking based on reason and effect is "inactive" when we dream, and that dreaming is "the only state in which pre-logical dynamisms can be found in all their purity" (Mazurkiewicz 1980: 84). The muffled frontal lobe would be responsible for the inconsistency of the tale. It seems that the rightness here lies in the fact that the logical processes are really switched-off or lowered. The full bloom of creativity, artistic work, is often possible owing to the fact that the rational, concrete, standard thinking is moved aside. The place for free phantasy appears to lie away from reason-and-effect actions and terror.

Alfred Adler provided a slightly different view, perceiving the metaphorical and non-logical quality of dreams a result of our moving away from the communal experience, from the "common sense", for the benefit of our own expression. Adler says that "imagination expressed in metaphors, on the sidelines of logic, solves problems in line with the dreamer's lifestyle" [translated from the Polish language] (Adler 1994: 229)⁸. Here, responsibility for the shape of night dreams is attributed to our lifestyle, ways of thinking, quality of reflection, and creative potential in imaging and calling.

At the same time, Erich Fromm associated dreams with a suspension of activity and with freedom: "In sleep the realm of necessity has given way to the realm of freedom in which "I am" is the only system to which thoughts and feelings refer" (Fromm 1977). For Fromm, there are three types of symbols of dreams (and not only dreams). The first one is located in the relation between a word and the object it signifies (conventional), the second one takes its beginning in concrete experience such as that related to a phobia (accidental), while the third one concerns everyone, involving a soothing closeness of feelings and thoughts.

The majority of classics talk about the symbolic language of dreams. Combining this language with any other tongue, as well as with mythology, Calvin Hall shows the language of dreams in the context of poetic speech, pointing out that we use non-literal meanings in various slangs on a daily basis. According to him, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor and irony are the main means of expression of dreams (Hall 1953: 172).

So perhaps it is in dreams that we involuntarily experience ourselves, our own individual imagination, and the creative activity of our minds, which is attracted to weirdness, finesse, circuitousness, hyperbole or originality. It is a "meeting" to which the observer of the dream (the ego?) comes as if it was a lecture – an often surreal, poetic, illogical presentation on experiences, thoughts and feelings. Although again imperfect, perhaps a metaphor of a virtual game, in which, controlling our own char-

⁸ Adler understood "style of life" as one's view of one's life, which most often is unknown to the thinking subject since it has not been the subject of reflection.

acter in a limited way, I stay in a created, imposed world that determines the roles I adopt, would be more accurate than a lecture given by a part of oneself, about oneself and for oneself. The awkwardness of comparisons shows all the more the unique position of the Self in dreams and the problem with the detailed determination of the function and presence of consciousness.

According to Fromm, the unconscious is tantamount to the unavailable to the non-availability of understanding. After accepting psychoanalysis or postmodernity, all the cognition is in a sense integrated with the unknown, but the difference lies in the degree of the unawareness, the scale of which begins with the bottom-lying ignorance.

The fact that dreams are actually dreamt may be considered a kind of the self's speech on topics that are significant for the subject or the spirit, or simply necessary for the psychic apparatus. People and science insult phantasies and dreams, and the insult takes its beginning in the lack of knowledge and/or cognitive intuition concerning ourselves. The absence of the drive to self-discovery may result from a strong blockade, a certain limitation of the mind, which does not prevent one's very good functioning at the highest levels of education. It is harder when such a life is connected to frustration, anger, sense of guilt, disastrous overprotectiveness or hysterical infantilism, which becomes an integral trait of personality. And although it is the reason for problems in relationships and frustration, it remains a part of the Self.

In the absence of self-analytical reflection and attempts at becoming familiar with one's own imagination (not necessarily psychoanalytic attempts), dreams carry out metawork on the imagination, relationships, and style of thinking. And they can do it with great discretion – if we continue to stay solely within the circle of symbolic, metaphorical dreams. In compliance with Freud's thought, representations remaining away from open meanings may result from censorship, but such a structure of power also simply provides a possibility to choose – an attempt at reflecting on the metaphor of dreams or ignoring them. Although away behind the horizon of the day, dreams anyway work through the contents of experience no one focuses on. The power of resistance – both the resistance present in dreams, and the one present in the attitude to dreams – may express the state of readiness or perhaps unpreparedness to accept and integrate some contents.

Due to the discretion of the symbolic dream, dreams often (with the exception of anxiety dreams and "grand" dreams⁹) escape the memory almost unnoticed. This is to some extent a result of the first light of the day: the clash between the work of the dream thought and the day thinking, a sceptically understood difference between the orders or even their "untranslatability" – as well as the fact that dreams most often happen just once.

Perhaps the elusiveness of dreams is also a protective coat for those who do not want to embark on the often difficult journey of self-discovery. Dreams can almost imperceptibly knock our consciousness and day memory. This is because the knocking is often so delicate that it is perceived as an illusion or (in a different view) as a meaningless buzz, unworthy of coming to the door for and asking "who is that"?

⁹ A concept originating from Jung's thought.

II

We often encounter an analogy between literary works and dreams, and hence the psychoanalysis of literature, where analytical tools are applied to explain the plot. It is equally important to reverse the relation and examine dreams recorded in journals and told by our contemporaries, using the knowledge provided by the humanities and the tools of literary critics.

Artistic works are interpreted in various theories as incomplete, which means that – as Ingarden put it – artefacts serve not only insufficiently determined places, which are not important or else they would have been filled in. The work of phantasy and individual perception of a concrete subject are really important here. The artist gives whole spaces for individual reading – in particular owing to symbolism, which becomes different in various meetings of two experiences – the experience written out in the work or text, and the experience living in the person who comes to the meeting and takes part in the dialogue.

I would like to compare the symbolic potential of works of art and dreams. If the work of art is incomplete, is then the dream unfinished? – unfinished both when it was stopped by an alarm clock and when it did not exhaust the topic which it surely began? Additionally, we may ask in this place whether a conscious meeting with a dream must by necessity end with a phenomenological reaction, a reproduction of the intention of the unconscious as the most important and the least approachable dream provider?

In Hanna Segal's book *Dream, Phantasy and Art* we may feel that the important inspiration with psychoanalysis affecting the humanistic perspective needs the liberations and revaluations of the orthodoxy, which is a natural consequence of the fact that psychoanalytic grassroots theories are not based on healthy or relatively happy individuals. Segal presents many inspirational thoughts concerning the relation with the dream and the relation with art, but finishes, placing the creative impulse in depressive anxiety. Let us start, however, with inspirations.

Segal shows that the style of dreams reflects a broad range of our relations (Segal 1991). I think that this speaks in favour of the attractiveness of styles of dreaming in persons living in a larger number of worlds: persons who discover, read, learn, fantasize, and work with their imagination. Persons who develop intellectually and spiritually have more metaphorical dreams. This may be related to creativity and the level of abstract thinking. Since indeed – as Segal writes – people are provided with identical drives, the richness of imagination depends on the ego.

The author says, quoting Melanie Klein, that unconscious phantasies lie at the base of dreams, symptoms, perception, thoughts, and creativity (Segal 1991). What is worthy of attention is that Klein identifies a single source giving rise to dreams and creativity. And here returns the question whether the plot of dreams is an expression of creativity rather than an organized armed defence of the ego, preventing us from the free expression of the unconscious?

It is only in one place that Segal reflects on the people who are on good terms with the unconscious, people who “have actual *communication* with their uncon-

scious phantasies [...] they can be consciously aware and in control of *symbolic expressions* of the underlying primitive phantasies" (Segal 1991: 32). They are in control through their understanding, with which it is worthwhile to befriend oneself also at the level of relations with our own dreaming. Psychoanalytic books on dreams provide spectacular examples showing how a thorough interpretative activity may reveal our most important conflicts disturbing the psyche in the development of the ego. But such a show is not necessary on a daily basis.

The contents of unconscious phantasies are revealed by both art and dreams. Freud understood the aesthetic value of art as a facilitation of the liberation of pleasure, a reward for successful attraction, a fore-pleasure (Freud 1925). Owing to their innate creative or aesthetic properties (and this is not about beauty), dreams allure us to engage in a foreplay with the dream imagination. As a result of self-analytical studies, curiosity and pleasure in the ease of the understanding of dreams, familiarity with their metaphors and styles, and treating them as artefacts, may enrich our vocabulary of thinking about our own unconscious phantasies – without the worry that they shall not be immediately clearly distilled from the chaos of representations, but with an awareness that self-discovery is prone to egocentric distortions in reception, to half-truths that will support the domesticated phantasms. Due to resistance on the part of the consciousness, these phantasms may prevent the development of imagination in its integration with the unconscious, i.e. with the not yet internalised.

Calvin Hall, a contemporary dream researcher, was interested mainly in the dreams of larger groups, the quantitative method, the coding of dreams. He reported a hardly contestable assumption about continuity between one's real life and dreams. Studying a cycle of dreams of a single individual, he noticed that a large number of repetitions as a part of a single case study creates the sense of boredom. This thread was well-commented on by Ole Vedfelt, who pointed out that "Hall's material was culled from people who weren't in therapy" (Vedfelt 1999: 125). This is because the absence of changes in the dream thought may indicate a lack of development of individual perception as well as a neglect in the area of the broadening of one's personality or, using the language of the depth psychology – a neglected integration of the shadow. Hall, Adler and neo-Freudianists write that dreams most often feature problem elements about which we dream until we have them, until we have worked through them.

Although generally speaking Hall's idea is actually consistent with psychoanalysis, some of its assumptions are contradictory to it. When specifying the points the dream interpreter should take into account following Hall's method, Ole Vedfelt shows that what needs to be taken into consideration is that "we dream of what we had to think about in the waking life" [translated from the Polish language] (Vedfelt 1999). This invalidates theories about unconscious phantasies present in dreams and the novelty of the content carried by the thought (not yet emerged in the consciousness) the dream may think. And the key evidence proving their existence is the deep analyses of the psychoanalytic perspective.

In our reception of the content of dreams, we may for a moment, following Barthes, assume the author dead, and this shall not be "a suicide as an experience of imagination". This shall be tantamount to the understanding that failure to understand the actual intention of the dream does not have to be a drawback of the work,

i.e. the interpretation of dreams. The free space of comprehension in thinking about oneself may slowly or partially broaden the contexts of understanding one's own experience.

Owing to creative representation, we simultaneously come closer to deeper meanings and we experience a soothing distance of the symbolization or displacements these contents undergo as a part of dreams and as a part of artistic representations. Since this is what the grandness of art is about, why should it not be an advantage of dreaming? What directs the process of the reception of works of art, just like dream interpretation in psychoanalysis, is the efflorescence of associations.

Dreams, although they are sequences, hums, and collections of images, most resemble films. However, what remains of them, is only a tale or its record, a "literary" trace.

Why do literary critics then omit these private stories? If this activity of the mind makes no sense, then literature, aesthetic literary quality and everything it offers through the act of reception are without any sense as well. Although centuries ago Jean-Jacques Rousseau crossed the border of talking about himself, there are still so few dream confessions. If the belief that they do not have much sense was authentic, this sphere would probably have been stripped and deepened long ago in Polish literature, since no one would hesitate to publish their dream journals and their interpretations.¹⁰

The existence of works of art, literature and dreams is not clamorous. Pictures wait in galleries, content awaits among the bindings, and the dream memory silently removes dreams, not transferring them to the long-term memory. Cognition depends on a decision – I shall go to the gallery, I shall open a book, I want to look at my dreams. A picture can be boring, a book can be graphomaniacal, a dream can be insignificant or unnoticed. Some more gaudy experiences also appear. Affective influences do not leave us indifferent. Let us think for example about the first contact with Libera's Lego Auschwitz set. Breakthroughs are not unnoticeable, although it seems that they do not take place without the first interest of the will directed towards cognition.

Perhaps the thinking of the creative structure of dreams and entering into a dialogue with dreaming is excessively positive or perhaps just a bit naive, but it results from a subtle and incomplete opposition inspired by how Segal solves, strongly accentuates and finishes her reflections:

[...] throughout this chapter, I have emphasized how the creative impulse arises out of depressive anxieties, and how their expression in a way meaningful to the recipient involves such processes as are mobilised in the depressive position: the capacity to symbolize; perception of inner and outer reality, and ability to bear eventual separation and separateness (Segal 1991: 90).

¹⁰ To the best of my knowledge, descriptions of their own dreams were published by Jan Lechoń, Maria Dąbrowska, Marian Marzyński, Adam Wiedemann and Henryk Bereza. However, none of the above reliably looked at their dreams in the context of self-discovery. In my opinion, the only such attempt was undertaken by Krystyna Sakowicz.

Indeed, the very expression is related to a loss of something which previously was mute, but it is also a separation and a birth of the meaning we can look at. The creative impulses or the impulses from which dreams originate are not based solely on depressive anxiety, but on the need, desire and preliminary readiness to accept a given content. The position of the artist or creator of a dream and the depressive position have their own joint places, but these can be created by various soils, various bases of creation. These bases can include not only anxiety and depression, not only conflict, but also happiness, love, or amazement or only a desire for them, as for instance in the pleasant dreams about flying. Psychoanalytic understanding has its own concrete feature resulting from the sphere with which it is coping, from the perspective of the disease through which it most often looks and from which each of us can take wonderful lessons in our dream attitude, remembering at the same time that these theories can be in various ways “excessively certain”, to be literally translated into dreams from the daily life as such. For Segal, the artistic impulse aims at a reconstruction of a deconstructed harmony. And since it is an attempt, the nature of the work is always open, unfinished. The creative process is coupled with the depressive position: an attempt at a recovery of the lost world. This seems to be integrally connected with a return of the repressed, with the fact that dreams are “the repressed wish, disguised in the dream”, with a rejection of the possibility that the unconscious in dreams is not only the formerly conscious, but also perhaps simply the not yet understood, the not yet thought, new.

Psychoanalysis is hermeneutics, and symbols/representations always refer us outside themselves – to some other meaning, but also to the accompanying emotions – hence the great role of the context and emotions present in dreams. Fromm divided symbols into conventional, accidental and universal ones (Fromm 1977). The conventional ones operate in the language, the universal ones can be compared to archetypes, and the accidental ones refer to individual experience and often provide dreams with idiosyncrasy.

Dreams not always provide extremely significant content directly from the very core of the great unconsciousness, just like not all literary works discuss the supra-individual property of the self. There are grand dreams, there are masterpieces, there are less important dreams, and there is graphomania. “Great work is like a dream, which, all obvious qualities notwithstanding, does not interpret itself and is therefore unequivocal” (Jung 1976: 402). Similarly, an ordinary dream is like a small book making an introduction to our life.

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Summary

Creative Stories of the Night – Neglected Dreams

In the article *Creative Stories of the Night – Neglected Dreams* I compare the formation of dreams to the creative process of an artist. I propose the liberation of the theory of psychoanalysis and interests in dreams as a basic creative function of the mind.

Keywords

dream studies, psychoanalysis, Hanna Segal, autoanalysis

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Oneiric incarnations: The construction of dreams in selected video games

Introduction. Dreams, culture and media

Dreams are an inexhaustible source of inspiration for cultural texts. Fascination with them seems to be not only equivalent to an interest in the alienness and otherness of the oneiric experiences in comparison to the ones we are familiar with in reality, dreams are also shrouded by the belief – deeply rooted in culture – that they have their own, unique function of providing us with knowledge which is otherwise unavailable to us; archetypal dreams show that by immersing ourselves in their world, we acquire access to new forms of self-reflection, prophetic abilities or truths, which remain concealed in other circumstances.

Dreams are discussed by various cultural texts. We may provide examples from the plastic arts (such as Francisco de Goya's etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* or Johann Heinrich Füssli's oil painting *The Nightmare*), literature (George Gordon Byron's *The Dream* or Susanna Clarke's contemporary fantasy novel *Jonathan Strange & Mister Norrell*), and cinema (*Inception* directed by Christopher Nolan or the interesting use of dream in Stanley Kubrick's production *Eyes Wide Shut*). Science – in particular psychology (Freud 1913) and cultural studies (Topp, Fereński, Nahirny 2014) – also often reach for dreams.

In this article, we want to show how video games use dream-related imaginaries rooted in culture. We will simultaneously show mechanisms of their adaptation to the mechanics of games and the plot and describe how games use the stylistic means available to them to show dreams in a new form. We will also analyse examples of games in which dreams are a particularly vital aspect. Additionally, we will indicate in what kind of situation the above puts the recipient (player) in relation to concrete imaginaries related to dreams.

We believe that this topic is important not only from the perspective of knowledge of the contemporary culture, but also those social sciences which are interested in the social transmission of knowledge, imaginaries and symbols, with a particular focus on sociology and the pedagogy of culture.

Dreams in video games – expositions and constructs

Video games have been changing and developing along with technological progress for a very long time. While many adult players associate this type of virtual games with productions such as *Mario*, a large share of the game market offers products that are more extensively constructed, involve many topics, are more complex, and have varied quality.

The operation of oneiric constructions is one of the means of expression used by games (and their authors) – and these very constructions are the main object of our interest. Choosing several examples of productions, we want to show the means allowing video games to adopt complex symbolism, and the manner of perception of the special human experience of the dream.

Grandness and self-destruction – prophetic dream visions in the *Baldur's Gate* saga

Baldur's Gate I and *Baldur's Gate II* are games classified among the classical titles that helped define the CRPG genre, and determined the direction of its development for years to come. Together with two extensions (one for each of the parts), they tell the story of a young protagonist who learns that he is a descendant of a deceased deity – Bhaal, a local patron of murder and treacherous assassination.

In both parts of the saga, dreams are a very significant element of the plot. They are a commentary to the current situation of the main protagonist, present his fears and doubts, and relatively often herald future events. They ask what we will do in the deciding moments of the game, and they present the real and imaginary consequences of our choices.

The dreams of the main protagonist are often prophetic; they contain a rich variety of symbols, and to be able to read and understand them, one needs knowledge about the universe in which the game takes place. In particular in part one of the cycle, dreams often show images of statues (sometimes broken ones), a bone dagger (an attributive weapon of the protagonist's godly ancestor) or visions of being swallowed up by the ground. The dreams accompanying the main character are usually bleak, restless, filled with anxiety and sometimes also more or less expressive of aggression. They are sometimes fatalistic – imbued with the sense of the inevitability of the forthcoming events, the final fall, and the impossibility of a change of our fate.

In his dreams, the protagonist reconfronts the enemies he had previously beaten – and, to his amazement, he discovers a new dimension of the already taken actions – one, which is often much more momentous and bleak than outside the dream.

Wherever the reality of the game forces a given character to fight – whether we want it or not – the act of violence and aggression may be shown as a voluntary choice in the dream. As if our consciously undertaken actions were an illusion constituting an attempt at a moral justification of the evil we inflicted. This topic also appears in games outside the sphere of dreams.

Sometimes it looks as though the game asks the players themselves about the fairness of their actions. Even when it seems that the decisions were good and noble, are they not sometimes just a smoke screen for Bhaalspawn to be able to satisfy his desire to fight, murder, and destroy?

What is characteristic is that the dreams – especially the ones featuring violence and destruction – are accompanied by visions of the ultimate self-destruction. Therefore, it is not rare to be absorbed by the evil, which – being the protagonist – we ourselves released.

In the game, dreams herald significant changes about to happen to our character. As a result, we open access to new abilities, we learn more about ourselves and our situation, and we open paths of plot interpretation or additional dialogue options with our companions.

The space of dreams seems to be a mystical reality. It is not only a symbolic representation of what we experience, but an autonomous space which has its own laws, allows one to act and has a strong influence on the protagonist. It seems that such experience has a special role to play: to facilitate a mystical transformation of the character, who acquires new features by gradually moving away from his initial condition. In these dreams, death and destruction go hand in hand with the recreation and transformation as if in an alchemical symbolism (Eliade 2013). The horror of these visions lies in the awareness that the final result of the transformations is unknown (and probably far from desirable). The transformations bring the main protagonist nearer to his grim, godly legacy marked with destruction. The development and acquisition of new powers – which initially may seem positive – creates a sense of inescapably heading towards the final failure and balancing at the borderline of an existential abyss (Bogost 2007). In the case of the intentionally evil protagonists, the direction determined by visions satisfies their bleak fantasies.

Dreams as intimacy and phantasy – on the basis of the video game *Neverwinter Nights 2*: *Mask of the Betrayer*

The action of the game *Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer* takes place in the same universe as the one described for the games from the *Baldur's Gate* series, but here, a new region is revealed for the player. It is Rashemen – a land strongly associated with ghosts, nature, magic, and dreams. Both in the game and in the books, the action of which takes place in Rashemen, the protagonists are highly attached to dreaming and dreams. A character called Fyodor of Rashemen, known from *Tangled Webs* (Cunningham 2004b), is one such example. The man would often say that “There are those who think and those who dream”. This saying shows that he perceives dreaming as something different than thinking, something cognitively special. Rashemen is also associated with dreams because they are connected with some significant events from the novels (*Tangled Webs* or *Daughter of the Drow* [Cunningham 2004a]) and *Neverwinter Night 2: Mask of the*

Betrayer – in particular in the location of Coveya Kurgannis, where the player visits the Slumbering Coven.

The game strongly displays the constructions of dreams – largely through the character called Gannayev, who is also referred to as Gann-of-Dreams. The man often talks about things related to dreams, and discusses their meaning, and his own experience of having dreams. He often associates them with intimacy – in particular while talking to the main character (especially if the protagonist is a woman). For example:

Then so be it – we will share dreams and awareness together. That was all I needed to know. We shall be each other's anchor when all around us is in turmoil... when chaos floods over us, our strength shall shield us against it. And even should I fall, this sharing of our feelings shall remain – and I will be with you, even if my physical self is destroyed. [...] My dreams are of you and I surviving this, with a tale of how two lovers braved death and returned. I think we deserve a happy ending, don't you? That is my dream. I think it is not too much to ask.

This is a direct connection of dreams with passion and other essential values that are close to people. Here, three elements are combined: mysticism, oneirism, and love. However, it is worth remembering about the fact that games – in contrast to the dreams of concrete individuals – are created largely intentionally, often with clear inspirations and cultural influences, thus largely presenting popular gender-related and sexual constructs and operating with socially-present discourses (such as the inclusion of non-normativity, or presentation of the tabooed) (Prósiniowski 2015; Prósiniowski, Ranachowska 2014; Cielecka 2014). Expectations related to women, men and sexuality are also presented through games and their constructions of dreams, romances, mysticism, and connections with social imaginaries. They can be related to the concept of differentiating between anima and animus, i.e. archetypical features and behaviours attributed to women and men (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 2010). This shows that oneirism, dreams and sexuality are not alien to digital, ludic social representations such as games. They present elements typical of our collective imaginaries concerning social groups and roles, and the expectations they are attributed with at a level which is much deeper than the very presentation of specific behaviours. Here, they achieve the ideal level – that of imaginaries lying at the basis of our understanding of the world and ways we think about it in concrete categories (Busse-Brandyk, Chmielewska-Łuczak 2009).

Therefore, *Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer* offers fantasies – both about adventures, and ghosts – and contact with dreams and romanticism, in a way transforming dreams into something mystical, mysterious, strongly connected with magic, experience, and intimacy – similarly to the better known Shakespearean literary incarnations, where dreams were also mixed with phantasy and love. Can we therefore say that video games materialize erotic dreams?

If games touch sexual archetypes, the expected – if they show the tabooed, the sexual, the exciting, – we can no doubt say that they sometimes become erotic and intriguing representations – especially taking into account their romance-related

contents (the possibility of virtual plot-related romantic conversations between the protagonist and a character created by the authors) present in games (including such extensive and well-known series as *Neverwinter Night*, *Baldur's Gate* or *Dragon Age*). This is yet another form of talking about dreams, fantasies and love. Culture knows many incarnations of such stories – they are presented in literature, cinema and the plastic arts. The presence of such elements in video games provides the players with an access to new forms of expression of their own sexuality. Remembering that the players are not just passive recipients, but – through the avatars they control – also active participants in the events, they can actively refer to them. They can become behaviourally and emotionally involved or consciously distance themselves to the experience. The romance-related contents in games therefore remain a field open to choices – and whether and how the players will use the opportunities offered largely depends on their conscious decisions, which makes the game a space of relatively free expression. With whom a romance will be developed (if it will be developed at all), depends entirely on the players' preferences, on which characters will sparkle an interest in them, will intrigue them, or which ones they will consider attractive.

Apart from the topics concerning Gann and romantic dreams, *Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer* also features other dream representations, such as collective dreaming rituals: again, dreams are shown here as something specifically intimate, something shared with one's dear ones. In this case, we are dealing with nine hags belonging to the Slumbering Coven, who sleep and never wake, who are also referred to as the "unending dream", talking in one voice through one of their members. The Slumbering Coven sustain themselves with dreams, taking them out "from its [the mind's – P.P., P.K.] deepest places, yes... where dreams mingle with hidden and forgotten things", and putting them together to make a whole in order to control them. This is how the women describe their role, dreaming, and dreams themselves:

From the dreams of mortals, we salvage much... visions and hopes and memories. We take these things and gather them here, before mortal minds can forget them. [...] We walk in their dreams, and we take what they will only lose. [...] We hoard, collect, preserve. To us, dreams are things to be treasured, torn from those who do not know their worth. [...] If you end our dream, all that it contains is lost. Imagine... the dreams of a thousand, thousand souls, the knowledge of wizards and kings centuries dead, the hopes and loves of men and women and beasts... all contained within our unending dream.

In their role, the hags are cruel in their own way, and the meeting of the player with them is marked not only with magic, an intriguing mysticism, but also the macabre. The Slumbering Coven do not hide their sternness, as they are willing to talk about punishments awaiting those who break their rules – and one of the punished ones included Gann-of-Dreams' mother.

While talking, one may peer into the so-called Dreamscape, become familiar with its form and see the true nature of the Slumbering Coven. The land is

described as “a vast tapestry upon which the hags crawl, greedily snatching up dream fragments from weaker mortals, and sewing them into their vast, sprawling web”. Also, the intimacy, fantasies and memories in the form of dreams may be accompanied by a specific horror – here, one taking the form of irreverent and stern hags guarding bits of dreams and visions ripped away from mortals.

The creation of space for the finalization of the gameplay is yet another intriguing aim of dreams in the game under analysis. It is there that we reach the aforementioned Dreamscape – it becomes the place in which, just before the final clash, we visit the dream versions of the locations known to the player. Therefore, the dreams become an intimate, but also – in a way – distorted memory. What is shown here, again, is the double nature of dreams: their fanciness, but also the horror and the doom of the past approaching the protagonist. The double nature generates yet another question: are erotic fantasies, dreams, discussing “the possible future”, that far from what has already taken place and the thanatic visions of the possible end?

Dreams – whether sensual, erotic, or disturbing, ominous ones – are marked by strong emotions and feelings. They leave a deep impression or offer promises related to the dreaming person’s expectations, thus facilitating the reflection and interpretation of not just the dream, but also elements of the life that has been lived so far or that remains to be discovered.

The art of poetic dreams – on the basis of the game *Tension*, developed by Ice-Pick Lodge

Tension is a production of a small Russian studio called Ice Pick Lodge. The game is maintained in the convention of a survival horror, it is produced artistically and operates with eroticism. The action of the game takes place in the location called the Void – a surreal, oneiric world in which a colourful Lympha sprouts. The players are to collect it to open increasingly new hearts in their bodies (which is tantamount to the acquisition of new abilities), create gardens sparkling with colours, talk to the mysterious Sisters, learn the principles of the Void and, occasionally, fight with the characters of the Brothers.

The production is filled with dark artistry expressed in various forms – unusual ambient music, poems recited by some unspecified creatures, or the very construction of the world. The dreams in *Tension* (partly as in *Neverwiner Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer*, although via different solutions) are marked by a mysticism evoked through the pressure on secret knowledge (not actually referred to in this way, but determined as such by the identification of many taboo subjects) and the ability to create colours, or the names of abilities (for instance a glyph of ritual). Mysterious topics are accompanied by eroticism, which creates sensual experiences. Some players may therefore feel the atmosphere of oneirism during their gameplay as a result of the slow tempo of the game and the sense that the player’s character levitates, moving through the land of the Void slightly suspended above the ground. The oneirism is strengthened by a visual presentation of places as if

from Zdzisław Beksiński's paintings – who also created “as if recording day and night dreams” (Beksiński 1978: 10). The authors also refer to dreams in the textual layer, for example quoting a poem by Luís de Camões:

The dream of the future, you see, dissolves,
and, with time, so does the apprehension.
The world under sun is no exception,
and all you see around you evolves.

New traits, and things familiar, can be sensed,
but futile is hope without fruition.
The grief you knew begets no vision.
The happiness you felt becomes regret.

Winter fades, and takes its cold and storm.
Spring revives the world with love and warmth.
But still the law: all things decay and age.

Vanity itself wont dry your tears.
And so you fear as your time draws near.
The world will turn, but never change.

The poem presents dreams as prophetic phenomena simultaneously related to the thanatic visions of destruction and the unavoidably passing time. It also talks about the task consisting in changing the world, which seems to be more than difficult; it is shown as something overburdening or even impossible. We can say that the atmosphere of the poem fills us with the senses of resignation, sadness, and even fear. It is also not without a reason that the lyrical subject mentions a certain regularity, thus underlining the unavoidability of death – “all things decay and age” in this world.

Therefore, *Tension* combines ludic elements and play with art, and indirectly also with philosophy, which is related to the artistic expression characteristic for a given period in human history, an analysis, and interpretation of the cultural and what is typical for the place and time. The placement of the dream in the context of such elements provides it with a clear artistic flair.

Sensitisation through dream and fear – on the basis of the video game *Among The Sleep*

The last game under analysis is *Among The Sleep* – an adventure game sometimes referred to as an interactive horror. It tells the story from the point of view of a child who is left alone (or almost alone – in the company of a helpful soft toy) in a room. When the night comes, everything begins to increasingly resemble a nightmare. The story and the locations are constructed in such a way that the player – despite their (presumable) maturity – feels fear evoked by strange shad-

ows, odd coats so long that they touch the floor, and many other daily objects. The fact that the authors chose the concept of a nightmare makes the player confused as to what is real and what is a dream.

The plot concerns the child's fears connected with the mother who appears episodically, to show herself as an oppressive and horrible power in the further part of the game. It turns out that the monster the child was escaping from was a nightmare about the mother and her alcoholism, shouting, and problems, and that everything the child saw on his way was an oneiric (or rather nightmarish) interpretation of the daily and evoking fear.

In the game, dreams are shown as sensitising visions which, just as literature (Nyhus 2012) (or other cultural texts) picture whatever stirs difficult emotions in people, breaks the taboo and simultaneously shows a certain problem to the world – inducing a discussion. From the pedagogical point of view, the above establishes conditions for the development of the discourse and detabooization. Breaking silence concerning such topics as alcoholism, suffering, and death allows one to work on the understanding or analysis of human, social weaknesses (Nils-son 2012). At the same time, the game steps outside a discussion on the taboo with children – it also proposes a discussion with adults, guardians, and members of the society, since it is the society who stigmatizes the phenomena as something difficult and raising concern.

In this place, it is worthwhile asking whether dreams are a taboo topic. In a sense, they are, since they are related to strong emotions. They raise fear (they picture it) – for example fear of losing one's safety, or losing something or someone. Hardly anyone readily shares strongly felt dreams that reflect their grandest fears. Tales about dreams and nightmares allow one to domesticate the fear, externalise the internal anxieties and get used to them – in a way. This is one of the basic forms of the reduction of fear – along with the contact with the object of fear and focusing on the course of the situation (Kępiński 2012), since it is tantamount to the performance of the activity of contact with the vision of the problem. Obviously, this requires time, and a single terrifying dream is not enough, although a multitude of occasions to face the taboo and fear may be an introduction, an opportunity to “work through” the problem – in particular if we come into contact with it from the perspective of a safe armchair (Kruszelnicki 2010). This seems to explain the popularity of various superstitions and conventions related to the interpretation of dreams. Chaos and anxiety are therefore clothed in conventionalised forms of interpretation of the content of dreams, and the interpretation itself becomes a domain of specific authorities (seers, spiritual authorities, fortune-tellers), or meanings consolidated by cultural practice, for example in the form of dream-books or orally-transmitted beliefs as to the concrete symbols and contents present in dreams. Already the Bible, telling the story of the patriarch Joseph, attributed his social advancement and the power he was vested with to his ability to interpret dreams allegedly being a gift directly from God. The ability to soothe fears and anxieties connected with the contact with the world of dreams becomes a synonym for wisdom and a talent appreciated by society. Even today, in many households

one may find various editions of books on the interpretation of dreams, while the internet has become a convenient platform of an exchange of information and beliefs on them. It is also in games that the understanding of dreams may become a significant part of the plot. The discovery of the oneiric meanings of visions may become as much as one of the key elements of the gameplay.

Therefore, *Among The Sleep* offers an oneiric restraint of the object of fear/problems. Dreams aim at highlighting (using overstatements, and presenting fears in the worst possible form) the significance of socially irritating, difficult issues. In this way, they attack the growing social tabooization.

Conclusion

The oneiric incarnations in video games make dreams immortal in a new way. They preserve them digitally and interactively, sometimes attributing to them functions and features known to the audience from other cultural texts and dimensions of their dailiness.

Just like in well-known works of culture, dreams are marked by prophetism, thanatism, horror, sensuality, erotics, intimacy, mysticism, and fanciness. This shows that in human understanding, dreams are sacred, but in their sanctity they are both beautiful and fearsome. Sometimes they can be understood as a phantasy, the destruction of which may end the current state of things or the perception of reality. Dreams are a form of compromise between the order and the chaos of human life (Caillois 1973). They answer the need to reconcile the sphere of social expectations and the emotional sphere of individuals – hence their dangerous charm.

Table 1. Summary presentation of functions and features of dreams in the analysed video games

	<i>Baldur's Gate series</i>	<i>Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer</i>	<i>Tension</i>	<i>Among the Sleep</i>
Dream function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prophetic - recollecting and reminding - commentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raising intimacy - creating opportunities and space for fantasising and recollecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthening artistic experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sensitising - raising fear by visual distortion of the reality while keeping the realistic fears - combining dreams and reality
Dream feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bleakness - unrest - fear - aggression - momentousness - mysticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - romanticism - mysticism - sensuality - mysteriousness - thanatism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bleakness - mysticism - slowness - thanatism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bleakness - horror - fanciness

Source: authors' own analysis.

The dream space appears to be a place where the daily is connected with the elements of cultural life we would rather not see on an everyday basis; a sphere of the risk in which the best and the worst tendencies find their vent and are free to speak. But it can also be the other way round: dreams can be fantasy, they can be an exciting desired stimulus encouraging us to reach for the promising; a prophecy of fulfilment – either real or apparent, but nevertheless tempting enough for people to take the risk and try. Representations of dreams are ambivalent, as they can show fear, but also tempt with success. They are an unrestrained and free thought which can trouble, destroy, and build.

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Summary

Oneiric Incarnations: The Construction of Dreams in Selected Video Games

Humanity has always considered dreams and oneiric visions significant. Along with development, the image of dreams has been presented in different media: the plastic arts, literature, and films. Dreams appear also in video games. They are often presented as significant, in some situations even essential for a story to move on. Developers, designers, dialogue writers transfer their understanding of dreams to their productions; they include popular vision of dreams in their games. Developers also adapt both the everyday and mythical features of dreams, presenting games in a specific pattern; they elicit specific interpretations of their constructs. The aim of this article is to deconstruct the virtual exposition of dreams in specific video games, as well as to describe the meanings engraved in dreams inside the analysed games.

Keywords

video games, game studies, analysis of cultural text, virtual reality, dreams

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My favourite characters. Images of girls and boys in children's literature. A pedagogical gender study

Contact with books, although increasingly rare today, is a permanent element of education. It normally results from school demands (obligatory reading), and sometimes covers literature read voluntarily. Regardless of the motivation, reading is an element of education and socialisation, including gender socialisation. The choice of the issue under analysis is justified by many studies suggesting that "the school system may be doing more to validate gender stereotypes than challenge them" (Neimanis 2006: 74). Basing myself on analyses unambiguously indicating the stereotypicality of school curricula and textbooks, I shall pay attention to educational impacts that are not directly related to the school system, but which are an element of the socialisation process.

This paper aims at the presentation of girl and boy characters from primary school pupils' favourite books. The protagonists will be analysed primarily in the context of gender stereotypes. In this article, I shall focus on children's spontaneous reading (taking into account books not included in the school book canon).

Exploration of this research area is consistent with the recommendations as a part of the application of *gender mainstream* principles in education. In chapter nine of the report *Polityka równości płci. Polska 2007. Raport* [Gender Equality Policy. Poland 2007. A Report] (Balińska *et al.* 2007), Magdalena Środa and Ewa Rutkowska specify nine concrete, detailed recommendations directed to authors of curricula and textbooks, ministry officials and publishers. I believe that the recommendations should also apply to education outside schools. Of particular importance for my area of explorations are two of the recommendations, which justify the purposefulness of studies into the gender analysis of children's books: the analysis' sensitivity to gender/sexuality, and other premises of identity.

My research procedure involved two parts: part one was aimed at becoming acquainted with children's reading choices, and part two consisted in the analysis of images of the children's favourite characters. In view of its goal, part one was carried out by means of a diagnostic survey. Part two complements the work with a qualitative content analysis. The combination of two distinct methodological strategies in a single research project is possible as long as both methods are used in separate stages of the research (Krüger 2007).

The study was performed in March 2012 and covered male and female pupils from grade V of one of the primary schools in Słupsk. A total of 85 pupils participated. 81 survey questionnaires were analysed. Four questionnaires were rejected since gender was not indicated among the respondent's particulars. The questionnaire survey was filled in by 47 boys and 34 girls.

Before commencing the study, I adopted some preliminary assumptions – the research shall focus on children's favourite characters, and I shall perform the analysis in the context of gender stereotypes, trying to answer the following questions: are the favourite characters from books stereotypical boys and stereotypical girls? What do the pupils learn about being boys and girls when they read their favourite books?

Answering the first question, I took into account two basic elements of gender stereotypes, i.e. the traits and actions undertaken by the books' protagonists. The table below, presenting a list of stereotypical male and female traits, is not a "rigid" scheme used for the analysis, but only guidelines for the text analysis. The list of traits was developed on the basis of the available literature.

Table 1. Stereotypical female and male traits (Brannon 2002, Pankowska 2005)

Stereotypical male traits	Stereotypical female traits
Rationality	Intuitiveness
Courage	Timidity
Aggressiveness	Sensitivity
Insensitivity	Tenderness
Ambition	Inclination to self-sacrifice
Imperiousness	Delicacy
Emotional coldness	Empathy
Valour	Submissiveness
Activity	Passivity
Self-reliance	Dependence on others
Independence	Non-logicality
Logicity	Weakness
Strength	Helplessness
Resourcefulness	Modesty
Self-assuredness	Quietness
Readiness to take risk	Focus on the needs and feelings of others
Rivalry	Grace
Creativity	Naivety
Composure	Undecidedness
Resoluteness	Emotionality
Ability to divide emotions from reason	Focus on external appearance
Carelessness as to their appearance	

Source: author's own analysis.

I shall present the results of my quantitative research in a descriptive form.

The reading activity of pupils

30 boys (64%) and 24 girls (71%) answered "yes" to the question "Do you like reading"? Reading books as a form of spending their free time was mentioned by 11 female (32%) and 10 male (21%) pupils. Both boys and girls indicated their mums as persons who read most at their homes. Mum was also indicated by 27 girls (79% female respondents) and 37 boys (79% male respondents) as the person who read books to them when they were younger.

13 girls and the same number of boys read more than twenty books last year. Six girls (18%) and 12 boys (27%) read books every day. Both boys and girls read books mainly due to school demands and for entertainment. The children learn whether a given book is worth reading mainly from their parents.

Which books were selected as their favourite ones by girls and which ones by boys?

82% of the girls and 66% of the boys declared that they had a favourite book. The table below illustrates the respondents' reading choices.

Table 2. Female and male pupils' favourite books

No.	Female pupils' favourite books	Male pupils' favourite books
1.	A.M. Stefańska, <i>Zuzka na spadochronie</i> [Sue on a Parachute]	A. Stelmaszyk, <i>Kroniki Archeo i Skarb Atlantów</i> [The Archeo Chronicles and the Treasure of the Atlantes]
2.	R. Kosik, <i>Felix, Net i Nika</i> [Felix, Net and Nika]	R. Kosik, <i>Felix, Net i Nika</i> [Felix, Net and Nika]
3.	J. Dale, <i>Puppy Patrol – The Sea Dog</i>	P. Bacalario, <i>Ring of Fire</i>
4.	E. Nowak, <i>Pajęczek na rowerze</i> [Little Spider on a Bicycle]	F. Simon, the Horrid Henry series (3 choices)
5.	<i>Wszystko o zwierzętach</i> [Everything About Animals] issued in 2009 as a part of the series <i>Książki z Delfinkiem Dudu</i> [Books with Dudu the Dolphin] published by Graaf	D. Terry, <i>Horrible Histories: The Rotten Romans</i>
6.	A.C. Doyle, the <i>Sherlock Holmes</i> series	H.J. Chmielewski, <i>Tytus, Romek i Atomek</i> [Tytus, Romek and Atomek]
7.	J. Wilson, <i>Bad Girls</i>	G. Daneshvari, <i>School of Fear</i>
8.	K. Gier, <i>The Ruby Red Trilogy: Ruby Red, Sapphire Blue and Emerald Green</i>	M. Paver, <i>Chronicles of Ancient Darkness</i>
9.	K. Duey, <i>Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron</i>	T. Canavan, <i>The Black Magician Trilogy</i>
10.	C. Jefferies, <i>Fame School</i>	M.P. Osborne, <i>The Magic Tree House</i>
11.	H. Block, T. Di Terlizzi, <i>The Spiderwick Chronicles</i>	J. Kinney, <i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> (2 choices)
12.	M. Cabot, <i>The Princess Diaries</i>	C. Paolini, the Inheritance Cycle
13.	M. Budzyńska, <i>Ala Makota</i>	M.R. Levin, <i>Rescuing Sprite</i>

14.	A. Maleszka, <i>Magiczne drzewo – czerwone krzesło</i> [The Magic Tree – The Red Chair]	A. Maleszka, <i>Magiczne drzewo – czerwone krzesło</i> [The Magic Tree – The Red Chair]
15.	B. Patten, <i>The Story Giant</i>	P. Baccalario, <i>Ulysses Moore, The Door to Time</i>
16.	J.K. Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone</i>	J.K. Rowling, the <i>Harry Potter</i> series (4 choices)
17.	G.C. Levine, <i>Ella Enchanted</i>	<i>Star Wars</i> books based on the films (2 choices)
18.	–	<i>Czas honoru</i> [Days of Honour] – a book based on a TV series produced by the TVP channel

The following school readings were omitted: *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *In Desert and Wilderness*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Six Bullerby Children*, *O Psie, który jeździł koleją* [The Dog That Travelled by Train], *The Little Nicholas* series, and *The Hobbit*. Source: author’s own analysis

All the books mentioned by the female pupils were selected just once. In the case of boys, four books were chosen as favourite ones by more than one person. The favourite books of both boys and girls include the *Harry Potter* series, *Magiczne drzewo – czerwone krzesło* [The Magic Tree – The Red Chair] and *Felix, Net i Nika* [Felix, Net and Nika]. Table 2 shows that – apart from a few items – the choices of the boys and girls are not the same. The literary interests of male and female pupils appear to be largely determined by gender.

Which book characters were selected by girls and which ones by boys as favourite ones?

38% of female pupils and 26% of male pupils declared that they had a favourite protagonist. The table below illustrates the reading choices of the pupils participating in the study.

Table 3. Girls’ and boy’s favourite protagonists

No.	Girls’ favourite protagonists	Boys’ favourite protagonists
1.	Sherlock Holmes	Harry Potter
2.	Ella (<i>Ella Enchanted</i>)	Albus Dumbledore (<i>Harry Potter</i> series)
3.	Gwendolyn (<i>The Ruby Red Trilogy: Ruby Red, Sapphire Blue and Emerald Green</i>)	Torak (<i>Chronicles of Ancient Darkness</i>)
4.	Marmaduke Stamp (<i>Fame school</i>)	Eragon (the <i>Inheritance Cycle</i>)
5.	Chloe Tompkins (<i>Fame school</i>)	Anakin Skywalker (<i>Star Wars</i>)
6.	Princess of Genovia – Mia Thermopolis (<i>The Princess Diaries</i>)	Bartek (<i>Kroniki Archeo</i> [Archeo Chronicles] and <i>Skarb Atlantów</i> [The Treasure of Atlantes])
7.	Ala Makota (<i>Ala Makota</i>)	Sprite (<i>Rescuing Sprite</i>)
8.	Hermione Granger (the <i>Harry Potter</i> series)	–
9.	The wild horse (<i>Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron</i>)	–

School readings were omitted. Source: author’s own analysis.

In my analysis, I omitted Anakin, since he is originally a film character, and Bartek in view of the unavailability of the book in the Słupsk libraries.

My research shows that the choice of favourite character is directly related to the pupil's favourite book. The characters selected by girls are predominantly female (apart from Sherlock Holmes, Marmaduke Stamp and the animal – although it has a gender as well). Boys chose male protagonists (although an animal character of a concrete gender was also indicated).

The gender of the favourite book characters is related to the readers' gender. Girls chose representatives of the female gender, while boys selected male characters. Such choices are related to their identification with the selected protagonist. It is a continuation of the process which begins at the beginning of education – in kindergarten.

It turns out that for small children, gender is the key to the assessment of the nearest environment (other people). A simple principle is in operation: boys believe that other boys (and men) are better and the opposite sex is the worse one. Girls perceive the world in the same way. In kindergarten children, gender affects not only the classification of people, but also for example the remembering of stories (boys prefer fairy tales with male protagonists, and the other way round) (Burnetko, Mateja 2011: 10).

I shall perform a qualitative analysis of my respondents' favourite protagonists on the basis of the data from Table 3, using the guidelines contained in Table 2. Having described the particular characters, I shall indicate whether they are marked by gender stereotypes. I shall complement their description with quotations from the books. Two characters: Sherlock Holmes and Albus Dumbledore, are adults, which makes them an exception in terms of the age of the protagonists. All the other characters under analysis are children.

Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes is rational, conservative, reserved, emotionally cool, and is marked by logical, exact thinking, precision and composure. He can be classified as not only a thoroughly stereotypical character, but a chauvinist to boot, who, however, under the influence of a certain woman changed his discriminating attitude to women to an egalitarian one.

And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman's wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of the woman (Doyle 1892: 28).

Ella

The next protagonist is called Ella. Soon after Ella's birth, a fairy lay a curse on her, making the girl obedient. To maintain her own separate personality, Ella tries to rebel as much as the magic spell allows her. "Instead of making me docile, Lucinda's

Curse made a rebel of me. Or perhaps I was that way naturally". (Levine 2006: 5). Ella was clumsy, and it was only at school that she was shown how a lady should behave. She was a fast learner, had a linguistic talent, imagination, and a sense of humour, and was impulsive, assertive, and independent. At the end of the novel, owing to her strong will and independent thinking, she managed to break the curse.

Now it was over. Ended forever. I was made anew. Ella. Just Ella. Not Ella, the slave. Not a scullery maid. Not Lela. Not Eleanor. Ella. Myself unto myself. One. Me. I tore off the rag that covered my hair. Then I curtsied to Char. "When you asked for my hand a few minutes ago, I was still too young to marry." I looked up at him and saw a smile start. "I am older now, so much older that not only can I marry, but I can beg you to marry me." He knelt and took his hand. He didn't let me kneel before him, He pulled me up and kissed me again. I took that to signify his consent. (Levine 2006).

Interestingly, it was finally she who proposed to Char, thus acting contrary to the settled and socially-sanctioned (both in the real and the literary world) sexual contract. Ella is a character we cannot call a stereotypical girl.

Gwendolyn Shepherd

Gwendolyn Shepherd is the next character that the girls indicated in their surveys. The protagonist of *The Ruby Red Trilogy* is not a very distinct personality – instead, she is unsure of herself and is focused on her looks – and as a stereotypical teenage girl, she has poor self-esteem. Although she lives in the shadow of her cousin, it turns out that in fact she is "the better one", as indicated by, for instance, Gideon's interest. This is caused by the gene enabling the girl to travel in time. Gwendolyn's uniqueness is caused by an accident rather than by anything she did. The protagonist sees herself as a girl primarily through the eyes of boys. Her image and value are defined by the male perspective.

I didn't mean to, but as I was on my way out I turned back once, quickly, to see if my triumph over Dr. White had impressed Gideon. Obviously not, because he was looking at my legs. Probably comparing them with Charlotte's.

Hers were longer and thinner, dammit! And she certainly didn't have scratches all over her calves from clambering about last night among a lot of old junk and a stuffed crocodile. (Gier 2011: 149).

This perspective is often present in women's lives. "During adolescence as in childhood, females continue to esteem themselves insofar as they are esteemed by those with whom they have emotional relationships. For many women this never changes during their entire lifetime" (Bardwick, Douvan 1982: 172).

There are many references to gender stereotypes in the book – for example, the figure of Count de Saint Germain – a declared chauvinist. Gwendolyn is amused by the Count's attitude and considers his chauvinistic beliefs a weakness of character. The Count describes his attitude to women in the following way:

I'd say the female blood is considerably more sluggish than ours. Just as the female mind is inferior to the masculine intellect. Would you not agree with me, girl?"

Male chauvinist pig, I was thinking as I kept my eyes cast down, stupid, pompous, boring old chatterbox. Oh, no! Was I crazy? I wasn't supposed to be thinking of anything! But obviously the count's mind-reading skill wasn't all it was cracked up to be, because he just chuckled again in a self-satisfied way. "Not particularly talkative, is she?" he remarked.

"She's only shy," said Gideon. "Timid."

Intimidated would have been more like it.

"There are no shy women," announced the count. "The modest way they cast their eyes down merely hides their naivety" (Gier 2011: 220).

Marmaduke Stamp

The character selected from the *Fame school* series is Marmaduke Stamp – a passionate dancer, and a class clown. He is an immature extravert and an optimist, but an injury leaves his personality transformed. He is distinctive, especially owing to his appearance. "Marmalade's long curls, snub nose, and freckled face were as noticeable as his bubbly nature and noisy laugh. Everything about him was larger than life, especially when he'd just gotten a little bit closer to realizing his ambition" (Jefferies 2008).

Chloe Tompkins

From the same series, girls also chose Chloe Tompkins as their favourite protagonist. Chloe comes from a not very well-off family. She is ambitious, hardworking, consistent, and determined. She has her own passion – pop music, to which she devotes herself entirely.

"But this is what I want to do for a *job*," she insisted. "Of *course* I'll work hard at something I really want!" [...] "I *won't* grow out of it," said Chloe. She was getting desperate. Her voice was wobbling, and she was near to tears. "It's my Big Chance. You're always telling me to be ambitious and aim high because you wasted *your* chance at college" (Jefferies 2005: 33–34).

The favourite *Fame School* characters cannot be classified as stereotypical boys and girls.

Mia Thermopolis

The Princess of Genovia – Mia Thermopolis (*The Princess Diaries*) – is an interesting character. Her parents are not together, they have never been married. The girl lives with her mum, who is an artist/painter and romances with Mia's algebra teacher. Her father turns out to be the prince of Genovia (a little known European country bordering with France), and Mia is his heiress, i.e. a princess. The book has the form of a diary, and together with its contents brings about associations with *Bridget Jones' Diary*. It is basically a teenage version of this type of literature. The novel contains many references to the bodies and sexuality of girls. This topic is treated in a superficial, stereotypical, sometimes even vulgar way. Most of the problems of the protagonist oscillate around the size of her breasts.

My breasts have grown exactly none since last summer. Mom was totally wrong. I did not have a growth spurt when I turned fourteen, like she did. I will probably never have a growth spurt, at least not on my chest. I only have growth spurts UP, not OUT. I am now the tallest girl in my class. (Cabot 2000).

No boy will ever ask me out. Ever. EVERYONE has a date to the Cultural Diversity Dance [...] Why was I born under such an unlucky star? Why did I have to be cursed with such freakishness? Why? WHY??? I would give anything if, instead of being a five-foot-nine flat-chested princess, I could be a five-foot-six normal person with breasts. ANYTHING. (Cabot 2000).

[Conversation with the school principal – M.S.] Is everything all right? Is everything all right? Hmm, hold on a minute, let me see... my mom is going out with my Algebra teacher, a subject I'm flunking, by the way; my best friend hates me; I'm fourteen years old and I've never been asked out; I don't have any breasts; and oh, I just found out I'm the princess of Genovia. (Cabot 2000).

Every so often, a "Things to Do" list appears in the diary – it contains ten items such as: "6. Stop thinking so much about Josh Richter. [...] 10. Measure chest" (Cabot 2000).

In the context of gender stereotypes and their consequences (including violence caused by prejudices), the following quotes can be considered particularly dangerous:

How embarrassing! Supposing Josh Richter starts sexually harassing me someday (I wish) and I don't notice? God, I'm so stupid sometimes. (Cabot 2000).

Just my luck, the only guy who's ever felt me up (not that there's anything to feel) was BLIND. (Cabot 2000).

One of the younger girls, Nicole, is sort of my friend, but then one night she told me this story about how she was Frenching a boy and I didn't know what Frenching was. I was only eleven at the time, which is no excuse, because so was she. I just thought Frenching was some weird British thing, like toad-in-the-hole, or air raids, or something. (Cabot 2000).

Then Michael asked me if I would put out for Josh Richter, and I had to think about it for a minute. Losing your virginity is a really big step, and you have to do it with the right person or else you could be screwed up for the rest of your life, like the women in Dr. Moscovitz's Over Forty and Still Single group, which meets every other Tuesday. So after I'd thought about it, I said I would put out for Josh Richter, but only if: 1. We'd been dating for at least a year. 2. He pledged his undying love to me. 3. He took me to see *Beauty and the Beast* on Broadway and didn't make fun of it. (Cabot 2000).

The book is an example (many similar examples can be quoted here) of the maintenance of the vision of a woman as a sexual object. Interestingly, Mia considers herself a feminist.

And it is sort of hard when all these beautiful, fashionable people are telling you how good you'd look in this and how much that would bring out your cheekbones, to re-

member you're a feminist and an environmentalist, and don't believe in using make-up or chemicals that might be harmful to the Earth. I mean, I didn't want to hurt their feelings, or cause a scene, or anything like that (Cabot 2000).

Ala Makota

Ala, the protagonist of the novel *Ala Makota. Notatnik sfrustrowanej nastolatki* [Ala Makota. Notes of a Frustrated Teenager] is thirteen, and attends a primary school at the time preceding the reform of the system of education – i.e. before the introduction of lower secondary schools. The girl has family-related problems. Her parents are divorcing – they both have other partners or romances. The form of the book is similar to *The Princess Diaries* discussed above. Also, the Polish Ala's problems are similar to the problems of her USA peer – they are related to outward appearance.

I shall become a model. Before I become one, I need to get rid of the pimple above my left eyebrow. I wiped it with spirit. It became red. I sprinkled it with mum's powder. It became brown. Thus, I cannot become a model yet (Budzyńska 2000: 40).

Pete! You are getting bold! I trustingly looked him in his contact lenses and he replied: you are not that far from that, either... Your breasts have not yet grown up decently and they have already sagged... After such a slander, obviously, my jaw dropped all the way down to the sandy lane. My heart was seized by indignation and quiet despair. As soon as I managed to pull myself together, I jogged straight home. I locked myself in the bathroom and I checked my breasts thoroughly in front of the mirror

... Pete is a boor. My breasts are so small that there is no way for them to sag, damn it, there is no chance for something which does not exist to sag (Budzyńska 2000: 67). It was for the very first time that someone said that I was pretty... I consider myself interesting... intelligent... well-read... generally speaking rather outstanding... but – pretty? As simple as that??? Until now no one has ever talked about me so frankly... And now – Ms Asia (Budzyńska 2000: 35).

It is worth having a look at descriptions concerning Ala's relations with boys – the following is a fragment about the boys Ala met during her holidays in Mallorca:

[...] together with Puszka, we have taken lots and lots of photos with our new boy-friends. Against the background of the swimming pool and under palms, at the table, and under an umbrella, in front of the hotel and by Elwira's shop – everywhere, literally everywhere. After all, the entire class – if not the entire school indeed – will burst out of jealousy ... And this is all about it (Budzyńska 2000: 13).

In part two, Ala attends demonstrations of farmers and miners to support them and express her protest. Although in contrast to *The Princess Diaries*, the problems are described in a less vulgar, but more humorous way, they remain strongly rooted in a stereotypical vision of girlhood.

Hermione Granger

Hermione Granger is one of the main characters in the Harry Potter series.¹ The Hogwarts pupil has long, brown, strongly curly hair. She is Harry's best friend. Her parents are Muggles – dentists by profession. Hermione is one of the most remarkable and important female characters in the entire series of the books. She often displays extraordinary knowledge and abilities. Hermione is an excellent example of a pro-school attitude – she is dutiful, always prepared for her classes, industrious, well-read, consistent with all the rules and regulations, principled, sometimes fetching in as far as being petty and overzealous, which makes her predictable.

One of her friends (Ron) sneers at her diligence and dutifulness as follows:

Well, I'm taking more new subjects than you, aren't I?" said Hermione. "Those are my books for Arithmancy, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination, Study of Ancient Runes, Muggle Studies –"

"What are you doing Muggle Studies for?" said Ron, rolling his eyes at Harry. "You're Muggle-born! Your mum and dad are Muggles! You already know all about Muggles!" "But it'll be fascinating to study them from the wizarding point of view," said Hermione earnestly.

"Are you planning to eat or sleep at all this year, Hermione?" asked Harry, while Ron sniggered. (Rowling 1999).

In part three, Hermione changes her behaviour – she more often follows her emotions in what she does. The decisions she takes are no longer justified by rules and regulations, but her own independent evaluation of the situation. She becomes more self-reliant, courageous, spontaneous and valiant.

Harry and Ron both made furious moves toward Malfoy, but Hermione got there first – SMACK!

She had slapped Malfoy across the face with all the strength she could muster. Malfoy staggered. Harry, Ron, Crabbe, and Goyle stood flabbergasted as Hermione raised her hand again.

"Don't you dare call Hagrid pathetic, you foul – you evil –"

"Hermione!" said Ron weakly, and he tried to grab her hand as she swung it back.

"Get off, Ron!"

Hermione pulled out her wand. Malfoy stepped backward. Crabbe and Goyle looked at him for instructions, thoroughly bewildered.

"C'mon," Malfoy muttered, and in a moment, all three of them had disappeared into the passageway to the dungeons.

"Hermione!" Ron said again, sounding both stunned and impressed.

"Harry, you'd better beat him in the Quidditch final!" Hermione said shrilly.

"You just better had, because I can't stand it if Slytherin wins!" (Rowling 1999).

¹ My analysis takes into account the first three parts of the series – mainly in view of the age of its potential readers. Theoretically speaking, this is the age group of the children who participated in my survey. However, I am conscious of the fact that primary school pupils also read the other parts of the cycle, although in my opinion they are definitely not addressed to this particular age group.

The girls selected Hermione as their favourite character, while the boys chose the main protagonist of the book – Harry Potter, the most popular children's literature character in recent years. The novel is loved by children and adults alike, and is invariably criticized by the Church, which criticizes it for the alleged promotion of black magic (used by the book's protagonists) and occultism among children. There have been many papers and analyses on this hugely popular series – some of them written using critical or feminist discourse. Feminists' opinions about Rowling's books are different, with two interpretations prevailing: one accusing the books of sexism, and the other stressing their progressiveness. The attitude depends on the perspective adopted for the analysis: either radical or liberal feminism (Smith 2010).

Harry Potter

The title protagonist of the series of books written by Rowling is a wizard. He is marked by courage, smartness and valour. "Third – to Mr Harry Potter ...' said Dumbledore. The room went deadly quiet. '... for pure nerve and outstanding courage, I award Gryffindor house sixty points.'" (Rowling 1997). He shows talent and brightness – and he is a very fast learner. He is also a very sensitive and emotional boy. He is very devoted to his friends. Harry often values love and friendship more than the need of revenge.

Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realise that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark Not a scar, no visible sign ... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin. (Rowling 1997).

In the article *Harry Potter, Radical Feminism and the Power of Love*, the author quotes an interesting scene (from the last part of the series, which I did not analyse, but it is significant and it is worth mentioning it), when Harry called on Voldemort to feel remorse, which can heal him. This "astonishing act of compassion [...] shocks Voldemort "beyond any revelation or taunt." "It's your one last chance,' said Harry, 'it's all you've got left.... I've seen what you'll be otherwise... be a man... try... try for some remorse.'" (Rowling 2007, quoted after: Smith 2010).

The author points out that according to the boy, Voldemort's actions had nothing to do with manhood, since "Harry's understanding of manhood is one that is fully human, incorporating traditionally feminine traits as well as traditionally masculine ones" (Smith 2010: 107). Harry is a complex character, who possesses traits considered to be typically male, but also traits believed to be female. He can be referred to as an androgynous character.

Albus Dumbledore

Albus Dumbledore – the headmaster of Hogwarts, believed to be the most powerful wizard of his time, is yet another character from the series. Albus has

a fantastic sense of humour. He was a great wizard, while having an unusual distance to himself:

Albus Dumbledore had got to his feet. He was beaming at the students, his arms opened wide, as if nothing could have pleased him more than to see them all there. 'Welcome!' he said. 'Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!
'Thank you!'
He sat back down. Everybody clapped and cheered. Harry didn't know whether to laugh or not.
'Is he – a bit mad?' he asked Percy uncertainly.
'Mad?' said Percy airily. 'He's a genius! Best wizard in the world! But he is a bit mad, yes.' (Rowling 1997).

What is also meaningful is the fact that Dumbledore is gay. There is no information about the psychosexual orientation of Hogwarts' headmaster in the books. The author revealed the fact only during a meeting with her readers.² Dumbledore is also a role model for Harry, who shows the boy that one can be both a courageous and compassionate or caring man. "In the Potter books, the right sort of boy, indeed, the right sort of man, is not only strong and brave, but kind and loving as well" (Smith 2010).

Torak

Another character selected by boy pupils is the main protagonist of a series of novels *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*³, Torak – a twelve-year-old boy, who after the death of his father has to cope in the Forest on his own. He is brave, independent and extraordinary, since he understands the tongues of animals, especially wolves. On the cover of *Wolf Brother* we can read as follows:

Wolf Brother is an enthralling story of friendship, survival and betrayal. It carries you back thousands of years to the ancient darkness of the Forest: to a world steeped in natural magic and elemental terror: a world of wolves and aurochs, tree spirits and Hidden People; a world in which trusting a friend means risking your life.

We should pay particular attention to the relationship between the father and the son. There is a very strong, deep bond between them. "Torak had never questioned that before. It was how he'd always lived: alone with Fa, away from the

² The author of the series on the adventures of a teenage wizard announced during her meeting with fans of the books that one of the main protagonists, professor Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, was gay: "Rowling confirmed what some fans had always suspected – that she "always thought Dumbledore was gay. [...] Rowling said Dumbledore fell in love with the charming wizard Gellert Grindelwald but when Grindelwald turned out to be more interested in the dark arts than good, Dumbledore was "terribly let down" and went on to destroy his rival. That love, she said, was Dumbledore's "great tragedy". "Falling in love can blind us to an extent," she said. The audience reportedly fell silent after the admission – then erupted into applause. (Reuters 2007).

³ I shall perform character analysis on the basis of the first novel: *Wolf Brother*.

clans. Now, though, he longed for people. He wanted to shout; to yell for help." (Paver 2004). Being very attached to his father, Torak found his death very hard to bear. He was also afraid of loneliness.

All his life he'd lived in the Forest with Fa, pitching camp for a night or two, then moving on. He knew the rules. Never skimp on your shelter. Never use more effort than you need when gathering food. Never leave it too late to pitch camp. His first day on his own, and he'd broken every one. It was frightening. Like forgetting how to walk. (Paver 2004).

However, owing to his brightness and resourcefulness, the boy managed to cope with many difficult situations.

It was twelve days since the bear had killed Fa. In that time Torak had fought hunger and conquered fever, found Wolf, and made his first big kill. He'd also made plenty of mistakes. But he was still alive. He pictured his father on the journey to the Land of the Dead – the land where arrows are plentiful, and the hunt never fails. At least, thought Torak, he has his weapons with him, and my knife for company. And all that dried meat. That blunted the edge of his grief a little. Torak knew that the loss of his father would never leave him – that he'd carry it in his chest all his life, like a stone. This morning the stone didn't feel quite so heavy. He'd survived so far, and his father would be proud. (Paver 2004).

Eragon

The last favourite character of the boys is Eragon – a teenage boy with a developed sphere of morality. He persistently sticks to his beliefs, but is at the same time clever and has a lot of enthusiasm for learning. In just a few weeks, Brom teaches him to read, write, and skilfully wield the sword. After his transformation under the Menoa tree, Eragon became a mighty Rider. Owing to acquiring elf's power, he could cast spells exceeding his human abilities. He also had a practical gift allowing him to assess how much energy a given charm will use. He was the best fencer among the Varden and dwarves, as well as most elves. He was a great archer owing to years of his hunting in the forest.

Both Torak and Eragon are stereotypical boys: brave and independent. They have interesting, dangerous adventures. In these novels, there are basically no girl or woman characters, and if there are any, their role is insignificant. We may mention such examples as Renn in *Torak*, who is a great archer, or the dragon Saphira in *Eragon*, but they are only a part of the background for the activity of the main protagonists.

In this text, I have analysed images of primary school pupils'⁴ favourite characters in the context of gender stereotypes. The results of the quantitative research show some small differences between the reading activity of boys and girls. The girls

4 We may wonder whether the characters mentioned by the children are really their favourite ones or just ones they remembered from the recently read books. However, this does not affect the qualitative analysis of their contents and does not lessen their socialization impact.

much more often selected their favourite male and female characters than the boys. We can notice a considerable difference as far as the gender of the favourite characters is concerned. The girl pupils selected girl protagonists much more often than boy characters. Importantly, the boys did not mention a single girl protagonist. This can be understood in the categories of ridicule, which means that a girl may have a favourite boy protagonist, but a boy does not see it as befitting to have a favourite girl protagonist. It is an element of an androcentric perception of reality, seeing the world through the gender (in this case sex) point of view, where the female/girlish is of lesser value. It also proves that boy protagonists in children's books are definitely more attractive to the readers of both sexes than girl protagonists.

The results of my analysis can yield the following conclusions:

1. Both the male and female characters are usually stereotypical. There are not enough distinct protagonists that could be a counterbalance to the ones embodying traditionally understood girlhood and boyhood.
2. The books read by girls much more often discuss corporeality. The girls have bodies, while the boys seem to be bodiless. The female characters are more focused on their appearance – they want to look good and want others to like them. Boys do not face similar problems. The books normalise the most traditional and conservative version of girlhood. The omnipresent “girls’ bodies” are accompanied by their presentation as sexual objects. I find such objectification in children’s literature unacceptable. Along with such notions as habitus, cultural capital, and symbolic violence, Pierre Bourdieu explains male domination in social reality. The author indicates the binarity and complementarity of women’s and men’s traits, describing the social translation of the anatomical construction of sexual organs (vagina as the opposite, reversal of the phallus – i.e. an empty thing, causing negative consequences, pernicious and dangerous) and the sexual act as a relation of domination described by the position of the pair: above/under, active/passive. Bourdieu also writes about “a body socially differentiated from the opposite gender [...], i.e. [...] a male, and therefore non-female, habitus or [...] a female, and therefore not male habitus.” (Bourdieu 2002: 23–24). Bourdieu describes how social constructions are “inscribed” in the body, how the social undergoes biologization, showing relations between nature and culture that are difficult to untangle.
3. The majority of the boy’s favourite protagonists reproduce stereotypes concerning masculinity, which are as dangerous as the stereotypes related to girls. The boys are in a way “doomed” to contact with masculinity models such as macho figures both in literature and in the real world. The boy protagonists can most often be categorised in the traditional masculinity paradigm and the heroic-national discourse. I shall understand masculinity here in the traditional approach as “domination and specialisation in concrete areas. It is based on the dualism of gender roles, asymmetry of masculine and feminine traits. It requires from the man to subordinate other men, women, and children. This is tantamount to the compulsion of stifling feelings and emotions” (Arcimowicz 2003: 28). Representations of masculinity in the traditional paradigm go hand in hand with the stereotypical perception of masculinity.

4. It is worth turning attention to the fact that the boys chose "magical" protagonists as their favourite ones (all four protagonists under analysis – Harry Potter, Eragon, Torak, Albus Dumbledore – are "magical") more often than the girls, who instead selected girl protagonists closer to daily life (three out of eight protagonists under analysis could be described as "non-real" ones: Hermione Granger, Ella, and Gwendolyn Shepard). What can, therefore, a potential reader coming into contact with characters from the "real" and "magical" worlds learn about being a boy or a girl? Selecting "magical" characters, boys have a chance to identify themselves with the masculine characters inscribed into the traditional discourse of masculinity. Such an understanding of masculinity is tantamount to the stereotype of a man. This is perhaps related to social changes in the area of social roles in modern societies, where such a type of masculinity is no longer the dominating one. The need of maintaining one's *status quo* in the area of the gender-based binary division of traits and duties is transferred to the fictitious world. Children's literature reflects the traditional division of gender roles and guards the sociocultural order, contributing to the reproduction of gender stereotypes, while the "reality" undergoes transformations in this area. The boys looking for distinct models of masculinity in literature become familiar with the traditional paradigm and "learn" masculinity in its patriarchal version.

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Summary

My Favourite Characters – Images of Girls and Boys in Children's Literature. A Pedagogical Gender Study

The purpose of the text is to present the characters of girls and boys in the favourite books indicated by elementary school students. These book's characters are analysed primarily in terms of gender stereotypes. The contact of the child with a book is an indispensable part of school education (required reading) while going beyond the framework of formal education (reading of choice). The text also points to the importance of reading in the educational process, particularly for gender education in the context of the formation of social gender roles.

Keywords

gender stereotypes, gender education, children's reading

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The Imaginary World in the Fan–Music Idol Relationship. Selected Contexts of Contemporary Values of Pop Culture

Scholarly literature devotes little attention to the phenomenon of fandom. It is not rarely that descriptions of fan culture are focused on deviation or psychopathology. Fandom understood as a permanent and engaged community of fans should not be associated with notions of youth subculture. In my opinion, the phenomenon is not clearly bad, either.

Works pioneering in the area of fandom description include Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, and Camille Bacon Smith's *Enterprising Woman: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*, both published in 1952. The texts played a significant role in the way in which fan studies – an interdisciplinary discipline combining elements of sociology, anthropology and media studies – are defined (Kobus 2013). The authors of the works sketched the most important fields of exploration of fan reception and discussed ways of perception of fan art, which actively responds to certain pop-culture senses and meanings (Kobus 2013). What is still missing, however, is extensive descriptions of music fan communities and the conceptualization of significant concepts such as the fan hierarchy, hardcore fans and others. The said pejorative tone of the existing fandom descriptions may cause negative simplifications and the perception of all fans as persons who are unbalanced or dangerous. Not every fan strongly engaged in their idol's life is a psycho-fan. Such an identification mainly results from the mass media (TV and Internet) coverage, highlighting single cases of attacks and harassment inflicted on public figures by their fans-stalkers. I agree with Bogusław Dziadzia that the media – along with other socialisation agendas – affect not only who we are, but also our values and the world in which we perceive the world (Karczmarzyk 2013).

To be objective, we need to remember that the negative behaviours targeted at idols are definitely single specific cases that are often connected with personality disorders or other dysfunctions.

Many psychologists believe that an unbalanced psyche is the basic prerequisite for fame, and additionally many specialists see a correlation between per-

sonality disorders and ambitious attempts at becoming successful, which is simultaneously related to the possibility of subordinating the public, anxiety, and self-destructive behaviours (Bandelow 2014). Destructive behaviour may therefore be accompanied by ambition-related factors. The same goes for the people who are on stage. Talent is often a factor of little importance, which can be just an addition to the hidden motivation behind the taking of the appropriate actions by the singer.

My research interest results from my willingness to become thoroughly familiar with the structure of the development of the fan-idol relationship and to describe it in depth. In Western Europe and Northern America, the issue of the phenomenon that singers are for their fans has been largely recognised and examined, but it is yet to be described in Poland. I would like to fill in the gap, be it even modestly, existing in the field of Polish pedagogy in the area of the description and definition of the phenomena of fandom and being a fan of a pop-music idol.

The people in question engage emotionally in a permanent relationship with their idol, and are able to cross geographical, mental, emotional and other borders. They become attached to the artist selflessly, unpretentiously, and totally. They consistently travel just to see their idol during a five-minute concert or to buy yet again the same record with yet another signature of the artist.

The relationship with idols reminds one of the relationship "I need you and you need me". It is based on permanent bonds. Fans want to highlight their involvement and subordination to their idol in an extreme way. The world of the fan's private emotions intermingles with the world of artificial relations created for the purposes of product promotion and sales.

The above-described relation between the fan and the music idol is an illustration of metaphorical imaginary worlds. They can be both beings and situations, as well as relations which for some reason will be unrealistic, and sometimes far from frank. In fans' perception, these imaginary worlds may also take the form of delusions.

I agree that we spend most of our lives fantasizing – in both thoughts and dreams (Karczmarzyk 2013). For many people, the very possibility to express their own opinion publicly is like the realisation of their dreams. Fans function at the borderline of fantasy, disregarding the fact that the music industry and marketing professionals create the illusory world (in which the singer becomes a commercial product) to generate profit. When fans begin to implement values from the imaginary world (in this context, it becomes a parallel world for them, where fantasy concerning the idol is mixed with the reality), this involves the risk of, for example, copying the idol's behaviour and implementing his/her values into real life, although these are often contrary to the one's their fans live by (Karczmarzyk 2013).

Fandom – terminology explained

The word “fandom” was coined by fantasy fans. It was often borrowed to describe groups of lovers of particular singers or actors and today has infiltrated literature. I shall use it in relation to the community of fans of pop-music singers.

Paradoxically, in the case of hardcore fans, i.e. the ones having the closest relationship with their idol, music plays a secondary role. It is the person who becomes the element strengthening the bond – and, along with him/her, a subconscious, often imaginary promise of happiness understood in a variety of ways. This is what makes fans determined to enter into a loyalty contract (Bauman 2002). Music idols are, to an extent, unreal figures. Their stage image, character and appearance must always be consistent. Idols-celebrities are often created by professionals from the music industry. Sometimes pop-culture suggestively exposes an idol and gives him/her the shape of a role model worthy of imitation. “The cult of celebrity creates archetypes and icons with which alienated souls can identify”, thus compensating themselves for the lack of close relationships, purpose, motivation or security (Jenson 1992).

Through consolidation with pop music adopted by pop culture, a significant celebrity-idol element becomes its determinant. Pop music by assumption reaches a wide audience – and one of a specific type to boot. Pop is a commonly accepted genre, trend, and style of music. It is marked by its tunefulness, light rhythm, repeatability of motifs, undifferentiated instrumentalisation, pleasant sound and performance (Gloer, Skrzydlewski 2002).

The canon was created at the beginning of the 1950s in New York record companies, where composers and authors of lyrics produced popular songs to order. We may refer to compositions ranging from jazz to metal rock as “pop songs”. Sometimes the genre is pejoratively associated with the kitsch (Gloer, Skrzydlewski 2002). Pop – as every genre of music – attracts specific groups of recipients. However, in the close fan/idol relationship, it is not the style or type of music that determines one’s belonging to the group.

According to Antonina Kłoskowska, pop-culture fits the mass culture. It belongs to the third system of culture, next to folk culture and institutionalised culture. It is very popular because it easily reaches the mass audience (Barker 2005).

Mass culture includes many norms and models of behaviour with a very broad scope of application. It is a by-product of the industrial revolution and urbanisation. Pop-culture created a specific type of audience – the so-called mass audience – for which it is criticised by many theoreticians. It is primarily criticized for being inferior and non-authentic, since its reception apparently does not require a major intellectual effort, and thus does not enrich its recipients (Barker 2005).

Literature concerning fans as a pop-cultural and music phenomenon is relatively scarce. Only some reflections do emerge on the occasion of discussing fame or celebrity cult. By assumption, fans are understood as a certain resultant reaction to the star system (Jenson 1992).



Photo 1. A wall with images of a pop idol in an obsessive fan's private flat.
Source: M. Weilandt's collection

The modern system of celebrityism promoted by the mass media brought into existence individual fans and fandom (understood as a group of people) very strongly emotionally engaged in the close and emotional relationship with a pop-culture idol. The relationship in some cases may resemble a cult of an individual. Some works devoted to fandom combine the fan's attitude with a pathological attitude.

John L. Caughey classifies the most important attitudes of fans, who shape their life under the influence of fantasies concerning the imagined close relationship with a significant idol as follows:

- an obsessive type (an extreme example balancing between affection and fanaticism; may become a stalker);
- a pathological type (for example fans being a part of the hysterically emotional crowd, and teenagers fascinated with their idols);
- a type enslaved by music (persons exaggeratingly identifying themselves with a style or genre of music, creating for example music subcultures).

In my opinion, the above classification is not full and needs to be extended (Caughey 1978).

Fan-fiction

Literature presenting the reasons why people become fans most often mentions "the influence of the media, a narcissistic society, hypnotic rock music, and crowd contagion" (Jenson 1992: 13). However, the mass media play a significant role in the process. When analysing the context of their impact on young persons' life situation, some authors formulate a belief that at present people live in the age of an addiction to the mass media (Caughey 1978).

Persons functioning in the media (on both commercial and public TV channels) have become idols for many people since the very beginning of their appearance in the public world.



Photo 2. A tattoo with the surname of a pop idol on a pathological fan.
Source: M. Weilandt's collection

Media studies research exploring the engaged and active reception of the media content in pop-culture fan environments shows several tendencies which emerged owing to the existence and the global reach of the internet (Kobus 2013).

Today, the internet has become a common platform for the distribution of messages between the sender (idol) and the recipient (fan). The role of the internet in the establishment of contact has become a key one. Communication developed in this way may build the sense of actual participation in the life of significant persons. At the same time, the internet may compensate for problems with the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships in real life, which are common among fans. Professionals interested solely in material profits consciously and intentionally use the naivety and emotions accompanying the co-participation of fandom in virtual life. The internet contact with the music idol tends to be a façade, as in many cases correspondence with fans is tackled by people cooperating with the vocalist rather than the singers themselves.

At present, the most popular tools used for internet communication include emails (i.e. virtual letters), and messages sent via social media. They have successfully superseded traditional letters and correspondence. At present, Facebook is the platform of communication which idols fans choose most often.¹

The imaginary possibility of participation in the life of one's idol draws like a magnet – perhaps because it is not known from private experience. Most often, it

¹ An internet social media service providing content on diverse topics, most often in the form of videos and photographs.



Photo 3. Intermingling of worlds: a fan/idol meeting. Source: M. Weilandt's collection

is not a real being, either. Here, a question appears – whether the imaginary world may in some situations substitute for the real world to a young person?

Reality tends to be less interesting than the imaginary world – positive and friendly, but often unreal. In an unreal world, the sense of community is also strongly related to the fan's cultural needs (Karczmarzyk 2013). In the 1990s, when the internet rapidly developed, fandoms emigrated to the web. This has resulted in the creation of modern internet phenomena, i.e. figures who for many become a phantasm of people of success – fulfilled and worthy of imitation – such as Justin Bieber.

Imaginary worlds

Everyone has a different theory of happiness. Fandom understood as a group of people with joint interests makes its members happy. Such a form of social reintegration has a strong compensatory dimension. Being a fan becomes a category, translates into a function one holds, is one of the coping strategies.

Fandom is usually composed of a specific group of a more or less consistent number of people. They cooperate together, each for their own individual reasons, normally for a long time. They have common goals behind their actions, such as values within the group including devotion, selfless affection, and others, mutually affecting each other and consciously constructed.

The psychological glossary, classifying membership groups in terms of their nature, points out that the membership is voluntary. Members of fan groups are observers looking for references being the bases for their assessment of the situation. Such environments are therefore strong opinion-makers, and individuals are very much eager to be approved (Szewczuk 1985).

In the fan/idol relationship, moments at the borderline between facts and subjective fantasies or situations in which this borderline is overstepped may be critical and may lead to the blending of the difference between the reality and an idol-related fantasy.

Being a fan then becomes only a substitute for the bond being an inadequate imitation of the desired closeness (Jenson 1992). Such authors as Donald Horton and Richard Wohl believe that such a situation is similar to a conversation, and tries to resemble a face-to-face impact. Since fans may feel a dissatisfaction resulting from the limited relationship, they seek additional forms of contact with their idol (outside of the official meeting places such as a concert). Others strive to establish a direct contact in order to win the prestige or influence they need from the psychological point of view but which they are not able to reach for themselves (Jenson 1992).

If a bond supersedes autonomous social participation, and the relationship with the idol causes a rejection of the objective reality, other social relationships are under threat of distortion or ruin. This, however, is an extreme form of being a fan – one that may take on a destructive or pathological form. Researchers indicate that such borderline forms are typical in particular for socially-rejected individuals, people who are inept, older, handicapped, shy, or rejected (Jenson 1992).

The idealised image of the idol in the case of groups threatened with social exclusion may result in an attempt at a compensation of the absence of authentic bonds. In this case, the celebrity will always function as a meaningful exemplary model. The authors of some works suggest that the media persona is a realization of the fans' dreams of autonomy and a close relationship. Many fans prefer to believe that their idol's official meetings with them result from his/her authentic heart's desire, and not from the economic motives of the music industry. In this case, the imaginary world will take the form of leading a substitute life via one's idealized idol's life. In some cases, being a fan may compensate for one's sense of absence of autonomy or community, fragmentary identity, as well as power and lack of appreciation (Jenson 1992).

Such behaviours always involve a risk or danger. The spheres of reality and fiction should be clearly separated from each other. It is only then that fans can be rational persons realistically assessing their situation, and not pose a potential hazard to the community.

The main factors that may develop into a fan attitude include psychological inadequacy, vulnerability to the media impact, as well as crowd psychology. From the psychological point of view, fans are, along with deviants and fanatics, people who suffer from inadequacy (Jenson 1992), who compensate for their emotional shortages with deep and permanent fantasies. Such persons experience problems related to their insecurity, often lead a relatively monotonous and routine-based life and construct scant social bonds. The mass media represented by pop-culture consciously use this type of inadequacy. It is them who produce all the models of idealised, better worlds, which for many become a way of organizing their average existence and providing it with colour. The attitude adopted by fans simultaneous-

ly determines their worldview and their sense of life. Fandom is a certain collection of joint features, typically including faithfulness, attachment and the cultivation of one's affection. This can also be sense of an aspect of the place we take in the society or culture. Finally, this is a style of life giving people the sense of their existence. After all, you do not travel thousands of kilometres for someone who is not important. You do not buy gifts for them. You do not subordinate your life to their official calendar. The fan attitude is correlated with the need of belonging and devotion. It begins one's new life which from then on has a sense to it: to be as close as possible to the idol – the sacred zone. When the borderline between the fantasy of an ideal world and the fans' previous life is liquid, the emerging compensation determines the life "as if".

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Summary

*The Imaginary World in the Fan–Music Idol Relationship.
Selected Contexts of Contemporary Values of Pop Culture*

Human beings, from birth, become artists of their own life, facing multiple tasks – starting with managing one’s own existence. In our times of liquid modernity (Bauman 2009), we all need to hurry and make different choices. In the process, luck is always a factor. The ideal of happiness, according to Kant, is not a product of reason, but rather the imagination. In our times, strongly dependent on the media (Caughey 1978), celebrities and idols function as role models, becoming significant others with mostly a positive reception in the eyes of their fans – functioning more like imagined figures. Fans willingly sustain artificial relations, created through imaginaries, becoming parts of fictional structures. In this article I will try to shed light on some of the compensation mechanisms present in the fandom groups of popular music.

Keywords

celebrity, fan community, meaningful icons

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Ritual process and the imaginary world at music festivals

Introduction

Przystanek Woodstock and Heineken Open'er Festival are currently the most popular music events in Poland, attracting thousands of participants. For a few days, festival camping towns are put up in the separated suburban areas of the cities, which host the events, presenting a field for sociological analysis. The festivals, due to their length, specific ambience and number of participants, are not "ordinary" weekend events organized in city centres. The purpose of the presented study is to explain their nature in the perspective of selected theories.

Theory

The rite of passage concept

During a ritual process an individual passes from the sphere of the profane (*profanum*) to the sphere of the sacred (*sacrum*). The changes that participants undergo make them gain new cultural competence. This process was the subject of an in-depth analysis by Arnold van Gennep (2004), an anthropologist who advocated the theory that societies can be divided into secular and religious ones, and that the reality of these societies will be respectively domains of the profane and the sacred. According to the researcher, the transformation of a neophyte – participant of the rite, the moment of granting him a new status – is best manifested in the rite of initiation.

The rite of passage – as it is also referred to – can be divided into three phases: preliminal, liminal, and post-liminal (from the word *limen* – threshold). Van Gennep claimed that each ritual is characterized by such a tripartite division. The first phase consists in exclusion. During this time it is crucial to separate the initiate physically from the social reality, and norms and conventions which are familiar to him. The liminal phase is the moment of suspension of these cultural and societal laws (it is a stage of functioning at the threshold of two worlds: the sacred and the profane), during which the ritual passage, the contact with the divine sphere,

takes place. The ensuing re-inclusion of the ritual participant into the world of the profane, with its conventions and established order, is the last stage of the ritual process. The individual, who was marginalized at the time of separation, returns to the defined social structure with new cultural competences obtained through the ritual influence.

The social group that consolidates during the transition rituals (unless the ritual is essentially individual), was described by Victor Turner (1969) as *communitas*. Within this construct, institutionalized forms are suspended, and the goal is to move away from the structural framework. Elżbieta Hałas (2007) notices that a rite induces an almost ecstatic sense of community in the group of initiates. Stripping the rite participants of the rights, duties and conventions which they followed before the rite, makes the *communitas* appear as a homogenous body, deprived of the past and the future, as a “pure nothingness” (Turner 1974). The initiates are in fact an anti-structure reality, i. e. a specific social field in which norms, status, rank or position are loosened, if not disintegrated, and established social structures are contrasted with their negations. Instead of the constant, we are dealing with the transient; in opposition to social inequalities – an equality of all is being put in place; the naming system disappears in favour of anonymity, and the secular is replaced by the sacred. In the case of a ritual, achieving the sphere of the sacred means a deep integration: it enables the entire community to unite firmly and redefine the social structure.

In this paper, it has been assumed that the discussed theories could be transferred onto the ground of participation in a music festival, understood here as a very specific rite of passage, where the place of separation is the area of the event, the initiates – its participants (forming the *communitas*), and all the acts taking place in its course – elements of the initiation process.

The social exchange theory

Functioning within the same structure requires the participants of the ritual to establish specific relations between each other, which are characteristic of *communitas*. One of them is exchange and related duties: giving, accepting and reciprocating the gift (Mauss 2001). In Marcel Mauss's theory of social exchange, the symmetry of particular aspects of exchange plays an essential role. Mauss's theory holds that there is a system of comprehensive benefits consisting in the fact that the objects of exchange may not only be material, but also intangible assets, services, behaviours, pleasantries and fun activities.

Imaginary world

Complementing the anthropological analysis with a phenomenological paradigm, it is worth paying attention to the original typifications made by an individual while organizing the surrounding reality. A member of a community recognizes individual experience (his or other members') as a common experience,

lived through by the entire community. This interpretation is supported by using the knowledge of “ancestors”, significant Others who are part of the community. An individual refers to this knowledge freely when interacting with other group members, assuming that they are using the same resource. When making the typification, an individual puts other members of the interaction into the category of the “generalized Other” (a representative of the community), who performs functions closely related to his/her assigned role. At the same time, for the sake of alignment, the role given by an individual to the companions of the interaction, becomes internalized by him/herself (Lejzerowicz-Zajączkowska 2003). During a music festival, a participant perceives him/herself and others as part of the festival attendee community, which shares the unique collective experience.

In a phenomenological analysis, music festivals can be perceived as specific microcosms, whose idea was explored in sociology by Alfred Schütz (Schütz in: Manterys 1997). This idea has two components: the objective one, which contains the whole of the culturally formulated reality, and the subjective one, covering the personal experiences and imaginations of individuals associated with the surrounding reality. These components constitute the distinctive intersubjectivity of the experienced world, where the vision of a given construct is shared by participants of the interaction, although it is still relevant for every individual separately.

Both elements complement each other and form an analytical framework which serves as a reference for the studies on the world of mass events. On the one hand, the established social construct, being a general characteristic of a given festival, is already visible, and on the other hand it has been created on the basis of the subjective approach of individuals. In this case, intersubjectivity may be an option to consider – intersubjectivity understood here as a vision shared by the general public, but still very specific to each individual. This vision takes the form of a common spirit or collective consciousness characteristic of the festival, established in the communication processes and interactions between festival participants. In this approach, the particular experiences of an individual and their subjective interpretations are translated into the experiences of other participants in the social reality. The suprapersonal consciousness will be an individual creation; however, shared by all, and considered identical. The awareness of this intersubjectivity is shaped by the given lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) experienced by every member of the interaction (Schütz 1989). Festival participants can therefore share a common stream of consciousness.

Objective and method

The aim of the research is to analyse the personal views of festival participants about this particular type of entertainment. The point was to transcend the individual experience of the partiers and to try to capture the general tendencies related to experiencing the events included in the sociological analysis. This method allowed for precise control of incoming information and enabled creating an accurate picture of the social reality. What caught specific interest were the intentions

for participation in the events, but also noticing both the festivals' distinguishing features and common aspects.

While designing the course of the research, the following questions were posed:

1. Which ritual processes are revealed at particular festivals?
2. How does the imaginary world appear from the point of view of festival participants?
3. What are the common features of given festivals?
4. Does participation in a festival transform an individual in some way? What is the durability of the occurring changes? Does the festival participant become a liminal entity?
5. How does the structure (anti-structure) manifest itself during the festival?
6. How does the sense of community manifest itself during the festival?

The study used qualitative in-depth interviews, and participant observation. Eight participants of the music festivals were interviewed, including three regulars of Przystanek Woodstock, three of Open'er, and two people participating in both festivals. The researcher attended Przystanek Woodstock three times (in 2008, 2009 and 2011), and participated in Open'er twice (in 2010 and 2015). The structured interview with direct participants of these events allowed to capture the essential nature of these phenomena. Qualitative analysis of the collected material made it possible to present an accurate image of this social reality section, i. e. music festivals.

Results

The motive for attending

The motives of the first arrivals at Przystanek Woodstock usually involve curiosity. Respondents hinted that they wanted to experience something new. Both festivals take place during the summer, so high school and university students (as they constitute the majority of participants at music festivals) can easily manage a few days off, as well as take spontaneous decisions about going. "I met my friend on the beach and K. in Sopot, and it was so completely spontaneous; he mentioned that he was going to Woodstock in two days, and asked if I was going with him. The next day, me and K, we checked out what Woodstock was, on the second day we found out about the prices, and there, we were already coming along."

Apart from wanting to satisfy curiosity, an important impulse to go is trying to verify the legend of the festival. This legend refers to a musical event with a relatively long history and the fact that it has been organized by Jurek Owsiak. "I'd always wanted to go, because I always admired Owsiak for what he does, and I wanted to see it, because I've heard a lot about this festival; and I was talked into it by a friend who had been there with another friend a year earlier, and they said it was fun; there were people, concerts; and that's why I went on this journey."

Finally, the purpose of arrival is the desire to spend a few days in a not particularly sophisticated, ludic atmosphere of freedom. Interestingly, the wish for ulti-

mate rest and to “chill out” seems to be a more important motive than the music itself. “If someone is interested in it, then they go; if someone can’t be bothered, they may not get to any concert, like K., who never even reached the stage; he only went on [...] Steczkowska, I guess, that’s where we landed, just for laughs”. Obviously, music is important, it builds the background and to a certain degree it determines the kind of people arriving at the festival, but the primary motive for participating in the event is the opportunity to cut off oneself from reality and to unwind. [People – T. L.] go there to relax, they don’t have to worry about getting up, getting dressed in the morning [...]. I am free, no one makes me do anything, I do what I want; I rest, I have fun, it’s different than just going to town to party, to a club.”

The *communitas* that forms spontaneously during these few days feels the need to get away from everyday life. “Because Przystanek is not about stars. It’s about having fun to music that is not necessarily good, but joyful, upbeat and ludic” (Owsiak, Skaradziński 2010: 37). Another distinct element is the need to make spontaneous friendships with casually encountered participants. “Everyone is a buddy at Woodstock, people embrace each other, and behave like a big family.”

Among the motivations of attending Open’er, the desire to experience a concert of a star comes first. When deciding to take part in this music festival, participants inspect the line-up: a list of performing artists.

First of all, we had an Open’er folder, which everybody gets from the organizers, and we could look through a table where it said exactly who was performing, when and where, and we could choose and combine what we liked. Since the list of performers is announced much earlier, you can learn a bit about them, listen to something you didn’t know before, and find out whether it suits or not. In general, obviously, we followed the well-known and popular bands.

A festival is evaluated on the basis of who comes to perform at it. “A festival is measured by the grade of musicians who come. It’s not that the festival is a great value just in itself [...]. I went to Selector once, maybe twice, now I’m not going because it’s just lame [...]”. Notably, the wish to attend the maximum possible number of concerts stands out.

You know, I went to Heineken, because the Sex Pistols played there, and I just couldn’t pass a concert of such a legend. Same with Prince, though I’m not a big fan. Then it turned out that Gentleman and Erica Badu were to perform, so it was a very nice combo on that day. I go to Heineken if there’s someone cool playing, Wood[stock] is not for concerts, just for the atmosphere, friends and fun.

Getting to the festival

The above mentioned freedom in the case of Przystanek is for the first time experienced during the journey to the festival, which most participants choose to make by special festival trains. This is the first opportunity for the initiate to

enter the festival's anti-structure. "Sodom and Gomorrah on the train [...] you let everyone off the leash and put them on that train and you feel that freedom. You start a hardcore party."

The journey to the place of seclusion appears here as a pre-liminal stage in the rite of passage, when participants cut themselves off from the reality in which they live every day. Social relations between the participants are formed at this stage already. This is how one of the respondents describes it in his column:

At ten o'clock I was standing on the platform waiting for the Woodstock train to arrive. When the train came, I immediately got on. I must say that I felt a bit awkward going alone, without my friend (I didn't quite feel the Woodstock climate yet). What was my surprise when right upon my arrival a group of young people asked me if I was going alone. I answered, truthfully, I indeed was. – Then you're going with us! – I heard. We spent the whole trip, over eight hours (as we had several unannounced stops on the handbrake, because the toilets had too little capacity), singing, dancing, if possible, and – as a matter of fact – drinking alcohol (Szkarlát 2010: 14).

Participants with a longer experience play an important role here – they are guides of a kind who help the newly arrived initiates to blend into the *communitas*. Despite the kindness of other participants, the journey to the festival is long and cumbersome. After arriving in Kostrzyn upon Oder, participants must reach the festival campsite, located several kilometres afar from the city centre. In other words, they need to get to the actual place of separation, where the next stages of the ritual will take place. Most of the Open'er attendees arrive in the vicinity of the festival on special buses, and in order to get to the festival campsite, they also have to march for an hour or so.

The festival campsite

The sense of community between the festival participants is present throughout the whole event, which with reference to the rite of passage constitutes the level of "macro". But it is most easily observable while travelling to the festival and during concerts.

After reaching the place, the *sacrum* affects participants by means of a camping site. "The look of the campsite is impressive, you're disgusted by this dirt, the nudity, the drinking; the first two hours are shocking, then you start to take in the atmosphere, enter the mode, it starts feeling like the usual. "In order to fully experience the music festival, feel its atmosphere, you need to use the campsite. Without it, the reception of the event will be incomplete; it will lose some of its value.

That's why people started going to the tents, so they wouldn't have to come back home. It seems to me that this is what people are looking for. They're seeking music, but going to a concert of a star you like is one thing, and seeing them at the festival, another. With the campsite, it feels like I'm on vacation, without it it's like coming back from a party every day.

The camping site is a space of social relations, established or maintained during the event.

I rent a camping space, but only for social reasons. I usually do it this way that I sleep and shower at my grandmother's, who lives in the centre of Gdynia, and I buy a ticket for the campsite so that I can enter the campsite; this is where most of the friends who have come from all over Poland are camping, otherwise I would not get a chance to hang out with them and talk.

The concert – the liminal phase

Concerts are the core of every music festival. While respondents – especially participants of Przystanek Woodstock – emphasized that the atmosphere of the festival is often more important than the music itself, the highlight of each day of the festival is the performances of the stars. It is during the concerts when you can clearly see the ritual process with its liminal phase. This is when the audience feels the communion with the sphere of the sacred the most. Participants who stay near the stage at the time of the performance are in a threshold situation (limen), when certain social conventions are suspended (anti-structure). The ecstatic vibe affects the majority of the listeners. After the concert, when they return to the structure for a moment, it is time to comment on the performance. "During the concert, I experience it deep down in my heart, and after the concert I comment on what I liked and what I didn't. "Experiencing the *sacrum* during the concert may occur individually, but respondents also remark on the collectiveness of this act. "At the concert, everyone behaves like one big family."

Indeed, establishing the collective spirit which results from the presence of masses of people similar to each other at the concert marks the climax. A common stream of consciousness manifests itself during the act of acquiring the same experience, while disregarding the structural framework. What an individual sees, appears to him/her as a vision shared by all. Individual consciousness is temporarily pushed away to the benefit of something that can be called trans-personal consciousness. Even if the concert is experienced individually, its reception among the mass of other participants or discussion about it is an act of an objectivization of this experience, constituting a specific *Lebenswelt*, which the intersubjectivity of the festival world is based on.

During the concert a specific act of exchange occurs, especially between the artist and the audience, where – considering the system of comprehensive benefits – the performers receive the approval of the audience in the form of applauding, cheering and a partying crowd. A ritualized exchange does not have to resemble an economic transaction. Musicians, as a matter of fact, give their performance as a gift, and the audience reciprocates this act with an enthusiastic response. An exceptionally great performance usually ends with the crowd's ovation and the demand for an encore. In this arrangement, cheers and applause are a gift that artists have to accept and then reciprocate. Mauss's theory works well here – when the

musicians give something remarkable and unique during the encore, they more than give back the kindness.

[...] and then they clapped so much that Pollard went out again alone with the guitar, and he played one more song, and it was great, it was so magical.

There even have been some fantastic improvisations; they displayed the lyrics of the piece *Knights of Cydonia* on the jumbotrons, and some lines are chanted there, and it was really cool, because the vocalist made contact with the audience and asked them to sing along with him. [...] Everyone was acting crazy; I was quite near the stage with my friend and even the mud that splashed up to our knees did not matter at all.

A peculiar form of suspending of social norms in the situation of a concert is pogo – observable especially at rock and metal concerts. This is an aggressive quasi-dance, sham fight, between the concert participants to the rhythm of the music being played. Aggression and violence are common during transition rituals, when initiates are beaten or even mutilated (Gennep 2004, Eliade 1997).

There's no profound ideology in it, I just enjoy that. Actually, I feel controlled aggression; I don't know, I like it, for example, entering this pogo with such aggression. Not with hatred towards these people, but with some kind of internal aggression, you move your body in a way that doesn't surprise anyone and, in fact, you're independent of other people's judgments and opinions.

In spite of the brutality of this act, its participant condones violation of his personal space, so that he can blow off his deposits of energy and tension. Interestingly, the respondents often talked about a certain fraternity, some sense of community between pogo participants. "I would be more likely to help someone during pogo than someone I meet in the street. Somehow he seems closer. I think we agree on this one particular aspect of life. "The behaviour of individuals during pogo is a practical application of the knowledge developed by significant Others. The phenomenological wisdom of ancestors is common to all the initiates who, nevertheless, remain anonymous to each other. The idea of pogo, created by a certain Other, prevails over other models of behaviour and such a system was accepted by the general public. "I'm entering pogo to let off steam. I feel identity with the crowd then."

The domain of many festivals – including Woodstock – is ubiquitous dirt. Przystanek is often called "Dirtstock" – especially by its opponents. The necessity to give up some of the normal hygiene habits is another argument supporting the anti-structure nature of a music festival. Admittedly, music festivals offer the opportunity to follow the necessary hygienic procedures, but often in a limited form. Besides, dust clouds and high temperatures make the efforts put into hygiene rather transient. Nevertheless, the company of other participants, who are in the same situation, effectively mutes the cultural imperative of cleanliness, enhancing the feeling of freedom. The care for appearance, for the perception by others, will return only after the event.

I don't mind it, because I brace myself for the dirt when I'm going there. [...] Not washing is simply convenient. You don't have to bother with towels, wash your hair; you just wake up, go to bed as you like it; nobody remarks on what you look like, or that you are dirty. I don't mind it, but I don't want to look like that when I come back from Woodstock.

In the case of Przystanek Woodstock you can talk about some kind of affirmation of dirt – one of the attractions there is mud baths. There is a high pillar near the main stage, the so-called mushroom, which sprinkles water, turning the area around it into a muddy puddle. It is a place for having fun, playing simple games and enjoying euphoric baths. Within the mud sector, social norms also become loosened.

Everyone seems to know these mud sectors. If somebody walks into it, you can legally make him dirty, he will not hold a grudge against you, because that's why you go there: to get muddy; and even if you don't know this person, you can easily push him in and he'll not take offence, he'll smile and throw you in, too.

This kind of fun resembles African and Australian rites of passage, where the bodies of the initiates are often smeared with mud. Dirt is not an element that excludes the contact with the sacred sphere, on the contrary – when considering the tradition of contact with mud and the ecstatic nature of this act – it may be the key to it. All in all, mud, just like the initiate in the liminal phase, is also a form in a specific state of suspension between dense liquid and thinned solid (Douglas 1966).

Conclusions

When the music festival is over, its participants return to playing various social roles, and again enter the structural framework. The *Communitas* dissolves just as quickly as it commenced, and the rite of passage comes to an end. A mass event of this type turns out to be a real comma, a threshold between the laws of the usual structure.

The uniqueness of festival music lies in the fact that it is strongly linked to the vibe that the festival offers, ingrained in the social reality created during its time. The reception of music is mediated by the imaginary world created at the festival, one which one can identify with (Frith 1998). "Rain doesn't bother us, because there is music. This is the bonding agent. "Music festivals, like Open'er or Woodstock, provide a subjective sense of belonging. They allow the participants to express themselves in a fixed framework, and the music enables them to define themselves and also to experience a collective identity in a ritual way.

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Summary

Ritual process and the imaginary world at music festivals

The article concerns the music festivals Przystanek Woodstock and Heineken Open'er Festival and analyses them in an anthropological and phenomenological paradigm. Through participant observation and structured interviews the author gathered manifestations of the ritual process and investigated the unique Lebenswelt, the world experienced by the attendees. The purpose of the scientific analysis was acquiring an in-depth insight into personal visions of the festivals, the way they are perceived by their participants and identifying the functions of this kind of entertainment. It was important to investigate the motives to take part in such mass events, but also to study the perception of other participants. The author analysed individual experiences and the way they translated into a collective experience. The analysis made use of the perspectives of the ritual process theory of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, the exchange theory of Marcel

Mauss and the experience of collective identity based on the phenomenological theories of William James and Alfred Schütz. The results confirm the presence of mechanisms identical with those in the rites of passage and antistructure, which manifest themselves in the suspension of certain social norms. The exchange refers primarily to the immaterial sphere between artist and audience, and is observable in the case of both events. The idea of *Lebenswelt* is based primarily on the joint experience of concerts which contributes to creating a collective experience.

Keywords

rituals, imaginary world, antistructure

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Social visions of skinhead subculture members

Skinheads are among the oldest contemporary subcultures. While for many years this subculture has undergone numerous changes and experienced numerous splits, the contemporary mass media continue to present a uniform image of this formation, namely as groups of young males with close cropped hair who wear paramilitary outfits and are responsible for acts of hooliganism, punch-ups and muggings. The media dehumanise skinheads by comparing them to machines of hate.¹ The stereotype of a “bad skinhead” is also reproduced by publications on youth subcultures, which most commonly focus on the pathologies, aggression, delinquency or extreme political views of skinheads – therefore, only on the negative aspects of how this group works.² This image is consistent with the popular understanding of this subculture: one that is associated with the rejection of certain cultural patterns, rebellion and behaviours that go against fundamental societal values. This is not, however, the only image of this subculture, nor is this the only and correct understanding of it in the social sciences (Zdulski, Zdulski & Wrzesień, 2011).

When exactly the skinhead subculture originated is difficult to pinpoint. While its beginnings are commonly dated back to around 1968, the first skinheads were actually seen among mods as early as in 1964. The word ‘skinhead’ is derived from the characteristically short haircut through which you could see the scalp (Marshall, 1991).

In the early 1960s, in the London district of Soho, the mod subculture began to emerge. The mods paid special attention to their attire: they went for classic, elegant suits, with an emphasis on subdued colours and a smart look. Like the Teddy boys, they were fascinated by the American mass culture, especially rock music and “black music”. In contrast to the Teds, however, mods did not participate in attacks on immigrants from the Caribbean (Zdulski, Zdulski & Wrzesień, 2011). In 1964/1965, the mods seemed a milder variety of the youth subculture. It was suspected that their hidden personal model was that of a middle-class dandy. However, the frustration caused by unmet material aspirations turned into aggres-

¹ This image of the skinhead can be encountered in such films as *The Believer* (2001, directed by Henry Bean), *Romper Stomper* (1992, directed by Geoffrey Wright), *Rossiya* (2009, directed by Pavel Bardin), *Teste Rasate* (1993, directed by Claudio Fragasso), and *Teraz Polska* (2005, directed by Michał Biliński).

² It can also be exemplified by Heidi Hassenmüller’s young adult novel *Schwartz, rot, tot*.

sion, expressed in fights with antagonistic youth groups. Around 1966, as a result of clashes between the rockers, who derived from the lower classes of society, and the mods, a more aggressive faction emerged, referred to as the hard mods, who are considered the direct predecessor of the skinhead culture. They gathered at clubs, where the Black soul music, later followed by ska, bluebeat and rock-steady music imported from Jamaica was played (Wilk, 1994). Jamaican music was developing in Great Britain thanks to the immigrants from the Caribbean. Younger mods and hard mods interacted with black youth, rude boys, and tried to copy their black peers in everything they did (Marshall, 1991). The simple and easily infecting rhythm of reggae music made it become very popular among the skinheads (Marshall, 1991).

A nearly parallel process involved copying the style of white skinheads by black immigrants. The mixing of these styles shaped the initial external image of skinheads (Janicki & Pęczak, 1994).

In addition to the shared musical interests, the first skinheads also sympathised with Caribbean youth in terms of using political riots for acts of blind vandalism and fights with the police. This is confirmed by the existence of gangs formed on the basis of a within-district solidarity. Both white youths and young immigrants were members of these gangs (Wilk, 1994).

In addition to music, football was another very important factor that contributed to the growth of the skinhead subculture. The winning of the World Cup by England in 1966 increased interest in football, also among skinheads. The press was gaining popularity by describing, in a sensational manner, fights at football stadiums, and these condemnatory articles in fact contributed to the promotion and popularisation of football hooliganism (Marshall, 1991). There is no consensus among the authors on the role of skinheads in unleashing the wave of violence at and outside football stadiums. It is, however, a fact that certain items of skinhead clothing, such as the heavy boots (because of which English football supporters were later called "boot boys"), became an inspiration to members of football clubs. As a result, many football supporters started to look like typical skinheads, although they did not fully identify with them. They were more of a hooligan stadium-based subculture whose aim was to cause "bovver" with supporters of other clubs and the police (Zdulski, Zdulski, Wrzesień, 2011)

The skinheads of this time also fought with the descendants of the rockers and with hippies. It was, however, violence against Asians living in the United Kingdom that generated the greatest interest in the media. "Paki-bashing" became such a loud issue that it was included among the most important topics in the talks between the British and Pakistani governments. However, these were not regular racist attacks, as the media painted it, as among the skinheads, in addition to the native British youths, there were also young Greeks, youths from the Caribbean and other immigrants of different skin colours. The large influx of people from Central Asia or Uganda caused panic among the native Brits about the labour market. Asians were perceived as competitors who might take away their jobs and homes. There were massive layoffs in heavy industry, and the traditional working class communities were threatened by urban planners, who intended to give up the building of cheap tower blocks. The skin colour of immigrants was the reason why

this group of people began to be quickly blamed for the problem Britain was facing. At this time people from the Caribbean had already been absorbed into the British lifestyle. Gangs of black skinheads, often called Afro boys, would occasionally fight with white or even multiracial gangs, but it was always a fight about the territory, not because of racism. The formation of districts inhabited solely by immigrants heightened the impression that the riots were racist in nature (Marshall, 1991).

Because of the smear campaign against skinheads in the media, their problems with the police, difficulties in finding jobs due to the society's aversion, and the damaging effects on the image of this subculture exerted by the most aggressive members, the skinhead subculture started to fade around 1974 (Bağ, 2005).

In 1976, during the full bloom of the punk subculture, skinheads re-emerged. It was then that the second phase in their history started, which brought them popularity around the world (Bağ, 2005). In the first wave of the punk subculture, skinheads were almost seen as something closely resembling hippies: young people creating a new, artificial and pointless fad. Despite everything, however, skinheads took to punk rock, and with time, the punks' anti-hippie attitude reconciled both subcultures (Bağ, 2005). At about the same time, the skinhead subculture spilt into the younger generation, who supported punks, and the older members of the subculture, who played the role of the personal guard to the conservative Teddy boys. The racist factions of the skinhead subculture most likely emerged from the skinheads who supported the Teds.

Garry Bushell, of the music weekly magazine "Sounds", integrated skinheads briefly by promoting the shout "Oi!" as a placating watchword shared by skinheads and punks. Even though this was still followed by a split on political grounds, punks gave up street punk and the shout "Oi!" to skinheads and turned towards a new music genre: hard core (Bağ, 2005). The very politically and socially involved lyrics of Oi songs started, with time, to draw the attention of various political parties and factions, which were seeking support among the frustrated youths. While this led to the political surveillance of skinheads by both right- and left-wing parties, this subculture was not yet interested in politics at this time (Bağ, 2005).

When Britain was hit by another wave of immigration, which caused a rise in unemployment among native Brits, skinheads, who most commonly originated from the working class, responded to the incoming population with reluctance. Some of them started to propagate the idea of racism and develop an interest in such parties as the British National Party or the National Front, motivated by the idea of national socialism (Bağ, 2005).

The increased numbers of right-wing skinheads and neo-Nazi organisations resulted in an equally heavy growth of left-leaning and apolitical factions and antifascist and anti-racist ones, such as SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), which not only fought against racism but also with the perception of skinheads as Nazis (Filipiak, 1999).

At this time, Nazi skinheads were still an internally cohesive group, and due to the brutal attacks on representatives of other nations, they were also controversial, through which they focused the media's entire attention. By acting in this way, they distorted the image of the skinhead and created, in the awareness of society,

the image of the skinhead as one of a Nazi, which has still been maintained to today (Bağ, 2005).

The knowledge of the history of this subculture is an important thing for its members, as it is one of the factors which shapes their subcultural identity. Earlier, this knowledge was drawn by the youths mainly from older friends, while at present, thanks to the better access to information, the main sources of knowledge are the internet, television, literature and films, whose main characters are members of subcultures.

The aim of the study was to determine the contemporary social notions of the skinhead culture and how they are shaped depending on the sources from which people draw their knowledge about this subculture.

In connection with this aim, the following questions were posed: What sources do people use to draw their knowledge about the skinhead subculture? What do they know about the skinhead subculture? How does the society receive members of the skinhead culture?

An interview questionnaire including multiple-response, multiple-choice and open-ended questions was used (Plich & Bauman, 2001). The form was developed in a way that allowed the respondents to respond as freely as possible and to avoid suggesting anything. The study was carried out online in order to reach the highest possible number of respondents. The questionnaires were completed anonymously. The respondents were aware of the purpose of the study. The results were coded (Plich & Bauman, 2001).

The questionnaire was completed by 160 subjects, including 94 women and 66 men. Most of the subjects (55%) were aged 18 to 25 years. The age structure of the subjects is depicted in Figure 1.

In the question about the knowledge about the skinhead subculture, a multiple-response question was used, so that the respondents could select more than one source of their knowledge. The study showed that the most commonly declared sources of knowledge about skinheads were: representatives of this subculture, stories told by friends and the internet. The least popular source of knowledge was educational classes. Figure 2 depicts the declared sources of knowledge about the skinhead subculture.

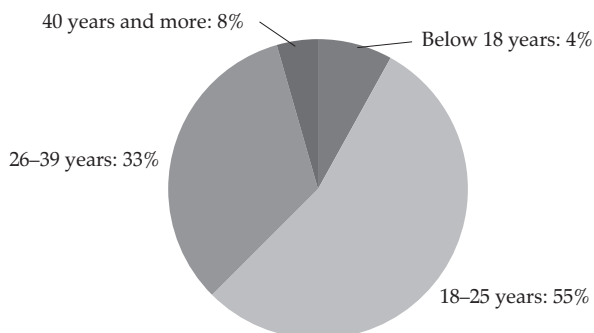


Figure 1. Age of respondents.
Source: author's own research.

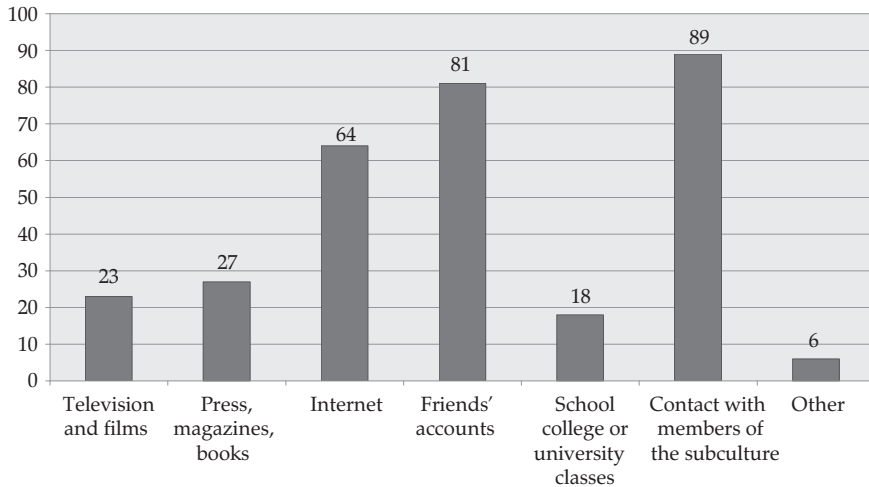


Figure 2. Sources of knowledge about the skinhead subculture.
Source: author's own research.

Subjects who drew their knowledge about skinheads from films and television indicated the following films as the most common examples: *American History X* (1998, directed by Tony Kaye), *Romper Stomper* (1992, directed by Geoffrey Wright), *The Believer* (2001, directed by Henry Bean), *This is England* (2006, directed by Shane Meadows), *Made in Britain* (1982, directed by Alan Clarke), *Skinhead Attitude* (2003, directed by Daniel Schweizer), and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971, directed by Stanley Kubrick). The following were mentioned in the literature category: *Spirit of '69: A Skinhead Bible* by George Marshall and *Krucjata łysogłowych* [Crusade of the Bald Heads] by Ewa Wilk (1994). In the category of other sources of knowledge, the subjects declared: lyrics, members of this subculture, fiction, or that they did not draw their knowledge about this subculture from any sources.

In order to examine their social notions about skinheads, the respondents were asked questions that included the following: Can a person of a different skin colour be a member of this subculture? Can women be, or are women, members of this subculture? Who are skinheads, in your opinion? What is your attitude towards members of the skinhead subculture?

According to the collected material, 46% of the respondents were of the opinion that people of a different skin colour could not be members of this subculture, 22% of the respondents didn't know how to respond to this question, and only 32% were of the opinion that people of a different skin colour can be members of this subculture, which is in fact the correct answer. These results show a poor knowledge of the history of skinheads among the respondents and confirm the stereotype of the Nazi skinheads spreading the slogans of "white power". The respondents were much more knowledgeable about whether women could be members of this subculture. Seventy-seven percent of the subjects were of the opinion that women could be members of this subculture, 17% did not know the answer to this question, and only 6% said that women could not be members of the skinhead subculture. The results of this study are illustrated in Figure 3.

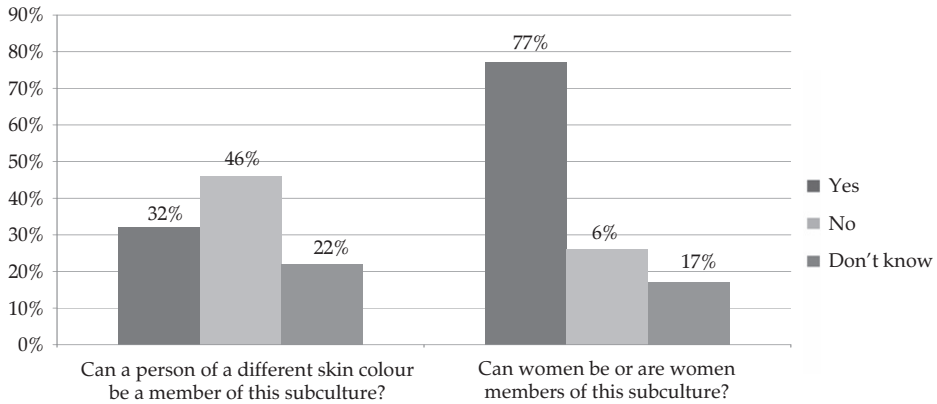


Figure 3. Possibility of women being members of the skinhead subculture.
Source: author's own research.

The study also showed that the respondents' attitude towards the skinhead subculture is largely neutral (44%), with more respondents having a negative than a positive attitude (22% vs 16%). The "other" category included, among others, the following statements: "My attitude towards them is negative, I'm scared of them, but they also interest me", "My attitude is neutral as long as their ideas and behaviours don't take on a fanatic nature", "It depends on the person".

Figure 4 illustrates the respondents' attitudes towards members of the skinhead subculture.

Based on their answers to the question about their sources of knowledge about the skinhead subculture, the respondents were divided in two groups:

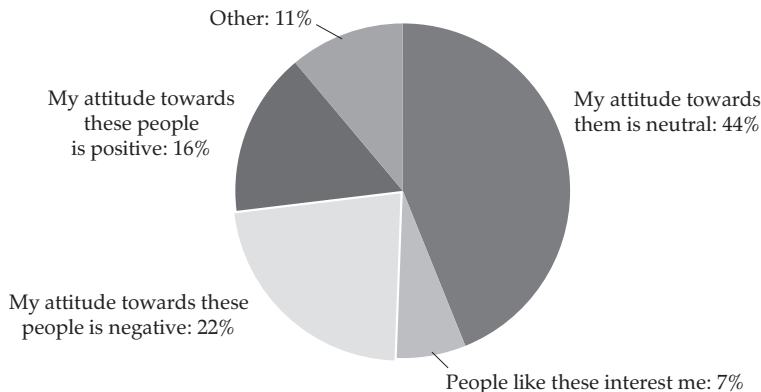


Figure 4. Attitude towards members of the skinhead subculture.
Source: author's own research.

1. Those who declared the television, films, press, books, educational classes, the internet, and stories told by their friends as the sources of knowledge about the skinhead subculture.

2. Those who declared their own experiences and the occasional contact with members of this subculture as the sources of knowledge about this subculture. This division is illustrated in Figure 5.

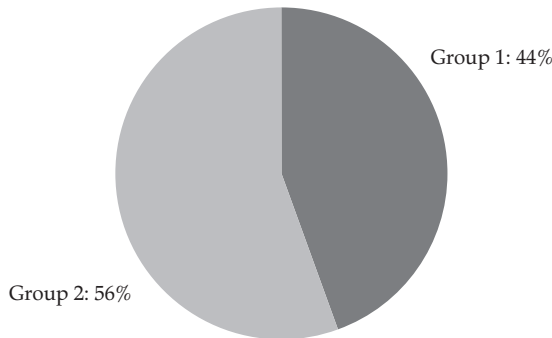


Figure 5. Contact of the subjects with members of the skinhead subculture.
Source: author's own research.

The study showed considerable differences in the respondents' attitudes towards skinheads depending on the group to which they belonged. In both groups, indifference towards skinheads predominated, and the greatest difference was observed between these groups as regards the positive attitude. In the first group, only 2% of the subjects declared a positive attitude towards skinheads, while the corresponding percentage in the second group was 28%. This trend was also observed for the negative attitude towards skinheads. The subjects who had contact with members of this subculture less frequently declared a negative sentiment (17%) than those who drew their knowledge from such sources as the television, the internet or stories told by their friends. This demonstrates that the media create negative notions about skinheads.

The respondents' attitudes towards the skinhead subculture depending on the group to which they belonged are illustrated in Figure 6.

The following categories were identified by coding from the answers to the question "Who are skinheads, in your opinion?":

- I don't know who skinheads are.
- A skinhead is a rebel.
- A skinhead is an extremist (a person intolerant of anything different, a nationalist, a racist, a Nazi xenophobe, an anti-Semite).
- A skinhead is an aggressive individual.
- A skinhead is a man.
- A skinhead is a person with a low IQ.
- Skinheads are (normal) people.
- Skinheads are people with unique views (this category included statements describing skinheads as people with a characteristic outlook on life and specific values without specifying these values and without passing a judgement on them).
- Skinheads are a subculture typified by a characteristic look and interests.
- Skinheads are an underclass.

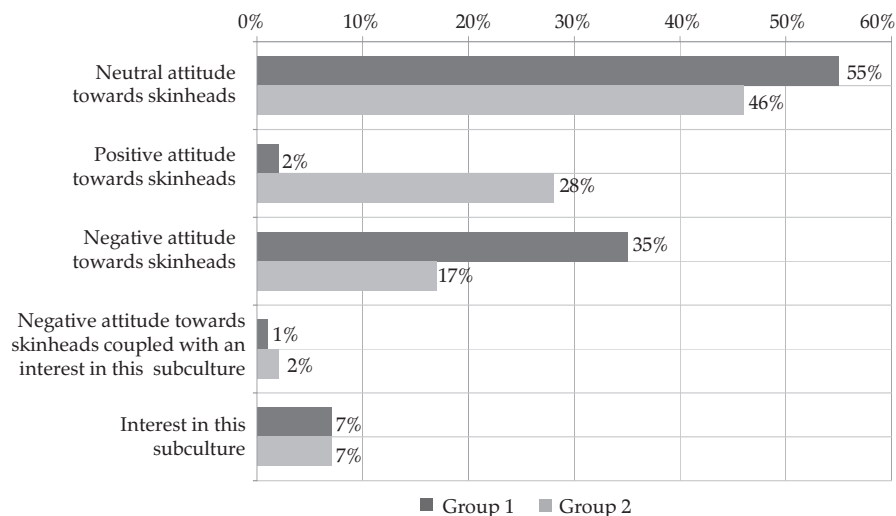


Figure 6. Attitudes towards the skinhead subculture: an analysis by groups.

Source: author's own research.

- Skinheads are stadium vandals, hooligans, chavs.
- Skinheads are good people.
- Skinheads are loyal friends.
- Skinheads are bad people.
- Skinheads are a diverse group of people burdened with negative stereotypes.
- Skinheads are people with problems.
- Skinheads are a closed group.
- Skinheads are manipulated people.
- Skinheads are a subculture typified by a characteristic look and interests.
- Skinheads are an underclass.
- Skinheads are stadium vandals, hooligans, chavs.
- Skinheads are good people.
- Skinheads are loyal friends.
- Skinheads are bad people.
- Skinheads are a diverse group of people burdened with negative stereotypes.
- Skinheads are people with problems.
- Skinheads are a closed group.
- Skinheads are manipulated people.

Analysis of the occurrence of these categories depending on the sources from which the subjects drew their knowledge about skinheads showed that the subjects from the first group more commonly made statements about skinheads in such categories as: "I don't know who skinheads are", "a skinhead is a young rebel", "a skinhead is an aggressive individual", "skinheads are an underclass", "skinheads are people with problems", "skinheads are a closed group". Most commonly, respondents from this group described skinheads as people with Nazi and extremist views and as aggressive people. Respondents who shaped their notions about skinheads based, among other things, on contacts with members of this subculture most commonly described them in the following categories: "skinheads

are a subculture typified by a characteristic look and interests”, “a skinhead is an extremist”, “skinheads are people with unique views”. It is also noteworthy that respondents in this group used a wider range of categories when describing skinheads. The results of this analysis are provided in Figure 7.

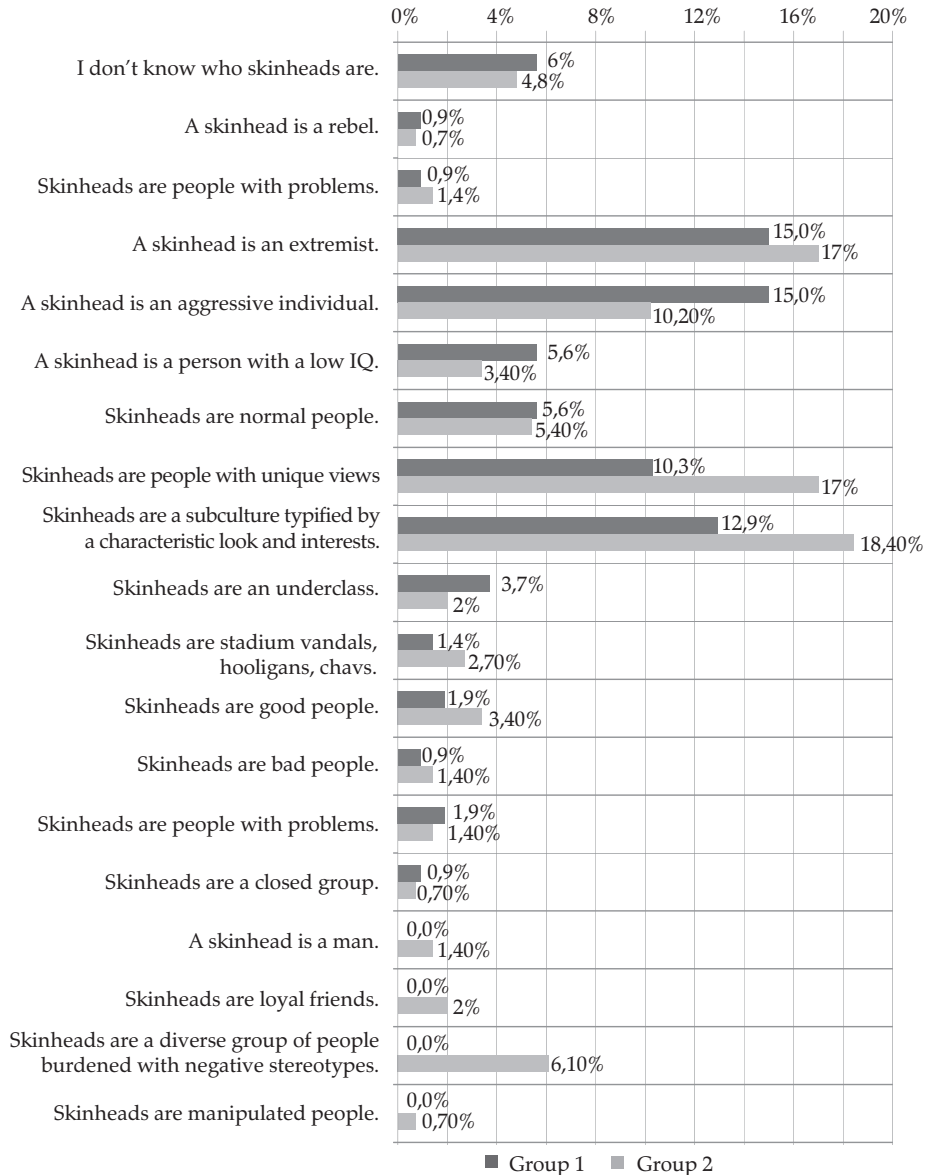


Figure 7. Notions about skinheads: an analysis by groups. Source: author’s own research.

The results of the study demonstrate the diversity of social notions about the skinhead subculture. The stereotype of a skinhead as an aggressive extremist is still, however, the predominant one. The analysis also shows gaps in the knowledge about this subculture. The material presented here is only a part of all the

studies and is intended to draw attention to the sources of social notions and to how they affect individuals' thinking and attitude towards, who are in fact, a group of people that the study subjects do not really know.

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Summary

Social Vision of Skinhead Subculture Members

The aim of the research presented in the text is to show the contemporary vision of skinhead subculture members and how the vision is shaped according to the source of knowledge on this particular social group. Analysis of the response shows that the vision and approach to skinheads depends on the source of information on the group. The given media – according to the research – has a great impact on the vision of this subculture.

Keywords

skinheads, subcultures, social expectations, media