

800s

AGAIN!

edited by
Aneta Jabłońska
Mariusz Koryciński



*Jolanta Słodzian
film club*

80s AGAIN!

A MONOGRAPH ON THE 1980s

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Aneta Jabłońska
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translated by

Jacek Wełniak
Agnieszka Piskorska

JOLANTA SŁOBODZIAN FILM CLUB
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klubslobdzian@gmail.com, facebook.com/klubslobdzian



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Jolanta Słobodzian Film Club was founded to commemorate a Polish director and a relentless film educator. In the 80s and 90s Jolanta Słobodzian showed young people across Poland that cinema shapes our sensitivity and helps to survive even the most difficult moments. We wish to continue her mission by organizing meetings at schools and universities, and by publishing essays and books about cinema.

The club's logo refers to the neon lights from Warsaw, lightening the Polish capital before and after World War II. After the enforcement of martial law in Poland (1981-83), the neon lights were turned off, and the citizens of Warsaw have gradually forgotten about them. Years later, their fans took all possible efforts to restore the neon ads. Thanks to her passion for cinema, Jolanta Słobodzian – just like the neon signs – lightened the dark times of communism. Unfortunately, in 1999 she committed suicide. It is time for the memory of her to shine over Warsaw again.



The Time Machine Series will consist of monographs concerning subsequent decades of the 20th century. Each book will contain essays devoted to culture and important social issues. The cross-sectional nature of the publications will afford a possibility of presenting the diversity of the decades and the ways in which the mainstream interacts with its margins. Publishing the book in two languages (Polish and English) in a digital reference form, and, what is more, in open access will help popularise the issues it addresses both among Polish and foreign readers.

In the past only libraries provided access to knowledge – the library of today is the Internet. That is why the Time Machine Series crosses the borders set by the traditional media, meeting the needs and interests of contemporary culture recipients.

The graphic design of Time Machine Series refers to the series published in Poland after World War II, which included popular literature novels: mystery fiction, thrillers, or science fiction ones. Time Machine Series is thus a return to that tradition, yet from a different, theoretical perspective.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The monograph is divided into three parts, each of them preceded with a short introduction, which summarizes particular texts and navigates the reader through the structure of each part.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Adriana Brenda-Mańkowska

a.m.brenda@student.uw.edu.pl

Graduated from the Faculty of Polish Studies, University of Warsaw. Co-organiser of conferences "80s Again!" and "N O L A N". Her research interests include the form of paradocumentary and epistolarieness in culture texts, fantastic and horror motifs in popular art, interaction between the media and art, advertising and PR activities in social media. Member of the 20th Century Literature Group.

Aneta Jabłońska

anetapaulina.j@gmail.com

Author of chapters in monographs *Niezwykłe inspiracje spoza kadru, Witkacy 2014: co jeszcze jest do odkrycia?, Oblicza miłości, Ja – My – Oni*; published in "Topos", "Nowe Książki" and "Bliza". Co-funder and president of the 20th Century Literature Group, coorganised a number of conferences on 20th century literature. Host of a literary program „Co pan pisze?” (*What Do You Write?*) in Radio Liryka. Her research interests focus on philosophy, literary work by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and by Witold Gombrowicz, as well as fiction and non-fiction writing of the period 1918-1939.

Agnieszka Kiejziewicz

agnes.kiejziewicz@gmail.com

Coeditor of *Powieści graficzne. Leksykon (The Graphic Novel. A Lexicon)*, author of chapters published in the volumes *Anatomia wyobraźni. 12 esejów o fantazjowaniu w kinie, telewizji, komiksach i literaturze popularnej (Anatomy of Imagination. 12 Essays on Fantazizing in Cinema, TV, Comics and Popular Literature)*; *Świat zmysłów. O znaczeniu zmysłów w kulturze (The World of the Senses. On the Significance of the Senses in Culture)* and *Sacrum w kinie dekadę później. Szkice, eseje, rozprawy (Sacrum in Cinema a Decade Later)*. Her research interests include cinematic avant-garde and the new visual experiment.

Paweł Jaskulski

jaskulski1989@gmail.com

Coeditor of the interactive volume *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej (Facets of the Audiovisual Education)* and author of chapters in the following monographs: *Kultura rocka. Twórcy – tematy – motywy (2) (The Rock Culture. Creators – Topics – Motifs 2)*; *Niezwykłe inspiracje spoza kadru (Amazing Inspirations from Beyond the Frame)* and *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej (Facets of the Audiovisual Education)*. Published in many Polish journals; co-organised conferences and courses on cinema and audiovisual education. Member of Polish Society for Film and Media Studies.

Mariusz Koryciński

mariusz.korycinski@gmail.com

Coeditor of the interactive volume *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej (Facets of the Audiovisual Education)* and author of chapters in the following edited collections: *Niezwykłe inspiracje spoza kadru (Amazing Inspirations from Beyond the Frame)*; *Zombie w kulturze (Zombie in Culture)* and *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej (Facets of the Audiovisual Education)*. Published in a number of Polish jour-

nals; co-organised conferences and courses on cinema and audiovisual education. Member of Polish Society for Film and Media Studies.

Joanna Kostana

joanna.kostana@gmail.com

Graduated from the Institute of Polish Culture. Works at Teatr Wolandejski, where she organized Students Theatrical Festival; collaborated with The Teatr Wielki – Polish National Opera and New Horizons Association. Interested in film studies, history and culture of the 19th century, as well as the philosophy of culture, especially semiotic and structuralist approaches.

Kamil Kościelski

Holds a degree in film studies from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Published in "Journal of Scandinavian Cinema", "Kwartalnik Filmowy", "Przestrzenie Teorii"; author of the book *"Cóż za wspaniały dzień na egzorcyzm...": Amerykańskie kino grozy przełomu lat 60. i 70.* ("What a Wonderful Day for an Exorcism...": American Horror Film at the Turn of 1960/70).

Wojciech Lewandowski

wojciech@gitararysowane.pl

Assistant Professor at the Institute of European Studies, Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw. Author of the book *Wolność i samotność. Myśl społeczno-polityczna amerykańskiego transcendentalizmu* (*Freedom and Loneliness. Social and Political Thought of the American Transcendentalism*). Author of chapters in a number of monographs, including *Polityka brytyjska po wyborach parlamentarnych 2010* (*British Policy After the 2010 Parliamentary Elections*); *Facets of Scottish Identity*; *System polityczny Zjednoczonego Królestwa* (*UK Political System*). Published in journals, such as "Creatio Fantastica", "Przegląd Europejski", "The Americanist" and many others.

Writer of the blog *Gitarą Rysowane (Drawn with a Guitar)*, dedicated to pop culture. Co-funder and secretary of British Socio-Political Studies Research Group BRITANNIA. His research interests focus on social and political issues in pop culture, cultural interpretation of social and political processes as well as British-American relations.

Dariusz Piechota

darekpiechota@o2.pl

Author of the book *Między utopią a melancholią. W kręgu nowoczesnej i ponowoczesnej literatury fantastycznej (Between Utopia and Melancholy. Amidst Modern and Postmodern SF Literature)*, coeditor of essay collections, including *Między literaturą a medycyną (Between Literature and Medicine)*, *Emancypacja zwierząt? (Emancipation of Animals?)*; author of chapters and journal articles. His research interests include literature of the second half of the 20th century, science fiction as a genre, contemporary pop culture, gender studies and animal studies.

Michał Pranke

michalpranke@gmail.com

Graduated from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Poet, author of the book *b*, literary reviewer and critic. Editor of the section "Poezja" in the journal "Inter-. Literatura – Krytyka – Kultura". Co-editor of the volume *Edward Stachura. Formy pamięci, znaki czasu (Edward Stachura: Forms of Memory, Signs of Time)*. Published in journals, including "Arterie" and "Fabularia".

Robert Zybrant

zinedine691@wp.pl

Holds a degree in culture studies from the University of Warsaw. Published in journals, including "Podkowiński Magazyn Kulturalny", "Topos", salon24.pl and obiektyw.info.pl. Co-organiser of poetic con-

tests and conferences; author of realist and surrealist photographic portraits displayed at many exhibitions; designed logos (e.g. for the 20th Century Literature Group) and posters (e.g. for the movie *In Hoc Signo Vinces*).

INTRODUCTION

A Rosebud given to Jolanta Słobodzian

Translated by Jacek Welniak

There are different concepts of culture. According to one of them – not the most important one – art should save: an image of passing reality, an elusive moment, a person who is not with us anymore.

When setting up a film club, we decided to name it after Jolanta Słobodzian, in order to revive a memory of this fascinating person and take it out of press archives, tightly sealed bookcases and decaying film tapes.

She was a director by education, yet on her own she only made one documentary, *...Dymny, Dymny...* She also directed a play written by Ireneusz Iredyński, entitled *Żegnaj, Judaszu*. Most people remember her perhaps as head of Dyskusyjny Klub Filmowy (Film Discussion Club) from the 1980s. She may have been important to some people as a co-organizer of Stars Festival at Międzyzdroje in Poland.

The spectrum of functions and professions resulted in a complicated biography, where nothing was obvious. Słobodzian is not among us anymore, thus leaving us with nothing else but to refer to the memories of those who knew her.

Renata Lis, the author of a book on the Russian writer Ivan Bunin, who used to participate in discussions on films led by Słobodzian, told me: "[...] she had serious educational ambitions concerning us [...]. All this happened in the mood of freedom and respect for individual searches, hesitations and doubts, without any pressure or indoctrina-

tion". Szymon, quoted by Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska in her reportage on Słobodzian, presented a different vision of those meetings: "Whenever someone said something naïve, she would shout 'What the heck are you talking about!?'".

What was then Jolanta Słobodzian really like? Did she dream of directing movies, or directing others? Did she want to work at the grass roots, or be a star of the red carpet? Did she struggle with contradictory desires? Or perhaps she was full of contradictions herself?

When trying to learn more about her, we feel like a character of *Citizen Kane* – the film with which she started her displays and discussions: each new person brings a new voice, a new distinct point of view, for everyone has their own 'truth' about other people.

For us, the most important thing was Słobodzian's passion and her idea to teach about cinema and reach the places that cinematic education usually does not reach. Of course, in the 1980s and the early 1990s, she realized this idea using the means available at that time: by visiting secondary schools, or travelling all over the country. Today, perhaps, but not for sure, she would engage in heated discussions on Skype and use Snapchat to publish pictures from her journeys, or Facebook to publish selfies with stars.

Contemporary limitations are much easier to overcome than those experienced in the times of communism and the period of political transformation. That is why *80s Again!* is basically published in a digital form. We wish to reach all those interested in gaining knowledge, not only the ones who visit libraries, and not only those who can afford to buy a printed book. We have prepared its two language versions, in order for the Polish thoughts to flow freely, just like the English-language ones.

Now that the book is ready for publication, the question that baffles me is: would Jolanta Słobodzian like the book devoted to the 80s?

Before we try to guess an answer, I need to clarify one issue. When Poles talk about the 80s, they think about those years in a double-track manner: either in the domestic or international context. At first glance, the period is associated with martial law in Poland, and with pastel colors and joyful music in the West.

The conclusion of the movie by Welles brings the answer that the mysterious Rosebud – which Kane mentioned before his death, and to which the investigation depicted on screen was devoted – is a sled.

It is, however, not the item itself that needs to be the explanation of the main character's mystery, but the time and space it refers to: the childhood realm. The 80s – if we look at them through the prism of popular culture, including Polish popular culture – may appear as an unreal, non-existent realm, filled with laughter and adventure.

It is to this realm that so many want to return to, even if they return to the Neverland. Hence the appearance of a certain soft drink in "a legendary 80s edition". Hence the popularity of synthwave, drawing from electronic music by Giorgio Moroder, John Carpenter or the Goblin group. Hence the interest in movies such as *Kung Fury*, co-financed by Internet users.

If we thus assume that the culture of the ninth decade of the 20th century escaped from the problems of daily existence, then our volume, which focuses on art, would not probably be to Słobodzian's liking. In a conversation with Tadeusz Sobolewski, she declared her beliefs: she valued movies that reflected reality, and referred to the end of the century as decadent.

However, *80s Again!* proves that simple divisions do not work, as most of the chapters present mutual permeation between politics and comics, cinema with technology and music, truth with fiction, popular culture with avant garde. The thesis is confirmed by history itself: the 80s in Poland is not only the martial law, but also the meetings at the Round Table. In the USA it is not only ever-present joy, but also an assassination attempt on Reagan or the crash of Challenger.

In the aforementioned conversation with Sobolewski, our patron said: "[...] art [...] exists to help us live". If the art of the 80s let somebody feel happy, even only for a moment, then Słobodzian would probably like our volume.

That is the way it is: offering joy does not mean avoiding serious problems, and visiting small towns does not make it impossible to organize a large festival. The aesthetics of a certain period, extinct in theory, gives life to new works after years.

Let this volume be a Rosebud to our Readers: a gate to the realm of many faces, several, yet not all, which we wished to show you.

Let this volume also be a Rosebud which we give – beyond time and limitations – to Jolanta.

I used, among other sources, the following articles: *Na co potrzebne mi kino. Spotkanie z Jolantą Słobodzian* ("Kino" 1992, No. 4, pp. 16–19) and K. Surmiak-Domańska, *Spływał z niej czerwony dywan* ("Wysokie Obcasy" No. 21, supplement to "Gazeta Wyborcza" from 27 May 2000, pp. 10–19) and the interview *Spadamy we wszystkich kierunkach* („Odra" 2013, No. 11, pp. 47–51).

Mariusz Koryciński
Milanówek, 25 July 2016

Part 1

In the orbit of politics

Introduction

The first part of this volume is devoted to artists' attitude to politics: ranging from not touching the subject at all and exploring the world of internal experiences or the world of art, to making clear statements on ideological issues. This section contains articles describing how an artist and art can be used by different groups (not only political parties), and how the tools of manipulation created by political systems can be appropriated by art in order to ridicule them.

The section is opened by an article by Robert Zybrant entitled *Wrocław's opposition and counter-cultural organizations of the 1980s and their impact on the formation of the Orange Alternative*. The author first briefly describes the political situation in Poland in the early 1980s, introducing readers to the socio-economic context of the period in Poland. Next, he analyzes the distinctiveness of Wrocław (a city situated close to the borders with Germany and Czechoslovakia) and the cultural centers which were active there (Teatr Grotowskiego). Then, he characterizes selected opposition and counter-cultural organizations, emphasizing the specificity of the "happenings" they carried out. The essence of those events was mostly about mocking the authorities, by referring, for instance, to the mechanism of propaganda. The article presents a picture of an independent, active part of the society, which was ingenious in terms of both artistic and organizational issues, above all

being extremely innovative. The factors described by Zybrant paved the way for the emergence of the Orange Alternative: a Poland-wide happening movement ridiculing the absurdities of the Polish People's Republic.

In the next article, entitled *How Witkacy turned into a woman or theatre of the absurd in communist Poland* Aneta Jabłońska describes not only the reception of the works by writer and painter Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz in the 1980s, but also a number of political factors which resulted in his exhumation and reburial. Jabłońska notices that it was the political mood that determined the perception of Witkacy. One example provided by the author is the fact that in 1984 the authorities of communist-era Poland did not have a slightest intention to include the Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz Association – a civic organization – into the public discourse. The situation changed just 4 years later, when Polish politicians went to great effort (including engaging with the authorities in Moscow, ambassadors, and the Polish and Ukrainian consulates) to bring back the body of Witkacy, which had been buried in Wielikije Oziera in Ukraine, to Poland and hold a ceremonious reburial in Zakopane. In her text, Jabłońska also wonders about the causes of Witkiewicz's suicide. One of them, according to the author, was the writer's anti-totalitarian beliefs, and his obsessive fear of Russian captivity. The author tries to answer the question of why the authorities chose Witkacy as a symbol of a national writer.

The next articles refer not so much to the limitations of individuals, the superordinate mechanisms of supervision or propaganda, but rather to artists' individual attitudes to ideology and politics. We present here both a Polish artist who started his career in the early 1980s (and thus we remain in the context of communism here) and British artists (forming a certain link to the book's next chapter, which focuses on English-speaking musicians), who criticize a totalitarian system in their works.

Miachał Pranke, in his article entitled *"And that was the exit!"*. *Maciuś Wariat* by Marcin Świetlicki analyzes a lesser-known, debut story by Marcin Świetlicki. Pranke argues that the poet's

prose debut sketches out the most important motifs (love, loneliness, neurosis, *mise en abyme*) and inspirations (Wojacek, Bursa) which appeared throughout all of Świetlicki's works. The author also discusses the short story's specific form: close to a diaristic strategy, making use of deep introspection and strongly subjectified idiolectic language. In addition, he draws attention to and describes the story's intertextuality. This article presents Świetlicki in a new light: not as a mature poet, but as an inexperienced prose writer making his debut.

In the context of Pranke's analysis, one may think of certain issues that he does not touch upon: namely, why didn't Świetlicki make any reference to the country's political situation (in the year that the story was written, a state of law was imposed in Poland) as he would do so frequently in his later works? Can his decision – paradoxically – be interpreted as a sign of disagreement with the political circumstances in the country? Or perhaps on the contrary: as a desire to liberate himself from topics related to politics and patriotism, associated with the Polish cinema and literature? However, is it perhaps possible that neither of those hypotheses is correct, and the writing of *Maciuś Wariat* was not influenced by the country's political situation at all?

The next author, Wojciech Lewandowski, in his article entitled "*Good evening London...*". *The socio-political revolution in comics, based on the example of the graphic novel V for Vendetta by Alan Moore and David Lloyd* writes about criticism of a totalitarian system expressed by means of comics. First, he presents the periodization of comics' history starting from the end of the nineteenth century, and emphasizes the British contribution to the development of the graphic story. He also points out the period in which the artists noticed the comics' potential as a politically-involved medium. Illustrators and writers started commenting on the times in which they lived in many ways, including by criticizing politicians and promoting certain social attitudes, and comic books became their tool for political agitation. Lewandowski reminds us of the signifi-

cance of the 1980s as the period of the medium's maturation. It was then that the *Watchmen* series by Moore and Gibbons first appeared, which is believed to be not only one of the most important graphic stories, but one of the most important novels in general (for example, according to *Time* magazine). The author focuses on another comic book by Moore, *V for Vendetta*, analyzing it in the context of the depiction of a social revolution and individual rebellion against totalitarian enslavement.

As is evident, the articles in this section share not only a certain sense of reflection about the rightful place of politics and contemporary events in artistic works, but also a desire to answer the question: How should one go about including one's voice into the public discourse? The authors of the articles examine various possible answers – by exploring the cases of a known and admired national artist, a widely read comic book, and a group organizing absurd protests meant to amuse an anguished society and disarm the authorities.

Robert Zybrant

Wrocław's opposition and counter-cultural organizations of the 1980s and their impact on the formation of the Orange Alternative

Translated by Jacek Węlniak

It is hard to disagree with Paweł Malendowicz's assertion that the Orange Alternative was "the most colorful manifestation of the Polish anti-communist opposition".¹ The happeners from Wrocław devised a unique manner of protesting, combining a clear message of opposition with artistic elements. Their activities amazed onlookers with grotesque humor, magnetized them with an unmitigated ludic charge, dazzled them with spontaneity and unpredictability. They were "islands" of refreshing chaos, drifting in a sea of ritualized, petrified communism, driven by inertia. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the Orange Alternative was one of the most original social movements of the 20th century.

At the same time, it should be remembered that nothing ever emerges from a vacuum. This is the case likewise in the context of Wrocław's happening movement, whose history bears certain traces of earlier activities by numerous anti-communist and counter-cultural organizations. In this article we will examine the most prominent Polish groups and organizations which influenced the emergence of the Orange Alternative.

Socio-political conditions in the last decade of the Polish People's Republic

On 1 July 1980 – without prior information or social consultations – a price increase was introduced on some grocery goods, mainly certain kinds of meat.² The decision turned out to be a fateful one. The price

¹ P. Malendowicz, *Polityczny wymiar kontestacji młodzieżowej w Polsce od lat siedemdziesiątych XX wieku*, Piła 2008, p. 47 [own translation].

² A. Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski*, Warsaw 2007, p. 423.

hike instigated strikes in many Polish cities, which soon proliferated, turning into a general workers' movement in defense of their rights.³ The scale of the protests, which unlike previous ones took place mainly in factories, forced the authorities to backpedal and to agree to some of the demands being made by the emerging Solidarity.⁴

The changes which occurred in Poland after the wave of August 1980 strikes, created conditions conducive to the establishment and development of youth opposition organizations. One of the achievements of the protests was attaining the right of legal association.⁵ The events in August 1980 brought a strong eruption of student and youth anti-communist initiatives, which involved not only people who sympathized with Solidarity, but also members of anti-system youth subcultures, which as Marek Wierzbicki reports were flourishing in the late 1970s and early 80s.⁶

"During the last decade of the Polish People's Republic," Wierzbicki writes, "the youth were not only a numerous, but an important part of the society. [...] It was increasingly common for the older to copy the young, and not the other way round, as things had been [...] The conditions of life and functioning within the society, as well as the specific cultural development determined their unique identity in comparison to the earlier and later generations".⁷ The increased activity of youth circles was intensified by the communist authorities' indolence, which – as Wiesław Kot points out – was unable to win the battle for the young generation.⁸ Instead of involving themselves in building the communist state, which was unable to cater to social aspirations, the youth would instead more and more frequently escape to the opposition, both the Solidarity-related opposition, and the counter-cultural one.

The party, as Jerzy Eisler reports, "did not hide its indifference towards the presence of Solidarity on the political scene".⁹ Within Polish society there was a growing conviction that the communist system,

³ A. Friszke, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu: 1939–1989*, Warsaw 2003, p. 367.

⁴ W. Pronobis, *Polska i świat w XX wieku*, Warsaw 1991, p. 479.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 478

⁶ M. Wierzbicki, *Młodość w PRL*, Warsaw 2009, p. 176.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *Ostatni bunt*, Warsaw 2013, p. 223 [own translation].

⁸ W. Kot, *PRL. Czas nonsensu. Polskie dekady. Kronika naszych czasów 1956–1990*, Poznań 2008, p. 200.

⁹ J. Eisler, „Polskie miesiące” czyli kryzys(y) w PRL, Warsaw 2008, p. 55 [own translation].

which could not afford to lose total control over its subjects, would decide to deal with the problem of increasing social activity by using force.¹⁰ As Karol Jankowski writes:

The party's authorities at the very beginning of the August "rebellion" rightly identified the danger that Solidarity posed to the real-socialist order [...] The essence of the problem can be summed up in the following question: Was the socio-political system – in its contemporary, unchanged state, preserving the privileged position of PZPR, which was unable to take and carry out the initiative to realize the transformations anticipated and accepted by majority of the society – capable of structural and political transformations which would provide access to power to organized forces situated outside the structures accepted by the establishment?¹¹

The authorities answered that question in a very brutal manner, by introducing martial law throughout the country on the night from 12 to 13 December 1981. Millions of Poles learned the party authorities' decision on Sunday 13 December when, after turning their TV sets on, it "turned out that their children could not watch their favorite morning program."¹² Instead, the TV broadcasted an address by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, announcing the establishment of the *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego* (Military Council of National Salvation).¹³

The imposition of martial law led to the eruption of numerous strike movements, brutally pacified by the authorities.¹⁴ The most intense strikes were organized by workers in the Silesia region.¹⁵ The December 1980

¹⁰ K. Devlin, B. Porter, J. B. de Weydenthal, *Polski dramat*, Warsaw 1991, p. 129.

¹¹ K. B. Janowski, *Źródła i przebieg zmiany politycznej w Polsce (1980–1989)*, Toruń 2004, p. 88 [own translation].

¹² J. Muszyńska, A. Osiak, D. Wojtera, *Obraz codzienności w prasie stanu wojennego: Gdańsk, Kraków, Warszawa*, Warsaw 2006, p. 55 [own translation].

¹³ *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego* (Military Council of National Salvation) – a non-Constitutional body that administered the People's Republic of Poland during the martial-law period (1981–1983) – editor's note.

¹⁴ L. Podhorecki, *Historia najnowsza. Świat i Polska: 1939–1999*, Warsaw 2000, s. 338.

¹⁵ A. Paczkowski, *Op.cit.*, p. 352.

strikes were, of course, of great importance to the Polish society, but their size was much smaller than the authorities had predicted.¹⁶ The wave of anti-communist protests also affected the universities, where classes were suspended until 3 January.¹⁷ Despite the ban, students and university workers would gather in officially closed universities, often deciding to occupy the buildings. The university protests, just like the workers' ones, were quickly pacified by aggressive law-enforcement forces.¹⁸

The demise of the December strikes provoked a discussion among the members of opposition about whether a continued struggle against the communist regime made sense, especially a fight waged with the use of standard techniques of resistance. The discussion became especially heated after the events of 31 August 1982, which were called the largest street manifestations during the communist rule in Poland.¹⁹ The mass demonstrations which were organized on the anniversary of the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement, during which not only workers, but also university and secondary school students as well as ordinary people all showed their discontent, were brutally pacified by the militia, which in some cities opened fire on the protesters. The protest in Lublin was especially tragic, with three people killed.²⁰ There were also casualties in Gdańsk and Wrocław.²¹ The events forced a major part of the society to withdraw and resign from traditional resistance practices, which posed too serious risk of direct confrontation with the increasingly brutal forces of law. Alternative forms of resistance started to gain popularity.

“During the period of martial law and after it,” Jarosław Wąsowicz wrote, “humor and satire were within the wide range of weapons used by the underground to fight the authorities”.²² After 13 December 1981, Polish society started to show an interest in independent culture. Special ingenuity in devising new resistance techniques was shown by

¹⁶ A. L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski 1944–1991*, Kraków 2011, p. 510.

¹⁷ W. Pronobis, *Op.cit.*, p. 483.

¹⁸ A. L. Sowa, *Op.cit.*, 511.

¹⁹ B. Międzybrodzki, *Ostatni wielki zryw Solidarności. 31 sierpnia 1982 roku na łamach prasy rządowej*, <http://histmag.org/Ostatni-wielki-zryw-Solidarnosci.-31-sierpnia-1982-roku-na-lamach-prasy-rzadowej-3736> (access: 20.01.2016).

²⁰ A. Paczkowski, *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² J. Wąsowicz, *Niezależny ruch młodzieżowy w Gdańsku w latach 1981–1989*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 495 [own translation].

youth and students' circles, who found an effective anti-communist weapon in wit and irony.²³

Opposition and counter-cultural organizations functioning in Wrocław in the 1980s

The opposition structures in Wrocław, in comparison with other anti-communist organizations, groups and associations which operated in Poland in the 1980s, had a very precise socio-political program. For Padraic Kenney, the opposition from Wrocław could be distinguished from other groups because it had specific, almost positivist goals, well-developed structures at schools and factories and strong anti-communist attitude.²⁴ When calling the Wrocław environment a "concrete opposition", it is worth noting that it was in Wrocław that first ecological demonstrations took place, organized predominantly by university groups and secondary school students. Naturally, university and secondary schools opposition structures were formed throughout the whole country during the last decade of communism.

What factors caused such strong activity among Wrocław's youth? Why was it Wrocław that became the birthplace for the Polish happening movement? Let us once again cite Kenney, who writes:

What seemed obvious in Wrocław was unknown elsewhere. The choice of tactics was determined by a number of circumstances [...] The fact that several new underground groups had been dismantled by the militia forced them to look for new solutions. Some point to the city's unique character – its location closer to Prague or Berlin than to Warsaw – as well as its demographic structure, dominated by young people and newcomers from other regions of Poland, after the forced post-war displacements and migrations.²⁵

²³ For more about humor and satire as a weapon used by the opposition during the martial-law period, see: W. Polak, *Śmiech na trudne czasy. Humor i satyra niezależna w stanie wojennym i w latach następnych (13 XII 1981–31 XII 1989)*, Gdańsk 2007.

²⁴ P. Kenney, *Wprowadzenie*, in: *Wrocławskie zadymy*, Wrocław 2007, p. 6 [own translation].

²⁵ *Ibidem* [own translation].

One should also not overlook the impact of Wrocław theatrical traditions, whose role in the emergence of the Polish happening movement was equally significant to the one played by the social and demographic factor. It was Wrocław that was home to Jerzy Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium,²⁶ which inspired groups of young artists, who as Grzegorz Kowalski writes, in the 1980s “were a part of the revolting society [...] as never before.”²⁷ Theatre artists were one of the most active groups which constituted the Orange Alternative.

The New Culture Movement and Ultraakademia

Some scholars believe the start of the process of the Orange Alternative's formation to be the emergence of the Ruch Nowej Kultury (RNK; New Culture Movement),²⁸ an organization established at the University of Wrocław in 1980.²⁹ Its formation is thus strictly related to the post-August relief, which resulted in increased activity among the Wrocław youth, who started to associate in numerous regional opposition and artistic organizations. The main founders of RNK were Jacek Drobný³⁰ and Andrzej Dziewit³¹. Also among its members

²⁶ Teatr Laboratorium – a theatrical institution set up in Opole (under the name “13 Rzędów”) by Stanisława Łopuszańska and Eugeniusz Ławski, led starting in 1959 by Jerzy Grotowski (director) and Ludwik Flaszen (critic). Based in Wrocław from 1965 on, officially disbanded in 1984. The troupe staged a range of theatrical and para-theatrical productions in Poland and abroad – editor's note.

²⁷ J. Wawrzyniak, *Buntownicy. Polskie lata 70. i 80.*, Warsaw 2011, p. 480 [own translation].

²⁸ J. Dardzińska, K. Dolata, *Introduction*, in: *Wszyscy proletariusze bądźcie piękni! Pomarańczowa Alternatywa w dokumentach aparatu represji PRL (1987–1989)*, edited by J. Dardzińska and K. Dolata, Wrocław 2011, p. 25.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

³⁰ Jacek Drobný (born 1958) – opposition activist, student at the University of Wrocław (1977–1981), co-founder of Ruch Nowej Kultury (1980), co-organizer of Solidarity strike at the University of Wrocław (1981), editor of the anarchist journal “Tematy” (1981), the founder of Kluby Rzeczypospolitej Samorządnej Wolność – Sprawiedliwość – Niepodległość (1981), during martial state arrested and detained, activist of underground NZS (Independent Students' Union), the founder and head of Students' Self-government at the University of Wrocław, later mayor of the city of Świdnica (1990–1991).

³¹ Andrzej Dziewit (1955 – 2014) – a political scientist, evangelization activist, co-founder of Ruch Nowej Kultury (1980), organizer of manifestations in Wrocław (1981), an activist of the Światło-Życie Movement (OAZA; since 1984), a volunteer involved in anti-drug campaigns, linked to the musicians' community.

were Waldemar “Major” Fydrych³² (the later leader of the Orange Alternative), Wiesław Cupała, Piotr Adamcio and Piotr Starzyński. In total, as noted by Monika Litwińska, the organization had between 100 and 150 members³³.

The main form of the group's activity involved events “happening” style events. One of the movement's most famous events was a happening entitled “Breaking the Asymmetry”, organized in November 1980. The performance involved about a dozen of people, who for several hours walked around the streets of Wrocław with an “Asymmetry” banner. Let us here give the floor to Fydrych, who reminisces about the event as follows:

The happening “Breaking the Asymmetry” was a purely conceptual action. The idea of breaking the asymmetry was a value in itself, being independent of formal solutions, as what does it mean to break asymmetry? A return to symmetry, or venturing into the unknown? Is symmetry a primal order, or only a place of reference for a mind existing in uncertainty? ³⁴.

³² Waldemar “Major” Fydrych (born 1953) – “happener”, artist, cultural animator, graduate of the University of Wrocław (1980), member of Students' Committee of Solidarity in Wrocław (1977–1980), co-editor of the Committee's underground journal “Podaj Dalej”, an activist of NZS (Independent Students' Union) Founding Committee at the University of Wrocław (from 1980), member of Ruch Nowej Kultury (from 1980), the author of *Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego (Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism)*, participant of strikes at the University of Wrocław (1981), co-editor and journalist of the underground counter-cultural journal “Pomarańczowa Alternatywa” (1981), the leader of the Orange Alternative happening movement (1986–1990), co-organizer of over thirty happening events, arrested and detained on many occasions, placed under surveillance by Department III of the Regional Internal Affairs Unit (1988–1989), candidate to Senate (1989), member of Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa (from 2003), originator and participant of the support action for the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (2004–2005), organizer of happenings during parliamentary elections (2007), and the author of several books. See: *Opozycja w PRL. Słownik biograficzny 1956–1989*, edited by J. Skórzyński, P. Sowiński and M. Strasz, Warsaw 2002, pp. 96–97; W. Fydrych, *Żywy Mężów Pomarańczowych*, Wrocław–Warsaw 2001, pp. 7–201; *Ibid, Major*, Warsaw 2013.

³³ See: M. Litwińska, *WiP kontra PRL. Ruch „Wolność i Pokój” 1985–1989*, Kraków 2015, p. 206.

³⁴ *Ibid* [own translation].

Ruch Nowej Kultury was involved in prolific publishing activity. The group's first journal was "Gazeta A", which published Fydrych's *Manifest Surrealizmu Socjalistycznego (Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism)*. "Gazeta A" – "Major" writes – was "the only artistic journal of the late communism period which combined opposition with new aesthetic proposals".³⁵ The journal, providing a mixture of clear political messages with cultural issues, referred to the movement's happening activity.

Another press organ of the group was the humorous and satirical journal "Pomarańczowa Alternatywa" ("Orange Alternative"), published during student demonstrations at the University of Wrocław in November and December 1981. Since its very beginning, "Pomarańczowa Alternatywa" evoked mixed feelings, as the journal's satirical blade was aimed not only at the communist system, but also at the developing student strikes, which soon reached other universities in Wrocław. Finally, "Pomarańczowa Alternatywa" came to the attention of the University of Wrocław's Strike Committee, which made the decision to censor the journal, and banned it from publication later on. As a result of the conflict with university authorities, Ruch moved its activity to Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Sztuk Plastycznych (State High School of Fine Arts), where it organized cultural events. The imposition of martial law brought a final end to the organization's activity.

The decision of the communist authorities forced the former members of the opposition and counter-cultural organizations to change their code of conduct. Some of them decided to focus on family life. Others got involved in the search for alternative ways of continuing resistance. Some of the former members of Ruch Nowej Kultury started building up underground structures of Solidarity. Waldemar Fydrych continued his opposition and artistic activities, setting up Ultraakademia in 1982. Operating within the new group as "the professor of war art", he painted images of dwarfs on the walls of Wrocław. Here it is worth mentioning a later emanation of Ultraakademia, namely the Chair of Tactical Painting, established in order to manifest "a genius of war art, created in the course of brilliant actions on the city's walls".³⁶

³⁵ W. Fydrych, *Żywoty Mężów Pomarańczowych*, p. 95 [own translation].

³⁶ B. Dobosz, W. Fydrych, *Hokus Pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*, Wrocław 1989, p. 30 [own translation].

For some scholars, it is the establishment of Ultraakademia that marks the true beginning of the Orange Alternative. However, this opinion is only partially true. The main focus of activity for the latter movement was on happenings, which the members of Ultraakademia did not stage. On the other hand, however, the image of a dwarf which Fydrych used to “decorate” the walls of Polish cities during the martial law period did become the main identification of the Orange Alternative.

The Wolność i Pokój Movement

When studying the origins of the Orange Alternative, it is impossible to overlook the Wolność i Pokój (WiP; Freedom and Peace) Movement. It was an anti-communist, pacifist and ecological socio-political organization, gathering together various youth circles. The movement included anarchists, hippies, punks, socialists, as well as activists of youth structures of solidarity and Catholic organizations. The WiPs not only sympathized with the Orange Alternative, but also cooperated with it on numerous occasions. Many “Orange” happenings were at the same time active members of WiP. The organizations also shared ideological beliefs (if one can speak of any concrete socio-political agenda in the case of the Orange Alternative). Both movements also made use of similar methods of protests, marked with pacifism.

WiP was established in 1985 in Podkowa Leśna, during the hunger strike in defense of Marek Adamski, who had refused to take the Army oaths and was sentenced to imprisonment. The protest ended with a conference, during which the setting up of the organization was announced, which was formally done on 14 April 1985. WiP was a Poland-wide movement, which operated in many cities. It was especially active in Warsaw, Gdańsk and Wrocław, in which the organization's structures were characterized by pluralism and diversity. The WiP from Wrocław gathered together both socialists and anarchists (Leszek Budrewicz, Marek Krakowski, Zuzanna Dąbrowska), as well as supporters of conservative-Catholic movements (Jerzy Żurko, Tomasz Wacko).

The core of the movement's activity was marked by anti-communism and pacifism. The WiP organized demonstrations, marches, hunger

strikes and sit-ins. They also frequently protested in defense of those who were sentenced to imprisonment for their refusal to take the Army oaths. Another field of their activity was ecology, which was emphasized especially in Wrocław. Since its very beginnings, the Wrocław WiP was very involved in protecting the natural environment. It was in Wrocław that first demonstrations against atomic power plants in Central Europe took place. The most famous actions by the environmentalists from Wrocław included “black marches” – demonstrations against the operations of a chemical plant in Siechnice, which was polluting the water in Wrocław and nearby towns. The movement was also involved in cultural activities, organizing happenings, lectures, exhibitions and concerts.

WiP soon earned the youth’s sympathy, becoming one of the most prominent and most famous organizations of the young generation in the last decade of communism. The movement was considered as one of the most interesting and important Polish opposition groups of the second half of the 1980s, whose impact on the young generation was compared to that of Solidarity. This could be attributed to its catchy manner of operation, which gained imitators in other countries of the Eastern Bloc as well as in Western Europe.³⁷

With time, however, its popularity started to wane. In addition, starting at the beginning of 1988 WiP struggled with a growing crisis, resulting from its inability to work out a coherent program, due to the ideological diversity among its members. As Anna Smółka-Gnauck wrote: “Ideological pluralism, which in the beginning was the movement’s driving force, started to turn into its weakness”.³⁸ The formal end of the organization came in 1992.

Dwunastka

One of the most popular youth organizations of the second half of the 80s was Dwunastka (The Twelve). It was an informal self-gov-

³⁷ See: P. Kenney, A. Saraczyńska et al., *Marszem do Siechnic: Wolność i Pokój*, in: P. Kenney, *Wrocławskie zadymy*, Wrocław 2007, p. 115 [own translation].

³⁸ A. Smółka-Gnauck, *Między wolnością a pokojem. Zarys historii Ruchu „Wolność i Pokój”*, Warsaw 2012, p. 26 [own translation].

ernment group established in 1986 by students of the University of Wrocław, who originated from academic-pastoral circles (mainly from the Dominik formation), opposition groups and the independent publishing movement. The group's main goal was "creating and attractive formula of activity available to all students and stimulating the activity of the students' community".³⁹

The group's actions, as Jolanta Popińska writes, were "an attempt of a new kind, and at the same time a tie between official and underground circles, which from today's perspective may serve as a sign of new times coming".⁴⁰ Kenney, on the other hand, writes that the Dwunastka group "went further in their action than other student groups anywhere in Poland. [...] it became a known trademark for all kinds of seminars and events".⁴¹ The tactics of political-artistic provocation soon came to be liked by Wrocław's youth, who saw student activity as a new form of opposition.

The movement's scope of actions included both traditional and new forms of resistance. Dwunastka provided help in terms of accommodation to people related to the students' community, organized protests in defense of those harmed by the communist regime, and held cultural events. It was, however, Dwunastka's activity in organizing happenings that earned them greatest popularity. In 1986-1987 the group organized a number of street events which gained great publicity, not only in Wrocław.

Let us take a look at the organization's most famous happening: when in May 1986, Dwunastka activists went on an hours-long ride around Wrocław in the rented bus *Fredruś*.⁴² Krzysztof Jakubczyk reminisces about the event as follows:

³⁹ J. Popińska, *Na pograniczu jawności i podziemia. Niezależna grupa samorządowa „Dwunastka” na Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim*, in: *Młodzież w oporze społecznym 1944-1989*, edited by M. Kała and Ł. Kamiński, Wrocław 2002, p. 151 [own translation].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141 [own translation].

⁴¹ P. Kenney, H. Feliks et al, *Lekcja fortepianu. Dwunastka na Uniwersytecie*, in: P. Kenney, *Wrocławskie zadymy*, Wrocław 2007, p. 214 [own translation].

⁴² *Fredruś* – an open-topped tourist bus built based on a Jelcz. Starting in 1975 it was owned by the Association of Friends of Wrocław, which used it for sight-seeing purposes. The name of the bus is linked to the sightseeing route, which started alongside the monument to Polish writer Aleksander Fredro, situated in the center of Wrocław.

[The ride started] near the University. We went near the dormitories, first to Grunwaldzki Square, then to the Polytechnic Institute campus in Wittig Street. During the ride, various banners appeared, some of them prepared beforehand, some of them spontaneous, such as “Free the bear” – when we were going past the Zoo. [...] The banner which became a legend was “Solidarity will be victorious”, written in the famous Solidarity font [...]. We also drove the bus to Sienkiewicz Street, where we stopped near the flat of Józef Pinior and Władek Frasyniuk, who were then in state custody. It was a symbolic tribute of the youth to our idols from that period, Wrocław’s legendary figures.⁴³

The happening was received with mixed feelings by the Wrocław passers-by. Some citizens were clearly disgusted by a colorful bus fool of joyful people in costumes, singing communist songs and chanting socialist slogans. Others looked at Fredruś and its bizarre passengers with interest, seeing Dwunastka’s action as a kind of breath of fresh air.⁴⁴ After roughly two hours the bus was halted by two militia cars. The action by law enforcement, who wanted to check the happeners’ IDs right in the middle of the road, with the happeners being completely unworried by the situation, gave rise to some commotion and sensation. The militia were unsure of how to handle these lunatics in sombreros and other wacky headdresses, singing innocent songs. The party continued at the police station, where attempts were made to get the officers to dance.⁴⁵ Fearing that the militia would end up being ridiculed, all the happening participants were quickly released.

The Dwunastka action gained publicity not only in Wrocław, but throughout Poland. The group’s activities were particularly fascinating to secondary school students, whose judgment of traditional anti-communist methods was increasingly critical. The group managed to devise a new and attractive form of resistance. It appealed to the young

⁴³ K. Jakubczak, *Kształtowanie się zjawiska Pomarańczowej Alternatywy*, in: *Wszyscy proletariusze bądźcie piękni!*, p. 289 [own translation].

⁴⁴ P. Kenney, *Rewolucyjny karnawał. Europa Środkowa 1989*, edited by P. Szymor, Wrocław 2005, p. 194.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192 [own translation].

generation more effectively than the activity by Ruch Nowej Kultury, whose program – presented by Fydrych in an unclear, if not to say bumbling, *Manifest Surrealizmu Socjalistycznego* – was comprehensive only to the inner circle of “the Major’s” most faithful students. Instead of direct confrontation with the regime, Dwunastka activists preferred to mockingly imitate the order of Polish People’s Republic. Instead of openly resisting the authorities, they ridiculed the communist order, presenting its grotesque caricature in the form of a jeering happening, whose significance in the second half of the 1980s was rapidly growing.

Almost overnight, happening events became one of the primary forms of expressing political beliefs in Wrocław. Expressing opposition, however, was not the only role played by happenings, as they also allowed for artistic expression, guaranteed fun and provided a way to avoid boredom. Young rebels, who had a negative attitude not only towards the communist system, but also to the actions by Solidarity, whose effectiveness was subject to growing criticism, found the happening form of art to be not only an attractive formula of protest, but also a source of excitement. Due to the activities by WiPs and Dwunastka, alternative anticommunist methods, marked by a sense of wit and the grotesque, and portraying the communist system in the form of mocking caricature, started gaining recognition and respect.

Conclusion: the beginning of the “orange” revolution

The activities by Wrocław’s youth organizations which functioned during the last decade of communism created a climate for the development of new opposition and counter-cultural initiatives. Encouraged by successes of WiP Movement and Dwunastka, Waldemar Fydrych decided to get more involved in happenings, systematically organizing increasingly popular street events. The ideas included in *Manifest Surrealizmu Socjalistycznego* started to appear in a clearer form. Once again, readers started reaching for the journal *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*, whose surreal style was hailed as an effective tool for fighting the absurdity of the communist system.

Fydrych gathered together a group of creative, well-organized student activists, who often functioned in anti-communist structures

or belonged to artistic organizations. “Major’s” group was also joined by more experienced oppositionists. The Orange Alternative also included secondary school students, who often had underground experience related to publishing activity or the distribution of leaflets and posters. All of them were united in their indifference towards communism and the need to liberate themselves from traditional opposition patterns. They recognized the happening formula to be a weapon of great force.

The main originators and most active participants of the first happenings of Fydrych’s group were: Wiesław Cupała, Robert Jezierski, Paweł Kocięba-Żabski, Krzysztof Jakubczak, Cezary Kasprzak, Alicja Grzymalska, Jolanta Skiba, Andrzej Kielar, Ewa Kapała and Małgorzata Waškiel. The happeners’ actions were often supported by members of the official opposition. Special attention should be paid here to Józef Pinior, who in 1980 along with Władysław Frasyniuk had organized the structures of Solidarity in Lower Silesia. Fydrych also gained the cooperation of workers from Wrocław factories, who provided props for the happenings. It is also worth mentioning the “aunts of the revolution”, elderly women who supported the happeners during their clashes with the law-enforcement forces.

On 1 June 1987 “the Major’s” team organized a happening entitled “Dwarfs in Świdnicka Street”. Some historians define this date as the actual beginning of the Orange Alternative, which from that moment onward held regular events through 1989. The actions by “the Major” were noticed in other Polish cities, inspiring the youth circles in Warsaw, the Tricity, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań and Olsztyn. Within a few months, from a local counter-cultural group the Orange Alternative evolved into a Poland-wide movement, which gathered together both the circles of anti-communist opposition and artistic groups. In several months, the “orange” wave flowed across Poland.

When, thus, did the Orange Alternative arise? The answer to that question is not easy. As a Poland-wide movement, it emerged between 1987 and 1988, the moment when the wave of interest in the actions of the group headed by “the Major” reached other Polish cities. As an artistic organization of opposition, however, the Orange Alternative came to life much earlier, as early as in 1980 – with the foundation of Ruch

Nowej Kultury, whose activities nevertheless did not gain much popularity. Irrespective of any such doubts, however, it should be remembered that the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative did not appear in a vacuum. It is hardly justifiable to define the Polish happening movement as an autonomous cultural phenomenon, untainted with any outside influences, and unrelated to any European counter-cultural traditions. Rather, it should be noted that the movement, although unique, was one of the links in an endless chain of opposition-related phenomena, which "the Major's" actions strongly reflected.

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Aneta Jabłońska

How Witkacy turned into a woman or theatre of the absurd in communist Poland

Translated by Agnieszka Piskorska

To my grandmother – Krystyna Przewłocka

“Witkiewicz lay down under a tree on the sunny day of 18 September 1939, cut his wrists and bled to death: the flow of blood was so heavy that an axe had to be used to chop his corpse out of his jacket that had turned into a hard clot on one side”¹. These words were written by Zygmunt Kałużyński in 1988, on the occasion of the reburial of the author of *The Mother*. How did Kałużyński know that in 1939 in a little village of Wielikije Oziera Witkacy’s² corpse was chopped out of his jacket with an axe? He wasn’t there and those who were did not mention an axe or a hardened blood clot... Well, there is no way to find out any more.

There are other unsolved Witkacy mysteries, such as what was so intriguing about him for the Polish communist authorities? Why did his 100th birth anniversary in 1985 impinge on the later reception of his works? Who decided in 1988 that his ashes should return to Poland, and last but not least, who organized his funeral in Zakopane?

Needless to say, the list of unsolved mysteries is much longer, but addressing those stated above may help to reconstruct Witkacy’s presence in the Polish public discourse of the 1980s.

¹ Z. Kałużyński, *Chichot z tamtego świata*, „Polityka” 1988, No. 20, pp. 4-5.

² Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, known as Witkacy (1885-1939) was a Polish writer, photographer, philosopher and painter. He authored a number of novels (*Farewell to Autumn*, *Insatiability*) and dramas (*The Shoemakers*, *The Mother*), reflecting upon historical, philosophical and sociological problems. He also founded a one-man Portrait company S.I. Witkiewicz. During WWII he fled German-occupied Warsaw together with his partner Czesława Oknińska-Korzeniowska, settling in a village of Jeziory (present-day Ukraine). When the Soviet army stepped into Poland on 17 September 1939, Witkacy committed suicide and was buried in the Wielikije Oziera cemetery.

PART I – WITKACY in 1985

Centennial celebration

With the grand celebration of the millennium of the Polish state, ordered for propaganda reasons by communist ruler Władysław Gomułka, the Polish authorities got to love jubilees, especially those that could be turned into propaganda spectacles.

In 1985 a note was added to the timetable of official celebrations: “100th anniversary of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz’s birth”. Simple and plain, the note appealed to UNESCO, which decided that the anniversary should appear on the list of world-celebrated events, and declared 1985 “The Year of Witkacy”³. Trying to find out today who exactly set the jubilee machinery in motion is much like untying the Gordian knot. Suffice it to say that for Polish authorities it was a matter of prestige and honour. Their primary aim was to make a most favourable impression on the world and to convince foreigners that communist Poland is a perfectly organized state that respects Polish cultural heritage and its creators.

To achieve this aim, a Committee for the Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz’s Birth was formed. It had to act promptly: theatrical stagings and exhibitions had to be scheduled, Witkacy’s writings had to be published. Unfortunately, none of the committee members had dealt with Witkacy’s life or work.

³ The information that UNESCO proclaimed 1985 “The Year of Witkacy” was published in “Biuletyn Polskiego Komitetu do Spraw Unesco” and in the magazine “Tak i Nie”, see “Biuletyn Polskiego Komitetu do Spraw Unesco”, January-June 1985, No. 1-2; “Tak i Nie” 1985, No. 7. However, in a conversation with Joanna Markiewicz, a representative of the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, I found out that “To this date, no information on proclaiming 1985 ‘The Year of Witkacy’ by UNESCO has been found in the documents of the Polish National Commission for UNESCO” (letter of 5.07.2016). The Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to UNESCO, in the person of Olga Ostrowska wrote “I contacted the UNESCO office and talked to the person in charge of anniversaries celebrated under the patronage of UNESCO and I am sorry to inform you [...] that despite the search no trace was found that this anniversary was among those officially recognised by UNESCO. This might mean that the archives from that period are incomplete, or that the jubilee was not celebrated under the auspices of UNESCO” (letter of 22.08.2016; own translation).

In fact, we cannot even be sure who was in that committee, except the minister himself⁴.

The effects of the propaganda efforts to celebrate Witkacy's jubilee could be considered remarkable. On his birth anniversary, i.e. on 24 February 1985, a huge celebration was organised at the Studio Arts Centre to open the Witkacy jubilee year⁵ and the jubilarian was appointed patron of one of the theatre Studio stages, a solemn culmination of the event.

Apart from that, each month of 1985 (except the two holiday months) saw at least four premieres of Witkacy's plays. That amounts to the total number of 39 dramas on the stage. But this does not exhaust the list of the committee's achievements, which also included publishing five volumes of the jubilarian's selected works as part of the Polish Publishing Institute Golden Series. A lot of energy was also spent on writing articles about *The Shoemakers'* author⁶.

An impressive list, indeed, and one could think that the Polish system for promoting culture deserved highest appreciation, but there were quite a few cracks on the seemingly ideal picture. Some complications occurred early on, during the event at the Studio Art Centre. To make the celebration more memorable, the centre's authorities decided to issue special envelopes. The stamps presented Witkacy's paintings accompanied by the inscription "100 anniversary of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz birth. Warsaw 1985", with Witkacy's signature in the middle. The only problem was that a stamp that allegedly showed Witkiewicz's self-portrait, was in fact a portrait of one of his friends, Tadeusz Langier... Apparently, recognizing Witkacy turned out to be too much of a challenge.

The publication of Witkacy's selected works in the Golden series was likewise marked by rush and desire to obtain quick and conspicuous results. Even when the five volumes came out, Poles still did not have access to Witkacy's other pieces and theoretical essays, which were scattered over many places. Despite the fact that Witkacy researchers put forward a proposal to edit his collected works "the pro-

⁴ See P. Rudzki, *Witkacy na scenach PRL-u*, Wrocław 2013.

⁵ See A. Micińska, *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*.

⁶ See P. Rudzki, Op. cit.

posal was not accepted. The problem was fixed provisionally [...] by publishing a selection of literary works. A great chance was wasted”⁷.

In the jubilee year, press journalists showed enormous diligence, publishing 141 texts on Witkacy, not including theatrical reviews. One could hope, then, that this stunning number of articles, some of which appeared in daily papers⁸, will make Polish audience understand and appreciate Witkacy. Unfortunately, the hope was totally unfounded. Among the massive number of publications it is difficult to come across a constructive and intellectually profound analysis of the jubilarian’s works.

A vast majority of the texts “echo [...] the most wide-spread, stereotypical opinions and judgments (if not gossip, lies, or simple factual errors)”⁹. The press focused mostly on finding shocking and sensational elements in Witkacy’s biography rather than on discovering and explicating messages hidden in his works to wide audiences. This attitude was bound to bring about disastrous consequences, completely opposite to what was expected. “[...] The reader ended up with an impression that the main reason why Witkiewicz’s anniversary was internationally celebrated was that once in a restaurant he put a schnitzel with a fried egg into his pocket; all the other reasons were much harder to discern”¹⁰ – as Małgorzata Szpakowska aptly pointed out.

The paradox was that on the one hand “we should be full of pride that this outstanding Pole’s achievements were recognised as timeless cultural heritage”¹¹, and on the other, it had to be kept in mind that “the artist reached for alcohol and drugs, and although he referred to paintings and literary pieces created under their influence as ‘experiments on myself’, in fact he couldn’t control his addictions”¹².

⁷ E. Piotrowska, *O Roku Witkacego – mówi doc. dr Janusz Degler z Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, “Nurt” 1986, no. 4, p. 31. All the quotes from Polish sources used this chapter appear in own translation.

⁸ See *Twarze Witkacego*, “Głos Wyrzeża” 1985, No. 257, p. 3; *Ostatnie akcenty obchodów roku Witkacego*, “Trybuna Ludu” 1985, No. 273, p. 8. Małgorzata Szpakowska sums up the situation in the following way: “But in the Witkiewicz year the demand for articles about him was not confined to special interest magazines – it was present in all papers, including daily ones.” M. Szpakowska, *Heca z Witkacym*, “Dialog” 1985, No. 12, p. 90.

⁹ A. Micińska, *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*, p. 6.

¹⁰ M. Szpakowska, *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹¹ M. Czarnecki, *Fetowanie Witkacego*, “Dziennik Polski” 1985, No. 46, p. 4.

¹² H. Wach – Malicka, *Witkacy*, “Dziennik Zachodni” 1985, No. 16, p. 5.

The general public faced a dilemma: to treat Witkacy as an exceptionally talented fellow citizen, the nation's pride, or perhaps to let him fall into oblivion so that his alcohol and drug-inspired works would not become part of the Polish canon? The Poles may still be unable to decide...

Happy anniversary in Zakopane!

"In the theatre the anniversary turned into a total fiasco"¹³. Directors took Witkacy too literally, trying all too painstakingly to prevent even a slightest bit of indecently abstract thinking from reaching the audience. They did not forget to emphasise the currency of Witkacy's historiosophy, in their own understanding of the term. The interpretation of Witkacy's plays was strikingly lacking in artistic value on every level of the theatrical craft¹⁴. The majority of plays were "chaotically directed and terribly acted, threateningly empty in thought and full of patronising allusions"¹⁵.

There was but one theatrical event that could spur some optimism and dilute the bitter taste of the unsuccessful premiere stagings of Witkacy's plays. It might have been so because this one was neither planned nor organised by the committee. On 24 February 1985, when the freshly released postcards were presented on the official feast opening the Witkacy Year in the Art Studio Centre, students of the Kraków National Academy of Theatre Arts were getting ready for a premiere performance of *Witkacy's Autoparodia (Self-parody)*.

With this performance, they launched a theatre of which Witkacy became a patron. Those who were in the audience on that night "to this day remember a special atmosphere of a happy, somewhat crazy and absurd entertainment, which incited us to laugh and was almost like catharsis at that gloomy time. Viewers didn't want the actors to leave the stage; the actors were most eager to perform their favo-

¹³ J. Sieradzki, *Nuda z Witkacym*, "Dialog" 1985, No. 12, p. 99.

¹⁴ See T. L. Stankiewiczówna, *Gyubalowy świat*, "Sztandar Młodych" 1985, No. 18, p. 9, E. Baniewicz, *Trudno znaleźć receptę*, "Teatr" 1985, No. 6, p. 24, D. Poskuta-Włodek, *Jeszcze raz Witkacy*, "Słowo Powszechnie" 1985, No. 63, p. 4.

¹⁵ E. Piotrowska, Op. cit, p. 31.

urite songs, such as *Kupiłam sobie nocnik* (*I Bought a Chamber Pot*), *Kobieto, z którą żyję, powinnaś mieć czerwony płaszcz* (*Hey, Woman with Whom I Live, You Should Have a Red Coat*) and some nonsensical sketches many times. Performances could last until dawn¹⁶.

“Managers in charge of culture”¹⁷, as the Witkiewicz Theatre artists would call themselves, also decided to celebrate their patron’s birth anniversary, but without any official pathos or involvement of the state. They organised Zakopane Art Presentations with exhibitions, film shows, concerts and many other performances.

The most interesting part of the presentations were evening discussions, also known as “essential conversations”¹⁸, which lasted many hours and were devoted to the reception of the plays currently being performed in the theatre, Witkacy’s views as well as his place and significance in contemporary culture. Most participants in those debates were young people who wanted to get to know Witkacy and understand him as much as it was possible.

PART II – WITKACY 1988

And the winner of the Witkacy war is ... communist Poland

Another milestone in Witkacy’s biography was the decision to bring his corpse to Poland, taken by the authorities in 1988. What was the reason why they suddenly remembered the artist lying peacefully at the Wielikije Oziera cemetery? There might have been a number of politically significant reasons and potential benefits. Besides, requests and petitions for bringing Witkacy’s remains to Poland signed by cultural institutions and private people alike could not be ignored.

It was in 1947 when Witkacy’s friends Jerzy E. Płomieński and Tadeusz Kotarbiński tried to rebury his ashes in Zakopane at the Pęksowy

¹⁶ J. Degler, *O Teatrze Witkacego*, <http://www.witkacy.pl/o-teatrze--witkacego.html> (access: 15.09.2016).

¹⁷ K. Karwat, *Teatr bez statusu*, “TAK i NIE” 1985, No. 24, p. 9.

¹⁸ “Essential conversations” – title of a chapter in S.I. Witkiewicz’s novel *Pożegnanie jesieni* (*Farewell to Autumn*), an expression often used by the author in his private letters and in his literary writings. What Witkiewicz dubbed “essential conversations” were serious discussions on philosophical, historiosophical or social issues.

Brzyzek cemetery, where his parents had been buried. These attempts failed, however, and the then government's unwillingness to undertake any steps about this matter was explained by a "Dziennik Zachodni" journalist in the following way: "[...] then, the position of Witkacy, considered mostly an 'eccentric' and 'freak' was dubious, and additionally, at the break of the 50s, accusations appeared of his bourgeoisie nihilism, degenerate formalism and hostility towards the revolution"¹⁹.

Another person involved in the struggle to bring Witkacy back to Poland was colonel Włodzimierz Ziemiański, who was the first to find the writer's grave in Wielikije Oziera. Ziemiański "sent well over a hundred documents to those interested, such as private people, cultural institutions, Zakopane authorities, Witkacy researchers, and the Witkacy theatre."²⁰ The colonel requested support from Czesław Miłosz²¹ and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz²², the then president of the Polish Writers' Union. Iwaszkiewicz replied "This issue is of utmost importance not only to me but to the whole union as well. We tried several times, but every time we encountered obstacles that could not be overcome ..."²³.

The obstacles effectively hindered the efforts of Zdzisław Dołatkowski, who "had the honour [...] to be a friend of Witkacy's"²⁴, and who founded the Witkiewicz Society. The main aim of the organisation was to "actively participate in shaping intellectual life [...] 'in the angry style', taking advantage of our Master's famous name as a slogan attracting creative and original people"²⁵.

¹⁹ M. Skocza, *Witkacego powrót do domu*, „Dziennik Zachodni” 1988, No. 3, p. 6.

²⁰ J. Wilczak, *Powrót Witkacego*, "Odrodzenie" 1988, p. 4.

²¹ Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) – Polish writer, poet and essayist. An emigrée in the years 1951–1993, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990. Author of *Second Space*, *Bells in Winter*, *Selected Poems*, and essay collections including *The Captive Mind* and *Native Realm. A Search for Self-definition*.

²² Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1894 -1980) – Polish poet, writer and translator. Member of the influential group of poets Skamander, editor of "Wiadomości Literackie" and the editor-in-chief of "Twórczość". Author of poems, with the most appreciated collections being *Summer 1932*; *Book of the Day and Book of the Night*; *Return to Europe* as well as novels and short stories, including *The Wilko Girls* and *The Birch Grove*.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Z. Dołatkowski, *Tak, ale nie*, "Polityka" 1988, No. 18, p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid.

The slogan proved to be enormously catchy. Originating in 1984, the society had over 200 members, who unanimously decided that the best way to launch their activity would be to bring their Master back home and organise a funeral ceremony.

For this plan to be implemented, two more things were needed: an official consent of the authorities for the society's participation in public life and money, some of which had to be supplied by state funding. The authorities' refusal disappointed almost 200 people, especially Dolatkowski, according to whom: „[...] the refusal nipped in the bud the beautiful deed of a new-style zealous cultural activity. The decision was up to those bureaucrats specialising in putting stamps on butterflies' wings and throwing disobedient initiatives into the bin”²⁶. It would be interesting to know why the advocate of creating Witkiewicz society referred to his project as “disobedient”. Did he think that in 1984 the idea of Witkacy's reburial met with the authorities' disapproval?

Whatever the answer was, one thing is certain, namely that in 1987/8, Witkacy won special favour with Polish communist politicians. After 48 years of oblivion, they remembered that Witkacy's grave was far away from Poland, in the Polesie village of Wielikije Oziera. The decision was taken immediately that it is crucial to bring the artist back home and to make him a grand funeral.

“Why right now and not, say, in 1985, in the Witkiewicz's anniversary year? Why today, on 14 April, and not in February (the month he was born in) or in September? (the month he died)?”²⁷ asks a journalist from “Świat Młodych”. An answer was provided by another journalist, Roman Dębecki: „[...] the political climate both on our side and on the Soviet side was not favourable towards this issue”²⁸.

The change of “the political climate” entailed a change in the authorities' attitude towards Witkacy, who ceased to be a representative of “bourgeoisie nihilism”²⁹, and became a “genuine artist”³⁰. Policies change and so do tastes, as we all know.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ T. Maciszewska, *Powrót*, “Świat Młodych” 1988, No. 61, p. 3.

²⁸ R. Dębecki, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁹ See J. Wilczak, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁰ See M. Szniak, *Bo grób twój jeszcze odemkną powtórnie*, “Sztandar Młodych” 1988, No. 80, p. 9.

Since Witkiewicz started to be considered a “compatriot artist”³¹, his funeral had to be of official state character. It was therefore necessary for each element of the ceremony to have appropriate symbolic meaning to prove the organisational skills of the authorities. One of the notes concerning the planning of the funeral read “It is recommended that no citizens’ committee be formed for bringing the ashes to Poland; the main organiser of the celebrations will be National Council for Culture”³².

In this way, Witkacy found himself in the hands of the authorities, which four years before did not permit a society having him as a patron to exist in the official public discourse.

Witkacy at the Kremlin?

Comrades acting in the state and communist party authorities made every effort to fulfil their plan to bring Witkacy’s ashes from Polesie, which demanded overcoming many political and administrative obstacles. First, it was necessary to obtain a permission to exhume the remains.

Theoretically, the permission should be issued by the authorities of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine, but it was obvious that Moscow’s decision will be essential due to the political character of the issue. Polish activists had to face numerous talks, negotiations, protocols and notes.

It is worthwhile to reconstruct the course of political events which made bringing Witkacy to Poland possible. According to Stefan Okołowicz, “the decision to bring Witkacy’s ashes was made at the highest level, i.e. Jaruzelski – Gorbaczow”³³, and this opinion is endorsed by Piotr Rudzki as well³⁴. However, documents stored in Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archives of New Documents) in Warsaw shed doubt on these speculations.

³¹ See Ibid.

³² Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka w sprawie sprowadzenia do Polski prochów St. Ignacego Witkiewicza*, from Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw, 1988.

³³ Cited in: J. Siedlecka, *Mahatma Witkac*, Kraków 2014, p. 276.

³⁴ P. Rudzki, *Op. cit.*, p. 435.

In November 1987 the minister of culture Aleksander Krawczuk wrote a letter to the Polish Consul General in Kijev, Ryszard Polkowski, saying “[...] in connection with previous correspondence and decisions made during the visit of Director of the Department of Culture from the Polish United Workers’ Party³⁵ Central Committee Tadeusz Sawic to Moscow, and also in connection with further talks conducted by the Embassy of Poland in Moscow, please be advised that a consent of the Soviet authorities has been obtained to exhume Witkacy’s ashes”³⁶.

The minister’s letter confirms that the decision to rebury Witkiewicz was not taken during the memorable Jaruzelski – Gorbachev meeting. No trace of interest in bringing Witkacy’s ashes home can be found in the archives of colonel Wiesław Górnicki, Jaruzelski’s closest advisor; even though all topics of the Jaruzelski – Gorbachev talks are included there.³⁷ It is evident that the heads of the states were occupied by more important problems, such as finding a way to reveal Moscow’s responsibility for the Katyn massacre.

The minister’s letter lends support to the supposition that it was Tadeusz Sawic, the Director of the Department of Culture, who tried to persuade the Moscow authorities to let Witkacy’s remains return to Poland. The reasoning is thus as follows: if the person sent to Moscow was Director of the Department of Culture, the above-cited letter was written by the Minister of Culture, and the documents that were found had been issued by the Department of Culture, then it can be assumed that the process of bringing Witkacy’s ashes back to Poland was initiated by one of these two institutions: the Ministry or the Department of Culture. Clearly, it was the latter that performed all the actions.

Even though Sawic reached an agreement with the Soviet authorities and obtained their approval for the proposal, it was only a beginning of the long way for Polish politicians to reach full permission to transport the artist’s corpse and to organise his funeral.

³⁵ Henceforth referred to as PUWP.

³⁶ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Od A. Krawczuka do Konsula Generalnego tow. R. Polkowskiego*, from Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw, 1988.

³⁷ *Raporty Wiesława Górnickiego dla gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego 1985-1988*, from Archiwum Dokumentacji Historycznej PRL.

Aleksander Krawczuk sent a letter to the consul in Kijev to request “formal steps to apply to the Ukrainian authorities for their consent to exhume the Stanisław Witkiewicz (Witkacy) corpse and to transport it to Poland (Zakopane)”³⁸. The request provides clear evidence of two facts: firstly, that the minister had forgotten that the artist, whom he intended to bury with due honour and pomp, had two names: Stanisław Ignacy; and secondly, a consent obtained from Moscow alone was insufficient. It was necessary to reach an agreement with the Ukrainian authorities, who may not have been enthusiastic towards the Polish plan.

Obliged by Minister Krawczuk's letter, Consul General Ryszard Polkowski may have feared refusal and decided to talk to Boris Iwanienko, Director of the communist party Department of Culture, rather than to the Ukrainian Minister of Culture. The meeting took place on 7 December 1987. Polkowski's objective was to “ensure B. Iwanienko that the method of exhumating the S.I. Witkiewicz ashes will be agreed upon with the republic and district authorities of USSR”³⁹. Consul's task was then to convince the director that every detail of the exhumation and transport will be negotiated with the Ukraine.

After the meeting Polkowski writes down a note and passes it on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw and to the Polish Ambassador in Moscow. His task is completed.

The action is taken over by Polish Ambassador in Moscow Włodzimierz Natorf, who consults the Foreign Affairs Department of PUWP. It can be reckoned that the aim of these talks was to establish the way in which the Polish side could approach the politically sensitive points of Witkacy's exhumations and reburial. The ambassador obtained the desired information, and further passed it on to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which directly “negotiated [...] with the USSR authorities the conditions and form of transferring the urn with S. I. Witkiewicz's ashes to the Polish side”⁴⁰.

Clearly, however, all the Polish Ministry obtained from the USSR authorities was some general statements rather than detailed informa-

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka dotycząca ekshumacji prochów Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

tion. Since the idea of using an intermediary institution failed, it was necessary to handle the issue directly and in person.

The Ministry of Culture and Art took the matters in their own hands and delegated Andrzej Michałowski to Lviv. The politician arrived on 28 February 1988 and remained there until 6 March. He was supposed to contact the Polish consulate in Lviv and carry out the task he was assigned: “[...] to obtain answers to the following questions: the form of exhumation, sanitary conditions; will the exhumation be performed by the Polish side (Bongo) or by the Russians; the way the coffin will be handed on at the state border; how the grave will be commemorated in the village of Wielkije Oziera; the list of Polish delegates to the village of Wielkije Oziera, participation of the mass media”⁴¹.

Michałowski needed six days to collect the information he needed. It can be supposed that on the Ukrainian side there was no desire to act promptly and to collaborate with the Polish consulate. The agreement reached in Lviv had to be approved of by the Russian comrades in Kijev so that they “could become an important point in the talks with the Ukrainian Minister of Culture during his visit to Warsaw”⁴².

To sum up, bringing Witkacy’s ashes to Poland required the involvement of the following Soviet institutions: The Department of Culture of the Russian Communist Party, The Department of Culture of the Ukrainian Communist Party and The Ministry of Culture of the USSR. In Poland three departments of the PUWP Central Committee had to be engaged: The Department of Culture, of Propaganda and Press, Foreign Affairs; besides the Ministry of Culture and Art, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish Embassy in Moscow and Consulate General in Lviv.

⁴¹ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka w sprawie sprowadzenia do Polski prochów St. Ignacego Witkiewicza*. BONGO – Polish acronym for Bureau for Providing Care for Foreigners’ Graves.

⁴² Ibid.

“The script for burying S. Witkacy’s ashes”

Even though Polish politicians finally handled all the formalities involved in the collaboration with the Ukraine, they still had to face a number of challenges. The secretary of the PUWP Central Committee demanded from the Department of Culture “a note describing the preparations for the celebrations, including a detailed script”⁴³. Besides, it was necessary to contact the Ministry of Environment Protection, Zakopane authorities and Witkacy’s family. Last but not least, “an appropriate propaganda setting had to be provided”⁴⁴ as well. This, predictably, was a task conferred to the Department of Propaganda.

It is then not surprising that what is referred to as “problem tasks” scheduled for March 1988 include “creating a script for burying S. Witkacy’s ashes”⁴⁵. What is surprising is that his pseudonym was mistaken for his surname.

Even though plans to bring Witkacy’s ashes to Poland were made in 1987, as evidenced by the above-cited Minister Krawczuk’s letter, it was in mid February 1988 when an official reply from the Ukrainian Minister of Culture was obtained and then the matter was certain.

The politicians had to act promptly since they learned that “the intention of the Polish and Soviet authorities is to complete the undertaking before the Pact and the Declaration anniversary, i.e. by 15 April 1988”⁴⁶. Because of that, help was requested from Andrzej Dziuk, director of the Witkiewicz Theatre in Zakopane. Possibly, the reason why the director was approached was a desire to put the burden of work on his shoulders and to speed up the process of organising the celebration. The authorities may have also wished to engage a cultural institution which fought for its independence in the activities of the state. However varied the reasons were, the decision was that “by 10 March [...] Citizen Andrzej Dziuk will present a script for the celebration of

⁴³ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka dotycząca ekshumacji prochów Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Plan Wydziału Kultury KC PZPR. Marzec 1988*, from Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw, 1988.

⁴⁶ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka dotycząca ekshumacji prochów Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*.

S. I. Witkiewicz's burial in Zakopane (in collaboration with W. Hasior, The Tatra Mountains Museum)⁴⁷.

Despite the fact that Dziuk was assigned to plan the details of the burial ceremony, he was definitely denied any creative freedom. It was the department of Culture that picked a place at the Pęksowy Brzyzek cemetery, where Witkacy was to find his final rest: "[...] the coffin will be placed in his mother's grave"⁴⁸. Maria Witkiewicz's grave was thus brutally dug up, the coffin being taken out and opened⁴⁹. It was not the director's idea either to decorate the Zakopane road leading to the cemetery with flags⁵⁰.

It was up to the authorities, too, to choose a list of guests who were allowed to keep vigil by the coffin: "[...] the following guests should be considered: [...] Czesława Oknińska /a person accompanying St. I. Witkiewicz during his death/; prof. Jan Leszczyński – researcher; Bogdan Michalski – researcher; dr Jan Degler – researcher; Lech Sokół – researcher; Janusz Zakrzeński – actor; Grzegorz Dubowski – director; Władysław Hasior – artist; Tadeusz Kantor – artist"⁵¹. It was truly generous of the authorities that they offered invitations to various artists and researchers dealing with Witkacy's heritage. It should be noted, though, that the then doctor and today's professor Degler's first name is Janusz not Jan, and Czesława's surname is Oknińska not Okińska. To err is human, as we all know, and even the most meticulous scribes can make small mistakes.

Including Oknińska in the list of guests is however somewhat disturbing. Even if she had been invited to Witkacy's funeral in 1988 by Gorbachev himself (and not by an ordinary clerk from the Department of Culture), she would not have turned up. She died in loneliness on 26 December 1976...⁵².

⁴⁷ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka w sprawie sprowadzenia do Polski prochów St. Ignacego Witkiewicza*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See M. Pinkwart, *Wygraliśmy*, Teatr Marczewski, 26 listopada 1994 roku, <http://www.marczewski.pl/236,Aktualnosci-Witkacy-jest-20-do-Xtej-Stanislaw-I-gnacy-Witkiewicz-1885-1939-Wygralismy-Maciej-Pinkwart.html> (access: 20.09.2016).

⁵⁰ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, *Notatka w sprawie sprowadzenia do Polski prochów St. Ignacego Witkiewicza*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See J. Siedlecka, *Op. cit*

Funeral and the irony of fate

Following the convoluted preparations, Witkacy's funeral finally took place. On 14 April 1988, about 10 o'clock at 15 Chramcówki Street, a black ford owned by the company BONGO pulled in. A bright pine coffin covered by a white and red flag was taken out and placed in the foyer of the Witkiewicz Theatre, decorated with portraits and photographs made by *The Shoemakers'* author. "We wanted him to be among friends for a while"⁵³, explained Andrzej Dziuk.

Vigil by the coffin was held by mountain rescuers clad in their festive attire. In front of the theatre there were a few thousand people getting cold and impatient. Each of them wanted to say goodbye to Witkacy. But priority was given to special guests from the above-mentioned list. The family, representatives of the authorities, artists and researchers received special badges entitling them to participation in the Holy Mass and guaranteeing entry to the Pęksowy Brzyzek cemetery, where the coffin was to be laid in earth. Discipline has to be observed everywhere.

"At 3 o'clock P.M., after the coffin was symbolically knocked three times against the theatre threshold to bid farewell to the home, mountaineers dressed in brown festive cloaks lay it on a carriage"⁵⁴. "The honour of driving the great artist to the place of eternal rest by his mother's side was granted to the old Sobczak, a mountaineer who knew Witkacy in person"⁵⁵. The carriage was followed by a huge crowd (according to some estimations consisting of fifty thousand people⁵⁶), wrapped in scarves and coats protecting them from the falling snow. Children were carrying wreathes, a folk band was playing, cold wind was smashing cheeks, the coffin was slowly making its way through Chramcówki, Krupówki, Kościeliska, and the black flags with decorative bells were blowing majestically in the wind.

Waiting in the small church by the cemetery were Reverend Professor Józef Tischner and Reverend Dean Władysław Curzydło, ready to celebrate the service. After a short Mass, Rev. Tischner "makes a speech never to be

⁵³ Cited in: J. Wilczak, Op. cit

⁵⁴ A. Malinowska, *Powrót Witkacego*, "Kierunki" 1988, No. 18, p. 14.

⁵⁵ J. Rubis, *Znów wśród swoich*, "Echo Krakowa" 1988, No. 76, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Stolica Tatr złożyła hołd Witkacemu*, "Dziennik Polski" 1988, No. 88, p. 6.

forgotten by those who heard it”⁵⁷. But such lucky ones were few – only the badge holders were allowed into the church. To make the celebrations audible to all others, loudspeakers were mounted outside. Unfortunately, something went wrong and “instead of Rev. Tischner’s sermon [...] short fragments of disco music could be heard from time to time”⁵⁸.

After the bereavement service, the coffin accompanied by both priests was carried to the cemetery. It was time for the official speeches. The first to talk was Minister of Culture Aleksander Krawczuk, who used very lofty words to refer to Witkacy: here our compatriot returns home, an important man and artist, who was “moderately famous” when he was leaving and is now returning in “glory and triumph”⁵⁹.

The next official to take the floor was Ukrainian writer, Jurij Szczerbak, who noted that although “the Ukrainian land opened her arms and returned Witkiewicz to the Polish land”⁶⁰, part of his rebellious soul would stay amidst Ukrainian trees and grass. Szczerbak mentioned Witkacy’s visit to Kijew, claiming that *The Mother’s* author would return there again, through his plays and other writings. The orator finished his speech on a grand note: “We shall respect the place [of Witkacy’s temporary burial in Wielikije Oziera – A. J.], in the same way as we respect our friendship, and the collaboration between Ukrainian and Polish literature”⁶¹.

The most sentimental and symbolic gesture was performed by Stanisław Kołtuniuk, Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Culture, who, in order to commemorate “the Ukrainian soil, which caringly protected his [Witkacy’s – A.J.] ashes”⁶², threw a handful on the coffin, saying: “Let this be yet another symbol of the brotherly friendship between the Polish and Soviet nations. Friendship forever”⁶³.

„Not everything in this ceremony was tactfull”⁶⁴ wrote Jacek Sieradzki in his reportage. Why did the journalist assess the precisely

⁵⁷ L. Sokół, *Pogrzeb Witkiewicza*, „Twórczość” 1988, No. 7, p. 137.

⁵⁸ M. Biernacka, *Zakopane w kwietniu...*, „Więź” 1988, No. 9, p. 146.

⁵⁹ See M. Szniak, Op. cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ M. Szniak, Op. cit.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

orchestrated celebration negatively? The words spoken by professor Lech Sokół might answer the question: “Wasn’t it ironic, indeed, that the writer who always kept distance from Officiality, committed suicide on 18 September 1939, and was a trouble-maker had such a pompous funeral”⁶⁵.

“It is a criminal case!”

The press published bulky reports about the funeral, and intellectuals led debates behind the scenes, with some of them issuing official protests⁶⁶. Still, there were reasons to be contented – after all, Witkacy returned to Poland, the funeral took place, citizens got involved, and the delegates spoke with much pathos about Polish-Ukrainian friendship. The objectives of the Polish communist authorities were met. The feeling of satisfaction did not, however, last long. By the end of April, the joy turned into anxiety, as rumours started to spread and reach the communist party’s ears that it may not be Witkacy who was laid in his mother’s grave.

One of the first to plant uncertainty among Poles was the anonymous author of the article *Proza życia* (*The prose of life*). The journalist made use of clever camouflage, claiming that he was contacted by a reader, who happened to be well familiar with forensics and was wondering why no report was published on the condition of Witkacy’s corpse and the results of forensic anthropological expertise.

The mysterious caller noted as well that the cemetery changed during the forty-nine years following Witkacy’s death and another corpse could have been accidentally buried in his grave. They went on to inquire about the condition of the remains’ teeth. If the teeth were in a good shape, argued the reader, the corpse could not be Witkacy’s. One has admit that no journalist could dream of a more alert reader; the article appeared on 28 April, i.e. fourteen days after the funeral.

The first response to these allegations, published on 30 April, came from Jagienka Wilczak, who underscored that “The grave was exhumed in the presence of a forensic anthropologist, who confirmed

⁶⁵ L. Sokół, *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁶⁶ See Z. Dolatkowski, *Op. cit.*

beyond any doubt that the corpse was Witkacy's. A belt buckle and cane ferrule were also found, which proves that the grave was his"⁶⁷. But not everyone was convinced by these explanations.

On 19 May, another anonymous article came out, titled *Witkacego śmiech spod regli* (*Witkacy's laughter from below the woods*), claiming that "It was a first-class propaganda event, but the exhumation went wrong. So all this was just a lot of hot air"⁶⁸. This text enumerates all the objects found during the exhumation proving beyond any doubt that it was not Witkacy who was brought to Zakopane. In the place where Witkacy's grave was allegedly located, a skull with a complete set of teeth was found next to a leather belt, some Ukrainian folk buttons, and a ring. The photos of the exhumed skull were taken, but as soon as the Hollywood-style full-teethed smile on it was noticed, the photos were deleted. Besides, the author of the publication insisted that all those who took part in the Wielikije Oziera trip knew that it was not Witkacy who was put in the beautiful pine coffin.

What happened on 12 April 1988 in Wielikije Oziera, then? Nothing that could not have been predicted – the exhumation was carried out solely by the Ukrainians, who did not know anything about Witkacy. When the Polish delegation reached the village, the ashes were ready for transport⁶⁹. The first to realise the truth was Maciej Witkiewicz, Witkacy's brother's grandson. Although he did not see his great-uncle's remains, he received photographs taken during the exhumation and the objects found in the grave. It was these private little things that made the young Witkiewicz guess that a fatal error had been made. "Both the photographs and the 'memorabilia' stunned me. The skull had all teeth intact, and a senior member of our family [...], who remembered Witkacy, reminded me that he had false teeth! In a little sack there was a coloured metal ring that Witkacy never wore – if he had, it would have been a gold ring"⁷⁰, said the relative.

The young Witkiewicz felt obliged to inform the Ukrainian deputy Minister of Culture about his disastrous discovery. The deputy minister was "completely astonished and insisted that it was impossible,

⁶⁷ J. Wilczak, Op. cit, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Witkacego śmiech spod regli*, "Sprawy i Ludzie" 1988, No. 20, p. 14.

⁶⁹ See J. Siedlecka, Op. cit.

⁷⁰ Cited in: J. Siedlecka, Op. cit, p. 273.

as the forensic anthropologist carrying out the exhumation was an outstanding specialist!”⁷¹. Despite his unshaken faith in the competence of the anthropologist, the deputy minister shared the news with his Polish comrades – the deputy culture minister Kazimierz Molek and the official in charge of historical heritage Tadeusz Zielniewicz.

The gentlemen summoned Maciej Witkiewicz for an “essential conversation”. It was not a nice chat: “[...] they did not even try to talk or negotiate. They were mad, shouting and addressing me in a rude way. »What did you say to Kołtyniuk and why? It s a criminal case! Do you realise the consequences of your doubts? Do you want to undermine Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Soviet relationships that we are so effortfully developing? And we’ll fail to reclaim our cultural heritage from them? Not to mention your own career?«”⁷². In this simple and brutal way all anxiety, hesitation or doubt was discarded, despite the fact that the young Ukrainian female brought to Poland in a pine coffin was buried with state honours.

Political satisfaction for the Polish?

Problems appeared from the very beginning of implementing the plan to bring Witkacy back to Poland. As demonstrated above, the process was very complicated not only politically, but also logistically. Perhaps Wielikije Oziera inhabitants had a point when they asked “Why waste so much effort and money? Why move him, doesn’t he have a grave here?”⁷³. The Ukrainians did not know, however, that neither the grave not even Witkacy himself was a priority. They did not realise that “the political layer was of much greater importance. The decision to bring home Witkacy’s ashes – a great but not uncontroversial or even troublesome persona, as many would insist, and to do this in such a conspicuous manner was a manifestation of new ways of thinking that were emerging in the cultural policy as well”⁷⁴.

Witkiewicz’s reburial required much effort from the Polish authorities, which was justified by political gains, obtained from many

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 275.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 274.

⁷⁴ *Witkacego śmiech spod regli*, p. 14.

sides. First of all, Polish politicians indicated to the Kremlin that they are ready and willing to cooperate with the Ukraine. In this way, good Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Soviet relations were developed.

It was also essential to cater to the needs of the public, showing to the Poles that the authorities are much more liberal than they used to be and that they have respect for every world view. Even though Witkiewicz was a controversial and experimental artist, his works “[...] are easily amenable to various interpretations, even contradictory ones, glittering with nuanced meanings, and alluring with chances of applying new perspectives”⁷⁵. Because of that when the news broke that Witkiewicz is returning home, all Poland was happy.

The Catholics emphasised their mission: “Witkiewicz died from despair, like one dies from a disease [...]. The Church in Poland should save people from despair and should face the question concerning its mission »to save people from dying of despair«”⁷⁶. Those who were close to the communist authorities insisted that “Witkiewicz had an interest in communism, evidenced by the respect that Atanazy (protagonist of *Farewell to Autumn*) pays to dictator Tempy”⁷⁷. The opposition evoked catastrophic views espoused by *The Mother's* author: “Witkacy's coffin symbolises the end of old values shattered by the 20th century wars and revolutions, the values that used to constitute the human being”⁷⁸.

Naturally, there were also people who attended the funeral in Zakopane not to place themselves on either side, nor to gaze on a spectacular show. The force that led them to Zakopane was the love of freedom. They understood that “[...] Witkacy is becoming a symbol of defending one's own identity – the particular existence, which is the highest value; a human being in all its complexity, including the right to intellectual and other kinds of independence”⁷⁹.

⁷⁵ J. Degler, *Witkacy w świetle*, p. 331.

⁷⁶ Cited in: L. Sokół, *Op. cit.*

⁷⁷ Z. Kałużyński, *Chichot z tamtego świata*, “Polityka” 1988, No. 20, p. 8.

⁷⁸ J. Sieradzki, *Coś ty uczynił ludziom Witkiewiczowi?*, p. 1.

⁷⁹ A. Gass, *Ostatnia droga Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, “Życie Warszawy” 1988, No. 87, p. 2.

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Michał Pranke

“And that was the exit!”
***Maciuś Wariat* by Marcin Świetlicki**

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

In short: an exit may be a solution. An exit may also mean a lack of solution. Apart from that, an exit is sometimes an entry, leading from one place into another. The exit mentioned in the title of this sketch and in a number of places below opens the way to the story entitled *Maciuś Wariat* (*Maciuś the Crazy*)¹ by Marcin Świetlicki,² and more importantly, constitutes the opening of the composition itself, being its first line. Let us then follow the trail and move on to the literature.

The exit under discussion takes place directly after a fragment taken from *Dziennik* (*The Diary*) by Rafał Wojaczek,³ namely its final part:

Yesterday evening it seemed to me that it was you standing at the edge of the sidewalk, and I almost fell, the heart could not take it for a while, it stopped and again started, yet reluctantly, to measure the rhythm, the pulse; until my sober younger brother dragged me after him, saying: you lunatic, you lunatic!

He was right, as the one who loves is on the other side.⁴

¹ M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś wariat*, in: *Tylko o miłości*, selection and editing by M. Dańkowska and W. Wiśniewski, Warsaw 1981, pp. 9–16. As can be easily guessed, Świetlicki's story opens this rather mediocre anthology.

² Marcin Świetlicki (born 1961) – Polish poet, lyricist, writer, and vocalist with the group Świetliki. Associated with the “brulion generation”, the author of crime novels – editor's note.

³ Rafał Wojaczek (1945-1971) – Polish poet and prose-writer. One of the “cursed poets”. The author of the volumes *Inna bajka* and *Sezon*. In his work he focused on the fate of the contester-poet (the vagabond, alcoholic, suicidal poet). He practiced a poetry of shock, sadomasochism and exhibitionism – editor's note.

⁴ R. Wojaczek, *Dziennik*, in: *Ibid*, *Utwory zebrane*, introduction by T. Karpowicz, edited by B. Kierc, Wrocław 1986, p. 47. See: M. Świetlicki, *Niebieskie*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze*, Kraków 2011, p. 603.

In 1981, the 20-year-old Marcin Świetlicki publishes his first story, bearing this motto taken from a composition by the 20-year-old Rafał Wojaczek.⁵ By means of this gesture and others, recurring in subsequent volumes of poetry and in song lyrics,⁶ as well as especially prominent in prose (when starting his crime trilogy with the frequently appearing phrase “A true hero should be lonely”⁷ and when concluding it likewise⁸), Świetlicki takes his place within an intertextual tradition running from Baudelaire, through the Wojaczek and its numerous epigones, to himself and then further onward, expanding in numerous directions. The words of Charles Baudelaire – “the true hero finds his pleasure alone” – allow all those texts to be read as cultural ones, rather than in the perspective of confessions or as existential or intimist writings.⁹

The story consists of thirteen parts, connected to each other by means of the main character from the title. The narrative strategy is hinted at by the abovementioned motto: the subsequent parts take the form of diary writings. Like an intimate diary, which “as a rule is open in its nature, meaning that it is not a composition planned in advance; it consists of a number of writings concerning various problems and topics, diverse in formal terms”,¹⁰ the story tends towards openness by using idiolectal, subjectified and at times anacoluthon-ridden language, making the impression of diarism, it also matches the criterion of covering the “formal span of writing [...] from chaotic, hardly controlled trains of thoughts and experiences to rigorously logical

⁵ A fragment of *Dziennik* dated to 6 September 1965.

⁶ See, for example: M. Świetlicki, *Anioł/trup*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze*, p. 344. See: R. Wojaczek, *Krzyż*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze zebrane*, edited by B. Kierc, Wrocław 2006, p. 151; Świetlicki, *Anioł/trup*, in: *Ibid*, *Cacy Cacy Fleischmaschine*, CD, Music Corner Records 1996. See also: R. Wojaczek, *Notatki z celi śmierci*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze zebrane*, p. 326, the third fragment: *Marche Funèbre*; M. Świetlicki, *Anioł/trup*, in: *Ibid*, *Zło, te przeboje. Piosenki 1992–2015*, Kraków 2015, p. 43.

⁷ M. Świetlicki, *Dwanaście*, in: *Ibid*, *Powieści*, Kraków 2011, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid*, *Jedenaście*, in: *Ibid*, p. 592.

⁹ Which was convincingly described by Krzysztof Siwczyk in the context of *Sanatorium*. See: K. Siwczyk, *Bohater bawi się sam*, „Dwutygodnik” 2011, no 48, <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artukul/1804-bohater-bawi-sie-sam.html> (access: 01.03.2016).

¹⁰ M. Głowiński, *Dziennik intymny*, entry in: *Słownik terminów literackich*, edited by J. Sławiński, Wrocław 2007, p. 118.

and rationalized deliberations”.¹¹ Another factor confirming the story’s diarism is its noticeable draft-like structure, as well as clearly dominant introspection aimed at both the protagonist’s intimate outpourings, and in-depth study of his spirituality and psyche.¹²

Obviously, what is meant here is the story being made similar to an intimate diary, not identical to it, the primary element which contradicts the diarist speculations being the lack of dating of subsequent parts, and the lack of chronological order of events resulting from it. The stylization of the story to resemble an intimate diary thus constitutes, as in the case of Wojaczek’s *Sanatorium* and *Dziennik*,¹³

¹¹ Ibid. In the case of openness and subjectification of language, the factor meant here frequently used by Świetlicki is the use of elliptical sentences, numerous repetitions of particular motifs and phrases, as well as breaking up the syntax and the semantic cohesion of the text. Consider the following fragment:

– Is father here?
when they come- tell them I went to Marcin.
Marcin,
that I won’t be coming back soon,
oh
I was supposed to go?
sorry
you will go alone,
tickets are on the window, in some brown thing. Yeah.

M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś wariat*, p. 12 [own translation].

¹² The story’s draft-like structure is manifested in the text being broken into fragments which look like they were written down as if “on the run”, “day after day”. A similar function is also performed by nicknaming characters in a diarist manner (e.g. Jot, Marcin, Grisza, Ania) – these are characters who are limited merely to their nicknames, understood only by the “author” of the projected quasi-diarist writings, devoid of any distinctive features (also their scarce utterances do not allow for a distinction, being stylistically identical to those produced by the protagonist-narrator. The draft-like structure and the introspection dominant throughout the story are also realized in the streams of consciousness. See: M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś wariat*, p. 10: “I will walk, maybe it will be easier to think over this whole failed, what is wrong with you? but professor, last day of the school year, perhaps we can let him off, I’m standing in the middle of the classroom, is he always so nervous? Of course, professor, always. Get a grip on yourself, mate, are you looking at me now? What it looks like from the other side I have no clue what is going on, I’m looking in surprise” [own translation].

¹³ See: G. Pertek, „*Jest ja, ale mnie nie ma*” – granica poetyckiego szaleństwa Rafała Wojaczka, „Przestrzenie Teorii” no 16, Poznań 2011, p. 210: “It is not without a reason that I am also suggesting that classification of the text by Wojaczek in terms of genre is a matter of convention. In formal terms, the writings raise many doubts. It seems that in this case we are dealing merely with a ‘simulation’

evidence of an autobiographical strategy and an effort to condense the subjectivity in the composition – the literary subject becomes similarly real, non-illusionary, just like biological existence.

On the other hand, however, the story by Świetlicki is strongly embedded in literariness, which is achieved by clearly visible alluding elements: ranging from references to fairy tale conventions (“The Princess”, “the Black Knight”, “Golem”, and other common terms stylized to look like proper names by means of capital letters¹⁴), to a reference to *Wiatroaeroterapia* by Andrzej Bursa¹⁵ at the beginning of the text,¹⁶ to the mention of prose by Wojacek and the structuring of the story in a manner similar to *Dziennik*.¹⁷ The recurring act of writing and the protagonist’s self-identification as the author (poems, empty pages)¹⁸ also point to a literary, not private nature of the story.

Such a narrative strategy, revealing inspiration from Wojacek’s text, also lies in the abovementioned collection of literary contexts, hinting at the motif of madness, which is also openly pointed out in the title.

of a diary, understood as a genre related to autobiography.

- ¹⁴ See: M. Świetlicki, *Gorzko*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze*, p. 566. The poem dated by the author to 1980 makes similar references to fairy tale conventions through the fourfold repetition of the phrase “we will not be kings” and quasi-fairy tale *Genesis* in a lyrical situation.
- ¹⁵ Andrzej Bursa (1932-1957) – Polish poet, prose-writer and playwright. One of the “cursed poets” belonging to the “Współczesność” generation (artists making their debuts around 1956). His work addresses the issues of the brutality of life and social norms, encouraging a contesting stance with respect to the existing reality – editor’s note.
- ¹⁶ A. Bursa, *Dobry psychiatra (Wiatroaeroterapia)*, in: *Ibid*, *Utwory wierszem i prozą*, Kraków 1982. See: M. Świetlicki, *Morderstwo*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze*, p. 504; *ibid*, *Ja latam*, in: *Wiersze*, p. 407.
- ¹⁷ As in the case of Wojacek’s *Dziennik*, the structure of the story by Świetlicki is heterogeneous in formal terms – in both one can encounter essayistic and essay-like fragments, parts of verse (in Wojacek’s work these are poems in a strict sense, whereas Świetlicki uses elliptical sentences, often graphically distinguished in subsequent lines), or fragments which are “openly” intimist and autobiographical (in the case of Wojacek this is a stay at a mental clinic, whereas in the case of Świetlicki it is, for instance, the author’s signature “Marcin”), see: A. Stoff, *Ja, autor. O funkcjach sygnatur w literaturze współczesnej*, in: *Ja, autor. Sytuacja podmiotu w polskiej literaturze współczesnej*, edited by D. Śnieżko, Warsaw 1996, pp. 64–78.
- ¹⁸ “All the poems we have written and which we will give to nobody, not for all treasures of the world. Those are the poems. they will be read on the Main Street. As loudly as possible” [own translation] M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś wariat*, p. 9. “He was looking at an empty page. It looked really funny” [own translation], *Ibid*, p. 12.

As commonly known, madness in literature and for literature has been a fundamental phenomenon for ages¹⁹ – from the Platonic divine madness, through Shakespearean realizations, to Romanticism, which preserved the already existing position of madness and guaranteed its constant presence to the present day. It is not our goal here to analyze the traces of Romanticism in contemporary times. Attempting to transpose Romanticism to the 1980s or to the present times seems to be merely a rhetorical instrument, successful to a greater or lesser extent. Similarly, using synecdoche rather than postulating another historical and literary construct, Walter Jackson Ong claimed that romanticism was not a temporary phenomenon, as many if not all literary, artistic and scientific movements, turned out to employ its elements, each of them in its own specific way²⁰.

What is being pointed out here is thus a certain continuity of understanding and transforming the phenomenon of madness in culture. The traces of Romanticism are clearly visible in the sixth part of the story, anyway:

Maciuś, the same Maciuś I’ve been trying to get rid of for a long time, he himself – Maciuś engaged in the discussion.

Although – he did not do it willingly – he would never do something that low, simply – he was made to express himself. It was form period.

The topic of discussion – ARE WE ROMANTIC?

My Dear Classmates – they got down to it rather seriously, first the definition of the term was considered, then adjusted to the contemporary situation, it was ensured that we were all ROMANTIC, but are afraid to show it. Several people, however, admitted to it without any resistance.

¹⁹ Let us only mention here the monumental work by Michel Foucault *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique. Folie et déraison*, Gallimard, coll. „Tel”, Paris 1961, or several other new and interesting works: M. Stasiuk, T. Baran, *Schizofrenik jako błazen. O roli szaleństwa w wyobraźni kulturowej*, Warsaw 2013; A. Klimkiewicz, *Od błędu do utopii. Śladami Orlanda Szalonego*, Kraków 2009; *Zjawisko szaleństwa w kulturze*, edited by M. Kasprowicz, S. Drelich, M. Kopyciński, Toruń 2010; *Wokół rozumienia szaleństwa. Szkice z zakresu humanistyki*, edited by P. Prus and A. Stelmaszyk, Toruń 2012.

²⁰ See: W. J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971

He stood up from his chair. It screeched against the floor.
 – I don't think that I, I'm saying as an example – I. But I don't think I am ROMANTIC – A quiet laughter went through the class.

A murmur. You turned around. Maciuś felt that, he started speaking a bit faster:

– ROMANTICS are those who are strong. Who are satisfied with their self-confidence – and they then can, have the right to be so. And I don't consider myself strong at all.

And Maciuś sat down.

The floor was taken a number of times later.²¹

As can be seen, this fits into the element of discussion on the status of the Romantic model of a poet-madman, which is a dilemma between “elevation, distinction, being someone special, pre-destined to possessing and spreading the truth, being a »poet-seer«”²², and undermining madness understood in such a manner. The motif of Romanticism is also obviously related to the school-based understanding of the period in terms of the primacy of spirit and senses over mind, and the motif of Nietzschean indifference towards Romantic values. In the first part of the story the protagonist-narrator defines himself as a poet – through recurrent self-marking with the stigma of madness and denying its added values, one may get the impression that madness becomes a classic example of *pharmakon*. The place of Romanticism – rejected in the story – is inevitably taken by Romanticization.²³

However, the ambiguous stance of the character towards Romanticism²⁴ does not change the fact that just like the Romantics' interest

²¹ M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś Wariat*, p. 10–11 [own translation]. An baffling factor is the affinity of characters such as a madman and a jester – which in Świetlicki's works is a figure of utmost importance. In the quoted fragment, the character of Maciuś presents himself as an outsider bearing the marks of madness – the facts that he takes the floor (and nothing before that!) makes him a noble jester, who can say what others cannot.

²² G. Pertek, *Op.cit.*, p. 209 [own translation].

²³ “An act in which creative imagination marks the world with subjective sigma, abolishing its previous disenchantment” [own translation]. A. Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzeni. Rewizja romantyczna i filozofia*, Kraków 2004, p. 202.

²⁴ On Świetlicki's relations with Romanticism, see, for example: T. Cieślak, *Inspiracje romantyczne w poezji polskiej roczników 60. i 70. (na wybranych przykładach)*,

in madness was to a large extent a reaction to enlightened rationalism, Świetlicki situates his hero in the circle of actors of madness, exploiting irrationality for the expression of values, using madness as an otherness that disorganizes the world order and opens up previously unknown cognitive perspectives. This is done firstly by means of the segmentation of the course of narration (the existence of 13 components, the co-occurrence of prose and verse), secondly through formal diversity within the writings, mimicking certain features of an intimate diary (essay-like fragments, intimate fragments, transcripts of dialogues), and lastly by means of traces hinting at the motif of madness (the story title, the motto, literary allusions, terms related to mental disorders, the motif of multiple personality,²⁵ suicidal motifs, references to melancholic paintings by Giorgio de Chirico,²⁶ the neurotic chaos of the course of the plot).

Świetlicki's *Maciuś Wariat* nevertheless seems to be an important point of reference for the author's remaining works. Even a superficial comparison of the diction and style of the story with the language Świetlicki uses in poetry, prose, or even interviews, shows that a tendency for ellipticality of speech and elliptical sentences is visible as early as in his literary debut. Interestingly, the story may serve as a pretext for contemplations of self-allusion and self-paraphrasing in Świetlicki's poetry. Let us take a look at a number of compositions, usually chronologically close to the story in question, and confront them with fragments from the poet's debut in prose:

w: *Polska literatura współczesna wobec romantyzmu*, edited by M. Łukaszuk and D. Seweryn, Lublin 2007, pp. 177–202; J. Borowiec, *Rozkopany grób. Kilka uwag o śmierci zapisanej w wierszach Marcina Świetlickiego*, in: *Mistrz świata. Szkice o poezji Marcina Świetlickiego*, edited by P. Słowiński, Poznań 2011, pp. 47–60; M. Cyranowicz, *Dlaczego von Kleist? Motyw samobójstwa Henricha von Kleista w twórczości Marcina Świetlickiego*, Jacka Podsiadył, Stefana Chwina i Manueli Gretkowskiej, in: *Literatura polska 1990–2000*, edited by T. Cieślak, K. Pietrych, Kraków 2002, pp. 346–365; P. Panas, *Na tropach autora, w: Opisanie świata. Szkice o poezji Marcina Świetlickiego*, Kraków 2014, pp. 15–36., R. Grupiński, I. Kiec, *Niebawem spadnie błoto, czyli kilka uwag o literaturze nieprzyjemnej*, Poznań 1997; R. Krynicki, M. Świetlicki, *Początek rozmowy*, „Nowy Nurt” 1996, no 13, p. 4.

²⁵ In the beginning Maciuś and Marcin appear as separate characters, but as the plot develops the border between them becomes less and less clear, allowing us to interpret the characters as one and the same – they thus become polar representatives of the same person. This is, obviously, a clear manifestation of the play with madness.

²⁶ “And wandering of some sort, a weird city, as if painted by Giorgio de Chirico. Such neon, twilight colors” M. Świetlicki, *Maciuś wariat*, p. 12 [own translation].

1a) we love someone!

oh! we write
 about it on the least important wall
 of the least important house
 in the least important street
 of a very big city
 IN VERY BIG LETTERS!

in a sad book it was written
 that we were little
 we were standing on a balcony
 someone's horse broke out
 it was running down the street.²⁷

1b) All the poems we have written and which we will give to nobody,
 not for all treasures of the world. Those are the poems. They will
 be read on the Main Street. As loudly as possible.²⁸

1c) [...] Maciuś, in his funny scarves, we were writing too much, it
 is all terrifying, tragic – well HORRIFYING.²⁹

2a) THE FIRST WOMAN! first motorbikes
 are looking, looking for each other in the pool of streets
 in the park there is a new fire, grass burns out
 when needed, there is cold when needed there is sun
 serious is your back, light are your elbows
 the first woman pushes her elbows against the table
 serious is your back, light are your elbows
 when needed you are older, when needed you are younger
 a winter fruit still helpless
 and not serious where can one hide?

²⁷ M. Świetlicki, *Wszyscy coś mają do ukrycia tylko ja i moja małpka nie*, in: *Ibid*, *Wiersze*, p. 483 [own translation]. The work was dated by the author to 1979.

²⁸ *Ibid*, *Maciuś Wariat*, p. 9 [own translation].

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16. See: M. Świetlicki, *Opluty*, in: *Wiersze*, pp. 150–151 [own translation].

salt glitters in the gaps in the floor, grey salt
serious is your back, light are your elbows.³⁰

- 2b) And you stand in gigantic sun.
And I look at you, you are completely serious, such a funny
murmur that sun is. Then you tell me to wait for you.
You disappear in a gigantic building.

[...]

And wandering of some sort, a weird city, as if painted by Giorgio de Chirico. Such neon, twilight colors.³¹

- 3a) The whole room has Marcins all over the walls.
At least once a week, I put a new Marcin on the wall.
The hangman’s fog is almost as thick,
as a cloud of cigarette smoke.

[...]

Marcin is hanging under the lamp, still raising his head
and I am making scary faces to him, believing,
that since he is trembling – then he is ashamed that
he is waiting like that and that he cannot wait, that he is waiting
like a child

for Christmas, waiting for a woman,
who will come, will surely come, everything will happen
the way it always does, as always, with some little
surprises [...].³²

³⁰ Ibid, *Pierwsza kobieta*, in: *Wiersze*, p. 488 [own translation]. The poem is dated to 1980.

³¹ Ibid, *Maciuś Wariat*, p. 12 [own translation].

³² Ibid, *** (*Cały pokój jest obwieszony Marcinami...*), in: Ibid, *Wiersze*, p. 104 [own translation]. The poem comes from the volume entitled *Schizma* from 1994.

3b) Once I wanted to prank them – I dressed
 a couch pillow in my
 flannel, blue, beloved old shirt. And trousers.
 I hung it at the bathroom ceiling.
 But before anyone came, I pulled my hangman down.
 I have no idea why³³.

Let us pause on the three comparisons of composition fragments, with the reservation that the story's potential has not been depleted in this aspect. Maria Magdalena Beszterda believes that the supplementary character of Świetlicki's poems (and prose), the perseveration of particular motifs and issues, resulting from an attempt to fill in the "lack" and "non-presence" as immanent features of the author's work, can be explained by right of "an open project, incomplete, constantly updated in subsequent references"³⁴ In such a perspective, this story by Świetlicki extends the scope of possible interpretations and paves the way to the roots of his poetics.

Świetlicki's debut story from 1981, being – quite simply – a tale about love, teenage disappointment and loneliness, outlines the collection of the most important motifs that the author has used in his works for years and points to Świetlicki's early inspirations – Wojacek and Bursa.³⁵ The "exit" from the beginning of the text is, in fact, merely an entry.

Let us also notice that – unlike the poet's later works – the political context in Poland (the events after 1980) is completely absent from this story. Here we would be inclined to interpret this not as a sign of the primacy of privacy in the young author's poetry, but as a first step on the road to shaping the strategy of jester-like pinching – an outsider becomes a jester, who is a figure predestined to tell the truth, who pinches, disgusts and hurts, but not until he actually speaks. It is at this moment that the jester gains his jester's mask, being merely

³³ Ibid, *Maciuś Wariat*, p. 12.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 134 [own translation].

³⁵ See: the poem by Świetlicki entitled *Cały pokój obwieszony Marcinami* (in: Ibid, *Wiersze*, p. 104) and the phrase „I live longer than all the poets who died young” [own translation].

an “other” without it. Świetlicki’s focusing on the privacy and daily experience of the subject is thus an act paving the way to the status of jester, who is allowed to say more than others.

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Wojciech Lewandowski

**“Good evening London...”
The socio-political revolution in comics, based on
the example of the graphic novel *V for Vendetta* by Alan
Moore and David Lloyd**

Translated by Jacek Welniak

Since the very beginnings of comics, or at least since the 1930s, the medium has been politically engaged. The unique character of this form of art made it, on the one hand, a convenient tool for propaganda, and on the other hand allowed artists to engage in multi-level social and economic criticism, through the ability to invoke both verbal and visual content at the same time. As the medium gained maturity, the authors of such pictorial stories, whose names were frequently not provided by publishing houses, decided to tackle more and more controversial topics concerning the social, political and cultural transformations of societies.

The 1980s was probably the period in which the comics medium “grew up” most rapidly. This was due to numerous factors, notably the experiences of counterculture comics, the flow of artists from the British Isles to the United States, and the transformation of the American comics scene. The mid-1980s saw the birth of contemporary comics, as a result of the aforementioned factors. The authors of American comics and graphic novels from that period, such as Frank Miller and Alan Moore, boldly commented on the Cold War reality. At the same time, their experiments with the medium itself laid the foundations for modern method of comics storytelling.

The graphic novel *V for Vendetta* by scriptwriter Alan Moore and illustrator David Lloyd fully demonstrated the potential of comics as a political medium. As a tale about a social revolution, individual rebellion against totalitarian enslavement, it became an important voice in ideological discourse. Deeply rooted in historical experiences and the cultural context of Europe at that time, it constituted a certain

novelty on the American market, then unaccustomed to such dark, and at the same time serious stories.

The aim of this article is to present the manner in which the authors of *V for Vendetta* managed to create a politically suggestive message, going beyond the conventions typical for pictorial stories. In order to do so, it will be necessary to take a look at the relations between the world of comics and the world of politics. At the same time, it will be essential to outline the character of changes which took place in comics at the turn of the bronze age and the time of birth of contemporary comics. *V for Vendetta* is a comic book representative of modern comics, influencing the ways in which authors describe the world around them and their readers. It is not only a tale about a revolution, but also a graphic novel which to some extent itself was a revolution in the ways of storytelling by means of words and pictures.

Comics and politics

As Scott McCloud writes, the medium of comics involves a set of “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”.¹ Will Eisner sees comics, which he defines with the term “sequential art”, as “the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea”.² The harmonization of words and pictures makes comics a medium which can address a reader both at the verbal and visual level. It is in their combination, as Fredrik Strömberg puts it, that the force of pictorial stories lies, with words enriching static pictures with additional meanings.³

Since its birth, comics has become a medium which is politically involved or used for political purposes. Screenwriters and artists have taken the liberty of commenting on the reality around them, drawing attention to the possibilities of improving the *status quo*. Such an evaluation of contemporary social and political events can even be found as early as in the first adventures of Superman, in which he

¹ S. McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, New York 1994, p. 9.

² W. Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, New York–London 2008, p. XI.

³ F. Strömberg, *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*, Lewes 2010, p. 9.

fought against arms traders (*Superman: The Champion of the Oppressed and Revolution in San Monte Pt. 2*)⁴ or promoted ideas stemming from the tradition of progressivism and the New Deal principles (*Superman in the Slums*).⁵ The authors of *Batman*, on the other hand, drew attention to the difficulties involved in tackling organized crime or political corruption (*Suicide Beat*).⁶

The authors of comic books have also used their stories to promote particular political behaviors. Comics became a convenient tool for propaganda during World War II. In the comic book series published by American authors, such as “Captain America Comics”, “All Star Comics” and “Military Comics”, included stories aimed at encouraging the war effort, depicting enemies and the desired attitudes on the side of the American society. The aforementioned depictions of the enemy were based on stereotypes and were meant to stir up hatred for the dehumanized foe.⁷ In this context, the British war comics, especially popular in the late 50s, were more realistic and contained more psychologically genuine character profiles.⁸ Published in so called *picture libraries*, such as “Commando” or “War Picture Library”, the stories were often written by war veterans, reinforcing the impression of realism in the readers’ eyes.

The comic authors’ negative attitude towards the political authorities and the norms dictated by society was especially prominent in countercultural and alternative comics, whose expansion occurred during the period of teenage rebellions of the turn of the 1960s and 70s.

⁴ See: *Superman: The Champion of the Oppressed and Revolution in San Monte Pt. 2*, in: J. Siegel (writer), J. Shuster (artist), *The Superman Chronicles. Volume One*, New York 2006, pp. 3–30.

⁵ See: *Superman in the Slums*, in: *Ibid*, pp. 111–124.

⁶ See: *Suicide Beat*, in: B. Finger (writer), B. Kane (artist), *The Batman Chronicles. Volume Four*, New York 2007, pp. 114–126.

⁷ See: B. W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation. The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, Baltimore–London 2003, pp. 45–54; C. Scott, *Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11*, “The Journal of Popular Culture” 2007, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 327–329.

⁸ Among the war comics published at that time, only “Commando” still appears nowadays. For more on British war comics see: J. Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History*, London 2011, pp. 95–103 and 127–135; W. Lewandowski, *Brytyjski komiks polityczny. Zarys problematyki*, „Przegląd Europejski” 2013, No. 4 (30), pp. 111–113.

Their authors on both sides of the Atlantic in numerous comics magazines, such as “Zap Comix”, “American Splendor”, “Cosmic Comics” and “Zip Comics”, pointed out the limitations of the capitalist economic system, negated the moral standards of society, encouraged the use of intoxicating substances and resistance against political authorities’ inappropriate behavior. Authors such as Robert Crumb in “Zap Comix” and Harvey Pekar in “American Splendor” portrayed a critical image of the American society of the 1960s and 70s. Apart from that, the authors eagerly experimented with the language of comics, thereby influencing the evolution of the medium itself.⁹

Comics authors nowadays eagerly tackle various political issues, addressing socio-political topics in an intricate manner, avoiding simplifications and overuse of stereotypes. Cord Scott notices that the comic books published after the events of 11 September 2001 warned against the threats resulting from applying collective responsibility towards the Muslim community.¹⁰ An example of such an approach can be found in *Captain America: New Deal*, in which the main hero saves a Muslim from being lynched by Americans, showing the citizens the ways to deal with the trauma of terrorist attacks.¹¹ Captain America’s status as the national hero of the United States allows desirable social attitudes to be propagated.¹²

Comic books allow authors and readers to share reflections concerning the condition of the contemporary world and contemporary societies. The authors address a wide scope of issues: terrorism

⁹ J. Chapman, Op.cit., pp. 200–222; W. Lewandowski, *Brytyjski komiks polityczny*, p. 111.

¹⁰ C. Scott, Op.cit., p. 336.

¹¹ J. N. Rieber (writer), J. Cassaday (artists), *Captain America Vol.1: The New Deal*, New York 2003. See also: C. Scott, Op.cit., pp. 337–338; J. Dittmer, *Captain America’s Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post 9/11 Geopolitics*, “Annals of the Association of American Geographers” 2005, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 633–641.

¹² Captain America is a very well-known superhero who epitomizes national values. Characters such as Captain America may support the development of citizens’ national identity. It is thus hardly surprising that on the eve of the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, the first volume of adventures of a native Scottish superhero called Saltire was released. For more information about him, see: W. Lewandowski, *SuperScots: Superheroes and Scottish Identity*, in: *Scottish Culture: Dialogue and Self-Expression*, edited by A. Korzeniowska and I. Szymańska, Warsaw 2016, pp. 380–388.

and its consequences (*The Sky over Brussels* by Bernard Yslaire), war and its impact on its participants and subsequent generations (*Maus* by Art Spiegelman, *Charley's War* by Pat Mills and Joe Colquhoun), the consequences of racial hatred (*Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Phillipe Stassen) and relationships between individuals (*Blankets* by Craig Thompson). Depending on the creators' intentions and skill, their works may serve as a valuable source allowing for better understanding of the surrounding world, as well as a factor capable of changing it.

The evolution of comics

The second half of the 1980s is a period in which comic books changed in character: from histories for teenagers, they transformed into more mature tales, whose authors did not refrain from addressing such difficult topics as the Holocaust, the threat of nuclear fallout or the role of media in society.¹³ Apart from new themes, changes were also noticeable on the visual side, which became darker, and the artists were more explicit in showing the atrociousness of the world around them. The birth of the new era was another stage in the evolution of the comics medium, both in America and, indirectly, in Europe.

It is customary to divide the history of American comics into a set of “ages” named after precious metals.¹⁴ The earliest age, called platinum or pre-golden, seen as including the years 1897-1937, was the period of the medium's emergence, both as a form of artistic expression and as a way of printing and distribution. The golden age (the years 1938-1955) saw the birth of the superhero comics and the appearance of characters such as Superman or Batman. The tales of similar heroes dominated the comic book pages through the end of World War II. The end of the golden age, occurring in the first half of the 50s, was characterized by decreased interest in superhero comics, in favor of the readers' fascination with horror stories (published in magazines

¹³ The period and its significance for the evolution of American comics and the topics it dealt with was comprehensively characterized in: S. Rhoades, *A Complete History of American Comic Books*, New York 2008, pp. 123-147.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 4-7.

such as “Tales from the Crypt” or “A Haunt of Fear”), which stirred controversies resulting in rigorous self-censorship by comics publishers.¹⁵

The silver age (1956-1972), in turn, brought a revival of interest in superheroes, but this time they were faced with typically human problems. Characters such as Spider-Man, the Hulk, the members of the Fantastic Four or X-men teams had to face the problems of daily existence (like ensuring their own livelihood) while at the same time encountering a lack of understanding from society, resulting from their possession of superhuman features. The adventures of Spider-Man was one of the first series to reject the rules of self-censorship from the 1950s.¹⁶ The bronze age (1972-1986), thought to have begun with the publishing of issues No. 121-122 of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, was above all characterized by its darker mood. It also involved the appearance of British writers and artists on the American market, and laid the foundations for the age of contemporary comics.

The term *British Invasion* more traditionally refers to the extraordinary popularity of British rock music in the United States in the mid-60s, but can also be applied to the second half of the 80s, when a large group of British creators came to be employed by American publishers.¹⁷ Most of them had previously worked for the British magazine “2000 AD”, in circulation since 1977. Gradually, it started to include stories addressed at readers with greater cultural capital. The most popular character who appeared in “2000 AD” was Judge Dredd.¹⁸ Among the British authors who started to cooperate with American publishers, we should above all mention Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Alan Davis, Mark Millar, Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Alan Grant, Paul Jenkins and Warren Ellis.¹⁹

¹⁵ B. W. Wright, Op.cit., pp. 153–179; D. Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague. The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America*, New York 2008.

¹⁶ See: S. Lee (writer), G. Kane (artist), *Green Goblin Reborn!*, in: S. Lee (writer), J. Romita (artist), et. al., *Essential the Spider-Man*, Vol. 5, New York 2002.

¹⁷ S. Rhoades, Op.cit., p. 112.

¹⁸ J. Chapman, Op.cit., pp. 144–171; W. Lewandowski, *Brytyjski komiks polityczny*, pp. 113–114.

¹⁹ Not all of the artists mentioned here started working for American publishing houses in the second half of the 80s. Rather, the “British Invasion” on the American comics market occurred in waves.

The comics by British authors were characterized by their emphasis on the artistic side of the story. They enriched the medium’s language both in linguistic and graphic terms. Their works were addressed primarily to adult readers and contained numerous comments of a socio-political nature. The comic books such as *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and David Gibson, *The Invisibles* by Grant Morrison or *Sandman* by Neil Gaiman²⁰ have shaped contemporary comics, inspiring numerous creators searching for new means of expression.²¹

Apart from the British artists, Frank Miller should also be mentioned among the authors whose works marked the birth of the new comics. His *The Dark Knight Returns* typified a kind of superhero comics addressed at a more sophisticated reader. This tale of Batman who is devoid of illusions and who wants to save his city, while having to face indifferent media and Cold War period threats, was a bitter diagnosis of the USA under Ronald Reagan.²² Like the titles mentioned earlier in the article, it, too, demonstrated the revolutionary force of comics as a medium.

V for Vendetta

The graphic novel *V for Vendetta* was at first published in the “Warrior” magazine. Two out of its three volumes were published in 1982–1985. In 1988–1989 the creators finished their work on *V for Vendetta*, which the American DC Comics publishing house decided to publish.

²⁰ Both series were drawn by numerous artists working on only one or several issues. These included Steve Yeowell, Mark Buckingham, Sam Kieth, Mike Dringenberg and Michael Zulli.

²¹ The artists mentioned here are still active and influential to the development of the comics medium. The authors who invoke the work of Alan Moore as their inspiration include Neil Gaiman (who himself has become one of the most important creators of pictorial stories) and director, screenwriter and comics author Joss Whedon. Another artist who confessed to being inspired by the works by Moore and Grant Morrison was Nic Pizzolatto, the screenwriter of the *True Detective* series. See: R. Johnston, *True Detective – It’s All Alan Moore And Grant Morrison’s Fault*, in: bleedingcool.com, <http://www.bleedingcool.com/2014/02/18/true-detective-its-all-alan-moore-and-grant-morrison-fault/> (access: 18.07.2016).

²² See a: M. S. DuBose, *Holding Out for a Hero: Reaganism, Comic Book Vigilantes, and Captain America*, “The Journal of Popular Culture” 2007, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 915–935.

The graphic novel's writer was Alan Moore, with the graphic side of the series being created by David Lloyd.

V for Vendetta is a dystopia, in which a lone rebel known as V, hiding his face behind a Guy Fawkes mask²³, is trying to overthrow the totalitarian government ruling Great Britain after a limited-scale nuclear conflict. V, a survivor of medical experiments, making use of terrorist methods, carries out the gradual destruction of the fascist regime that thwarts the freedom of the British people in the name of providing them safety in a degenerated world. He is aided in his fight by Evey Hammond, a woman that V saved from the clutches of regime's oppressors. Observing the events from her perspective allows the readers to better understand the motives of the main character, as well as the doubts he experiences.

The story written by Alan Moore focuses on presenting the conflict of political ideologies, at the core of which lies the possibility of ensuring the freedom of an individual. In *V for Vendetta*, Moore expressed his criticism for totalitarian fascist ideology, which brutally limited individual autonomy. As an alternative, he proposed anarchism, which in his opinion seems to work best as a means of securing a wide range of individual liberties. In 2006 the graphic novel was filmed. The screenwriters of the film version decided to change the message of the whole story, adapting it to contemporary American political disputes, which met with strong opposition from Alan Moore, who argued that the British political context of the graphic novel was not appropriate for describing the socio-political reality on the other side of the Atlantic.²⁴

The graphic novel *V for Vendetta* was also to a degree innovative in terms of formal assumptions. The initiative, which is described by Alan Moore in the text *V: Behind the Painted Smile*, came from the artist:

²³ Created for the needs of this graphic novel.

²⁴ A. Moore, *Bez przywódców. Wywiad z Alanem Moore twórcą komiksu „V jak Vendetta”* („No leaders: Interview with Alan Moore, the author of “V for Vendetta” comic book”), „Inny Świat”, reprint: rozbrat.org, 28.01.2012, <http://www.rozbrat.org/publicystyka/walka-klas/3030-bez-przywodcow-wywiad-z-alanem-moore-tworca-komiksu-v-jak-vendetta> (access: 26.11.2012). The interview was published only in Polish.

Elsewhere in the same letter, Dave was giving me his ideas as to how he actually wanted to approach the strip in terms of layout and execution. These included the absolute banning of sound effects, and, as an afterthought, the utter eradication of thought balloons into the bargain. As a writer, this terrified me. I wasn't so much bothered about the sound effects, but without thought balloons, how was I going to get over all the nuances of character that I needed to make the book satisfying on a literary level? All the same, there was something about the discipline of the idea that fascinated me, and while dropping off to sleep at night I'd find it nagging away somewhere in the recesses of my cerebral swamp²⁵.

Those assumptions were fully realized by the authors. As a result, they managed to avoid infantilization of the instead invoking to the reader's imagination and perceptive abilities. A characteristic feature of contemporary comics seems to be avoidance of excessive, and sometimes simply unnecessary description of what is visible on the drawings anyway.²⁶ A competent reader, and it was competent readers that *V for Vendetta* was aimed at, will be able to fill in the missing information themselves, as was mentioned above by Alan Moore.

The characteristic feature of *V for Vendetta* as a graphic novel is its intertextuality. Alan Moore in the script, and David Lloyd in the graphic side, recall numerous cultural texts and entwine them into their own story, which for a reader at a certain level of cultural competence will serve as a factor capable of enriching the reception of the work. The frame from the bottom right corner on page 12 of *V for Vendetta* is a good example of how this mechanism is used by the authors. It contains a reference to the film *Son of Frankenstein*, which in tandem with a reference to the novel by Mary Shelley²⁷ several pages earlier,

²⁵ Ibid, V: *Behind the Painted Smile*, in: A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), *The Absolute V for Vendetta*, New York 2009, p. 373.

²⁶ See: J. Szyłak, *Poetyka komiksu. Warstwa ikoniczna i językowa*, Gdańsk 2000, pp. 91–110. The author writes in detail about the function of the narrative commentary in comics.

²⁷ A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), *Op.cit.*, p. 22. Examining the references

constitutes a reference to the main character's experiences. V, like the monster created by Victor Frankenstein, will become a child who will turn against its creators²⁸.

Comics revolution

Alan Moore and David Lloyd confront two antagonistic visions of society: the fascist and the anarchist. At the same time, they analyze the possibility of effective resistance against totalitarian rule, which tries to subdue all aspects of individual existence.

The Norsefire party seizes power in Great Britain as a result of limited-scale nuclear war.²⁹ It manages, to some extent, to free Britain from chaos by establishing a totalitarian, fascist regime. The state is supposed to work as an effective organism, one manifestation of which involves using body-part names to refer to particular services and institutions. The state's unity is the key to its survival. An organism thus has to get rid of elements which are sick, or incompatible with it, a task which is performed by the political police.

Norsefire's authority is based on the constant invigilation of its citizens. Increasingly effective invigilation is possible due to technological development, increasing computing capabilities and the birth of the Internet. In such conditions, tracking citizens, who often willingly provide information about themselves on social media³⁰, poses no particular difficulty for the political or economic elites. Written back in the 1980s, the graphic novel anticipated the present to a certain degree. In exercising power, the Norsefire regime uses the Fatum computer system, which aggregates the available data on citizens and suggests actions to be taken with respect to them. The computer described in

to other cultural texts, *V for Vendetta* and its movie version are analyzed by J. R. Keller in: *V for Vendetta as Cultural Pastiche. A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel and Film*, London–Jefferson, NC, 2008.

²⁸ On V's bookshelves one can find books closely connected to the plot of the graphic novel itself: *Capital* by Karl Marx, *Utopia* by Thomas More, *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler and *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas.

²⁹ The process of seizing power is shown in the graphic novel with the use of only a dozen frames. A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), *Op.cit*, p. 32–33.

³⁰ This is emphasized by Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon in the book entitled *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, Cambridge 2012.

V for Vendetta seems to embody the dreams of wielding power which is firm, objective, devoid of emotions, and always rational. Adam Susan, the leader of Norsefire, functions in a world delineated by a wall of screens, through which he observes the society, at the same time being deprived of direct contact with it.³¹

Moore and Lloyd also depict the totalitarian regime's need to create a new man. This they show through the prism of the *Diary*, written by doctor Delia Surridge, who runs medical experiments. The experiments are conducted at the Larkhill resettlement camp, which is a destination for individuals who do not abide by the standards set out by the party. The experiments serve as a metaphor for mechanisms aimed at creating a new type of citizen. A prisoner in cell No. V turns out to be the most promising “guinea pig”, but his plans go beyond the role his creators meant for him. Thanks to abilities gained in the course of experiments, V liberates himself from their power. His emergence, with him being purged by fire during an explosion he provoked, constitutes a symbolic moment of birth of an avenger who will bring social and political revolution³².

Liberated from the influence of the authority, he plans and conducts a revolution, which leads to the overthrow of the Norsefire party's fascist regime. The authors of the graphic novel suggest that the success of a revolution requires in-depth knowledge of the opponent's systems, ideological determination, and an honest desire to liberate the society from unjust authority. One of the criteria of the revolution's efficiency demonstrated by Moore and Lloyd is V's taking control of Susan's beloved Fatum system³³.

The revolution against oppressive authority in *V for Vendetta* is symbolized by the character of Guy Fawkes, a participant of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a symbolic rebel whose social perception has been

³¹ See: A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), Op.cit., p. 50 or pp. 245–246.

³² Ibid, p. 105–108. For more about the vision of a new man in *V for Vendetta* see also: W. Lewandowski, *Nowy człowiek, zamaskowany niszczyciel. Wizja zagłady dystopijnego państwa w powieści graficznej „V jak Vendetta” Alana Moore’a i Davida Lloyd’a*, „Creatio Fantastica” 2015, No. 3 (50), pp. 26–41, <https://creatiofantastica.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/artn-wojciech-lewandowski-nowy-czc582owiek-zamaskowany-niszczyciel1.pdf>. (access: 16.08.16)

³³ A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), Op. cit., p. 245 and 293.

evolving ever since he made his the failed assassination attempt.³⁴ V, on comic book pages, manages to do what Fawkes did not. By destroying carefully selected targets, V deprives the Norsefire regime of the possibility to invigilate and influence society.³⁵ The collapsing regime falls prey to internal struggles for the legacy after the leader, and the society becomes immersed in chaos, from which a desired political system was meant to emerge.

Importantly, Alan Moore and David Lloyd left the novel with an open ending. They did not show the success of anarchist revolution. They did not show who was saved and whether anybody's well-being was ensured. Did someone save the British society from itself? Did it return to the state from before the revolution, or has the demon of totalitarianism been driven away? The message of the novel's final frames seems to be pessimistic,³⁶ although the act of Evey taking V's role, and her intention of leading humanity towards a better world leave a bit of hope.³⁷

V for Vendetta is an example of a comics revolution on several levels. It is one of the comic books which contributed to the widening of the medium's spectrum in terms of topics. It was, on the one hand, a commentary on the British politics of that time, and, on the other hand, it expressed the belief in the power of art as a source allowing for the world to be transformed.³⁸ From the perspective of the development of comics art, *V for Vendetta* could be aimed at mature readers through the setting of certain requirements of cultural competence necessary for understanding the message of this graphic novel.

V for Vendetta is one of the graphic novels which has influenced the shape of pictorial storytelling. A suggestive political treaty, in comic book wrapping, proved that comics is a medium by means of which it is possible to discuss the most important social and political issues.

³⁴ For more about the evolving view of Guy Fawkes, see: J. Sharpe, *Remember, Remember: A Cultural History of Guy Fawkes Day*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2005.

³⁵ A. Moore (writer), D. Lloyd (artist), Op. cit., pp. 263–268.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 365.

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 356–357.

³⁸ See: A. Romero-Jódar, *A Hammer To Shape Reality: Alan Moore's Graphic Novels and the Avant-Gardes*, "Studies in Comics" 2011, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 52–54.

The conflict of ideologies and the methods of overcoming it presented by Alan Moore and David Lloyd may inspire discussions, especially in the context of debates about ensuring individuals’ safety, even at the price of limiting their freedom.

Moore and Lloyd presented an interesting portrait of revolution which leads to overthrowing a totalitarian system in favor of creating a society based on more just principles. The Guy Fawkes mask, created for the needs of the graphic novel, has now in the 21st century become the symbol of resistance against various social injustices.³⁹ It has become the symbol of an idea thanks to which one can bring about social change. *V for Vendetta* described revolutionary ferment by means of rather interesting formal measures within the story itself, perhaps providing a revolutionary stimulus going beyond the pages of the comic book.

³⁹ See: O. Kohns, *Guy Fawkes in the 21st Century. A Contribution to the Political Iconography of Revolt*, “Image [&] Narrative” 2013, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 89–104.

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PART 2

Crossing musical borders

Introduction

The volume's second part is devoted to music, as well as ways of projecting an image of singers in cinema. The authors analyze the relationships between music and social changes which took place in the 1980s, the impact of pop music on underground phenomena, and how both movements were parodied in the music of that time.

This part of the book is opened by Dariusz Piechota's article *Emancipation according to Madonna*, devoted to the analysis of the singer's compositions from the 1980s. The article refers to the second wave of feminism, dated to the 1960s and 70s, thus examining the impact that preceding phenomena exerted on the decade of our interest. Piechota argues that the topic of women's emancipation in Madonna's songs evolves. *Like a Virgin* deals with women's sexuality, *Material Girl* with the consumerism of the decade, *Papa Don't Preach* with abortion, *Express Yourself* with male domination, and *Like a Prayer* combines corporeality with the *sacrum* domain. In the 1990s, on the other hand, Madonna became inspired by the culture of sexual minorities, which in Piechota's view is a consequence of her attitude from the previous decade, manifested in her criticism of social norms and fighting taboos and stereotypes. The author does not limit himself only to the textual side of the interpreted

songs: he also refers to the music videos and films she starred in. The context of the period is outlined, which in the author's opinion should not only be seen as having influenced the singer herself, but also should inform our interpretation of her compositions; he mentions, for instance, the Pro-Life movement and movies which tackled the problem of racism.

Whereas Madonna always worked within the cultural mainstream, Kurt Cobain and his band did not gain instant popularity, instead spending a long time outside that mainstream. In the article *The origins of oblivion: Nirvana in the 1980s*, Paweł Jaskulski describes the lesser known, early period of Nirvana's existence. Whilst introducing the topic, he deliberates the reception of rock music, perceived by some as an inferior type of art; he also describes the origins of the *grunge* movement, born in the United States in the 1980s. The article presents the history of the band's first recording session, made under spartan conditions, the origins of the debut album and Kurt Cobain's own favorite songs. Jaskulski then analyzes Kurt Cobain's and Kris Novoselic's accomplishments from that decade, distinguishing the following areas: the strategy connected with how the band's songs were named, the band's contact with its fans, and its leader's self-promotion. There is also a reference to the album *Nevermind*, which, despite being released in 1991, constitutes a summary of the band's activity from the previous decade.

The notion that both popular culture and independent culture frequently function by analogous patterns seems to be confirmed by the article by Adriana Brenda-Mańkowska, entitled *The Rutles, Medusa, Spinal Tap – musical mockumentary in the 1980s*. The author examines movies belonging to the mockumentary genre, which are aimed at parodying documentaries while at the same time preserving the same poetics. Brenda-Mańkowska also emphasizes the ways of depicting the characters in such selected movies. In her view, the mockumentaries of the 1980s allow us to study the reception of artists from the decade itself (like Madonna), but also from previous decades (like The

Beatles). In addition, the author argues that the movies she analyzes reflect the changes connected to corporeality and sexuality which took place in that period (which refers us back to the analysis offered by Piechota, as described above). Her analysis may also constitute the first step to studying the quasi-documentaries of the following decade, which saw growing popularity in the wake of the premiere of *Blair Witch Project*.

The authors in this section of the volume are open to the periods neighboring upon the 1980s, which allows us to look at the decade not as a distinct, isolated period, one whose specificity is measured only in terms of extravagant outfits and hair-styles. Rather, the ninth decade of the twentieth century turns out to have intensified certain phenomena while also giving birth to new ones whose time was yet to come, for instance in the next era. In such a context, it is easier to understand both the cultural continuity of the decade as well as the controversial types of behavior, which were often ahead of their time.

Dariusz Piechota

Emancipation according to Madonna

Translated by Jacek Welniak

Madonna entered the music business in the 1980s, a period when the United States was undergoing profound social and economic changes. By the end of that decade, the artist had become the prototype of a modern woman: a businesswoman aware of her body and its needs. Importantly, however, the singer has often laid to rest the myth she herself created by playing upon stereotypes.¹ Suffice it to say that the artist's stage name "is a provocative gesture against the dogmas of the Catholic religion".² She has continued to reinvent her image with each album, which not only demonstrates a constant need to search for bodily identity, but also serves as a successful marketing strategy. A reflection of Madonna's evolution can also be found in the lyrics of her songs, which touch upon problems addressed by second-wave feminism.

Like a Virgin: the lifting of the taboos surrounding sexuality

Second-wave feminists contributed to the discussion on topics that had been previously regarded taboos, such as abortion and the female orgasm.³ The general debate was centered on female attractiveness and the related norms and expectations. Social activists gave women the opportunity to make their voices heard. Liberated from the confines of patriarchal culture, women broke through a symbolic barrier by expressing their opinions about their bodies and their needs. The issue surfaces, though in a somewhat tricky way, in the song *Like a Virgin* (1984). Its title alone sparked off concerns and controversies

¹ R. Pruszczyński, *Muzyka popularna*, in: *Encyklopedia gender. Płeć w kulturze*, edited by M. Rudaś-Grodzka et al., Warsaw 2014, p. 329.

² Ibid [own translation].

³ S. Kuźma-Markowska, *Druga fala*, in: *Encyklopedia gender*, p. 98 [own translation].

in the conservative America of the 1980s,⁴ where the pornographic movie industry was experiencing expansive growth in the field of audiovisual culture in the broad sense.⁵ The song lyrics can be interpreted as a game that Madonna is playing with the listeners by presenting what seems to be a traditional love story told from the perspective of a woman. On the one hand, she “feels like a virgin”; on the other one, she describes her internal dilemmas:

I made it through the wilderness
Somehow I made it through
Didn't know how lost I was
Until I found you.⁶

The word “wilderness” suggests a certain state of exhaustion, hidden melancholy, and depression that the singer has overcome. Finding a new object of affection marked a turning point in her life. Incidentally, this depiction is consistent with the Victorian image of a woman as “the Angel in the House.”⁷ In patriarchal traditions, the key role of a woman is to find a husband and start a family. In the song *Like a Virgin*, the artist focuses on a moment of fascination and compares

⁴ It is worth emphasizing that the song also sparked off controversy during the MTV Video Music Award gala in 2003. During her performance, Madonna, who wore an elegant black tuxedo (like a groom), passionately kissed the two other singers, Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, dressed as brides. The artist once again broke the barriers between the established normative patterns governing the behavior of women and men in a patriarchal society.

⁵ P. Kletowski, *Ukinowienie pornografii i upornografienie kina, czyli kilka słów o fluktuacji mainstreamu i porno*, “Ha!art” 2006, No. 23, pp. 122-126. The expansion of pornography was linked to the growing popularity of VHS cassettes. Importantly, the first movie distributed on a VHS cassette in 1977 was a pornographic movie. The popular culture of the 1980s, whereby the present author means videos played on MTV, started to emphasize eroticism, with a special focus on human sexuality. The music video *Domino Dancing* (1988) by Pet Shop Boys features young and scantily dressed boys against the backdrop of sea waves. On the other hand, the video *Being Boring* (1990) by the same artists shows a naked, athletically-built man. Another equally controversial artist of the 1980s was Cher, whose video *If I Could Turn Back Time* (1989) could be played on MTV only after 9 p.m. due to the artist's provocative outfit.

⁶ Madonna, *Like a Virgin*, in: Ibid, *Like a Virgin*, Warner Bros Records Inc. 1984.

⁷ E. Kokoszycza, „Anioł w domu”, *czyli o małżeństwie w wiktoriańskiej Anglii*, in: *Kobieta i małżeństwo. Społeczno-kulturalne aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX i XX*, edited by A. Żarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw 2004.

it to virginity. It is thanks to a man that she can feel reborn (“shiny and new”).⁸

It is worth looking more closely at the chorus, where Madonna compares being in love to physical intimacy:

When your heart beats next to mine
Gonna give you all my love, boy.⁹

Love makes her strong as well as very courageous (as suggested by the adjective “bold”). What stirs anxiety is that the beloved man’s love is diminishing, which terrifies the lyrical subject:

Oh your love thawed out
What was scared and cold.¹⁰

The love story presented in *Like a Virgin* resembles a typical account of a teenager in love. It should be stressed that drawing a comparison between being in love and being a virgin is an important factor in view of second-wave feminism:¹¹ the singer openly refers to her sexuality, a subject regarded as a taboo in a patriarchal society. By doing so, Madonna undoubtedly uses the song to break a certain stereotype.

Women in the world of mass consumption

Second-wave feminists also discussed the presence of women in the media.¹² In patriarchal traditions, the public sphere was domi-

⁸ Madonna, *Like a Virgin*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Second-wave feminism began in the 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. Feminists placed a special emphasis on the mechanisms of mystification to which American women were subjected when trying to adjust to the model of an ideal woman, in addition to analyzing the sources of the oppression of women in a sexist society, both in social and in individual terms. One of the greatest achievements of second-wave feminism involved highlighting the positive dimensions of womanhood. See: A. Burzyńska, *Feminizm*, in: A. Burzyńska, M. P. Markowski, *Teorie literatury XX wieku. Podręcznik*, Kraków 2007, pp. 395–397.

¹² S. Kuźma-Markowska, *Op.cit.*, pp. 98–99; A. Burzyńska, *Op.cit.*, pp. 397.

nated by men, whereas women's place was in the domestic sphere. That stereotype began to crumble in the 1980s. Importantly, that was when women established their presence in the music business, dethroning men. Famous examples included Kate Bush, Whitney Houston, Cyndi Lauper, Mariah Carey, and Kylie Minogue, to name but a few. Women began to assert their dominance not only in music, but also in movies. Interestingly, the popular television series *Dynasty* (directed by I. J. Moore et al., USA 1981–1989) preserves two antagonistic depictions of women in two leading female characters, namely Krystle and Alexis. The image of the former is deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions: Krystle is the exemplary wife of a businessman and a mother focused on looking after her family and taking care of a luxurious residence. She becomes a modern version of the Victorian "Angel in the House". Alexis, in turn, is a businesswoman, the owner of the powerful Colby-Co Oil company, an emancipated woman aware of her sexuality. Her character, created for a television soap opera, resembles the modern *femme fatale* – a woman who clashes with men in the world of business, characterized by the absence of influential women.

Movies from the 1980s also include ones that dispel the myth of a happy housewife who raises children in a house in the suburbs, a trend probably sparked off by Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). It depicts the life of a woman limited to the role of a mother and a housewife as leading not only to the sense of the hopelessness of life, but also to the development of mental disorders.¹³ One example is the movie *Desperately Seeking Susan* (directed by S. Seidelman, USA 1985), in which the protagonist, Roberta Glass (played by Rosanna Arquette), is a bored housewife who follows the ads published in a New York City tabloid that reflect the love life of a mysterious woman named Susan (portrayed by Madonna). As a result of an unexpected turn of events, the two women switch places. Roberta's life changes completely and becomes a string of intrigues, affairs, and exciting activities – in other words, everything the married woman has longed for. The eponymous Susan epitomizes the freedom that Roberta has been dreaming of.

¹³ S. Kuźma-Markowska, Op.cit., p. 97.

The image of an outgoing and independent woman was also related to the economic situation of the United States in the 1980s. Under President Ronald Reagan, the country not only overcame recession, but also reduced unemployment, embarking on a period of prosperity, booming technologies, and fascination with capitalism and consumption. The concept of Great Society “ennobled” the middle class, with the world of business becoming dominated by large corporations. Market mechanisms expanded rapidly in the areas of social life where they had previously been absent.¹⁴ Greed appeared to grow rapidly as a result of the unsatisfied desire for material possessions. Society engaged in mass consumption, also in the attempt to satisfy a growing hunger for novelty. That climate is reflected in the song *Material Girl* (1984) from the album *Like a Virgin*.

The lyrics are written from the perspective of a woman who is the center of attention, as evidenced by the numerous men who appear alongside Madonna in the video. She demands adoration, which the admirers should express by giving her expensive gifts, among other things. She even jokes that she will leave her lover unless he gives her his credit card. In the world of mass consumption, the only object of desire is a successful businessman with money (“cold hard cash”).¹⁵

The image of Madonna’s admirers in *Material Girl* is yet another interesting aspect of the song. The way men are portrayed in the song is far from the stereotypical image found in patriarchal traditions, which results from the transformation of popular normative models and the related relations between men and women.¹⁶ In Madonna’s song, the men seem to be tormented by their object of affection, which remains beyond their reach. They bring gifts, beg for attention, and analyze their behavior, admitting neglect and guilt. The woman,

¹⁴ M. Sandel *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Market*, New York 2001, p. 7.

¹⁵ Madonna, *Material Girl*, in: *Like a Virgin*.

¹⁶ Shirley Sugerman in *Sin and Madness. Studies in Narcissism* (1976) pointed to the relationships between the narcissistic personality of our times and some aspects of contemporary culture such as: strong fear of old age and death, fascination with celebrities, fear of rivalry, **deteriorating relations between men and women** [emphasis by D. P.]. Quoted after: Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York–London 1991, p. 33.

in turn, is a strong personality who is aware that men come and go. What is more, she admits that the experience has enriched her, so she gets to decide the rules of the game (“and now they’re after me”).¹⁷

The world presented in the song *Material Girl* is immersed in mass consumption, which is a priority in the life of a narcissistic society.¹⁸ As Christopher Lasch argued, the contemporary society has rejected the past, concentrating on the present, which has become one of the most important symptoms of crisis in culture.¹⁹ The (post) modern world is like a mirror every individual looks into, expecting constant approval and adoration from the audience. The contemporary mass media, by popularizing the cult of celebrities, have intensified the narcissistic dreams of being famous,²⁰ at the same time rejecting the banality of daily existence. The transformation also involved interpersonal relations, which resulted from the postulate of living for the moment in a consumer society.²¹ The cult of commerciality resulted in individuals’ loss of interest in their ego, with many falling into a delirium of desire.²² Visits to high-end shops have come to resemble pilgrimages to “the temples of consumerism”.²³ Americans living in the times of prosperity felt the urge to satisfy their needs, searching for the meaning of their existence in compensatory art. The popular motto “through the body to the soul” was transformed into “to the soul through shops”.²⁴

Madonna ironically, and at the same time provocatively, challenges the American lifestyle, which is further emphasized by the music video, in which the artist’s appearance is inspired by the movie *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (directed by H. Hawks, USA 1953), more specifically Marilyn Monroe’s performance of the song *Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend*. The final part of the *Material Girl* music video is especially

¹⁷ Madonna, *Material Girl*.

¹⁸ See: Ch. Lasch, Op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. VIII.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 21.

²¹ Ibid, p. 27. [own translation]

²² Ibid, p. 28. [own translation]

²³ The term, referring to contemporary shopping malls, was introduced by George Ritzner. Quote after: Z. Bauman, *Duch i ciało na rynku – duchowość na sprzedaż*, “Znak” 2011, No. 7–8, p. 22 [own translation].

²⁴ Ibid [own translation].

noteworthy: Madonna's love interest gives her flowers and takes her on a date in a truck. She ultimately rejects expensive jewelry and chooses the affection of a man she loves. It should be noted that during the first decade of her career the artist frequently wore a belt with the symbolic "Boy Toy" buckle, which might be interpreted as an admission that the artist was a toy in the hands of men. In view of the image of a woman aware of her sexuality in *Like a Virgin* and *Material Girl*, however, it can be assumed that it is Madonna who plays with men.

***Papa Don't Preach* (1986) as a voice in the debate on abortion**

Second-wave feminism also contributed to the society-wide debate on abortion.²⁵ Notably, feminist movements fought for women's rights to abortion in the 1970s.²⁶ The issues remained topical throughout the 1980s as a result of the activity of the pro-life movements. One only needs to recall the march that took place in Washington in 1989, when women again demanded rights to abortion. The problem of unplanned pregnancy appears in the song *Papa Don't Preach* (1986) from the album *True Blue*.

The lyrics of the song are written from the perspective of a pregnant teenage girl who is trying to reason with her father. She is trying to make her father realize that she is no longer a little girl. In a monologue addressed to her father, she appreciates his role in her upbringing: he was the one who taught her to know right from wrong. The teenage girl's situation is worth examining in more detail: on the one hand, she needs support and understanding from her father; on the other one, she does not want him to preach. This dramatic situation is further intensified by the girl's announcement that she is "keeping her baby".²⁷ One could assume from the contextual clues that many people in her surroundings have encouraged her to have an abortion.

The young girl is overwhelmed by anxiety: she feels torn between what her friends are saying and what her boyfriend declares. The baby's

²⁵ S. Kuźma-Markowska, Op.cit., p. 98; B. Umińska-Keff, W. Nowicka, *Aborcja*, in: *Encyklopedia gender*, p. 18.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Madonna, *Papa Don't Preach*, in: Ibid, *True Blue*, Sire Records Company 1986.

father promises to marry her and to start a typical family. Her friends, on the other hand, believe that she is too young to make such a serious decision. She herself is uncertain about her boyfriend's declarations, as demonstrated by the word "sacrifice". She does not want to follow the well-established social roles derived from patriarchal traditions. She probably does not feel emotionally mature or she does not accept the role of a mother and a wife. At the same time, she keeps emphasizing her love for her boyfriend.

Undoubtedly, the situation described in *Papa Don't Preach* is universal in its nature and therefore easily relatable for pregnant teenagers. In this song, Madonna resembles a pro-life activist: she assumes the role of a defender of life, believing in the strength of young women. The young girl in the song is convinced that the love of her boyfriend and the support of her family will allow her to keep the baby and happily raise it.

(Re)visions of patriarchal social roles

Second-wave feminists also began to analyze the manifestations of patriarchal culture and male domination in all aspects of the social reality. At the center of their interest lay sexism as a primary form of oppression.²⁸ Patriarchal culture preserved the stereotypical perception of the opposite roles assigned to men and women: men not only dominated the public sphere, but also remained active in the field of natural sciences, whereas women were associated with humanities and the domestic sphere. Feminists argued that the sources of male domination in the public sphere lay in domestic life, which was a miniature version of social relations.²⁹ The song *Express Yourself* (1989) from the album *Like a Prayer* fits into this discourse as one of Madonna's most belligerent and optimistic hymns.

A noteworthy element of the song is the music video, which calls into question the privileged role and position of men. The artist deliberately reverses the roles: women dominate, whereas men are sub-

²⁸ A. Burzyńska, *Op.cit.*, p. 397; S. Kuźma-Markowska, *Op.cit.*, p. 98.

²⁹ A. Burzyńska, *Op.cit.*, p. 397.

missive. Madonna is inspired by the actress Marlene Dietrich for her performance in the song: she is portrayed as the owner of a powerful company that only employs male workers. It seems significant that this powerful factory is managed by a woman who gets to decide, like the archetypical *femme fatale*, which of the workers will become her lover. She is portrayed carrying a cat, which is an allusion to Ernst Stavro Blofeld, James Bond's adversary. In *Express Yourself*, the singer is a strong woman, a guru that gives women advice on how they should treat men. At the beginning of the song, she says that women should put men and their love to the test in order to make sure that their feelings are real.

She does not need a diamond ring or a fast car to be happy. Expensive gifts do not play any role in her life, which challenges the consumption-focused nature of the American society. Madonna pays attention not only to men's physical attributes, but also to their character. She states that a man needs to understand a woman's mind ("He needs to start with your head").³⁰

The artist rejects the image of a woman as "the Angel in the House", one that does not express her feelings and needs. By using the title *Express Yourself*, she urges the generation of women to openly express their feelings. What is more, young women should persuade their men to declare their feelings. In this way, Madonna urges people in love to engage in dialogue. Undoubtedly, the artist is aware that a relationship cannot be based on male domination, which assigns women secondary roles in the relations between men and women. *Express Yourself* allows the conclusion that Madonna, just like second-wave feminists, does not define women in the men-women relations as a universal category.³¹ The song's message is undoubtedly optimistic, with Madonna highlighting the positive aspects of womanhood, picturing women as devoid of an inferiority complex in a patriarchal society. Women seem to dominate men, as demonstrated by the fragment in which the artist expresses her belief that a man will return to his girlfriend on his knees:

³⁰ Madonna, *Express Yourself*, in: Ibid, *Like a Prayer*, Sire Records Company 1989.

³¹ A. Burzyńska, *Op.cit.*, p. 397.

He'll be back on his knees
 To express himself
 You've got to make him
 Express himself³²

Between the sacred and the profane

In the late 1980s, Madonna again made her voice heard on the issue of women's emancipation, this time by boldly tapping into the issue of religious symbolism. In *Like a Prayer* (1989), she explores the sphere of the sacred, traditionally dominated by men in patriarchal culture. Importantly, the song's lyrics should be interpreted together with the music video, which shows Madonna kneeling in a church and praying for forgiveness. The prayer takes her to the times, when God was a mystery. These religious accents are further emphasized by the presence of a cross and other Catholic symbols. The artist also touches upon the problem of racism. Incidentally, the issue was addressed by the popular culture of the 1980s, for example in the movies *Driving Miss Daisy* (directed by B. Beresford, USA 1989), *Mississippi Burning* (directed by A. Parker, USA 1988), and *Ragtime* (directed by M. Forman, USA 1981). In terms of income, however, the most successful of such movies was the screen adaptation of the novel by Alice Walker *The Color Purple* (directed by S. Spielberg, USA 1985), which tells the dramatic story of a black woman named Celie, who is treated as a source of cheap labor by her husband. As the plot unfolds, Celie undergoes a metamorphosis, freeing herself from the power of her husband, Albert, whom both she and her children formally address as "Sir".

The *Like a Prayer* video shows a black man accused of murder and Madonna as the only witness of his innocence. Thanks to her testimony, he is released from prison. In the video, the issue of race is incorporated into the sacred, with Madonna kissing the statute of a black Messiah in one of the scenes.

The lyrics are very personal and intimate: the song is a monologue and at the same time a prayer, addressed to the man she loves. Just

³² Madonna, *Express Yourself*.

like in the video, Madonna uses religious symbolism: she is portrayed kneeling (like during the mass), comparing her lover's voice to "an angel sighing".³³ This mysterious voice "elevates" the woman, transferring her into another dimension, one that blurs the borders between the sacred and the profane. *Like a Prayer* relies on the classic "up-down" dichotomy: the divine is "up", as represented by Madonna's lover, whereas the earth is "down" – it is the place where "everyone must stand alone".³⁴ When the woman hears a mysterious, magnetic voice, she regains her internal peace, as confirmed by the words "and it feels like home".³⁵ Thus, the figure of home is a clear symbol of safety and harmony. The words "in the midnight hour / I can feel your power"³⁶ may refer both to the singer's lover and to God.

Numerous comparisons to a prayer are an allusion to the *Song of Songs* in the Bible, a dialogue between two lovers. In *Like a Prayer*, the dominant voice belongs to the woman, whereas the man is an enigmatic figure that appears disguised under mysterious signs. Their relationship takes on a metaphysical dimension: the lovers are connected by a bond that allows them to cross the borders between what is real and what is imaginary ("it's like a dream to me").³⁷

Summary

Madonna's evolution as a singer is reflected in the way she addressed the issue of the emancipation of women in the 1980s. As a voice of her generation, the artist moves beyond the borders of taboo, addressing the issues of female sexuality. She challenges popular stereotypes about women that are preserved in patriarchal traditions, simultaneously negating male supremacy. Madonna also taps into the notion of the sacred, emphasizing the aspect of sexuality when talking about love. As an artist, she is likewise interested in issues related to sexual minorities. One example is the music video *Vogue* (1990), inspired by

³³ Madonna, *Like a Prayer*, in: Ibid, *Like a Prayer*.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

vogueing, a dance observed in New York clubs visited by homosexuals. In the dance routine, men strike poses that mimic the behavior of models on the catwalk. During her concert tours (*The Virgin Tour*, 1985; *Who's That Girl World Tour*, 1987; *Blond Ambition World Tour*, 1990), Madonna once again invokes the roles appropriated by the male discourse, such as a tomboy, Mary Magdalene, and a platinum blonde.³⁸

In the following decade, the artist opened up to the concept of broadly understood otherness, not only by referring to the lives of those marginalized in society, but also by making the audience accustomed to what differed from the popular normative patterns. Emancipation according to Madonna is therefore a continuous process that requires the inclusion of new social groups, which results from the fact that we live in a multicultural world that forces us to get to know and accept others in order to understand ourselves.

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³⁸ R. Pruszczyński, *Op.cit.*, p. 330.

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Paweł Jaskulski

The origins of oblivion: Nirvana in the 1980s

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

In each era, on all levels of society's functioning, a certain opposition emerges – this regularity applies not only to the world of politics, but also to the domain of culture. Throughout history, a decisive role has been played by new artistic trends, paving the future cultural paths. In light of this observation, the unpopularity of certain authors can be explained. Yet, while they were creators who in no way conformed to the dominant ideas of the periods they happened to live in, should they be pushed into the margin for this reason? Among humanist scholars there is presently a certain revisionist opposition to this tendency, which has significantly impoverished the history of literature and film. Certain analogies to these problems can also be noticed in the history of Nirvana – a band whose history, dating back to 1985, will be the subject of this article.¹

“Low” vs “high” culture? Rock vs poetry?

The name of The Melvins (a band that was especially friendly with Nirvana) simply means “The Weirdoes”. Such a moniker can be interpreted as self-thematic and self-ironic, as since the beginnings of rock music members of its subsequent generations have been viewed by some recipients of culture (especially of “high” culture, although fortunately at

¹ Documentation of the band's history is continually expanding as new publications emerge: concert DVDs, bootlegs, previously unpublished recordings, etc. The 4-record box set *With the Lights Out* (3 CD, 1 DVD) was published in 2004, collecting miscellaneous recordings by the band (sides B of singles; first versions of compositions which later appeared on records, etc.). In recent years, concert-related publications have also been released on DVD: *Nirvana Live at the Paramount*; *Nirvana Live at Reading*; *Nirvana Live and Loud*.

present the artificial division between “low” vs “high” culture is diminishing in significance), as a wild, inferior, and even dangerous people who need to be tamed. In Polish culture, such concern was expressed, among others, by the poet Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz¹, who could not understand the interest in popular culture shown by his contemporary poets:

I read young poets and observe with great concern that something is going on, which could be defined as insulting culture, humiliating it, and even reducing it to the beat level of rock singing. Videoclips and hopping on stage have their place in culture, but it is not the same place that literature holds. [...] But poets should not touch it, should not get involved. If they are really poets. This is not a job for them. [...] A poem is a very serious matter, as one cannot make contact by means of a guitar and hysteric screams, whereas a poem allows for contacting one’s own existence, as well as others manners and forms of existence.²

These words excellently illustrate the diametrical differences between Rymkiewicz’s generation and that of Marcin Świetlicki³, for instance, who by contrast says: “I, unfortunately, as I get older, think of poems in a musical way, as having performed for twenty years I have become terribly rhythmical, and everything I write, even not meant to be performed on stage, becomes more and more rhythmical”.⁴ Any discursive accord between those two writers is out of the question on this count: Rymkiewicz (and possibly many other writers from his generation) probably simply does not understand what triggered the young generation’s turn towards rock music, whereas for the “brulion generation”,⁵

¹ Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (born 13 July 1935) – Polish poet, essayist, playwright and translator. Author of books on Polish romantic poets: Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki – editor’s note.

² *Terror szyderców. Z Jarosławem Markiem Rymkiewiczem rozmawiają Dariusz Suska i Tomasz Majeran*, in: J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Rozmowy polskie w latach 1995–2008*, Warsaw 2009, pp. 28–29.

³ Marcin Świetlicki (born 1961) – Polish poet, lyricist, writer, and vocalist with the group Świetliki. Associated with the “brulion generation” (see footnote below), the author of crime novels – editor’s note.

⁴ *Odpowiedź po dwudziestu latach. Z Marcinem Świetlickim rozmawiają Mariusz Koryciński, Piotr Kowalczyk oraz Paweł Jaskulski*, „Odra” 2013, No. 6, p. 56.

⁵ The “brulion generation” – a collective term referring to the Kraków-based quarterly

mass culture was a point of reference which was as natural as the Romantic period was for Rymkiewicz.⁶

Grunge – pure noise?

Grunge emerged as a separate subgenre of rock music in the 80s. It involved a contamination of pop music by several genres; mostly punk rock, less frequently heavy metal, more frequently hard rock. In the literature it has been established that the first person who used the term *grunge* in this context was Mark Arm⁷, better known as a vocalist and guitarist with grunge pioneers Green River, and with Mudhoney, where he still plays today. In 1981, the magazine *Desperate Times* held a contest for the most overrated band from Seattle. The readers sent their votes, with one of the opinions being “I hate Mr. Epp and The Calculations! Pure grunge! Pure noise! Pure shit!”⁸

The short letter was signed with the name Mark McLaughin, which was the real name of Mark Arm, who was himself in fact the founder of Mr. Epp and The Calculations.⁹ The whole situation was typical of the satirical profile of *Desperate Times*, and several years later Bruce Pavitt from Sub Pop record company used Arm’s term to promote the extended play entitled *Dry as a Bone* recorded by Green River. He promoted it as raging grunge, something devastating for the morality of the whole generation, and Mudhoney’s music as ultra-sludge, as grunge, as something heavy as a glacier, dirty punk.¹⁰

On the other hand, Bartłomiej Chaciński, in his article *Grunge, czyli dwie dekady z syfem (Grunge: Two Decades with Filth)*, cites Jonathan Poneman from the Sub Pop record company, as suggesting that the first

literary magazine *brulion*; despite diverse styles and interests of the individual writers, they shared a common denominator of departing from existing cultural patterns and turning instead towards popular culture, which in turn was linked to the political changes then playing out in Poland (the late 1980s and early 1990s) – editor’s note.

⁶ J. Klejnocki, J. Sosnowski, *Chwilowe zawieszenie broni. O twórczości tzw. pokolenia „bruLionu” (1986-1996)*, Warsaw 1996, pp. 139–140.

⁷ G .G. Gaar, *Nirvana bez tajemnic*, Warsaw 2013, p. 54.

⁸ M. Yarm, *Everybody Loves Our Town. A History of Grunge*, New York 2012, p. 195.

⁹ G. G. Gaar, *Op.cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

person to use the word *grunge* was a PR employee Howard Wuelfing, who used to be a music journalist at *New York Rocker*.¹¹ Poneman cites 1981 as the date of Wuelfing's publication, which is the same year when the term *grunge* was used by Mark Arm. From the perspective of time, and first of all in the name of historical truth, what we can state most safely is that, most probably, two people used an identical term at a similar time and in a similar context.

In the second half of the 1980s grunge bands were decisive to the strength of the underground rock culture, and it was gradually gaining significance. New bands were being formed, with their members acting towards imparting internal cohesion to the genre. Nobody competed against each other; on the contrary, one could speak of a certain consolidation within the same, unique, music movement.¹²

Cobain's favorite songs

Before we move on to outlining the origins of Nirvana, it is worth taking a look at its leader's favorite songs, as it turns out – despite the fact that Nirvana was a musical avant-garde in the 80s – that pop music diffused into their songs.

All band members were concerned for even the heaviest of songs to still be properly melodic. The pop character of *Nevermind* was strongly emphasized, both by the creators and by the critics.¹³ This was due not only to how the album sounded, but also to the way in which it was promoted, which included all possible elements: raging from music videos (made for the following songs: *Smells Like Teen Spirit*; *Come as You Are*; *Lithium*; *In Bloom*) and concerts at festivals and in big arenas all the way to sales of T-shirts, pendants etc.

Apart from the classics of hard rock such as *Back in Black* by AC/DC, Kurt Cobain's favorite songs also included records of totally

¹¹ B. Chaciński, *Grunge, czyli dwie dekady z syfem*, <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnik-polityka/kultura/1519874,1,nirvana-pearl-jam-soundgarden---20-lat-temu-narodzi-l-sie-grunge.read> (access: 19.07.2016).

¹² G. G. Gaar, Op. cit., p. 55.

¹³ I. Robbins, *Nevermind*, in: *Cobain*, edited by Z. Mikołajewska, Poznań 2000, p. 20.

different styles, evidencing the musician's diversified musical tastes.¹⁴ Interestingly, some of those songs were so dear to him that they became part of Nirvana's concert repertoire. *My Best Friend's Girl* by The Cars is one of the first compositions that Cobain learnt to play on the guitar.¹⁵ This would not be a source of such dramatic tension, were it not for the fact that a cover of this new-wave song began the last performance in the band's history, in Munich on 1 March.

A similar story is associated with the song *Seasons in the Sun* by Terry Jacks. Nirvana made their own version during their stay in Brazil, where they played two concerts in early 1993: in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The first of them is believed to be the band's worst performance in the period of their greatest fame, as is recalled by a technical support team member, Earnie Bailey.¹⁶

Unable to cope, the musicians tried to get out of the hopeless situation with a surprisingly large number of covers; the setlist included *Run to the Hills* by Iron Maiden, *Rio* by Duran Duran, *We Will Rock You* by Queen, *Kids in America* by Kim Wilde; *Heartbreaker* by Led Zeppelin, and *Should I Stay or Should I Go* by The Clash. This last cover perfectly reflected the dreadful situation Nirvana was in: by means of The Clash's composition, Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl were asking the audience whether they should already leave the stage on that evening. The question seemed rhetorical, as the concert lasted an hour, which given the musicians' extremely low disposition was not a bad result anyway. Had it not been for the threat of not being paid, the performance would have probably been even shorter.

The remaining titles among Kurt Cobain's favorite songs are less surprising; *Don't Bring Me Down* by Electric Light Orchestra, compositions by the Bay City Rollers, and the main theme from the award-winning 1960s series *The Monkees*,¹⁷ not to mention Cobain's frequently emphasized affection for The Beatles.¹⁸

¹⁴ G. G. Gaar, Op.cit., pp. 19–20.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁶ See: E. True, *Nirvana. Prawdziwa historia*, Czerwonak 2014, p. 423.

¹⁷ G. G. Gaar, Op. cit., pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ *Kurt Cobain: interview for "Rolling Stone"*, interviewer: D. Fricke, in: *Cobain*, p. 66.

The discography of the band from Seattle is filled predominantly with heavy compositions, with electric guitar in the leading role and with very strong beats by the drummer, but they are also distinguished by their melodicy. Its song-like character was the subject of a separate composition entitled *Verse Chorus Verse*. Although the lyrics are rather pessimistic, the pattern of traditional repetitions of verses and chorus allows us to sense a certain game being played with the listeners. We are rebellious, angry, but our songs are predominantly pop-inclined – the musicians seemed to be saying.

First steps on stage – *Demo with Dale*

Cobain and Novoselic, under the name of Ted Ed Fred, prepared a record which was a true prelude to their debut: *Demo with Dale*, named in honor of the drummer of The Melvins, Dale Crover, who agreed to take part in the project.¹⁹ His involvement served as an additional recommendation for the two unknown musicians, who were searching for a recording studio. The choice fell on the Reciprocal recording studio in Seattle, where the phone was answered by producer Jack Endino. *Demo with Dale* should be remembered not only because it included such songs as: *If You Must*; *Downer*; *Floyd The Barber*; *Paper Cuts*; *Spank Thru*; *Hairspray Queen*; *Aero Zeppelin*; *Beeswax*; *Mexican Seafood*; and *Pen Cap Chew*. *Downer* and *Spank Thru* had already been on the tape by *Fecal Matter Illiteracy Will Prevail* (1985), whereas the songs *Floyd The Barber* and *Paper Cuts* could be heard on *Bleach*, and the majority of material was intended for the mixtape *Incesticide*.

The ten songs mentioned were recorded within just several hours, on 23 January 1988.²⁰ This date should be considered symbolic, as the day when Jack Endino recognized Cobain's additional sense... the studio sense. That was probably why he decided to keep the original tape, with the band receiving a copy.²¹ Working in a studio with Nirvana was later recalled in positive terms by Butch

¹⁹ G.G. Gaar, Op. cit., pp. 32–34.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 33.

²¹ Ibid, p. 34.

Vig (the producer of *Nevermind*), and Steve Albini (the producer of *In Utero*).²²

Crover's guest appearance was related to the problems that Cobain and Novoselic had been experiencing for a long time with finding a proper drummer, in fact since the formation of the band.²³ They regularly placed press ads, with increasingly explicit content, eager to finally lure someone extraordinary.²⁴ Such an ad was put in the magazine *The Rocket* shortly after *Demo with Dale* was recorded, when it turned out that the drummer's duties to his original band would no longer let him accompany his less experienced friends.

The wording of the ad in *The Rocket* serves as evidence of the Nirvana members' holistic approach to their work, which was treated seriously, yet with a dose of negligence at the same time. Mockery appeared to be a useful tool for presenting their polemic stance towards the music industry, which they knew from the inside, and within which they for a moment reached an indisputably high position. Thanks to it, Nirvana members were able to secure contracts for friendly bands, such as Meat Puppets and The Melvins.

In the meantime, Jack Endino sent out copies of *Demo with Dale*. One of them went to Jonathan Poneman from the record company Sub Pop.²⁵ Together with Bruce Pavitt, they decided to watch the band's live performance. Cobain was stressed by the scrutiny and did not manage to handle the pressure, so the several concerts observed by Poneman and Pavitt almost ended in fiasco.²⁶ Despite that, the musicians were trusted to continue working with Sub Pop and record their first single in their career for the alternative record company.

Along with those events, Nirvana's problems with finding the right drummer had ended. The perfect candidate turned out to be Chad Channing, who joined the band to start recording in at the Reciprocal studio in June 1988. Side A included the cover of a song by a Dutch group Shocking Blue entitled *Love Buzz* (the song's title served

²² S. Black, *Nirvana. W holdzie Kurtowi*, Cracow 1994, p. 52. *Classic Albums: Nirvana – Nevermind* (directed by B. Smeaton, USA 2005).

²³ S. Black, *Op.cit.*, p. 20.

²⁴ See: G.G. Gaar, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 37.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 41.

as the name for the whole single). The musicians were initially against that, instead wanting to present their own material, but finally had to agree with the record company.²⁷ *Love Buzz* for many years remained a staple of Nirvana's concerts, and its psychedelic-pop sound was in accordance with Cobain's and Novovselic's interests. Side B contained an original production, *Big Cheese*. Both songs later appeared on their debut album *Bleach*, although the single version of *Love Buzz* is distinguished by a intro in the form of sound collage, which Cobain liked and eagerly returned to while performing live.

During the concert in Rio de Janeiro on 23 January 1993, the band presented a 17-minute version of the song entitled *Scentless Apprentice*, based mostly on improvised collages.²⁸ Cobain achieved the desired effects by means of a guitar and an amplifier, and the intro to *Love Buzz* was a studio documentation of this aspect of the artist's interest. For ten seconds (originally for forty-five), we hear a montage of voices cut from TV and radio programs. Some voices were sped up, which gives the impression of fast-forwarding a VHS tape, and the whole piece represents a funny introduction to a riff played on bass guitar.

The influential magazine *Melody Maker* declared *Love Buzz*, released in November 1988, to be its single of the week,²⁹ and Sub Pop kept up the momentum, as in December the listeners were already presented with the mixtape *Sub Pop 200*, which included material by Nirvana.³⁰ This time the choice was *Spank Thru*.

***Bleach* as a distinctive piece of work**

It is worth taking a closer look at Nirvana's first album, *Bleach* (1989). The LP has passed the test of time, especially in its digitally re-mastered version, but it lost its significance in the early 90s after the release of *Nevermind*, with Cobain himself emphasizing the fact on a number of occasions. At an acoustic concert in New York, for instance, when announcing the song *About a Girl* he reminded the audience

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ E. True, Op.cit., p. 425.

²⁹ J. Hector, *The Complete Guide to the Music of Nirvana*, London 1998, p. 146.

³⁰ G.G. Gaar, Op.cit., pp. 44–46.

that it was from the band's first album, which most people then did not have (*MTV Unplugged in New York*, directed by B. McCarthy, USA 2007).

Direct comparison of *Bleach* with its successor *Nevermind* will not lead to constructive conclusions. Nirvana's second album was an overwhelming hit, with Cobain openly saying that in hindsight he would not have released the *Nevermind* material all at once, but instead spread the songs out over fifteen years.³¹ *Bleach* will not stand up to this confrontation, if only for being an amateur production (its cost was \$600)³²; in comparison, the cost of producing *Nevermind* was \$135,000 and it was mixed by the producer of thrash metal group Slayer, Andy Wallace.³³ Having signed a contract with Geffen Records, Nirvana enjoyed a budget which was satisfactory for all parties involved in new album's production.

Rather, here we take the view that it is much better to view Nirvana's debut album as a separate whole, as a completely distinct piece of work. The band was developing according to certain logic. When announcing the *In Utero* album, Krist Novoselic emphasized that fans should not expect a repeat of *Nevermind*. A similar tone was struck by Cobain, when asked about recording plans after the release of *In Utero*.³⁴

In order to experience the true discreteness of *Bleach*, it is better to forget about its 1989 version and enjoy the digitally re-mastered version. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the album's premiere, a special anniversary edition entitled *Bleach (Deluxe Edition)* was released.³⁵ The comfortable sound quality of this edition makes it finally possible to trace out a melody in this occasionally cacophonous music, which constitutes a harbinger of the structure of most songs from *Nevermind*. The melodic aspect and references to pop music are especially visible in *About a Girl* and *Love Buzz*.

³¹ Kurt Cobain: interview for "Rolling Stone", p. 66.

³² Ch. Mundy, *Bleach*, in: *Cobain*, p. 16.

³³ M. Azerrad, *W sercu i umyśle Nirvany*, in: *Ibid*, p. 39.

³⁴ Kurt Cobain: interview for "Rolling Stone", p. 69.

³⁵ W. Hermes, *Nirvana: Bleach (Deluxe Edition)*, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/bleach-deluxe-edition-20091102> (access: 20.07.2016).

What should be remembered in the context of *Bleach* is the largely unknown music video for *School*, dating from 1990.³⁶ Cobain used a fragment of a performance by former teen idol Leif Garret, a star of sitcoms such as *The Odd Couple* and *Family*³⁷ (interestingly, Garret sang a cover of *Smells Like Teen Spirit* on the album by The Melvins entitled *The Crybaby*). In the background projection of the video there are fragments of Shaun Cassidy's TV show, the tap dancing duo from *Star Search* program (in which Britney Spears started her career) and – last but not least – a group of Christian bodybuilders called The Power Team. Nirvana's members appear wearing shabby clothes, which stands in strong contrast with the stylish outfits presented in the fragments used by Cobain. Nirvana's image from that music video was a preview of a new period in rock culture, marked by flannel shirts, worn-out jeans and smelly sneakers. But all that was yet to come.

Words: names and lyrics

Also worthy of some examination are the name-giving patterns used by Nirvana's leader. Throughout his whole career, Cobain consistency named his bands and individual songs in a provocative manner. The force of *Fecal Matter* has not diminished over time, nor has that of the title *Illiteracy Will Prevail*, which is a tribute to Nirvana's punk roots, but first of all a result of Cobain's sense of humor, which is hardly ever mentioned. However – as the musician's close friend reports – at that time he recorded a cover of *Material Girl* by Madonna.³⁸ Cobain's version, in comparison to the original, had a different semantics, namely, the material girl from the title was replaced by *Venerable Girl*.

Such naming practices were deliberately used in 1993 in the *In Utero* album, which besides the literal meaning seems to be more accurately interpreted as “return to the womb”.³⁹ Such a reading hints at

³⁶ G.G. Gaar, Op.cit., p. 68.

³⁷ *The Top 25 Teen Idol Breakout Moments*, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-top-25-teen-idol-breakout-moments-20120511/leif-garrett-1978-20120511> (access: 19.07.2016).

³⁸ G.G. Gaar, Op.cit., p. 25.

³⁹ S. Black, Op. cit., p. 55.

additional layers in Nirvana's last studio record. The womb returned to, in this case, is the source from which the musicians' tastes originated. In the compositions from *In Utero* Cobain returned to punk inspirations. The bass guitarist Krist Novoselic warned before the premier that the album would be radically different from *Nevermind*.⁴⁰ He also expressed his satisfaction with the release of *Incesticide* mixtape, thanks to which listeners had a chance to get used to the band's cruder sound, with the melodic line being not exposed as much.

Cobain's lyrics, on the other hand, oscillate around the same patterns, as had been the case since *Bleach*. He was always interested in the same topics: dark humor, corporeality and elements of social diagnosis – which were present, among other songs, in *School*, in which Cobain draws an analogy between the rules of school and the rules of adult life.⁴¹ The lyrics were not yet mature enough, the humor in *Floyd the Barber* might be amusing in its simplicity.⁴² It would, however, be unfair to classify the lyrics as naïve, as they are the expression and natural result of a certain stage in Cobain's career. Apart from that, he did not really consider the lyrics of his songs important, claiming that when he wrote he did not know what he wanted to say, so analyzing the lyrics or trying to explain them did not make sense.⁴³

Cobain's lyrics – at least the ones without autobiographical traces – should be treated with great reserve. What the artist said about his own lyrics, cited above, seems to fully justify such an approach. In the case of Nirvana, it is predominantly the music that the artists want to present to the audience. According to the definition by Wojciech Siwak, "each rock composition functions on three levels: the basic two are music and lyrics, and the third one is the manner of performance at a concert, so the stage level".⁴⁴ However, they do not always function as equal components. Cobain's rather skeptical conclusions concerning his own lyrics should not come as a surprise, as the tradition of American rock music is based on simplicity of words, easily remembered

⁴⁰ M. Azerrad, *Najnowsza kolekcja hałasu na '93*, in: *Cobain*, p. 48.

⁴¹ Ch. Mundy, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ S. Black, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁴ W. Siwak, *Estetyka rocka*, Warsaw 1993, p. 59 [own translation].

due to repetitions, and the popularity of the topos of love (including in its physical sense).⁴⁵ In this sense, Cobain in his early lyrics did not go beyond the thematic canon which – according to Grzegorz Brzozowicz – was shaped as early as in the 1930s, back when the bluesman Robert Johnson sang mostly about sex and drugs.⁴⁶

Cultural policy

The band was very consistent in its vision of cultural policy. The copies of *Love Buzz* were numbered by hand and accompanied by very specific press materials written by Cobain, in which he made provocative observations about the poor condition of alternative music while at the same time insisting that his band was not interested in repairing the situation, only in making money.⁴⁷

Attaching such a declaration to a historical, debut single in one's career seems quite a risky move, even from today's perspective. Although it is hard to deny Cobain a sense of humor, he was at the same time very bold, as it was impossible then to predict the single's future, as well as the band's further career. We are thus dealing with a classic example of a non-compromising artistic attitude on all available levels. Nirvana, as a representative of alternative circles, is pointing their middle finger to the establishment, but also to their own backyard, distancing themselves from their own natural environment.

The biographical legend of Kurt Cobain does have an influence on the band's unflinching position in the pantheon of rock music. A handy tool for analyzing the role of the artist's biography in his creative development can be found in a study by the Russian theorist of literature Boris Thomashefsky. In 1923, he wrote:

The question itself is very clear: do we need the poet's biography in order to understand his work, or not? [...] [F] or a writer with

⁴⁵ W. Królikowski, *Mowa wzmacniaczy*, part 1: *Definicja i treść tekstu rockowego*, „Magazyn Muzyczny/Jazz” 1982, No. 4, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁶ M. Rychlewski, *Autentyzm kontra forma, czyli pierwiastki ludowe i modernistyczne w kulturze rocka*, „Polonistyka” 2005, No. 3, p. 144.

⁴⁷ E. True, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

a biography, the facts of the author's life must be taken into consideration. Indeed, in the works themselves the juxtaposition of the texts and the author's biography plays a structural role. The literary work plays on the potential reality of the author's subjective outpourings and confessions.⁴⁸

The matter was presented in a similar context two years later by Ramon Fernandez. Analyzing the example of Stendhal, he presented the phenomenon of the emergence of literature in autobiography, and a manipulation of one's own image, which in itself allowed for the construction of artistic value.⁴⁹ It can be said that in the case of this tool, time had a positive impact on its quality. At present, self-creation in art is a factor which is, if not necessary, then at least very frequent. In a similar manner, Cobain, as a contemporary artist, maintained a certain image of a person heading towards self-destruction. A good example here is the song *I Hate Myself and I Want to Die*. When Nirvana fans were worried by the health of their favorite band's leader, Cobain decided to use that as the album's title.⁵⁰ Eventually, the album was released under the title *In Utero*, and the vocalist emphasized that he had wanted to make a controversial joke.⁵¹ When the electrician Gary Smith discovered Cobain's body on 8 April, the joke became a classic of dark humor.

Summary – Smells like the 80s

The main mode of the rock culture of the 80s was the British new wave of heavy metal, or above all, the stunning success of Guns N'Roses. Those are actual cultural phenomena which clearly outmatch Nirvana's achievements from the same decade, but as we have sought to show here, the band which was to shake the world in September 1991 had in

⁴⁸ B. Thomashefsky, *Literature and Biography*. In: *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: An Introductory Anthology*, edited by V. Lambropoulos and D. Neal Miller, New York 1987, p. 116.

⁴⁹ M. Żurowski, *Stendhal i powieść francuska dziewiętnastego wieku*, "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" 1960, volume 3, issue 2, pp. 43-76.

⁵⁰ G.G. Gaar, *Op. cit.*, s. 255.

⁵¹ *Kurt Cobain: interview for "Rolling Stone"*, p. 65.

fact been forged in the second half of the 80s. It was then that it gained experience during club performances, concerts at campuses, and its first recording sessions. For many, the remnants from that period are holy relics, and the hardships of searching for them can surprise even the most determined nirvanologists. But it is worth it. Without those relics, Cobain would not have come up with the idea of recording a pop album entitled *Nevermind*, and later its rabid opponent *In Utero*.

To sum up, without the supply base of the 80s Nirvana would not have become the coolest thing since sliced bread, as predicted by the editorial board of “*CMJ New Music Report*”.⁵²

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⁵² J. Apter, *The Dave Grohl Story*, London 2006, p. 59.

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Adriana Brenda-Mańkowska

The Rutles, Medusa, Spinal Tap – musical mockumentary in the 1980s

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

The mockumentary formula and quasi-documentary as a parody

The quasi-documentary is inseparably linked to its documentary prototype. All documentaries have a common feature of being meant as a recording of actual events, even if the recording is to be manipulated.¹ Mirosław Przyłipiak views the documentary in opposition to feature film. Of all the features characterizing the former genre (such as, for instance, its social goals, topic, methods of work on set and textual features, or style), the most important and desirable one is the kind of impression it makes on the viewer: “the impression of truth, direct contact with reality, being in the place of action”.² The impression of authenticity of a given recording results from viewing a documentary as “a source of truth, the vestiges of a given event, or a legal testimony”.³

To attain a sense of authenticity, this tendency may be reinforced by a certain weakness on the part of the viewer: an irresistible desire to feel real emotions in contact with the film. This becomes more prominent when the viewer is a child. Children tend to be unaware of the mechanics by which audiovisual arts operate, and are often unable to distinguish between presented images and the real world. This is demonstrated by an experiment described in the book entitled *Media*

¹ A controversial one here is, for instance, *Triumph des Willens* (Germany 1935) made by Leni Riefenstahl as a documentary, but making use of instruments characteristic of a propaganda film.

² M. Przyłipiak, *Poetyka kina dokumentalnego*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 21 [own translation].

³ *Ibidem*, p. 8 [own translation].

i ludzie *The Media Equation: How People Treat Computers, Television, and New Media like Real People and Places*. It illustrates the difference between a child's and an adult's perception of an object presented on a TV screen: an adult will realize that the bag of popcorn seen by him is virtual and thus is not subject to laws of physics, whereas a child, asked what will happen if the TV set is flipped upside down, will answer that the popcorn will fall out of the bag.⁴

Quasi-documentaries are made with the aim of making use of such phenomena in mind. It allows a certain manner of the film's reception to be suggested to the viewer. The force of the suggestion may vary, depending on the intensity of the stylistics, as the makers' intended goals may also vary – ranging from the common mystification⁵ of a documentary, which involves copying the instruments used in documentaries available on the Internet without any commentary (as in the case of films posted on YouTube), to engaging a viewer in a sophisticated game of believe-disbelieve with his emotions,⁶ when they are simultaneously provided with grounds for and against believing in the picture's authenticity.

As Bartłomiej Paszyk mentions in *Słownik gatunków i zjawisk filmowych*, the first mockumentary, *A Hard Day's Night* (directed by L. Lester, Great Britain), was made in 1964.⁷ It depicted a day spent by The Beatles members, made in a manner which was jokingly exaggerated. Created in cooperation with the actual band members, the film contributed to the band's new, alternative image. It was done

⁴ B. Reeves, C. Nass, *Media i ludzie*, Warsaw 2000, p. 13.

⁵ Such instruments had been used even before the genre of quasi-documentaries emerged, for instance in the famous case of Cottingley Fairies, where pictures manipulated with by two girls were accepted by many people as evidence for the existence of elves, see: *The Cottingley Fairie*, hoaxes.org, http://hoaxes.org/photo_database/image/the_cottingley_fairies/ (access: 04.07.2016).

⁶ It also involves action such as displaying the information on the materials 'authenticity' before the film starts. This can be done in a simple form – in *The Blair Witch Project* (directed by D. Myrick, E. Sánchez, USA 1999) it is a black screen with white text, or in more sophisticated fashion – in the film *The Fourth Kind* (directed by O. Osunsanmi, USA, Great Britain 2009), there is a prologue in which the actor Mila Jovovich introduces herself with her real name, explaining that her role is only a reconstruction of actual events (which is not true, as the 'authentic' materials are also fictional in the movie).

⁷ B. Paszyk, *Mockumentary*, in: *Ibid, Słownik gatunków i zjawisk filmowych*, Warszawa – Bielsko-Biała 2010, s. 218.

so successfully that even today on websites devoted to entertainment one can still encounter fragments of the film, presented, for instance, as quotations from actual, absolutely serious interviews with the band's members.⁸

Despite still ongoing definition-related disputes concerning the mockumentary genre⁹ and its links to comedy, it cannot be denied that its satirical element appears frequently and is easy to distinguish. As a consequence, the convention is a perfect response to parody-makers' needs. Even mockumentaries which are not comedies are often a pretext for creating pastiches and caricatures, often even including pornographic elements.¹⁰

Game of fiction in a quasi-biographical movie

An analysis of biographical movies concerning musicians allows the following recurring composition patterns to be distinguished:¹¹

1. pictures, films and documents from the main character's childhood;
2. interviews with their family and friends;

⁸ For instance, such fragments appeared in 2014 on a satirical website Joemonster. See: *Żartownisie z The Beatles*, joemonster.org, http://joemonster.org/art/26342/Zartownisie_z_The_Beatles (access: 21.07.2016).

⁹ Bartłomiej Paszyk in *Słownik gatunków i zjawisk filmowych* clearly emphasizes that the mockumentary genre only includes comedy films, with all other works referring to the convention of quasi-documentary, such as horrors and thrillers, remaining outside it. The notion is not universally accepted by scholars; its validation by citing the meaning of the English word 'mock' can be disproven by arguing that the word can be perceived here in terms of its second meaning ('mimic'), which does not justify the necessity of including elements of comedy, see: B. Paszyk, op. cit.

¹⁰ We are thus talking about both parodies/compilations of films making use of the quasi-documentary formula, such as *Scary Movie 5* (directed by M. D. Lee, USA 2013), and strictly pornographic movies, based on the plot of an existing quasi-documentary, which include elements of a mockumentary only due to mimicking, such as *The Blair Witch Project: A Hardcore Parody XXX* (directed by D. Gibbles, USA 2011), a movie inspired by *The Blair Witch Project*.

¹¹ This phenomenon can be noticed, for instance, in films such as *Lemmy* (directed by G. Olliver, W. Orshoski, USA 2010), *God Bless Ozzy Osbourne* (directed by M. Fleiss, M. Piscitelli, USA 2011), *Jimi Hendrix – Voodoo Child* (directed by B. Smeaton, USA 2010). Interestingly, most of the same elements still appear in contemporary biographical films about musicians, like for instance *One Direction – This is Us* (directed by M. Spurlock, USA 2013).

3. interviews with their co-workers and other stars from the business;
4. including fragments, or only titles of articles from the press, record covers and other souvenirs;
5. recordings from concerts and music video fragments;
6. interviews with the artists themselves, and their memories.

The elements enumerated above allow for the consistent construction of the legend of a star personality, under the pretext of merely relating his or her life and work. A perfect example here can be found in the biographical film *God Bless Ozzy Osbourne* (directed by M. Fleiss, Mike Piscitelli, USA 2011), in which by means of archival materials and pictures, along with recordings of interviews with the artist's family members and people from the same circles, the filmmakers present the economic and spiritual poverty in which John Michael Osbourne grew up in, his parents' poor house and the sense of omnipresent unemployment and lack of prospects around him. It constructs a narrative about a man from the backwoods, who after attaining success and wealth compensates himself for extreme hardship in his childhood years.

The possibility of basing a movie on well-established patterns makes it easier to use the same elements for creating an irreverent version, whereas exposing the auto-creative mechanisms perfectly corresponds to the content based on parody and pastiche.

Levels and elements of imitation

A quasi-documentary's imitation of a documentary, in the case of parodies of musicians' biographies, often takes place on several levels, already at the moment of plot composition. The patterns of instruments used for that purpose can be presented as follows:

1. real band – fictional events;
2. fictional band – fictional events;
3. parody of an existing film about a real band;
4. directed material, edited to make the impression of being completely spontaneous.

How did the 1980s influence the specific sub-genre of quasi-documentary? In order to answer that question, we should first note that the mood of that period was presented in documentaries that depicted musicians' biographies, or their parodies, of shorter or longer duration.

The Beatles – The Rutles

Hard Day's Night (directed by R. Lester, Great Britain 1964) was not the only quasi-documentary devoted to the lives and the legend of The Beatles. While in its case the parody elements had to be accepted by the band members (as the musicians themselves starred in the film), in *The Rutles – All You Need Is Cash* (directed by E. Idle, G. Weis, USA 1978), made by a director who had no connection to the band, the humor was more mercilessly aimed at The Beatles. It is enough to look at characters' names, which were direct references to those of The Beatles members, containing unpleasant or mocking wordings. The lineup of The Rutles was evolving, yet its main members were Ron Nasty, based on John Lennon, Dirk McQuickly, based on Paul McCartney, Stig O'Hara, meant to be reminiscent of George Harrison, and Barry Wom, referring to Ringo Starr's name-change.¹²

All You Need Is Cash was made in 1978, when The Beatles already had the well-established position of international stars. While presenting the band's bumpy road to fame, the film makes use of the instruments typical for retrospective biographical documentaries. Among the elements used, there were shots of the band members' family homes, sordid clubs in which they gave their first concerts, fragments of interviews, articles and music videos. The whole is combined with narration by a reporter telling their story. *All You Need Is Cash* ridicules the musicians' financial and personal problems, use of illegal substances (The Rutles members abuse tea, which is presented as a dangerous stimulant). The absurdity of the humor allows one to immediately notice the comedy formula of the film, but the resemblance to a documentary is consistently preserved throughout the plot.

¹² Ringo Starr was born as Richard Starkey, whereas the member of The Rutles changed his name from Barrington Womble to Barry Wom.

The popularity of *All You Need Is Cash* allowed The Rutles to start an actual musical career, during which they released four records. The details of their career will be revisited below.

Spinal Tap

Another example of a fictional band which then enjoyed an actual career is Spinal Tap. It was a true phenomenon: a band which was a compilation of vices and humorous characteristics of American rock bands from the late 1970s to the 80s. *This Is Spinal Tap* (directed by R. Reiner, USA 1984) is a film which covers the band's history, from its set-up through all the difficult moments: the drummer's abduction by a UFO, the use of wholesale amounts of drugs, erotic scandals. They mostly appear as retrospective tales, as the narration of *This Is Spinal Tap* is provided by a documentary-making fan of this formerly well-known, and now almost forgotten band, supplemented by interviews with the artists and archival materials.

Throughout their stage activity, the band's image undergoes drastic changes. While allowing the filmmakers to ridicule similar tendencies, this also made it possible to present a certain overview of the categories of the bands parodied.

At the beginning, Spinal Tap are reminiscent of The Beatles – after changing their name from The Originals to New Originals, and later to The Thamesmen, they perform on stage with characteristic hairstyles, in suits and ties stylized to look like the British band. The parody effect is augmented by the presentation of black and white recordings with simple notes and lyrics which were pastiches of songs by The Beatles. A perfect example here can be found in a song from the discussed period, entitled *Gimme Some Money*:

Stop wasting my time
You know what I want
You know what I need
Or maybe you don't

Do I have to come right flat out and tell you everything?
Gimme some money, gimme some money;¹³

which refers to the song by Lennon, entitled *Give Me Some Truth*:

I'm sick and tired of hearing things
From uptight, short sighted
Narrow-minded hypocritics
All I want is the truth
Just gimme some truth.¹⁴

Next, the band adopts a rock image, under the name of Spinal Tap – the outfits are replaced by tight leather, the band members wear sharp makeup and have long hair and moustaches, the song lyrics start to directly refer to eroticism (“My love gun’s loaded and she’s in my sights. Big game is waiting there inside her tights”).¹⁵

Another turning point comes when group members enter flower-children era, adjusting the group’s image to the look of the hippie subculture. The stage decorations become psychedelic pictures in pastel colors, the Spinal Tap members wear flower-patterned vests, and the song lyrics refer to the protest songs of the period:

Flower people walk on by
Flower people don’t you cry
It’s not too late
It’s not too late.¹⁶

Also, stylizations after bands like Black Sabbath, Queen, Aerosmith and Guns N’Roses often constitute such an intense conglomerate of im-

¹³ Spinal Tap, *Gimme Some Money*, metrolyrics.com, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/gimme-some-money-lyrics-spinal-tap.html> (access: 20.07.2016).

¹⁴ J. Lennon, *Give Me Some Truth*, metrolyrics.com, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/give-me-some-truth-lyrics-john-lennon.html> (access: 20.07.2016).

¹⁵ Spinal Tap, *Big Bottom*, metrolyrics.com, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/big-bottom-lyrics-spinal-tap.html> (access: 20.07.2016).

¹⁶ Spinal Tap, *(listen To The) Flower People*, metrolyrics.com, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/listen-to-the-flower-people-lyrics-spinal-tap.html> (access 20.07.2016).

itated elements that particular references are impossible to distinguish. Generally, the characteristic long hairstyles and fringes refer to the ones sported by such stars as Ozzy Osbourne, Freddie Mercury, and Steven Tyler. The image is also constructed by tight leather outfits with metal studs, imitating the ones of Black Sabbath, and even such details as the hat worn by the drummer, almost identical to the one worn by Slash, the Guns N'Roses guitarist.

Madonna – Medusa

The biographical film *Madonna: Truth or Dare* (directed by A. Keshishian, USA 1991) was made during the singer's scandalizing *Blond Ambition World Tour* in 1991. It includes recording from concerts, as well as off-stage ones, conversations with the star and people from her inner circle, as well as black and white retrospective recordings of Madonna's private life. *Truth or Dare* became an inspiration for a quasi-documentary entitled *Medusa: Dare to Be Truthful* (directed by J. Brown, J. Fortenberry, USA 1991). Its script is an exaggerated, satirical version of the original. The imitation goes as far as to the key scenes (like, for example, the scene of simulating masturbation on stage while performing *Like a Virgin* – in this version *Like a Video*), dialogues, and the music itself. The two compositions share similarities of both melody and lyrics. The original "Like a virgin touched for the very first time, like a virgin with your heartbeat next to mine"¹⁷ was replaced with words "Like a video I want to play you all the time, like a video your close-ups make me feel so fine"¹⁸. The rhythm and rhyme pattern of the original were preserved. Undeniably, despite the filmmakers' focus on presenting Medusa-Madonna, the detailed projection and parodying of elements of the original created a pastiche of the mood of the musical 1980s, as summed up in *Blond Ambition*.

While in *Truth or Dare* Madonna complains about the rainy season, Medusa struggles with a season for volcanic eruptions. The humor

¹⁷ Madonna, *Like A Virgin*, tekstowo.pl, http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,madonna,like_a_virgin.html (access: 20.07.2016).

¹⁸ J. Brown, *Like A Video*, tekstowo.pl, http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,julie_brown,like_a_video.html (access: 20.07.2016).

presented in such a way is a direct response to the instruments used by Madonna. *Truth or Dare*, showing her private life at its most intimate moments, from mourning to eroticism, still shocked the viewers. Creating one's own image as a woman from show business who violates social taboos, at the same time presenting scenes marked with emotion, created a certain contrast, which could be conveniently used in a mocking version.

Crossing the borders of fiction

One phenomenon that is inseparably associated with quasi-documentary forms involves filmmakers' attempts to cross the borders of fiction and the real world, made in order to engage the viewer into a sort of a game.¹⁹ It is no different in the case of musical mockumentary, concerning biographical topics. Making characters similar to actual people or bands involves a number of measures, such as:

1. selecting actors who are physically (as well as in terms of vocal traits) as similar as possible to the actual musicians;
2. using characterization, hairstyles and costumes modeled those used in a documentary;
3. naming characters in a way which is a clear reference to the actual names, or giving names which sound similar;
4. creating parodies of musical compositions with lyrics slightly altered, or ridiculing the original compositions;
5. supplementing the characters' lines with characteristic, ridiculing mannerisms;
6. including interviews with real artists talking about fictional characters, like in the case of Mick Jagger from the Rolling Stones, talking about his supposed cooperation with The Rutles.

In the case of musical movies, the phenomenon is sometimes taken to an even more surprising dimension, when the members of completely

¹⁹ Examples involve having characters named after the actors who played them, for example in *Paranormal Activity* (directed by O. Peli, USA 2007); creating websites presenting the film's plot as actual events, like in *Apollo 18* (directed by G. Lopez-Gallergo, USA 2011); using the names of actual places, like in *The Blair Witch Project*; or presenting local beliefs, like in *The Fourth Kind* (directed by O. Osunsanmi, USA, United Kingdom 2009).

fictional bands gain popularity in the real world as a new band. Both The Rutles and Spinal Tap crossed the borders of fiction and became full-fledged participants of the music market. In both cases, this resulted in a rather absurd situation of a band having two collections of records, one created for the purpose of the movie,²⁰ and thus existing only as single compositions and a list of record titles, and the actual one, released as records available for sale. The bands also did concert tours, gaining new fans.

Various accessories connected with the band, created first thanks to the movie, and later on as a result of the band's independent existence – such as T-shirts,²¹ posters, or even figurines²² of band members, were sold in the real world. For fans especially interested in Spinal Tap song lyrics, there is also a website generating random quotations.²³

Musical mockumentary – a summary

Since the beginnings of their existence, mockumentaries have been serving as a perfect tool for ridiculing the vices of artists and the music industry, as well as the related movies. Parodies may thus be treated as a voice in the discussion on documentary movies, and not only as mocking compositions, responding to viewers' needs in terms of comedy. Why is this form suitable for artists' biographies? It is crucial to notice the role of parody as a tool for analyzing an original composition. The psychological mechanisms mentioned at the beginning of the text, which encourage viewers to treat a documentary as a recording of reality, are exposed by a parody. A parody imitates art, which is why its recipient notices the imitation of life by imitation-art, not a true recording that would be impossible to tamper with.

²⁰ In case of the Rutles, the fictional list of records released is based on parodied titles of songs and records by The Beatles, such as *A Hard Day's Rut* (a reference to *A Hard Day's Night*) or *Sgt. Rutter's Only Darts Club Band* (*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*).

²¹ Available, for instance, in the online store Redbubble, see: [redbubble.com](http://www.redbubble.com/shop/rutles+t-shirts), <http://www.redbubble.com/shop/rutles+t-shirts> (access: 21.07.2016).

²² Available for purchase on Ebay, see: [ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com/itm/ORIGINAL-Spinal-Tap-Dolls-Derek-Small-Nigel-Tufnel-David-St-Hubbins-figures-/121447088827), <http://www.ebay.com/itm/ORIGINAL-Spinal-Tap-Dolls-Derek-Small-Nigel-Tufnel-David-St-Hubbins-figures-/121447088827> (access: 21.07.2016).

²³ Generator available on: <http://www.unc.edu/~jdsmith/rstlg/> (access: 21.07.2016).

The formula of structuring a story about a rock or pop star, full of pathos and containing patterns which are easy to distinguish,²⁴ constitutes a basis for depicting celebrities in a *profanum* rather than *sacrum* convention. This is perfectly demonstrated by the term “rockument” coined in *This is Spinal Tap*, combining the elements of a documentary, parody, and references to rock music.

The 1980s introduced bold erotic humor into cinema. In sitcoms such as *Married... with Children* (USA 1982–1997) the characters use unrefined expressions to talk about having sex (‘going upstairs’) or breasts (‘balloons’), and in the comedy *Porky’s* (directed by B. Clark, USA 1982) teenagers’ first erotic experiences were presented. It would seem that scenes such as when Madonna simulates fellatio using a glass bottle would be difficult to exaggerate, but Medusa boldly reenacts the scene using an enormous watermelon. When comparing documentaries from previous periods, a much greater reluctance when joking on such matters can be noticed. The loosening of the traditional standards of what can be shown on stage and in film, which occurred in the 1980s, set the bar rather high for the erotic gags of a mockumentary. Jokes about The Rutles manager’s obsession about the tight trousers worn by the band members, scenes involving Medusa having sex with the camera operator while he holds the camera, Spinal Tap members talking about their excesses: these are direct products of the loosening of the sexuality taboo in the films which were the inspirations for making them.

We can conclude with some remarks concerning the future of the musical-biographical mockumentary. If the genre is to continue to appear in cinemas, it must certainly undergo constant change and updating of the techniques used. The contemporary development of technology and new media makes it possible even for amateurs to create movies, often with extremely low budgets, and to post them on the Internet. Services such as YouTube, Metcafe and Dailymotion allow content to be shared with the audience for free, sometimes even for a profit. It is hardly surprising then that one can encounter paro-

²⁴ Its conventionality is a convenience for parodists, as the viewer recognizes humor due to familiarity with the convention, and is often supported by knowledge about the band which is an inspiration for both films.

dies of such compositions as *Hello*²⁵ by Adele, *Please don't leave me*²⁶ by Pink and *Wrecking Ball*²⁷ by Miley Cyrus, to name just a few. Also, more elaborate movies are being made, containing not only parody of an existing composition, but their own plot, such as the almost 4-minute-long parody of a documentary on a fictional artist nicknamed G.O.Ś.K.A.²⁸ The main goal – imitating a documentary film – is attained only when the satirical counterpart makes use of the same methods as the original. Any innovations introduced in making documentary movies must therefore be reflected by quasi-documentaries.

²⁵ Adele – *Hello Parody! Key of Awsome #103*, youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emG3YhU9Efg> (access: 06.07.2016).

²⁶ *PINK! Please Don't Feed Me – A Parody of P!nk's Video – Please Don't Leave Me*, youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL1pSGWQY6Y> (access: 06.07.2016).

²⁷ *Miley Cyrus "Wrecking ball" PARODY*, youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NltmauJLP-A> (access: 06.07.2016).

²⁸ Kabaret LIMO, *Gośka*, youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVzFx-jVtEi4> (access: 06.07.2016).

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PART 3

The past directs the future

Introduction

The volume's final part is devoted to cinema. The authors analyze different genres and movements: horror, thriller and comedy, as well as neo-noir and "night" movies. The common denominator of all the articles is the study of cinema's ability to be a resonator of the reality in which films are made. Did social and cultural transformations influence the cinema of the 1980s, and if so, how? This question is interesting especially due to the fact that the movies made in the period were generally referred to as escapist.

The part is opened by an article by Kamil Kościelski, entitled *Pastiche in the shadow of parody – a certain adventure of the American horror films of the 1980s*. Kościelski starts his analysis by outlining the features of American horrors from the 1970s, which he considers the most important. The movies reflected the social anxiety of that period, thus corresponding to the cinema of opposition. The popularity of New Adventure Cinema led directors to refrain from addressing social issues. In this context, Kościelski takes a look at the horror films of the 1980s, which are clearly tinted with pastiche, at times tending towards parody – these above all include *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* by Tobe Hooper, as well as *Re-Animator* by Stuart Gordon and *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* by Stephen

Chiodo. As Kościelski argues, this trend is on the one hand evidence of the genre's maturity, as parodying it would not have been possible without a rich film tradition, while on the other hand it reflects the tendencies present in the American culture from the period of Reagan, which was reluctant to focus on daily problems. In the author's opinion, the movies discussed create a new formal quality, encouraging a certain redefinition of classic views on pastiche and parody.

Joanna Kostana, in her text entitled "*Retromania*" of the 1980s: *On different faces of neo-noir cinema*, notices – much like Kościelski does – that the directors of the 1980s were familiar with the cinematic tradition. The author's goal is to extract the nostalgic factor from their work. To do so, she analyzes selected compositions from the so called second wave of neo-noir cinema: *Body Heat* by Lawrence Kasdan, *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott and *Blue Velvet* by David Lynch, not only in terms of narrative tools, but from the aesthetic perspective as well. She outlines the connections between neo-noir and its predecessor, noir cinema, dated to the 1940s and 50s. Kostana also pays attention to the features that are emphasized or omitted in the neo-noir movies of the 1980s. She ponders how neo-noir corresponds to the specificity of the decade, including in terms of postmodern philosophy. This question raises another one: if we assume that the American noir was an answer to the wartime and post-war chaos, does this mean that its being revisited later represented analogical evidence of another crisis? For Kostana, however, neo-noir differs from postmodernism in its susceptibility to updating, being a new type of film art – existing between the past and the present.

A different view of the cinema is presented by Agnieszka Kiejziewicz in her article entitled *Dystopia, new society and machines. The 1980s as the period of emergence and development of cyberpunk cinema*. She defines cyberpunk as a genre which is an attempt to answer questions related to the future of humanity, the directions of development of science and the fears which appear in the face of political crises. Unlike Kościelski,

Kiejziewicz chooses a genre whose emergence, in her opinion, would not have been possible without the appearance of new technologies. Her article constitutes an introduction to the topic of cyberpunk, also presenting the moments when its most important assumptions emerged and developed, which can be noticed in movies from the 1980s. Kiejziewicz first mentions the directors' literary aspirations, emphasizing the role of writers such as Bruce Bethke, Bruce Sterling, Philip K. Dick and William Burroughs. Next, she enumerates the features that constitute the genre: the vision of a dystopian city, cyberspace, and the motif of cyborgization. Towards the end of the article, she describes the poetics of cyberpunk movies from the 1980s, referring to the issues of post-nationalism, post-industrialism and post-humanism.

The topic of neo-noir, the *mise en abyme* of cinema and its potential to comment on reality return in the article *Into the cinema? Yuppie nights, innocent noirball and new classicism*. Mariusz Koryciński here describes several movements in 1980s cinema that are similar, yet differently named by various scholars. He emphasizes that many productions which are included into those movements – like, for instance, *Into the Night* by John Landis and *After Hours* by Martin Scorsese – are similar not only in terms of their main character, a yuppie, but also in terms of their references to the history of cinema and a plot which takes place at night. In this context, the author refers to two Polish works: *Ćma (The Moth)* by Tomasz Zygałło, and *Nocna korekta (Nighttime Proofing)*, an unfilmed novel by Jolanta Słobodzian and Marek Kreutz. Koryciński also wonders whether the movies that he describes reflect – as some commentators claim – the crises of the period in which they were made. For this purpose, he refers to productions from other decades of the 20th century (*La Strada*, *Ewa chce spać*, *La Notte*, *Eyes Wide Shut*), comparing their reception with the reception of the movements from the 1980s which he analyzes. Next, by referring to the crime novel *Drugie Dno (Hidden Meaning)* by Dominik Damian, he combines the basic

motifs, proposing a new interpretation of cinema at that time in terms of the notion of film classicism.

As can be seen, the articles collected in this part of the volume share a preoccupation not only with the question of cinema's potential for commenting on reality (or reflecting reality), but also with describing directors' tendency to refer to the tradition of the 10th muse. It also seems that that for some authors the ability to tackle contemporary problems lies in a skillful transformation of classic compositions, or at least in the universality of certain patterns, movements or poetics. The tactic of drawing upon cinema's past, popularized during the 1980s, would become subject to theoretical reflection in the following decade, earning the name of postmodernism in cinema.

But that is another story.

Kamil Kościelski

Pastiche in the shadow of parody – a certain adventure of the American horror films of the 1980s

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

American cinema at the turn of the 1960s and 70s

The turn of the 70s and 80s brought a change in the tone of stories told by American cinema. Many movies made in the previous decades had reflected the mood of the countercultural rebellion in the United States. Horror filmmakers were eagerly involved in the public debate on the most crucial problems of the period. For instance, a conflict which played out in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) by George Romero, between a black character, Ben, and one of the white characters and which was clearly emphasized in the movie, was viewed in the context of the discussion on racial segregation in the United States and the Afro-Americans' fight for their rights.¹ *Dawn of the Dead* (also directed by Romero, 1978) takes place in a shopping mall, becoming a vicious example of criticism of consumerism, in which zombies become a literal symbol of mindless throng whose existence is limited to material goods.² The main character of *The Stepford Wives* (directed by B. Forbes, 1975) discovers that due to a male conspiracy all the women of the town were replaced by robots, which took on

¹ See: K. R. Phillips, *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*, Westport, Connecticut, London 2005, p. 95; R. Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction*, Oxford 2008, p. 95; K. Kościelski, „Cóż za wspaniały dzień na egzorcyzm...” *Amerykańskie kino grozy przełomu lat 60. i 70.*, Wrocław 2014, pp. 35–37.

² See: B. Accomando, *George A. Romero Interview*, in: *George A. Romero: Interviews*, edited by T. Williams, Jackson (Mississippi) 2011, p. 160. See also: I. Kolasińska, *Kiedy spojrzenie Gorgony budzi upiory: Horror filmowy i jego widz*, in: *Kino gatunków: wczoraj i dziś*, edited by K. Loska, Kraków 1998, pp. 125–126; P. Sawicki, *Odrażające, brudne, złe: 100 filmów gore*, Wrocław 2011, pp. 235–236; D. J. Skal, *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*, New York 2001, p. 309 and 376; K. Kościelski, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

the roles of perfect housewives. Forbes's movie embodied the nightmare of representatives of the second wave of feminism, who protested against the position of women in the American society of the 60s and 70s.³

The range of subjects touched upon by the horror movies of that period indicates their countercultural nature. The horrors of the 60s and 70s perfectly fit into the 'cinema of opposition' movement, for reasons that include their questioning of the social order and traditional values. An example which demonstrates the creators' negative attitude to the dominant conservative ideology of the Americans can be found in the change in the manner of depicting the family. Andrzej Pitrus explains that in a classic horror movies:

[T]he most common set of positive values are those associated with family and the institutions that support it. One extremely popular motif is a small, provincial town being attacked by an 'alien'; a town inhabited by idealized American families. The fight against the intruder [...] always finishes with the restoration of the order from before the catastrophe. The trial that the characters are put to leads to the elimination of individuals remaining outside the system created by family values, and to the act of 'testing oneself' by the most valuable individuals.⁴

In the horror movies of the 1960s and 70s evil often hides within a family community, which is why some authors use the term *family horror* with regard to the movies from that period.⁵ Consequently, evil placed within the heart of a family has a symbolic dimension, if not to say a manifestative one. In classic horrors or Hollywood films of the 1930s and 40s, a family represents a traditional system of values, allegedly a refuge and a guarantee of social order. The patholog-

³ See: K. Kościelski, Op. cit., pp. 62–63.

⁴ A. Pitrus, *Gore – seks – ciało – psychoanaliza. Pułapka interpretacyjna*, Siedlce 1992, p. 19 [own translation].

⁵ P. Hutchings, *Historical Dictionary of Horror Cinema*, Lanham, Maryland 2008, pp. 112–113. The disturbing image of a family in the horror films of the 60s and 70s is also mentioned by: R. Worland, Op. cit., pp. 93 and 208–209; I. Kolasinińska, Op. cit., pp. 116–117 and 119; A. Has-Tokarz, *Horror w literaturze współczesnej i filmie*, Lublin 2011, pp. 103 and 107–108.

ical relationships between the fanatically religious mother with her daughter in the film *Carrie* (directed by B. De Palma, 1976), as well as the recurring motif of the demonic image of a child – for example in *The Exorcist* (directed by W. Friedkin, 1973), *It's Alive!* (directed by L. Cohen, 1974), *The Omen* (directed by R. Donner, 1976) – are a conscious or automatic expression of Americans' growing distrust for the former icon of law and order.⁶

The Last House on the Left (1972) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) by Wes Craven expose the hypocrisy of petit bourgeois families, which under the pretext of normality demonstrate a capability to commit inhumanities matched only by their depraved antagonists. The comparison between the director's childhood memories with his opinion about *The Hills Have Eyes* leads to the conclusion that the behavior of characters from both of Craven's films from the 70s may reflect the condition and attitudes of the Americans themselves. In one of his interviews, the director spoke about his growing up in a religious middle class family, whose members did not talk openly about many issues, with some topics never mentioned. There was no place for conflicts, with many feelings forcefully suppressed. It was not until he grew up that he noticed that the Americans as a nation act in an identical manner.⁷

Craven's remarks are close to his opinion on the Carters from *The Hills Have Eyes*. The director pointed out that the characters do not share all information with each other, in order not to cause concern, but as a result they reduce their chances of survival in confrontation with a family of cannibals.⁸ This seeming pretext is in fact a reflection of the American society, whose hypocrisy and short-sighted attitude intensifies problems.⁹ Another factor which encourages reading the movie in the context of contemporary culture and circumstances is the surname of the main characters, a reference to the name of the US president at that time, Jimmy Carter. Pitrus also emphasiz-

⁶ See: K. Kościński, Op. cit., pp. 44–61.

⁷ See: R. Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond*, New York and Chichester, West Sussex 2003, p. 114.

⁸ L. Russell, *Ideological Formations of the Nuclear Family in "The Hills Have Eyes"*, in: *The Philosophy of Horror*, edited by T. Fahy, Kentucky 2010, pp. 113–114.

⁹ See also: J. K. Muir, *Horror Films of the 1970s*, Vol. 2, Jefferson, North Carolina and London 2007, pp. 479–481.

es that the negative image of a family in the horror films of the 70s is an act of opposition:

[T]he things which are “sacred” in horror films are negated at the very beginning. The situation is illustrated perfectly by *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, where the main collective character is a family, but it is not the target of an “alien’s” attack, but itself poses a major threat. The Sawyers are a degenerated, brutish, family of cannibals.¹⁰

The director of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), Tobe Hooper, admitted to have seen much oddness and hellishness among the members of his community, which was why he wished to create a movie depicting a dysfunctional family.¹¹ Nobody expected, however, that the family’s caricature could take such a macabre and shocking form. Whereas in Hooper’s movie one can find other elements which evidence his engagement on social issues, when making a continuation of his legendary series in the 80s the director clearly rejected all aspirations to comment on the American reality, tending instead towards self-parody. A comparison of both parts of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* serves as a great starting point for discussing the horror films of the two decades, at the same time demonstrating the spirit of each of the periods.

Self-irony of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*

Hooper’s ironic attitude towards his own roots is a perfect reflection of the perversity with which he refers to certain motifs from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. In the film which starts the series, the family consisted only of men, with the honorary seat during the terrifying feast being taken by the grandfather of the cannibal family. His special position is indicated by the priority the old man was given in a kind of a ritual murder of the last victim. Robert Burns, the art director of the film’s first part, expressed his surprise at the lack of female

¹⁰ A. Pitrus, Op. cit, pp. 19–20 [own translation].

¹¹ 0.12’35”–0.13’05”; D. Gregory, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre: The Shocking Truth*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_Ug_9UYu_Y (access: 23.06.2016).

characters in a three-generation family living on a farm.¹² According to a joking response from the movie's co-writer, this issue is a family secret.¹³ The lack of women in the degenerated family is also surprising due to the fact that *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was to a large extent based on the life of Ed Gein.¹⁴ The key motif concerning this serial murderer was his pathological bond with his despotic mother, which was an inspiration for the *Psycho* novel by Robert Bloch,¹⁵ and it's even more famous movie adaptation directed by Alfred Hitchcock.¹⁶ While working on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, Burns prepared a skeleton of the cannibals' grandmother, but the character did not appear in the script and, in comparison to the film's second part, her position in the family was marginalized.¹⁷ The source of degeneration in Hooper's movie lies within the family, which has a patriarchal structure.

In *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986), in turn, the cannibals' family is again mostly represented by men, but the ending of the movie's second part clearly emphasizes the extraordinary status of the old matriarch, who rests on the throne with a chainsaw on her lap. The cannibals' grandmother sits at the top of a structure which is reminiscent of a tower, which is why in the family hierarchy she seems to occupy a position close akin to that of a queen bee or ant. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* thus suggests that the cannibals' family is in fact a matriarchy. The exaggeration evident in the presentation of the grandmother's image signals that the series' second part has a self-ironic character.

¹² 0.12'05"–0.12'15"; D. Gregory, Op. cit. Wood also notes the lack of a female character in the cannibals' family. R. Wood, Op. cit., p. 82.

¹³ 0.12'15"–0.12'20"; D. Gregory, Op. cit.

¹⁴ It is mentioned by Tobe Hooper. See: 0.09'15"–0.10'45"; D. Gregory, Op. cit. The cannibalism attributed to Gein, the defiling of graves and the interior of his horrifying "residence", where parts of human bodies were adopted as decorative elements – all these motifs associate the film by Hooper with Gein's history. Another reference to the real-life killer is the character of Leatherface, who wears a mask made of human skin. Ed Gein tore off the skin of his victims, making "a costume of human skin" for himself. See: J. Stukan, *Seksualni seryjni mordercy*, Zdzeszowice 2014, p. 136.

¹⁵ R. Worland, Op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁶ The case of Gein is discussed in detail by Jarosław Stukan. See: J. Stukan, Op. cit., pp. 130–136.

¹⁷ 0.12'25"–0.12'35"; D. Gregory, Op. cit.

Another mocking scene is the one of Leatherface attacking one of the female characters in a radio studio. The murderer touches the woman's body starting from the ankles, continuing to the knees, until finally touching her intimate area with the murder weapon. While making this ambiguous gesture, Leatherface licks his lips a number of times, looking at the female character with great interest. The terrified woman asks in a shaky voice: "How good are you?", which in the context of this fragment may be interpreted as an attempt to sway the tormentor and make him think about his behavior. The female character's words, however, are ambiguous when taking into account the erotic context of the whole scene. The further development of events intensifies the impression. The woman says "You're really good. You're the best", when Leatherface touches her bosom with a chainsaw and, being clearly electrified by those words... he turns on the chainsaw again. Leatherface demolishes the studio, sparing his victim, then afterwards points his murder weapon towards her, while at the same time making motions that simulate sexual intercourse.

The traces of eroticism visible in the confrontation of the two characters are a kind of mockery of the psychoanalytic interpretative key eagerly invoked by horror filmmakers and scholars dealing with horror movies. According to the Freudian explanation, all oblong and sharp murder weapons (knives, daggers, saws, etc.) were interpreted as references to the phallic motif,¹⁸ whereas murdering a woman on screen was read as a fulfillment of the male fantasy of sexual domination over her.¹⁹ The rightness of this analogy (apart from the aforementioned ambiguities) is also confirmed by one of the shots, in which Hooper emphasizes that the chainsaw touching the woman's crotch really is at the level of Leatherface's genitals.

¹⁸ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by J. Strachey, New York 1965, pp. 389–390. Worland, on the example of a number of movies, discusses the occurrence of phallic motifs (among others in *Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) R. Worland, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60, 189, 218, 224, 228, 234 and 237.

¹⁹ Robin Wood, when discussing the film by Hooper, even points to the strong association between the chainsaw and the phallic motif. He also claims that the tormentors' violence and sadism are a degenerated manifestation of their sexuality. The explanation also seems to be true for *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* (directed by M. Powell, 1960). See: R. Wood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 82–83. See also: N. Rehling, *Extra-Ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity and Contemporary Popular Cinema*, Lanham 2009, pp. 229–230; R. Worland, *Op. cit.*, p. 228.

The creator's distance to the story told is also shown in the scene of a chainsaw duel between the character played by Dennis Hopper and Leatherface, which is a joking reference to swashbuckler films. Hopper plays Lieutenant "Lefty" Enright, who for many years had been investigating the case of his two missing relatives – the cannibal's victims from the movie's first part. Thus, he is a combination of a character driven by the desire to avenge the death of his relatives from the famous series *Death Wish*, and a determined guardian of law reminiscent of *Dirty Harry*. Each of the archetypical figures decided on their own, or against their superiors' will and approval, to chase the perpetrators of murder, which shows that Hooper here makes a reference to action movies whose characters who are forced to seek justice on their own.

As the abovementioned examples prove, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* is full of allusions and quotations – along with references to various genre conventions. In the second part of the legendary horror movie, however, it is visible that the references are half-joking in nature. Some elements and plot references in Hooper's movie may be defined as pastiche, whereas others give the impression of parody, often balancing at the overlap of the two conventions. That is why the clarity of our study requires a more precise definition of the two terms.

Pastiche and parody

According to *Słownik filmu (The Dictionary of Film)* movie pastiche is:

[...] stylization, imitation of an original style, at the same time exaggerating its characteristic features, unlike parody, **it lacks the intention of mocking** [highlighting – K. K.], it is based on an intertextual game with the viewer, requires competence, is one of the determinants of post-modern aesthetics, it marks the end of innovativeness.²⁰

²⁰ K. Loska, *Pastisz*, in: *Słownik filmu*, edited by R. Syska, Kraków 2010, p. 138 [own translation].

Parody, on the other hand:

[...] means mocking imitation of an existing composition or artistic genre. The aim of parody is mockery of the manner of presentation, by means of comic exaggeration and overrepresenting drawing the features of a recognizable original. Means such as a quotation, inversion, surprise, exaggeration, interruption and playing with language **are most frequently used for the purpose of mocking** [highlighting – K. K.] the conventional artificiality, lack of resemblance to real life and lack of quality of the parodied compositions.²¹

The definitions of the two terms are basically in agreement in relation to the basic issue – whereas pastiche is “a composition imitating another work, but with **no intention of mocking** [highlighting – K. K.]”, parody means “stylization means aimed at **mocking** the composition in question [highlighting – K. K.]”.²² However, even in this case some varying opinions appear. For instance, the compendium *Literatura świata: Encyklopedia PWN* also presents pastiche as “a literary composition or a work of art made in order to purposefully imitate a creator, school or epoch, with no intention of forgery (yet showing close resemblance to a forgery)”, at the same time adding that “it is **occasionally created with a joke in mind** [highlighting – K. K.]; by exaggerating the features of the imitated style, [pastiche] intensifies the expressiveness and synthesizes its formula”.²³ A similar definition is not found in a substantial number of dictionaries, but this discrepancy should be analyzed for two reasons. Nycz emphasizes that:

The perspective [...] of understanding the phenomenon of pastiche, as can be thought, is still paving the way for itself – with the growing number of “pastiche-like” artistic phenomena,

²¹ J. Ostaszewski, *Parodia filmowa*, in: *Ibid* [own translation].

²² J. Paszek, *Pastisz, Parodia*, in: *Słownik wiedzy o literaturze*, edited by R. Cudak and M. Pytasz, Chorzów 2005, p. 286 [own translation].

²³ *Literatura świata: Encyklopedia PWN*, edited by J. Skrunđa, E. Zuberbier and A. Tarnowska, Warsaw 2007, p. 547 [own translation].

of pastiche performing new roles, as well as the expansion of the term's use on extra-literary (and extra-plastic) phenomena of contemporary art (music, theatre, dance, film)²⁴.

This remark reminds us that the manner of understanding literary terms (such as pastiche) is subject to change and that art often makes scholars redefine certain phenomena and concepts. This makes one wonder about the case of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*. The exemplary motif involving Lieutenant Enright is clearly based on the archetype typical of a certain group of action movies, of a character who decides to deliver justice on his own, due to the ineptitude of the authorities. The distinguishing feature of this type is being driven by personal motives, and a determination which often verges on the edge of the law, or indeed openly breaches police procedures. Hooper clearly outlines Enright's image as, on the one hand, a person obsessed with revenge and, on the other hand, an individual acting in accordance with his own elementary sense of justice. Hooper's movie is a pastiche of the aforementioned action movies due to the "sharpening of features"²⁵ characteristic of the discussed genre (the character type, the motif of revenge, etc.).

The duel between Lieutenant Enright and Leatherface should be viewed from a different perspective. It incorporates not only a clash between the protagonist and the most recognizable antagonist, reminiscent of swashbuckler films, but also the motif of the protagonist helping an endangered heroine at the last moment. While freeing her from the hands of her tormentors, the protagonist is forced to fight a duel, the important point of which is spectacular choreography. The hero, standing on a table, is forced to jump, so as not to be struck by the opponent's sword, or to lower his head to save himself from a mortal blow. All those elements are present in the movie by Hooper, but the excess of "features of the recognizable genre" is accompanied by "comic exaggeration", as the swords have been replaced by chain-

²⁴ R. Nycz, *Tekstowy świat: poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze*, Kraków 2000, pp. 231–232 [own translation].

²⁵ *Literatura świata: Encyklopedia PWN*, p. 547.

saws.²⁶ The sequence is thus a parody of swashbuckler tales, but also a deliberate – as we will argue below – gesture of goodwill towards the audience, which at that time was charmed by New Adventure Cinema.²⁷

It is more difficult to categorize the scene taking place between Leatherface and the radio speaker. Some horror filmmakers (such as John Carpenter, Brian De Palma, Alfred Hitchcock) made use of Freudian symbolism.²⁸ Hooper, in turn, exaggerates some elements of this movie tradition, but it is impossible to tell for sure whether it is for the purpose of mocking those motifs, or merely a jocular reference to them. As a result, the scene sits on the verge between pastiche and parody of the formula in question. This ambiguous situation is also repeated in a number of other compositions from that period.

The example of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* is symptomatic for any discussion of the horror movies of the 80s. The film reflects, first of all, a change in the mood of the stories told. Tobe Hooper demonstrates irony towards his own work, and such a view on the genre's past becomes characteristic for other titles of the decade. The horror of the 80s is rich in quotations and allusions to other works, demonstrating the creators' knowledge of the past traditions of horror cinema – with the references often going beyond horrors, as we will demonstrate below. From the perspective of the ongoing discussion, it seems crucial that pastiche and parody are two poles which determine the poetics of Hooper's films. The two conventions also turn out to be a point of reference for other horror movies of the 80s. This does not mean, however, that a similar key as in the case of a movie by

²⁶ J. Ostaszewski, Op. cit., p. 138.

²⁷ The notion of New Adventure Cinema was introduced into Polish cinema analysis by Jerzy Płażewski, who distinguished three characteristics of the productions he described: depoliticization, parody, and the perfection of their technical execution. He dated the beginnings of this type of cinema to the late 1970s and early 80s, turning his attention mainly to Hollywood productions (including those of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas) – editor's note.

²⁸ The associations between oblong objects and the phallic motif are confirmed by statements made by the filmmakers themselves – for example those of John Carpenter about *Halloween* (1978) (see: R. Worland, Op. cit., p. 237) or William Friedkin about *The Exorcist*: W. Friedkin and W. Crouch, *Interview with William Friedkin*, in: *Studies in the Horror Film: The Exorcist*, edited by D. Olson, Teller Court, Lakewood, Colorado 2011, p. 71.

Hooper – which involves pointing to scenes which are marked with parody, pastiche, or ones which combine both types of poetics – can be applied to any horror film of the 80s. Yet, pastiche and parody do constitute two poles between which the filmmakers of the decade operate.

Horror in the shadow of pastiche and parody

The Return of the Living Dead (directed by D. O'Bannon, 1985) is another example which demonstrates the abandonment of the serious tone of the previous decades. The co-writer of *Night of the Living Dead*, Dan O'Bannon, wrote a novel which was a continuation of the film by George A. Romero. When adapting the book, he made major changes, deciding to introduce elements of comedy, based on linguistic and situational humor. For instance, the worker of a medical warehouse, while talking to his colleague, claims that *Night of the Living Dead* was based on actual events, and the undead bodies were stored in special containers in the basement. When the characters later discover that it is impossible to kill an undead in the way Romero presented in his film, one of them screams in terror "You mean the movie lied?" The motif points to the *mise en abyme* character of *The Return of the Living Dead*. It turns out to be even more deliberate that Dan O'Bannon used a drama situation that was conventional for zombie movies of that time, present, for instance, in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* by George Romero.

The films tell the story of a group of people who find themselves in an enclosed space and who search for a way to escape from the undead breaking in. This claustrophobic dimension of the film's setting is no coincidence, as it emphasizes the characters' hopeless situation, and the same time evokes fear in the audience. The starting sequence of *The Return of the Living Dead*, however, shows that it would be premature to conclude that the references should be treated only in the context of parody, merely due to the grotesque character of certain situations or dialogues. When the worker of a medical warehouse talks about undead bodies stored in the basement, the camera makes a slow zoom on both characters' faces, which is accompanied by sinister

music. The culmination of the story is interrupted by a high-pitched telephone ring, which in combination with the gloomy story suddenly terrifies the other man. This initial scene signals that despite the black humor present in the movie, O'Bannon certainly does not give up on building suspense and terrifying the audience.

An equally serious and disturbing message is carried by the ending of *The Return of the Living Dead*, which presents the uncompromising manner in which the government solves the situation getting out of hand. Such a critical and distrustful image of the authorities also appears in *Night of the Living Dead*. In that movie, the forces of law, while apparently restoring order, in the last scene kill the only person who survived the tragic night. Taking into account the sociological aspects of the movies by Romero, it can be stated that *The Return of the Living Dead* not only made use of a plot structure typical of his films, but also made allusions to their social message and pessimistic conclusion. In the movie by O'Bannon some dialogues and scenes shot "with a joke in mind" were thus balanced by sequences whose message was serious or disturbing. Due to those motifs, it is hard to suspect the filmmaker of the intention to ridicule the formula of a zombie movie. *The Return of the Living Dead* is based on the plot structure and allusions to the social and tragic aspects of zombie movies, thus heading towards pastiche, yet not without irony.

The film by O'Bannon proves that pastiche constitutes an important point of reference for the horror movies of the 1980s. Apart from the zombie movie formula, the directors of the decade also referred to other typical elements of the genre, not just limited to its film tradition. *Re-Animator* (directed by S. Gordon, 1985) was an adaptation of prose by H. P. Lovecraft, but in its musical aspects it referred to the famous composition by Bernard Herrmann from *Psycho* (directed by A. Hitchcock, 1960).²⁹ The film by Stuart Gordon told the story of an ambitious medical student, working on a mixture capable of bringing the dead back to life. The film's plot was reminiscent of the story of Frankenstein, and the movies by Universal from the 1930s.³⁰ The

²⁹ R. Worland, Op. cit., p. 247.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 244. It is no coincidence that the title of the second part of the series is *Bride of Re-Animator* (directed by B. Yuzna, 1989).

associations were intensified by the acting style of the actor playing Herbert West, inspired by the roles played by Colin Clive in James Whale's movies *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). The character thus referred to the archetype of an ambitious and arrogant doctor. His behavior was marked with exaggeration, which was almost parodical – especially due to the fact that the situational and linguistic humor was rooted in the doctor West's repartees and his charlatan ideas. However, *Re-Animator* included not only the motifs characteristic of the horror movies' early tradition, but also the poetics known from gore movies. This brutal and bloody overtone of particular scenes was a counterbalance to the film's black humor.

Due to the combination of comedy and horror, the discussed productions are closer not to parody but rather to a combination of horror, grotesque and black humor. The wit present in it is mostly based on "exaggeration of characteristic features" of a given formula or genre, or emphasizing the elements taken from the classic horror movies. The situation is repeated in the case of the last group of movies *The Stuff* (directed by L. Cohen, 1985) and *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* (directed by S. Chiodo 1988) – referring to the productions from the 1950s, which were a combination of horror and science-fiction.

The beginning of *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* reminds one of *The Blob* (directed by I. S. Yeaworth Jr., 1958), in which a pair of teenagers, being in a remote location, notice an unidentified object and try to locate the place where it hit the ground. The further development of the story only confirms the use of a similar plot pattern, although it is worth noting that such elements appeared in other movies as well – *It Came from Outer Space* (directed by J. Arnold, 1953), *Invaders from Mars* (directed by W. Cameron Menzies, 1953), *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (directed by E. L. Cahn, 1957). Another common element of this narrative structure involves informing the authorities about the disturbing signs, which may signal an invasion of extraterrestrial beings. The authorities, however, generally believe the whole story to be absurd – and it does not make any difference whether it is a case of aliens from the movies from the 1950s, or of *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*. In the meantime, the invaders are already wreaking havoc among the local community, which forces an immediate reaction, but

the final triumph usually belongs to those who first noticed the threat. The movie's starting conditions are in accordance with Pitrus's description of classic horrors, which "very frequently (...) include the motif of a small, provincial town attacked by the »alien«".³¹ Another justification for seeking analogies between the film by the Chiodo brothers and the horror movies of the 50s lies in the fact that it contains a clear reference to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (directed by D. Siegel, 1956). The cocoons with the aliens' victims trapped inside, resembling cotton candy, are a joking allusion to the enormous seeds from the movie by Siegel, from which clones imitating real people spawned.

A reference to the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* also appears in *The Stuff* by Larry Cohen (1985). In this movie, a yoghurt-texture desert turns out to be a parasitic organism, murdering and controlling the minds of its consumers. The people who eat it demonstrate emotional coldness and suspiciousness in contacts with other people; they never get tired and are constantly happy, thus giving an unnatural impression. They also unite against those community members who have not tried the mysterious substance yet. In Siegel's movie there is a similar situation – a group of people from a small and peaceful town notice an analogous change in the behavior of others, who are actually clones of the real people and are acting in conspiracy. The film by Cohen does not state that the substance came from another planet; however, his reference to another production from the 50s is evident. The dangerous matter has a liquid form and grows, consuming its victims. An identical description could be given when referring to the alien life form from *The Blob*. In the film by Cohen, detective David "Mo" seeks the support of a retired soldier, convincing him that the murderous substance is a kind of Soviet provocation. The motif is a reference to the political dimension of the movies from the 50s, in which stories about visitors from other planets reflected American anxiety in relation to the communist threat – such as *The War of the Worlds* (directed by B. Haskin, 1953) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (directed by D. Siegel 1956).³²

³¹ A. Pitrus, Op. cit., p. 19 [own translation].

³² See: R. Worland, Op. cit., pp. 77–79; D. J. Skal, Op. cit., p. 250.

The absurd idea of putting clowns in the role of visitors from another planet, or the story of yoghurt murdering people, makes one wonder whether the films by Cohen or the Chiodo brothers should not be considered parodies of the movies of the 50s. Both pastiche and parody involve imitation of certain instruments, motifs or plot patterns. They require that the creator must know the rules of a given film group and show proof of his “skills”³³ which serve to imitate an effect known from other works. The distinguishing element of parody is its intention to mock or criticize another work, which according to Nycz leads to a revelation of “the style’s secrets and limitations” and to “exposing the convention’s inabilities”.³⁴

A good example here is the film from the late 1970s entitled *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* (directed by J. De Bello, 1978) in which the authors ridiculed the horror films involving a threat from destructive forces of nature – such as *Birds* (directed by A. Hitchcock, 1963), *Jaws* (directed by S. Spielberg, 1975), and *Kingdom of the Spiders* (directed by J. Cardos, 1977). The very starting point of the movie indicates the parodistic character of the story, which is then confirmed in the film’s every scene and plot resolution. The movie’s intro contains the following information: “special appearance of the Royal Shakespearean Tomatoes by arrangement with the Queen”.³⁵ In one of the scenes, one can notice advertisements in the form of subtitles at the bottom of the screen, and special discounts offered in a certain shop. In the cases of the movies by Chiodo brothers and Cohen, however, the situation is much more ambiguous.

A film whose plot involves clowns, who as visitors from another planet terrorize the inhabitants of a small American town, naturally appears to be full of parody and the grotesque, suggesting that the composition as such is of parodistic nature. That seems even more true when we consider that their spaceship looks like a circus tent, they shoot popcorn at people, turn their victims into cocoons resembling cotton candy, and many more caricatured motifs. However, the grotesque shown in murdering the characters goes hand in hand with

³³ R. Nycz, Op. cit, p. 232.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 217 and 221 [own translation].

³⁵ The name is a reference to the Royal Shakespeare Company.

the brutality characteristic of gore movies, when for instance a clown punches a man and smashes his head off. Identical feelings are evoked by the repulsive make-up of the clowns and the scene when it seems evident that the alien invaders drink the blood of their victims.³⁶

Similar ambiguities appear in relation to *The Stuff* by Larry Cohen. Some scenes containing the parents and brother of one of the characters are shot in half-shadow, typical of horror movies. In combination with their unnatural behavior, this contrasts with the movie's plot, which is as grotesque as that of *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* Due to the music and nighttime scenery, a similar dissonance is noticed when a boy first discovers the properties of the mysterious substance. In *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* and in *The Stuff*, it is visible that despite the parodistic nature of the main antagonists, both movies balance between parody and pastiche.

As the abovementioned examples show, in the horror cinema of the 1980s the filmmakers' efforts were not necessarily aimed at belittling the past traditions. In the case of the movies discussed, it is much harder to answer the question of whether the intention is parody or pastiche, which is "occasionally created with a joke in mind". The horror movies of the 80s often balance on the overlap of those two conventions. If some horror productions from that period are laced with black humor and at times bear resemblance to parody or to a combination of horror, grotesque and black humor, it can be said that pastiche remains in the shadow of those artistic decisions.

Horror heading towards New Adventure

Our discussion about the specificity of the horror movies of the 1980s started with an analysis concerning a drastic change in the mood of those movies, remaining in opposition to the social involvement of horror filmmakers from the previous decades. In order to better understand that metamorphosis and the intentions which may have guided the movie-makers of the 1980s, we need view those movies in the broader context of the American cinema from that period.

³⁶ The motif is a reference to *The War of the Worlds* by Herbert George Wells, where the aliens feed on humans in an identical manner.

As the 1970s drew to a close, productions immersed in the poetics of opposition give way to spectacular and commercial projects such as *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* (directed by G. Lucas, 1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (directed by S. Spielberg, 1977). The end of the countercultural rebellion also marks the twilight of movies expressing opposition towards the existing social order. Their place is taken by productions which are referred to as New Adventure Cinema. Although the term was coined by Polish film critic Jerzy Płażewski³⁷ and is not frequent in foreign literature on the subjects, it reflects well a certain specificity of movies from that period. As Jerzy Szyłak explains, “the most important features of the new movie formula are its commercial character and spectacularity, as well as a turn towards the patterns from former popular cinema, and **the presence of pastiche** accompanying those factors [highlighting – K. K.]”³⁸ From the perspective of our discussion here we should take into consideration that the films representing the New Adventure Cinema head towards escapist entertainment, which allows the audience to free themselves from the painful reopening of old wounds and critical thinking about the American reality and culture.³⁹

The different expectations of the 1980s audience may be demonstrated by the reception of movies such as *The Thing* (directed by J. Carpenter, 1982) and *E.T.* (directed by S. Spielberg, 1982). Carpenter’s gloomy and pessimistic tale about a confrontation with an extraterrestrial visitor was initially not well-received by the audience and was a financial flop.⁴⁰ As Szyłak points out, “year after year, its ratings have increased, and at present it is considered to be one of the most important science fiction movies from the 80s, held in special esteem by the fans of the genre”⁴¹ *E.T.*, whose premiere took place a month earlier, presented an encounter with an alien in a fairytale manner and, unlike the movie by Carpenter, became an extraordinary box-office success.⁴² The horror films of the 80s frequently tried to meet the expectations

³⁷ See: J. Szyłak, *Kino Nowej Przygody*, Gdańsk 2011, p. 5.

³⁸ See: *Ibid.*, p. 8 [own translation].

³⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, [own translation].

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

of the audience, who hoped that movies would provide them with entertainment and an escape from day-to-day problems. This trend is reflected, for instance, in *Ghostbusters* (directed by I. Reitman, 1984) and *Gremlins* (directed by J. Dante, 1984), which combine the poetics of horror with adventure or family cinema.

This change of mood also appears in the case of the two parts of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The second installment in the series shows that in the 80s Hooper does not aspire to stir discussion on contemporary social issues, as he did a decade before. The case of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is not the only one in which the grotesque replaces a former mood of seriousness. One can find other series from the 1980s and early 90s whose further parts are told by the same filmmakers in an ironic tone. A perfect example here is the attitude of the directors of *The Evil Dead* (directed by S. Raimi, 1981) and *Basket Case* (directed by F. Henenlotter, 1982). Indeed, the plot of *Army of Darkness* (directed by S. Raimi, 1992), which is the last part of the series by Sam Raimi, instead of a horror movie reminds one more of a tale of sword and sorcery. This time the main character is moved back in time to the Middle Ages, where he must lead the fight against a legion of demons. It can thus be seen that *Army of Darkness* is a gesture towards an audience that had by then favored the New Adventure Cinema for over a decade.

It is then no coincidence that the poster for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* was inspired by that of *The Breakfast Club* (directed by John Hughes, 1985). The resemblance is visible if one takes into account the use of frontal composition, the gestures and way of deploying the characters of the two movies, as well as the background against which they were presented. The movie by John Hughes, addressed at a young audience and dealing with their problems, turned out to be a huge box-office success.⁴³ The poster of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* signals not only the creators' ironic attitude, but also their desire to find a new audience among the next generation of Americans. The film by Hooper thus went with the spirit of the times, trying to meet the expectations of the contemporary audience.

⁴³ See: *The Breakfast Club*, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=breakfastclub.htm> (access: 31.07.2016).

The film industry of the 1980s' orientation towards spectacularity was a convenient situation for horror filmmakers, as producers turned a favorable eye to genres which enjoyed popularity among cinema audiences. They wished to exploit the possibilities of the tested movie formulas.⁴⁴ Due to the popularity of the saga by George Lucas and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, commercial success was expected from science fiction productions. A similar desire for profit resulted in remakes. *The Blob* (directed by Ch. Russel, 1988), *The Fly* (directed by D. Cronenberg, 1986) and *The Thing* were made on the basis of the movies from the 1950s, and although they are not pastiches, they reflect a tendency similar to the one shown by the previously mentioned films. A vast majority of the productions mentioned so far were nothing more than the outcome of their authors' cinematic passion, which is evidenced by the multitude of references they contain. This trend is also reflected in movies produced outside the USA, such as *Bad Taste* (directed by P. Jackson, New Zealand 1987) and both parts of *Demons* by Lamberto Bava (Italy 1985, 1986). Many films from the 80s refer to various traditions of horror movies – starting from its origins in the German expressionism, through the period of classic horror of the 30s, followed by productions from the 50s, to the formula of zombie movies. The pastiche present in the horror films of the 80s, or the productions which are almost parodical in their camp aestheticism, prove the richness of the genre's tradition, which can be drawn from, reinterpreted and transformed. This does not mean, however, that the horror from the previous decade was not a fully-shaped movie form. Playing with conventions was apparently not among the priorities of the horror films made in the period of protest. The productions from the 80s were thus a gesture towards the movie tradition which not only the authors, but also their audience had grown up on.

⁴⁴ Jerzy Szyłak notices that in the case of New Adventure Cinema: “searching for sources of excitement had to be accompanied by searching for a show formula which could include them all. *Star Wars* already was a mixture of genres, in which critics noticed motifs taken from westerns, samurai tales, science fiction, fairy tales, and the Arthurian tales. [...] *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* are undoubtedly film pastiches: they refer to film genres known from the past and their rules in order to exploit the possibilities they give” J. Szyłak, Op. cit., pp. 11 and 13 [own translation].

“Parody and pastiche [...] signal intense self-reflection [...] of art”⁴⁵, so both conventions require that the creators and recipients know the convention and respond to it consciously.

As Jerzy Szyłak explains:

New Adventure Cinema grew from a feeling that it is necessary to change the approach to cinema entertainment and was aimed at meeting the viewer’s expectations. As a result of the fact that it was born in an atmosphere of discussion about the depletion of modern art’s potential, the change involved a look into the past and a nostalgic return to the formulas of the traditional genre cinema. The same factor determined that the meeting of the audience’s expectations was accompanied by an ostentatious rejection of the notion that the mass viewer is a naïve viewer. A modeling factor here was the assumption that the viewer knows the conventions of the genre cinema, understands them, remembers the best ways of using them – and that is why they have great fun during a showing.⁴⁶

When discussing the horror films of the 80s in the context of New Adventure Cinema, one can wonder whether the multitude of quotations present in those horrors is not a reflection of an identical nostalgia and a certain gesture towards earlier productions, which in this case, however, shows a bit of distance maintained by the authors. It is also worth adding that the opening concept of *The Stuff* or *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* is close to the kitsch which characterized many similar productions from the 1950s. The creators’ nostalgia towards the works they grew up with would not thus serve as evidence of their naïvety and lack of criticism towards the past traditions of the horror movies. However, Szyłak emphasizes that the awareness of multiple influences and allusions was not just for the filmmakers, but became a source of pleasure for the viewers themselves.

⁴⁵ R. Nycz, Op. cit., p. 245 [own translation].

⁴⁶ J. Szyłak, Op. cit., p. 15–16 [own translation].

The pastiche present in the American horror movies of the 1980s may also indicate the “depletion” of the horror formula. Pastiche is at times described as “an ostentatious symptom of coming to terms with the loss of individual expression, a symptom of being trapped in the past. Being satisfied with a purely consumerist attitude towards to the cultural heritage and an eclectic search through its archives”.⁴⁷ The examples of *The Stuff* and *They Live* (directed by J. Carpenter, 1988) demonstrate that such conclusions may be unfair in relation to certain productions of the 1980s. This motion picture by Carpenter is, alongside the already discussed movies, another pastiche of the cinema from the 50s. Once again, the protagonist discovers an alien conspiracy which is taking control of the world and human minds. The signals broadcast by the aliens reach humans subconsciously, keeping them in the state of hypnosis. All commercials as well as press and TV information actually contain a subliminal message of slogans such as “buy”, “obey”, “no imagination”, “consume”, “marry and reproduce”. The social system created by the aliens turns humans into cheap labor force and encourages them to join the rat race, thanks to which a small group of the chosen can live in prosperity at the expense of the Earthlings. Some characters, in pursuit of wealth, are able to sacrifice their companions.

A similar situation is observed in *The Stuff*. Counting on profit, two entrepreneurs want to sell the “dessert” in a new formula, which is allegedly safe for consumers. In Cohen’s movie, viewers can once again experience suggestions that the complete stupefying of the population to make them desire *The Stuff* has something to do with product placement. Detective “Mo”, while trying to obtain the “dessert’s” secret formula, starts his investigation from a conversation with a woman responsible for preparing TV commercials. Cohen also, on a number of occasions, demonstrates *The Stuff* and its advertisements in the presence of other products associated with big corporations, such as, for instance, the scene showing the “dessert’s” packages in a fridge bearing a Pepsi logo.

Both movies thus involve the recognition of certain problems associated with the Reagan era – the targets of criticism are a stupefying

⁴⁷ R. Nycz, op. cit., p. 242 [own translation].

system within which social inequalities pile up, the demagogic character of the media, the culture of consumerism, human conformism, etc. From this perspective, the movies by Carpenter and Cohen engage in a dialogue with the movie tradition. The films refer back to the poetics of the horrors from the 1950s, which reflected the fear of communism shown by the American society. Cohen deliberately makes his character seek help from a retired soldier, who naïvely considers the substance to be a Soviet provocation. One of Carpenter's characters, in turn, claims that the rebels are presented by the media as communists who try to overthrow the government.⁴⁸ However, the political overtones in *They Live* and *The Stuff* are of a perverse nature, as these films suggest that the threat to American society does not come from outside, but is a force which destroys citizens from inside. They demonstrate an ironic attitude towards the genre's tradition and to a degree contradict the previous conclusions, according to which the horrors from the 1980s do not show the creators' involvement in social issues. Taking into account the sociological and political dimension of the films by Carpenter and Cohen, we can conclude by making the jocular statement that those movies had to take the entertainment-like form in order for the products to find their consumers.

⁴⁸ J. Carpenter, *They Live*, 1.09'30"–1.09'4".

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Joanna Kostana

**“Retromania” of the 1980s:
on the different faces of neo-noir cinema**

Translated by Jacek Wełniak and Agnieszka Piskorska

I

*It has always been easier to recognize
a film noir than to define the term**

James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts*

There are few phenomena, especially within film studies, which have caused and still cause problems of theoretical nature to such an extent, and in case of which so much attention is devoted to the matter of definition. Despite efforts by cinema theorists,¹ the thesis expressed by Paul Schrader in 1972, according to which every scholar has their own definition of the noir movement, remains valid.² The most popular tendencies include defining it as a genre (or a genre which started as a convention), a certain closed period in American cinematography, or as a style, mood, or specific climate, with even those terms being distinguished from one another.³

However, regardless of the problems connected with definitions of classifications, in line with the opinion expressed by James Naremore in the motto above, it is much easier to recognize a noir movie intuitively, or by pointing to its characteristic elements (both at the aesthetic

* J. Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, Berkeley 1998, p. 9.

¹ Especially heated discussions on the phenomenon's definition took place in the 1960s and 70s; various concepts of understanding the term “noir” are presented in an article by Rafał Syska. See: R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, „Studia Filmoznawcze” 2010, No. 31, pp. 24–25.

² P. Schrader, *Notes on Film Noir*, in: *Film Noir. Reader*, edited by A. Silver and J. Ursini, New York 1996, p. 54.

³ See: R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, Op. cit.

level, and in terms of plot and narration). The most important formal determinants of the genre include, first of all, characteristic scenography, which is usually a dark city full of wet streets, or the presence of a detective of demotic origin and a *femme fatale*, who involves him in a crime, around which the film's plot is structured. In visual terms, there are dominant contrasts of black and white (unlike the moral sphere, where there is no simple opposition between good and evil, with binarity replaced by ambiguity), operating with low lighting and shadows, which are visible, for instance, on the streets, puddles, and characters' faces.¹

The mentioned darkness is present not only in the physical sense, but also in a metaphorical one: noir films are distinctive in their climate of fear and mental confusion, which is why viewers witness irrational behaviors and a pessimistic vision of the world – contrary to the classic gangster movies.²

This specific, sinister climate is a result of historical circumstance – one of the main conditions in which noir cinema was born was the socio-political crisis connected with World War II and the state of the post-war world. It is for a reason that the forerunner of the genre is believed to be the movie *High Sierra* (directed by R. Walsch, USA), with its symbolic, actual beginning being *The Maltese Falcon* (directed by J. Huston, USA)³ – both made in 1941, the year when the United States joined the conflict. From that moment on, for more than ten years, creators made movies inspired – apart from war and the post-war chaos – by issues related to psychoanalysis, existentialism and surrealism,⁴ or hard-boiled literature, which was eagerly being adapted to the screen in that period.⁵ At the aforementioned aesthetic level

¹ S. Bobowski, *Film noir – repetytorium (Zamiast wstępu)*, „Studia Filmoznawcze” 2010, No. 31, p. 7.

² Although the latter – like, for example *Little Caesar* (directed by M. LeRoy, USA 1931), *The Public Enemy*, (directed by W. A. Wellmann, USA 1931) and *Scarface*, (directed by H. Hawks, USA 1932) – touch upon the same topics, they do so in a different atmosphere – with dominant rationality, characters' roles and moral classifications being clearly defined, and the whole plot heading towards a final resolution or punishment for the crime.

³ See: S. Bobowski, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴ See: R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, pp. 43–48.

⁵ In the years 1941–1948, 20% of noir movies were adaptations of prose works by authors such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, or Horace McCoy;

one can notice, among other features, inspirations drawn from German expressionism or French poetic realism.⁶

Shortly after noir cinema had been noticed as a separate phenomenon and *A Panorama of American Film Noir* by Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton⁷ was published in 1955, the formula began to wane, due to a combination of political, social and technological factors.⁸ Generally, the end of the noir genre is dated to around 1958, although even here there are doubts concerning the precise moment.⁹

Despite all the aforementioned doubts, the fact that the phenomenon cannot be precisely classified or placed within a particular time span does not mean it did not exist. The very attempts to define it, to search for and as a consequence find certain interpretative keys or characteristic features within a particular group of films, serve as evidence that noir was a type of cinema which was to a degree expressive, cognitively valuable and inspiring. Inspiring discussions, but also the creation of other, even more varied, cultural texts, as evidenced by the appearance of neo-noir.

the compositions made use of subjective narration, devoid of chronology, told from the protagonist's point of view. See: S. Bobowski, Op. cit., p. 13.

⁶ The characteristic features associated with the former include the primacy of subjectivity, the presence of introspection or operating with chiaroscuro, whereas the elements taken by noir from poetic realism include a similar climate of pessimism and fatalism, the scenography of city hotels, back alleys shown mostly at night or in the rain or fog. In addition, Rafał Syska points to a certain ideological kinship, as yet understudied, between American noir cinema and the Italian neorealism. See: R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, pp. 30–36.

⁷ It was not the first use of the term, but the most complete attempt to characterize the already existing phenomenon.

⁸ The reason for this is thought to be Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, dominated by an optimistic atmosphere, a mood of entering an age of economic prosperity and at the same time growing consumerism. On another level, processes taking place in Hollywood were also of great significance, including the spread of color film and broad screens. See: R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, pp. 48–49.

⁹ See: M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Neo-noir. Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, Katowice 2015, pp. 24–25.

II

*“Neo-noir” is not a cinema genre, but a stage in the development of the general “noir” idea which encompassed film and literature as well as other areas of art and culture**

Kamila Żyto, *Od kina noir do neo-noir – bezdroża i ślepe zaułki*

According to Magdalena Kempna-Pieniążek, “the only thing which is basically certain and undisputable is that the new black film must have some connection to noir film, as it inherits from its ancestor all the still-unresolved problems related to definition”.¹⁰ Perhaps in the beginning – paradoxically – theoretical work on this phenomenon can be facilitated in a certain way by noticing its transcultural, intermedial and purely aesthetic potential, which suggests a rejection of its definition as a genre or movement, and rather encourages us to call neo-noir a style, a climate or a certain kind of aesthetics.

On the other hand, however, the distinction between two stages of the return to black cinema pointed to by Andrew Spicer – the modern, from the 1960s and 70s, and the postmodern, located in the period since the 1980s to the present,¹¹ reveal the great diversity within the studied phenomenon. The films from the former of the two periods were much more conservative in their attitude towards the noir heritage, whereas the postmodern stage, which we will discuss here based on the examples of three different compositions, is a time of extremely boldly playing with conventions, experimenting with aesthetic tools and reshaping patterns.¹² The new black cinema uses stronger emphasis on topics and motifs touched upon by the classic cinema of the 1940s and 50s as often as it uses their far-reaching modifica-

* K. Żyto, *Od kina noir do neo-noir – bezdroża i ślepe zaułki*, [in:] *Film i media – przeszłość i przyszłość. Kontynuacje*, edited by A. Gwóźdź and M. Kempna-Pieniążek, Warsaw 2014, p. 79 [own translation].

¹⁰ M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Neo-noir. Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, p. 19 [own translation].

¹¹ A. Spicer, *Film Noir*, Harlow 2002, pp. 133–135 and 149.

¹² Importantly, it should be noticed that the second of the important differences is related to economic matters: the modern stage coincides with a period of weakening of Hollywood cinema, whereas the latter includes blockbusters, popular commercial cinema hits.

tion. It is at times more lavish, more sated with eroticism – *Basic Instinct* (directed by P. Verhoeven, USA, France 1992), *Femme fatale* (directed by B. de Palma, France, Switzerland 2002), which even more strongly emphasizes the crisis of identity and social bonds, *Unknown* (directed by J. Collet-Serra, USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada 2011), *Following* (directed by Ch. Nolan, Great Britain 1998) and films showing even greater difficulties with solving the mystery – such as *Memento* (directed by Ch. Nolan, USA 2002). Finally, the enormous diversity, especially within the second stage, results from the application of the neo-noir formula in combination with other genres or conventions, such as the thriller, the crime story, or the science fiction story, which also illustrates its hybrid nature.¹³

***Body Heat* – Eroticism**

Body Heat (directed by L. Kasdan, USA 1981) is a film considered by scholars¹⁴ – alongside *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (directed by B. Rafelson, USA, GDR 1981) – as one of the iconic ones starting the second stage of neo-noir. It does not share the characteristic features with its ancestors as much as it largely refers to a particular work from the 1940s: *Double Indemnity* (directed by B. Wilder, USA 1944).

Both films are based on a similarly structured plot axis: a story of a spouse being cheated on and one of the characters being murdered by the wife in cooperation with her lover. However, *Body Heat* uses this inspiration and, making it more up-to-date, provides it with a new meaning by emphasizing other aspects. Whereas in *Double Indemnity* the financial motivation and the murder investigation were more important than feelings, in the movie by Kasdan the driving forces are eroticism, passion, and Ned and Matty’s physical addiction to each other. The difference in the crime motive and, at the same time, in

¹³ See: M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Neo-noir. Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, pp. 170–174. Note that one of the genres that noir aesthetics most frequently draws upon is the thriller, which, according to Rafał Syska is itself: “[...] nothing more than a hybrid genre, hard to define indisputably and objectively” [own translation]. R. Syska, *Thriller jako gatunek*, in: *Wokół kina gatunków*, edited by K. Loska, Kraków 2001, p. 83.

¹⁴ See: M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Neo-noir. Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, p. 31.

the dominant aspect of the movies is noticeable already at the level of the titles, as well as the posters of both movies. Although some promotional materials for *Double Indemnity* do show lovers embracing, they stir up few sexual connotations; in addition, the characters dressed in elegant clothes are accompanied by props such as a telephone or a revolver, and the poster also includes the picture of the murdered husband along a suggestive line: "From the moment they met it was murder!" What was impossible to show or even imply several decades before, due to censorship limitations of the Hays Code,¹⁵ and what also constituted the main aspect of Sexual Revolution of the 1960s and 70s, was clearly signaled on the *Body Heat* posters. Matty and Ned – regardless of what situation they are shown in – are always in mysterious darkness, disturbed only by delicate light. He is naked, she is dressed in a light white dress with a low neckline, both holding a cigarette or, on another poster, lying in a bathtub – those images are merely a foreplay to the audience being stunned by bold scenes and sexuality in the movie.

"As the temperature rises, the suspense begins" – this slogan from one of the posters, showing the correlation between external conditions, the atmosphere between characters, and the climate the motion picture is marked by, reveals another difference between the movie by Kasdan and its noir original. The setting of the black movies of the 40s and 50s – including *Double Indemnity* – was a city, full of narrow streets and office buildings, but almost always shown in the evening or at night, often in rainy or foggy weather. In *Body Heat*, however, despite the fact that the events take place in a city, as early as in the first scene, when the main character looks through the window, and also later, the audience is repeatedly informed about the heat and the characters' exhaustion with the weather, which makes for a radical reversal of the noir convention.

Finally, what is especially in keeping with the classical noir formula is the *femme fatale* character – a woman who is mentally strong, independent, makes bold decisions, and at the same time seduces and often

¹⁵ The Motion Picture Production Code was created in 1930, published by Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in 1934, and was in force until 1966.

persuades the seduced man to commit a crime. Both Phyllis and Matty are attractive, elegant blondes who create an aura of mystery around them, including through the use of such props as dark glasses and a cigarette, which become almost fetishes. Especially the latter should be examined more closely, as it becomes a prop which provides additional signification; apart from the psychoanalytic interpretations of a cigarette as a phallic symbol, it is worth pointing to its association with the aspect of freedom and emancipation, especially when we are talking about a woman smoking. Only active characters – especially ones acting in as destructive a manner as Matty from *Body Heat* – smoke, and so their smoking is a demonstration of strength and control of their own fate, undermining the foundations of the ideology of female shame.¹⁶ A cigarette in a woman’s hands or lips does not make any statement, but extracts meanings, brings associations, hints at interpretations – in the cinema of the 1940s and 50s it suggested what was not possible to show openly, whereas in the neo-noir erotic thriller it became a prop which confirms the thesis of the female character’s demonic nature.

***Blade Runner* – Apocalypse**

A drastically different motion picture classified as neo-noir is *Blade Runner* (directed by R. Scott, USA, Great Britain, Hongkong 1982), which at the same time is believed to be one of the most important representatives of New Adventure Cinema,¹⁷ also having a nostalgic potential.¹⁸ This classification will be specified on the basis of the dis-

¹⁶ See: M. Madejska, *Od towarzysza zbrodni do zbrodniarza. Papieros w filmie „noir”*, in: *Zbrodnia, występki, wykroczenie. Mikrokosmos kryminału*, edited by A. Staroń and Ł. Szkopiński, Łódź 2012, p. 123.

¹⁷ See: J. Szyłak, *Kino Nowej Przygody – jego cechy i granice*, in: *Kino Nowej Przygody*, edited by J. Szyłak, Gdańsk 2011, pp. 163–168. The notion of “New Adventure Cinema” was introduced into Polish cinema analysis by Jerzy Płużewski, who distinguished three characteristics of the productions he described: depoliticization, parody, and the perfection of their technical execution. He dated the beginnings of this type of cinema to the late 1970s and early 80s, turning his attention mainly to Hollywood productions (including those of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas) – editor’s note.

¹⁸ The New Adventure Cinema formed a part of the “retro” tendency and aimed at maximum exploitation of ideas, hence the tendency to make sequels in the 1980s. In addition, some of its features, such as hybridization of genres, pastiche or drawing

tinctions drawn by Jerold J. Abrams, who defined Ridley Scott's work as "future neo-noir" (and more precisely – "detective science fiction").¹⁹ The distinctive nature of this subgenre involves concentrating on apocalyptic motifs, asking questions about the essence and the decline of human existence, as well as touching upon the issue of technological progress, often considered as excessive and harmful.

At this point it should be mentioned, referring to the discussed conventions in a more general sense, that all of neo-noir deals with devastation and endings: both in individual and global terms – in classic noir cinema the characters were certain that they were humans, whereas in *Blade Runner* even this aspect of identity and the awareness of one's own subjectivity is questioned. Defining a human being in a way that takes into consideration only the biological aspect ceases to be relevant – humanity is an effect of working out or achieving a certain state of mind or feelings, not a matter of DNA. Ridley Scott's broad development of the replicant characters and extension of their psyche (in relation to the literary original: Philip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)²⁰ results in the difference between them and human becoming more and more subtle and difficult to notice. The principal issues which are subject to reflection in *Blade Runner* include the replicants' fear of death and the basic question of whether and how they could prolong their lives, as well as Rick Deckard's doubts about whether he is a human himself, as revealed in the final scene of the director's cut. Andrzej Tuziak summarizes this problem: "Why does Rachael fall in love with Deckard, if she has no feelings? There are many questions of this sort."²¹ The aforementioned apocalypse – understood as reaching the final point of reflection on humanity and its borders – takes places in

upon popular culture deserve special attention in the context of studies of neo-noir aesthetics. See: Ibid, pp. 7-8. A strongly subjective definition of the New Adventure Cinema movement was formulated by the term's inventor, Jerzy Płażewski. The article which started the discussion of the phenomenon states that the typical viewer of New Adventure Cinema movies is "a teenager craving for morally uncomplicated spectacular effects and despising all other forms of cinematic expression", and the 1980s as such are a period of infantilization of the cinema. See: J. Płażewski, „Nowa Przygoda” – i co dalej?, „Kino” 1986, No. 5, pp. 33–39.

¹⁹ J. J. Abrams, *Space, Time, and Subjectivity in Neo-Noir Cinema*, in: *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*, ed. M. T. Conrad, Kentucky 2009, pp. 7–20.

²⁰ A. Tuziak, *Łowca androidów. Słowa i obrazy*, Katowice 2014, p. 158.

²¹ Ibid.

a typically noir scenery, which is a metropolis, dark, rainy and sinister. The Los Angeles of 2019 presented in the movie is lit only by neon lights, with its inhabitants being an anonymous, undifferentiated crowd rushing through crowded streets.

Among those wandering people a detective can be identified, whose profile clearly matches the model from the classic noir cinema. Rick Deckard is cold, cynical, pessimistic and alienated, and the place where we meet him is a bar. The shots from *Blade Runner*, showing the protagonist sitting at the bar and talking to the bartender or random people, or when he communicates by telephone (when decisions important for the plot are made) hark back – referring again to a particular example from the 1940s and 50s – to relevant scenes from *The Asphalt Jungle* (directed by J. Huston, USA 1950). Despite the fact that the two movies show no resemblance in terms of plot, a more detailed analysis of components proves that the character of detective from *Blade Runner* was inspired by the image of an ambiguous character from the typically noir convention. Rick Deckard, just like Dix and Gus from Huston’s movie, especially at the early stages of plot development, spends his moments of doubt and reflection at the mentioned bar on a dangerous street. Making use of technology, including a phone with a screen, allows Rick to engage in important and necessary communication with Rachael – just like the men from *The Asphalt Jungle* (Gus, Dix and Louis), who remain in strong dependence upon one another and use the telephone to have the most important conversations during which decisions crucial for their future are made. In addition, some of Rick’s other behaviors should be paid attention to: he rebels against the police and does not obediently carry out the order to eliminate replicants, but instead wants to conduct an investigation on his own, while at the same time – in the movie, contrary to Dick’s novel – he is not married and becomes more strongly involved in an emotional bond with Rachael, a woman of uncertain identity.

Whereas the man conducting an investigation in noir movies was rather ambivalent, incomprehensible, unclear,²² the woman was much

²² Suffice it to mention the flagship characters of the movement, such as Sam Spade from the aforementioned *The Maltese Falcon* or Philip Marlowe from *The Big Sleep* (directed by H. Hawks, USA 1946), who despite being cynical and malicious

more frequently presented as a *femme fatale*, unambiguously driving him towards his doom. Thus the manner in which the character of Rachael is portrayed should be considered a sharp departure from the patterns of the near-war period. Initially making the impression of distanced and remote, while at the same time attractive and emphasizing her looks, in the course of the plot she turns out to be lost, susceptible to outside influences, and has a problem with defining her identity. In addition, she undergoes a transformation, which is noticeable at the physical level – she stops wearing strong make-up, a tight outfit and perfect hairstyle, in favor of a more natural look. The situation of making a character fit the pattern of classic noir films gets complicated, however, when we pay attention to other women present in the movie by Ridley Scott; if we consider Pris or Zhora as *femmes fatales*, it turns out that this type of a female character ceases to be an important element of the composition, becoming instead a strongly marginalized figure.

Blue Velvet – Excess

Finally, the third of the films to be examined here can be labeled with the term “excess”, referring to the theory by Andrew Spicer, who distinguishes this kind of sub-category within neo-noir.²³ The cinema of excess is characterized by, among other features, the aesthetics of excess, breaching norms, spectacularity and video-like nature. In addition, motifs of paranoia, alienation or fatalism sometimes appear in movies of this type.²⁴ *Blue Velvet* (directed by D. Lynch, USA 1986), mixes various orders (images of an idyllic village entwined with scenes of brutality and eroticism) and the use of the song *Blue Velvet* performed by Bobby Vinton in the soundtrack distinctly contrasts against the violence and absurdity of certain sequences.

The last type, however, constitutes merely an aesthetic addition while generally preserving the convention of the classic noir cinema,

remained persistent idealists, aiming to complete the task they were charged with, as long as they were sure of its value and relevance.

²³ A. Spicer, Op. cit., pp. 155–157.

²⁴ Ibid.

or only modifying it slightly. In *Blue Velvet*, the setting is not a metropolis but a village, with the main character being a young boy, instead of a professional detective. If we accept the interpretation by Siegfried Kracauer concerning the investigator as a figure who watches the world and strives to bring order to the chaos of the big city, or even to the disorder in reality as such,²⁵ then in what light does this put Jeffrey, who tries to overcome the chaos of his environment? Is the chaos of the modern world so common and unstoppable that it directly touches everyone, forcing them to react and become active? On the one hand, such entanglement of an honest person in a situation of threat may point to danger lurking nearby, on the other hand, however, “despite the fact that we live in »the period of lost innocence«”²⁶, it is worth paying attention to the movie’s positive ending, punishing the gangsters and reuniting the mother with her child. The complication of the aforementioned relationship between the character and his environment, as well as the surprisingly optimistic ending of *Blue Velvet* remind one of Jerzy Szyłak’s interpretations. In his view, which may seem surprising, such “postmodernist artistic mechanisms [...] serve the purpose of talking about values, about what holds the human community together, about what a human believes in or would like to believe in, about what they do or what could make their lives meaningful”²⁷.

The main theme of the movie is a conflict between gangsters, with a threat of a crime in the background, and an investigation conducted on one’s own in order to discover the secret of a dangerous group of criminals. Jeffrey becomes accidentally involved in a criminal affair and gets to know the criminal underworld, in which he initially feels definitely lost. His alienation was presented by the motif of observing the situation from a hiding spot, from inside a closet – in the 1940s and 50s the characters were similarly separated from open space by

²⁵ See: K. Żyto, *Klasyczny film noir, kino modernistyczne, modernité– czyli tam i z powrotem*, [in:] „Media - Kultura - Komunikacja Społeczna” 2014, No. 10/2, pp. 48–49.

²⁶ J. Szyłak, »Crash«, »Dym« i wymyślanie spisków, [in:] *Ibid, Kino i coś więcej. Szkice o ponowoczesnych filmach amerykańskich i metafizycznych tęsknotach widzów*, Kraków 2001, p. 31 [own translation].

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 30–31 [own translation].

means of windows or staircases, with the interiors being small and limited. Apart from the aforementioned closet, it is worth emphasizing the fetishizing of some items present in the movie (such as a night club, a lipstick and a luxurious material). This fetishizing generates a mysterious atmosphere associated with sexual desire, which corresponds with the depiction of the urban bustle (cars, neon signs, dark streets).

An important role in this movie is also played by a *femme fatale*, but, interestingly, apart from Dorothy Vallens – a self-confident, attractive brunette dressed in an elegant dress or a nightgown – there is also her complete antithesis, a girl played by Laura Dren, who is innocent and naïve, wearing pink or white dresses and sweaters.²⁸ The contrast is strongly emphasized and is a repetition of one of the noir conventions, namely the introduction alongside the character of a *femme fatale* of another woman – the redeemer, as was done, for example, in *The Maltese Falcon*.

A characteristic feature of works by Lynch, which is playing with categories such as gender, self-consciousness, memory, while at the same time using excess and breaching the norms at the aesthetic level, is what makes his movies – especially *Blue Velvet* – examples of excess cinema, the cinema of scandal, both at the visual and moral level.²⁹ According to Laura Mulvey: “It is probably only out of the self-consciousness of contemporary, post-modern Hollywood, in conjunction with Lynch’s own influences such as Surrealism”³⁰ as well as the classic black cinema, which nota bene is fascinated by what is subconscious, mysterious, oniric and full of nightmares or visions.

²⁸ A similar situation can be observed also in another movie by Lynch – *Mulholland Dr.* (USA, France 2001), in which there appear both the dark-haired *femme fatale* Rita and the blonde angel Betty, with the clear opposition being additionally complicated by the game with the characters’ identities and the appearance of other, mysterious transformations in the movie.

²⁹ M. Kempna-Pieniżek, „Neo-noir” jako kino ekscesu, in: *Skandal w tekstach kultury*, ed. M. Źrsel, M. Dąbrowska, J. Nadolna and M. Skibińska, Warsaw 2013, p. 417.

³⁰ L. Mulvey, *Netherworlds and the Unconscious: Oedipus and “Blue Velvet”*, in: *Ibid., Fetishism and Curiosity*, Bloomington 1996, p. 138.

III

*Is postmodernity in film exemplified by “Blade Runner”?
[...] “Blue Velvet”? [...] All of the above?”
Maureen Turim, Cinemas of Modernity and Postmodernity*

The three titles examined here make different attempts to confront the heritage of noir cinema, with their variety serving as proof of the retromania of the 1980s, visible in almost any film genre. One thing is common – neo-noir is:

[...] laced with nostalgia, which is directed in terms of numerous aspects. The longing for “the good old times”, for the reality in which all crises were less noticeable, subjectivity seemed unthreatened, and the identity seemed to be something integral, is accompanied in this case by the sentiment related to classic conventions, manners of storytelling and structuring reality.³¹

A recurring question here is whether this special popularity of the noir aestheticism in the 1980s is a sign of crisis, of the depletion of creativity and certain film formulas, or whether it on the contrary evidences a certain development in that area. A similar dilemma applies to category of postmodernism,³² and neo-noir – with its hybrid nature, intertextuality, immersion in popular culture and fetishizing of surfaces – is one of its manifestations. Fredrik Jameson claims that the term “is not widely accepted or even understood today”,³³ whereas Maureen

* M. Turim, *Cinemas of Modernity and Postmodernity*, in: *Zeitgeist in Babel: The Postmodernist Controversy*, ed. I. Hoesterey, Bloomington 1991, p. 177.

³¹ M. Kempna-Pieniżek, *Neo-noir: Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, pp. 149–150 [own translation].

³² In Jean-François Lyotard’s opinion, nowadays “strange machines are assembled, where what we didn’t have the idea of saying or the matter to feel can make itself heard and experienced. The diversity of artistic ‘propositions’ is dizzying. What philosopher can control it from above and unify it?”. See J.-F. Lyotard, *Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity*, in: *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. G. A. Johnson, Evanston 1993, p. 332.

³³ See: F. Jameson, *Postmodernism and Consumer Society*, in: *Modernism/Postmodernism*, ed. P. Brooker, New York 1992, p. 164.

Turim argues that the term often takes on contradictory meanings and can become useless, but it cannot be omitted as an inspiring topic of the discussion from which much can be learnt.³⁴

Apart from nostalgia, another important characteristic of neo-noir is self-consciousness.³⁵ Perhaps it is a result of the crisis declared by Lyotard, of all large narrations. If nothing new can be created in cinema anymore, and moreover if cinema is ceasing to be a medium depicting the truth about reality, then well-established schemas are utilized, leading to self-irony and *mise en abyme*. And so, cinema beings to speak “about itself, its sources and conventions”,³⁶ laying bear the truth inherent not in reality, but in its own nature. According to Fredrik Jameson, one of the characteristic features of postmodern works is not necessarily expressing something innovative through art, but expressing something about oneself in a new way. In his view, “[...] in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum.”³⁷

“Postmodernism can be just this type of stylistic renovation, an updating of art deco with a high-tech flair”³⁸ – writes Maureen Turim. Juxtaposing noir cinema and its postmodernist continuation allows us to refute these doubts. Despite the opinions of the scholars quoted, expressing doubt in the originality and outside-the-box nature of postmodernist works, neo-noir – as an example of the latter – can nevertheless be considered proof of the period’s progressive tendencies.

Miriam Bratu Hensen suggests that we consider noir cinema as the most critical reaction to “modernity and its failed promises”,³⁹ yet the classic black cinema of the 1940s and 50s is a phenomenon which is important, but which is also a peripheral aspect of American cinematography: the most popular movies at that time were those by Alfred Hitchcock, whose links to the noir movement are not clear,

³⁴ M. Turim, *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁵ M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Neo-noir. Ciemne zwierciadło czasów kryzysu*, p. 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123 [own translation].

³⁷ F. Jameson, *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

³⁸ M. Turim, *Op. cit.*, p. 188.

³⁹ M. Bratu Hansen, *The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism*, „Modernism/Modernity” No. 6.2 (1999), p. 72.

but who certainly cannot be considered a characteristic representative of the genre.⁴⁰ In addition, despite the invocation of the cult of stars or actor duos, such as Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart, only the latter became an icon and a character typical of noir. And so, while admitting its huge importance to the period, Rafał Syska reminds us that:

The phenomenon of black cinema was thus as underestimated in the moment of its emergence, as it is overestimated today. Years ago, the audience preferred films with more light and with a moralizing message, whereas today’s viewers and historians do not remember at all the movies made in the 1940s which were in opposition to noir.⁴¹

Today, we are dealing with a completely different situation: the spread of neo-noir aesthetics and its presence not only into almost any movie genre, but also into other forms of media (apart from cinema, also video games, comic books, etc.),⁴² proving that it has become an even more powerful lens through which modern culture can be observed. Whereas the classic noir cinema was a reflection of the political and social unrests of the near-war period, neo-noir problematizes its era to an even larger extent, becoming a transcultural type of aesthetics and a dominant area of movie production. If we were to accept the notion of a crisis as provoking reflection, than analogically the large number of neo-noir productions clearly shows that the decade was marked by crisis to a larger extent.⁴³ This is be-

⁴⁰ Note that according to some interpretations such films by Hitchcock as *Spellbound* (USA 1945), *Notorious* (USA 1946), or even *Psycho* (USA 1960) are considered noir productions. See: R. Schwartz, *Neo-noir. The New Film Noir Style from “Psycho” to “Collateral”*, Lanham–Toronto–Oxford, pp. 3–23.

⁴¹ R. Syska, *Panorama kontekstów amerykańskiego „noir”*, p. 49 [own translation].

⁴² Suffice it to mention such video games as *L.A. Noire* (directed by B. McNamara, Australia 2011) or *Max Payne 2 – The Fall of Max Payne: A Film Noir Love Story* (directed by M. Mäki, USA, Finland 2003) and the comic book by Brian Azzarello *Joker* (DC Comics, 2008).

⁴³ Not limiting ourselves only to the field of cinema, yet while staying within the domain of visual culture, we can point out the crisis in art and art criticism, which expressed itself in conceptualism, among other things. In Grzegorz Dziański’s view, “conceptualism emerges from the logic of modernism and is an expression

cause many neo-noir films depict crises related to technology, morality or identity. Moreover, these films are characterized by a high degree of modification of the original noir convention, which translates into a refreshment of the collective memory and turns cinema as a medium into a method of overcoming the observed crises.

Following this lead, paradoxically, the retromania of the 1980s – by making use of old patterns, mechanisms and traces, while filtering them through the prism of the decade's problems and transformations – creates something qualitatively new. At the same time, the 1980s themselves start to appear as a time of particular tension between ever-present development (in technology, social customs, etc.) and the demonstrated tendency to return to classic sources of convention and nostalgia, which definitely has the critical and creative potential.

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of the crisis of that logic, but it at the same time creates circumstances allowing that crisis to be overcome”. See: G. Dziamski, G. Jarzębowska, *Między tradycją a zabawą. O sztuce i krytyce artystycznej w postmodernizmie*, „Obieg”, 15.05.2006, <http://www.obieg.pl/rozmowy/5704> (access: 06.07.2016).

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Agnieszka Kiejziewicz

**Dystopia, new society and machines.
The 1980s as the period of emergence
and development of cyberpunk cinema**

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

Introduction

Cyberpunk, as a cinema genre, constitutes a conglomerate of influences from various branches of literature and cinematography. The elements of reality portrayed in prose, such as a dystopian city, the motif of cyberspace, androids and automatized society, deprived of the sense of collective identity, have been successfully transferred to the cinema screen.¹ The characteristic features of the genre, inspired by earlier ideas of writers and directors, are also elements of poetics of a cyberpunk film, illustrating at least one of the three topics: post-humanism, post-industrialism, or post-nationalism.²

Social processes, as well as permeating influences of literature and cinematography contributed to the origins and popularity of the new genre in the 1980s, as an answer to philosophical questions concerning the future of humanity, the directions of using new technologies and the fears emerging in the face of political crises. It is worth noting that the period under discussion witnessed inventions which served as prototypes of contemporary technologies, such as the CD-ROM, Windows 1.0, or first internet websites. Social unrest, on the other hand, was stirred, among other factors, by the menace of Cold War, with the discussion about possible scenarios for the future being additionally triggered by events such as the explosion of Chernobyl nuclear power

¹ One of the examples here are the works by William Gibson, described in the following section.

² T. Lasek, *Homo superior – człowiek i maszyna w literaturze i filmie nurtu cyberpunk*, in: *Człowiek-zwierzę, człowiek-maszyna*, edited by A. Celińska and K. Fidler, Kraków 2005, pp. 245–254.

plant, or the appearance of the HIV threat in the public awareness. Both threats to the social order and inventors' innovative ideas stimulated the imagination of film directors and viewers, who eagerly engaged in contemplating the visions presenting answers to the questions about the shape of the world in 'the near future'. Cyberpunk also reached the East, spurring the imagination of Japanese creators and initiating the emergence of its avant-garde form.³

Nowadays, despite the aging of the technological solutions from the cyberpunk of the 80s, the movies from that period may still serve as a rich source of observations of the genre directors' innovative ideas, which were developed (and upgraded in technological terms) in the 90s. However, the unique mood of the first cyberpunk motion pictures, associated with character creation and the image of a dystopian city, still holds a significant position in the visual culture, revived in post-cyberpunk productions after 1999.⁴

The origins of cyberpunk – influence of literature

When trying to precisely define the moment of cyberpunk's emergence as a category separate from science fiction, one should take into account the social processes and the development of literature and cinematography which had led to that division. Although it is customary to consider the works by William Gibson as the source of the genre, at the moment when his *Neuromancer*⁵ was published, cyberpunk already existed as a movement, with its definition constantly expanding. The very term 'cyberpunk' appeared in 1980 as a title of a story, by Bruce Bethe, about a group of teenage hackers breaking into a city network called CityNet. In the foreword added to the online publication, the author explains that while searching for a new term describing the phenomenon, he focused on the synthesis of various terms connected with technology and disobedient youth, looking for a word which would best describe the characters of his story.⁶

³ See: A. Kiejziewicz, *Shinya Tsukamoto i wyobrażenia cyberpunkowa*, in: *Anatomia wyobraźni*, edited by S. Konefał, Gdańsk 2014, pp. 81–97.

⁴ A good example here is also *Matrix* (directed by L. and A. Wachowski, USA 1999).

⁵ W. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, Canada 1984.

⁶ B. Bethke, *Cyberpunk*, in: *Infinity Plus*, <http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/>

Tomasz Lasek accurately stated that cyberpunk is a “conglomerate of influences formed from implants drawn from various areas of literature”⁷ Undoubtedly, the greatest influence on the emergence of the genre was the new-wave fantasy literature from the 1960s and 70s. However, the speculative nature of science fiction, drawing from free imagination, unbound by logic and constructing stories taking place in outer-space scenery, was abandoned by cyberpunk, in favor of the extrapolative character of narration.⁸ According to Carl Malmgren, new extrapolative fantasy literature was based on scientific knowledge, and the structure of the worlds displayed was based on the result of logical assumptions concerning the real world’s possible developments.⁹

In *Preface to “Mirrorshades”* – a manifesto of writers referring to themselves as “cyberpunks”, Bruce Sterling enumerates the sources of inspiration for the movement pioneers. The first to be mentioned are writers of the New Wave¹⁰ and traditional science fiction,¹¹ among whom a prominent position is held by Phillip K. Dick.¹² Lasek draws attention to Thomas Pynchon and William Burroughs,¹³ the author of *Naked Lunch*.¹⁴ The latter, categorized as a member of the Beat Generation movement, was to inspire cyberpunks by his experiments with opiates and descriptions of dark conspiracy theories.¹⁵ Burroughs, considered to be “a thinker of the information age, before it even started”,¹⁶ thanks to his unique perception of the world around him, influenced the manner of presenting the achievements of civilization

cpunk.htm (access: 11.26.2013).

⁷ T. Lasek, Op. cit., p. 245.

⁸ P. Frelík, *Cyberpunk*, „Magazyn Sztuki” 1998, no 1 (17), p. 121.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. Sterling enumerates authors such as: Harlan Ellison, Samuel Delany, Norman Spinrad, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss and J.G. Ballard.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 115. The author enumerates creators such as: Olaf Stapledon, H. G. Wells, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, Philip Jose Farmer, John Varley and Alfred Bester.

¹² Phillip K. Dick is the author of, among others, the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, on the basis of which *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott was filmed.

¹³ T. Lasek, Op.cit., p. 246.

¹⁴ The novel *Naked Lunch* was adapter for the screen in 1991 by David Cronenberg, the maker of, among others, cyberpunk movies *Videodrom* and *eXistenZ*, as well as body-horror *The Fly*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ R. Księżyk, *23 cięcia dla Williama S. Burroughsa*, Gdańsk 2013, p. 11.

and humanity in cyberpunk novels (and later in movies).¹⁷ Burroughs also predicted the era of the Internet, believing that wars of the future would involve disinformation, and power will be held by those who control data distribution.¹⁸ The writer's ideas became an inspiration to introduce the motif of information as the most valuable currency into cyberpunk works. What is more, as early as in the 60s, Burroughs noticed that citizens of the West externalize their senses by means of technological devices,¹⁹ which in turn corresponded to the concepts of Marshall McLuhan, and constituted the core of cyberpunk perception of an individual. Rafał Księżyk, in his book *23 cięcia dla Williama S. Burroughsa* (*23 cuts for William S. Burroughs*) notices that without the writer's imagination and style cyberpunk could not have existed.²⁰

A prominent position among the creators whose achievements have influenced the process of shaping the constitutive features of the genre is held by Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. The utopian and anti-utopian visions which they presented were sources of inspiration for the creators of dystopian cyberpunk worlds. Another factor that exerted a great impact on the aesthetics of the genre, as well as on the characterological concepts of protagonists, were works classified as noir cinema, inspired by hard-boiled fiction.²¹ The authors worth mentioning here are Dashiell Hammet and Raymond Chandler.²² What is more, the manner of constructing cyberpunk narration draws on the motif of investigation, gradually revealing the characters' perverted secrets,²³ which also originates from noir cinema.

¹⁷ The traces of Burroughs' thought may be found in most western cyberpunk novels and movies, as his philosophy constitutes an unremovable element of the later poetics of the genre. The role of information as currency, or externalization by means of technological devices appear, among others, in *Blade Runner*, but also in *The Lawnmower Man* or post-cyberpunk *Matrix*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 112.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 141.

²¹ T. Lasek, Op. cit., p. 246.

²² Ibid.

²³ S. Bukatman, *Terminal Identity. The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*, Durham, London 1993 [cited in:] S. J. Konefał, *Corpus futuri. Literackie i filmowe wizerunki postludzi w anglosaskiej fantastyce naukowej oraz ich komiksowe i telewizyjne reinterpretacje*, Gdańsk 2013, p. 196.

Another inspiration for “cyberpunks” was the concept by Alvin Toffler, presented in *The Third Wave* (1984).²⁴ The manner of perceiving technological revolution as a phenomenon which was getting out of control and decentralizing society was close to the creators of this movement. Besides, the ideas put forward by aforementioned Marshall McLuhan, the author of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, significantly influenced the creation of cyberpunk visions of the world. The terms “global village” and “information society” as a metaphor of humans being taken over by technology formed a basis for creating the cyberpunk visions of cyberspace.²⁵ It is also worthwhile to mention Jean Baudrillard, whom critics such as Scott Bukatman or Mike Featherstone consider to be the most important theorist of the genre.²⁶ In his works Baudrillard presents descriptions of society immersed in simulation and hyperreality, which are subject to manipulation by mass media and capitalist corporations. His model of social relations was later successfully recreated in cyberpunk narrations.²⁷

As Bruce Sterling observes in *Preface to “Mirrorshades”*, the new genre is not only a marriage of philosophy and popular culture, but first of all “the final product” of the atmosphere of the 80s.²⁸ The origins of cyberpunk as a genre is thus associated with a new type of integration of creators, as well as the areas of culture and art which had previously been incompatible. As written by Sterling “[...] And suddenly a new alliance is becoming evident: an integration of technology and the Eighties counterculture. An un-holy alliance of the technical world and the world of organized dissent – the underground world of pop culture, visionary fluidity, and street-level anarchy.”²⁹ In addition, a researcher of post-modernism, Brian McHale, noticed that cyberpunk does not introduce any new or original components

²⁴ B. Sterling, Op. cit., p. 117.

²⁵ M. Featherstone, *Cyberspace/ Cyberbodies/ Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, London 1996, p. 34.

²⁶ A. Myszala, *Cyberprzestrzeń – wprowadzenie*, „Magazyn Sztuki” 1998, nr 1 (17), s. 55–56.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 56.

²⁸ B. Sterling, Op. cit., p. 114.

²⁹ Ibid, *Preface to Mirrorshades*, in: *The Cyberpunk Project*, http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/mirrorshades_preface.html (access: 10.08.2016).

into cultural circulation.³⁰ Its novelty lies in a successful combination of motifs, images and terms known from previous texts, as well as from providing them with new meanings and manners of interpretation.³¹ An important determinant of cyberpunk in literature and cinema is thus addressing the problems of contemporary world, related to the functioning of an individual in a post-industrial society, as well as the vision of disintegrated future, the illustration of which can be found in the stories of the main characters.³² Those are the topics which make cyberpunk a genre which is discursive in nature, engaging in polemics on the direction in which the history of humanity is heading.³³ The perception of the world that was close to cyberpunk creators was related to the reevaluation and clash of various cultural movements in the 1980s. Their primary goal was thus reaching a global point of view, and consequently a new interpretation of terms connected with human existence.³⁴

Cyberpunk in movies of the 80s – features that constitute the genre

An analysis of cyberpunk characteristic features should start with enumerating the visions of a dystopian city, which is the main setting for cyberpunk stories. Images of the world present in the genre emerged as a result of inspiration by aforementioned works, such as the movie *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang (Germany 1927) or the novels *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell. However, in contrast to the literary utopias and anti-utopias, when analyzing the genre's literature and movies it can be noticed that the cyberpunk dystopia is a dangerous place where the influences of corporations collide with the postulates of subcultures and the interests of dwellers of criminal

³⁰ B. McHale, *POSTcyberMODERNpunkISM*, in: *Ibid, Constructing Postmodernism*, London 1992, p. 229.

³¹ P. Frelik, *Op.cit.*, p. 122.

³² An example here may be the situations experienced by Deckard, the main character of *Blade Runner*. The relations with other characters that the protagonist engages in are based on a system of mutual benefits, which perfectly illustrates the disintegration of the dystopian society.

³³ P. Frelik, *Op.cit.*, p. 122.

³⁴ B. Sterling, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

demimonde, where the established law is not a constant value. The city areas are controlled by changing groups of interest which introduce their own regulations, so that an individual never feels safe. What is more, one can never be sure whether they are involuntarily breaching the established rules at a given moment. Referring to dictionary definitions emphasizing the difference between an anti-utopia and a dystopia, it is worthwhile to recall the statement by Andrzej Niewiadowski, who writes:

[Anti-utopia is] a creation close to dystopia, and often unjustifiably identified with it, as it always presents a negative image of social order, just like dystopia does. However, dystopia bases its visions directly on the development tendencies contemporary of the author, whereas anti-utopia derives them from utopian presumptions.³⁵

Dystopia, on the other hand, is defined by the scholar as “a composition presenting a nightmarish, yet logically justified, internally coherent and at times probable vision of future human existence”³⁶. Writer Raymond Williams, in his article *Utopia and Science Fiction*³⁷ emphasizes four main features which characterize dystopia: no possibility for an individual to escape (the world looks the same everywhere), its origins reaching back to an event which had not been predicted and could not be stopped by humans (for example, a natural disaster), its establishment through degeneration of society and technological transformation, which improved the standard of living only for privileged groups.³⁸

When constructing the vision of an agglomeration, cyberpunk creators were also inspired by world models known from SF movies,³⁹ but

³⁵ A. Niewiadowski, A. Smuszkiewicz, *Leksykon polskiej literatury fantastycznonaukowej*, Poznań 1990, p. 250.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

³⁷ R. Williams, *Utopia and Science Fiction*, in: *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide*, ed. P. Parrinder, London–New York 2004, pp. 52 – 65.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁹ Among SF movies which became an inspiration while creating cyberpunk visions, the ones worth recalling are: *Star Wars: New Hope* (1977) and *THX* (1971) by George Lucas, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) by Stanley Kubrick, *Planet of the Apes*

gave them a chaotic nature, which was meant to reflect the dynamism of social changes. In the disordered city space, alongside ruins there are skyscrapers made of steel and glass, bathed in the light of ever-present neon lights. Thus the image of dystopia is a combination of futuristic settlements, underground cities and post-apocalyptic Earth after a nuclear catastrophe.⁴⁰ In cinema, the archetype of a cyberpunk city was the space created in *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott (Hong Kong, USA, Great Britain 1982).⁴¹ Sinister Los Angeles, divided into four districts, was considered to be a canonic image,⁴² which also influenced the creation of metropolis images in the movies from the 90s. Another representation of a dystopia returned in movies such as *Total Recall* by Paul Verhoeven (USA 1990)⁴³ or *Gattaca* by Andrew Niccol (USA 1997).

A factor inseparably connected with a city as a setting is the motif of cyberspace, which is crucial for the genre. The concept of a “world inside a computer” was first formulated and presented in 1981, as one of the elements of a story entitled *True Names* by Vernor Vinge.⁴⁴ The virtual world inside a computer served as a place of refuge for characters, offering temporary relief from overwhelming daily routines. Depending on a literary or cinematic vision, cyberspace appears under different names.⁴⁵ The Web is also a tool which allows corporations to control social movements. The cinematic cyberworld of the 80s was mostly presented as a 3-dimensional computer environment, filled with abstract geometrical shapes.⁴⁶ Such a vision can be found in *Tron* by Steven Lisberger (USA 1982). The production was

(1968) by Franklin J. Schaffner, or B-class productions such as *Forbidden Planet* (1956) by Fred M. Wilcox.

⁴⁰ P. Frelík, *Op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴² J. Kerman, *Retrofitting Blade Runner*, Madison 1991, pp. 185–195.

⁴³ *Total Recall* was made on the basis of a story by Philip K. Dick entitled *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (1966).

⁴⁴ A. Kamrowska, “Cyberpunk w filmach Wschodu i Zachodu”, PhD thesis, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków 2006, computer printout, p. 12.

⁴⁵ P. Frelík, *Op.cit.*, p.123. The terms related to cyberspace which appear in literature are: Net (in *Eclipse* by John Shirley), Web (in *Islands in the Net* by Bruce Sterling), System (in *Synners* by Pat Cadigan), Matrix (in *Neuromancer* by William Gibson), Telespace (in *Arachne* by Lisa Mason), Metaworld (in *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

a response to the phenomenon of video games, which became a new element of the entertainment industry in the 80s.⁴⁷ The movie presents the adventures of Kevin Flynn, who is transferred by dematerialization to the computer system ruled by the domineering Main Program. In the motion picture by Lisberger, the cyberspace functions according to the rules of the real world, with the programs, like employees in a large corporation, charged with specific roles and tasks. The system itself is nothing more than a digitally-generated city. What is interesting, the programs were presented as personal constructs, bearing the features of the ones who created them. The director even introduces a metaphysical aspect of the world inside a computer, equipping the programs with faith in their creators, perceived as omnipotent gods.

The manners of depicting cinematic representations of cyberspace which were outlined in the 80s, and were later consequently developed can be divided into several categories. They appear as simstim,⁴⁸ which means a stimulation of experiencing a new, virtual body, like in *Brainstorm* by Douglas Trumbull (USA 1983), or presenting virtual reality as a “panorama” designed in a manner which defies reality.⁴⁹ In this case, the cyberworld constitutes an extension and a metaphor of the human mind, allowing characters to gain unique experience.⁵⁰ A movie which should be added to the classification is *Videodrome* by David Cronenberg (Canada 1983), where the cyberspace functions as consensual hallucination, which is a non-material phenomenon shared by a community.⁵¹

Another characteristic feature of the genre, according to the classification by Tomasz Lasek, is the presence of the Mass, which is the automatized society, devoid of identity.⁵² A mass-human from cyberpunk is immersed in the cyberspace, deprived of subjectivity, and their ability to cultivate relationships is severely diminished. Despite technological advances, a large part of dystopia citizens live in difficult conditions,

⁴⁷ J. Szyłak et al., *Kino Nowej Przygody*, Gdańsk 2011, p. 173.

⁴⁸ M. Radkiewicz, *Gender w humanistyce*, Kraków 2001, p. 119.

⁴⁹ A. Kamrowska, *Op.cit.*, p. 131.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵¹ D. Cavallaro, *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture*, New York 2001, p. 10.

⁵² T. Lasek, *Op.cit.*, p. 247.

struggle with addictions and lack of livelihood.⁵³ It can thus be noticed that cyberpunk as a genre focuses on technology's negative impact on human life, presenting social changes as a direct cause of the collapse of community and the decline of such terms as national states.

The third element of Lasek's classification, and another constitutive feature of the genre, is the Machine, understood as a metaphoric figure of cyborgization.⁵⁴ Cybernetics shapes the society, offering the possibility of modifying a human body by means of "cyber implants". Cyborgizations may appear as replaceable organs, equipping a body with weapons incorporated into living tissue, or computers connected directly to the brain.⁵⁵ The motif of connection between a machine and a biological body creates a unique mood of cyberpunk narrations, exemplifying technology which is "[...] visceral... it goes under the skin", as Paweł Frelik put it⁵⁶. Cyber implants, unlike the break-through inventions presented in science fiction literature and cinema, used for travelling to outer space and discovering new worlds, make it possible to discover the limits of a human body by extending its potential.⁵⁷ Cyberpunk as a genre undermines the faith in machines and presents body modifications as a weapon against the system, thus departing from the positive view of technology characteristic of science fiction.⁵⁸

The motif of cyborgization may also involve introducing androids, which are machines equipped with artificial intelligence, and thus imitate humans. The hybrid model of a dead body, representing the fear of artificially created being, first appeared in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.⁵⁹ However, the motif of "enlivening the lifeless" can be found as early as in the texts from the ancient period, such as the stories of Pygmalion and Galatea, Jason who brought dragon warriors to life, or the golem of Prague.⁶⁰ The being shaped by humans has also found

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ P. Frelik, *Op.cit.*, p.125.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ S. Konefał, *Op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 16 .

its place among the audiovisual texts at the very beginning of the history of cinematography, with the aforementioned *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang as one of the examples. However, it was not until the cinematic and literary cyberpunk that elaborate discussions on the condition of human soul and the existence of the Absolute, based on the comparison of the existence of man and machine, appeared within plots concerning robotics. The emergence of “new life” in the shape of mechanical beings results in the characters’ urge to search for new ways to achieve immortality, when former dogmas of faith have turned out to be insufficient in an anti-religious world. Such liberation is possible on the Net, which offers a whole range of experiences, a bit close to the feelings of religious tremendum. By detaching the mind from the body, it is possible to achieve a new kind of existence and liberate oneself from time and space limitations. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek compares the dreams of a virtual body, which can be created in another reality, with the gnostic longing for non-material “astral body”. In addition, he believes that cyberspace functions in a gnostic way, promising to elevate an individual to the level of consciousness at which they will free themselves from bodily inertia and receive a new, ethereal body.⁶¹ Literary and movie characters which have undergone a transposition of personality into cyberspace, are interesting personal constructs⁶². The prototype of such a character was Dixie Flatline, created by Gibson, who was a digital recording of a deceased human’s personality, transferred into the Web in *Neuromancer*.⁶³ Similar characters appeared later on in cinema, for instance in *The Lawnmower Man* by Brett Leonard (Japan, USA, Great Britain 1992).

The issue of corporeality is also associated with the concept of the main character of cyberpunk movies. The “console cowboy”⁶⁴ is an individual immersed both in the industrialized world and in

⁶¹ S. Žižek, *No Sex Please, We’re Post-Human!*, Lacan.com, <http://www.lacan.com/nosex.htm> (access: 10.08.2016).

⁶² T. Lasek, Op.cit., p. 250.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The term “console cowboy”, meant to denote a protagonist immersed in cyberspace, was introduced by William Gibson, using the expression to name Bobby Newark – the main character of *Sprawl Trilogy* (1984–1988).

cyberspace, which is understood here as the frontier of reality.⁶⁵ The character of a hacker, a computer genius who stands above the law, being at the same time an experimenter and a traveler wandering through cyberspace, is one of the main character patterns of the genre. His or her extraordinary skills intensify the feeling of alienation from society. In this respect, the psychological construct of the main character of cyberpunk movies is reminiscent of an individual living on the verge of law, as portrayed in westerns. The “console cowboys” can be found, among others, in films such as *Brainstorm* by Douglas Trumbull (USA 1983) or *Johnny Mnemonic* (directed by R. Longo, Canada, USA, 1995), which appeared on screens in the 90s. Another way of interpreting this archetypical pattern is the figure of Max Renn, the main character of *Videodrome* by Cronenberg. In the director’s vision, the protagonist was placed in a “hallucinatory reality of interactive television” instead of cyberworld.⁶⁶ Renn is a media expert, capable of evaluating the viewers’ needs related to the content broadcasted. The protagonist can thus be called “remote control cowboy”, as in the movie by Cronenberg the remote control serves the same purpose as the console in other pictures mentioned: it is an extension of the senses, connecting a user with the world of audiovisual broadcasts.⁶⁷

When summarizing the features of cyberpunk movies, it is worth noticing that not every motion picture assigned to the genre by critics and scholars contains all the abovementioned elements. It seems, however, that classifying a film as a representative of the genre need not be based on the largest possible accumulation of the genre features, but on creating a unique mood of a dystopian vision of the near future, which was started by the creators from the 80s and continued in the subsequent periods of cinematic development, in movies such as *Johnny Mnemonic* by Robert Longo, *eXistenZ* by David Cronenberg (Canada, Great Britain 1999), *The Thirteenth Floor* by Josefa Rusnak (Germany, USA 1999), or a Japanese animation *Ghost in the Shell* (Japan 1995) directed by Mamoru Oshii.

⁶⁵ P. Frelik, Op.cit., p. 124.

⁶⁶ S. Konefał, Op.cit., p. 197.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 199.

The poetics of cyberpunk movies of the 80s

When analyzing the problem of cyberpunk poetics, it seems reasonable to start from recalling the topics of the movies from that genre, which can be assigned to three paradigms: post-humanism, post-industrialism and post-nationalism.⁶⁸ The problematic aspects of the first one are connected with presenting the relationship of an individual vs. artificial intelligence and the virtual world. The characters surrounded by intelligent machines ask ontological questions about who they are. The presence of an android or a hybrid of a human and artificial components in social life causes the need to compare and assess a natural body in relation to a mechanical one. At the same time, characters struggle with doubts concerning the existence of soul. The problem of distorting the human identity in contact with a “living machine”⁶⁹ was presented in *Blade Runner*, when the main character starts to doubt his humanity when confronted with a perfect android. In the motion picture from 1982, the replicants are more human and inclined towards feelings than their prototypes, which causes detective Rick Deckard to question his own origins⁷⁰. As noticed by Scott Bukatman⁷¹ in his book, the protagonist’s status remains unclear till the end, especially if changes in the scripts of the two versions of the film (director’s cut and the cinema version) are to be considered. According to the scholar, the goal of Ridley Scott was to ask an existential question, with the viewers meant to search for an answer⁷². Post-industrialism and post-nationalism, on the other hand, are associated with the previously mentioned manners of showing the functioning of post-society and the problems of the world which broke out of control of its humans

⁶⁸ A. Kamrowska, Op.cit., p. 26.

⁶⁹ T. Lasek, Op. cit., p. 253.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ S. Bukatman, *Blade Runner*, London 2012.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 92–95. Taking into consideration comments made by people collaborating with the director, Bukatman analyses Deckard’s status in the various versions of the movie, pondering about the influence of the origami left at the hero’s doorstep on his self-perception. For this author, the hero’s identity is to be understood metaphorically, in connection to constructing a definition of humanity.

creators,⁷³ unavoidably heading towards collapse.⁷⁴ When expanding the meaning of post-industrialism in relation to cyberpunk movies, it can be noticed that one of the mechanisms most frequently used by the makers is comparing the world displayed in the movie to the world known to the audience.⁷⁵ A post-industrial dystopia, in which state governments have fallen, and power has been seized by corporations, seems at the same time very similar and extremely different from the off-screen reality. Since the plot of cyberpunk movies is set in a “near future”, the viewers encounter fashion, street look and computer components familiar to them from their lives or the media.⁷⁶ At the same time, the downfall of law, customs and social life results in perceiving a cyberpunk city as an extremely dangerous place. In the post-industrial world, the function of the most valued currency is fulfilled by information, with the technology shown on screen serving mostly as a means to acquire valuable data. The functioning of “new currency” results in the protagonist’s struggle to acquire knowledge which can be used in order to improve his standard of living. For viewers, such an image of the world is comprehensible and relatable, as the observed economic mechanisms, despite being flawed and altered to fit the movie’s reality, are the ones which function in reality they experience.⁷⁷ The topic of post-nationalism, which constitutes the third motif of cyberpunk movies, touches upon the issue of shaping an individual’s identity in the world after the fall of national states, in which power has been seized by corporations.⁷⁸ Their influence also reaches the virtual world, defining the character’s belonging to a given group, not on the basis of his/her origin, but due to the quantity and quality of consumed material and non-material goods. Apart from

⁷³ Ibid, p. 247.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 253.

⁷⁵ A. Kamrowska, Op.cit., p. 26.

⁷⁶ Since cyberpunk movies are steeped with American culture, they include brands of products (for example as neons) or cars known from American streets. Examples of this phenomenon can be found, among others, in movies such as: *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott, *The Terminator* by James Cameron (USA 1984) or *RoboCop* by Paul Verhoeven (USA 1987).

⁷⁷ An example here can be the increasing value of information and the emergence of virtual currencies in computer games.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 27.

corporations, the primacy in the world of the future is also pursued by gangs, as well as representatives of subcultures, who try to create a counterbalance for the corporate monopoly on information transfer. The theme of cyberpunk movies is thus also related to social changes resulting from technological transformations, and consequently showing on screen the result of rejecting the ways of dividing humanity according to races and nations, which is inadequate in the new reality.⁷⁹

When presenting the elements of the genre's poetics, it is also worthwhile to take a look at the structuring of the settings, as well as the time of the movies' plot. The actions by the main character always occur in the "near future". As a result, the cyberpunk world, apart from huge technological advances, does not differ much from the reality known to the audience. In some movies, the diegetic time is precisely defined, as in *Blade Runner*.⁸⁰ However, most creators avoid specifying a precise date of starting the action, as done by James Cameron in *The Terminator* (USA 1984). The "killer robot" mentioned in the title travels to 1984 from the "near future". It can be noticed that refraining from a precise setting of the plot in time makes the movie more universal and prevents it from becoming obsolete. It also encourages viewers to compare the creator's vision to what the future has brought.

When writing about the movie's poetics, it is also worthwhile to pay attention to the plot level.⁸¹ The main axis of the events of cyberpunk movies is the protagonist's fight against the system represented by corporations or groups trying to gain influence in cyberspace or within dystopian borders. The "role" of the corporation from a movie can also be played by a local government or associated members of a fundamentalist religion. The protagonist can also act against a group he used to belong to, and had positive relations with. An example here can be *Brainstorm*, where the main character cooperates with a team of experts representing corporations that fund research laboratories. However, in order to defend his beliefs, the hero leaves the group, becoming an enemy of "the system". In recurring plot patterns, an important role is also played by individuals that the protagonist encounters. Supporting characters

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The plot of *Blade Runner* takes place in November 2019.

⁸¹ D. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, New York–London 2007.

in the movies of this genre can be divided into two categories. The first one is that of “informers” and “guides”, who agree to help the protagonist to reach his goal in exchange for information. They play the role of gate keepers, introducing the main character into the environment closed to him, or offering him a body modification without which he will be unable to carry out his mission. The other group of characters are those who need the protagonist’s protection- they are mostly female characters⁸². Cyberpunk women are closely connected to the element of corporeality and emotionality, which can be observed in *Blade Runner*. The character of Rachel (Sean Yung), a replicant driven by emotions and lost in search for her identity is in this case confronted with clear-headed detective Deckard (Harrison Ford). What is crucial here is that male characters when faced with the necessity of choice, focus on their own goals and abandon the ones they should defend. Apart from the character played by Ford, another example here is the protagonist of *Brainstorm*, who after numerous family-related issues finally decides to separate with his wife, choosing to pursue his research goals on his own.

The last important aspect of the genre poetics is the scenography and iconographic elements closely related to it.⁸³ The iconography of cyberpunk movies is based on omnipresence of items connected with technology: cables, computers and peripheral devices, modified vehicles and devices used for cyborgization. Central units, monitors and their extensions fill the characters’ homes, laboratories and city space. Apart from that, the determinant of the genre’s uniqueness is a combination of hi-tech and low-tech elements. The representatives of advanced technologies are microchips and “cyber implants”. They may be items whose existence at the moment of making a film was still in the domain of scientific dreams, such as the kit for recording and replaying another person’s feelings and memories, presented in *Brainstorm*. Low-tech items which appear in cyberpunk are mostly computers and consoles, which hackers from the movies call ‘decks’. Despite the technological advances of the world displayed, the cyberpunk computers are machines known to the audience and not subject

⁸² A. Kamrowska, Op.cit., p. 62.

⁸³ D. Bordwell, Op.cit.

to miniaturization. What is important here, the technology presented in cyberpunk movies is interpreted by the critics as a factor which destabilizes the “traditional social and cultural space”,⁸⁴ and the iconography presented also constitutes a context for discussions on the condition of humanity.⁸⁵

It can thus be noticed that the poetics of the cyberpunk movies of the 80s is a composition of socially relevant topics, which the creators translated into recurring plot patterns. Creating a unique mood of the images described would not be possible without using a unique combination of scenography and iconography, which was meant to disorient the viewer, as well as make the movies easily readable in the context of transformations occurring in the real world.

Summary

Cyberpunk is a literary and cinematic genre which emerged in the 1980s as an expression of combining various areas of creators' inspirations and recipients' needs. The features which constitute the genre, as well as its poetics, are a reflection of social topics which were relevant in that period – the hopes, fears and expectations associated with the dynamic technological advances. Cyberpunk provided the recipients with an answer to the question: what will their lives look like after miniaturization of computers liberates them from limitations of the body, place of living and nationality. However, the cyberpunk creators' focus on scientific issues results in the movies becoming increasingly obsolete along with the development of the world. The elements of computer sets presented in the 80s and 90s, seem to be relics after 2000, and the visions of the future presented in movies which failed to come true, do not serve their intended purpose any more. At present, in the West, a kind of depletion of the genre's formula can be observed, which has resulted in the emergence of its hybrid forms, such as post-cyberpunk.

⁸⁴ A. Myszala, *Op.cit.*, p. 55.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

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Mariusz Koryciński

Into the cinema? Yuppie nights, innocent noirball and new classicism

Translated by Agnieszka Piskorska

*To Professor Elżbieta Przeździecka
and Professor Wanda Pokrzywnicka*

American popular cinema of the 1980s had many faces. Adventure was provided by the episodes of *Star Wars* (1980–1983) and the three parts of *Indiana Jones* (1981–1989), directed by Steven Spielberg. Sports emotions were offered by the three acts of *Karate Kid* (1984–1989), and dancing could be admired in musicals, such as Adrian Lyne's *Flashdance* from 1983 and Herbert Ross' *Footloose* made a year later. The future provided the setting for James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) and four episodes of the original *Star Trek* series (1982–1989). The magical world of the past opened before the viewers' eyes in Ron Howard's *Willow* (1988) and in Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride* (1987). Among horrors, very popular were slasher films, including four parts of *Halloween* (1981–1989), five parts of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984–1989), and as many as eight parts of *Friday the 13th* (1980–1989). Fans of superheroes could watch Superman's story continued (1980–1987), two pictures showing Conan the Barbarian's adventures (1982, 1984) as well as Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989). Laughter ruled everywhere, including *Beverly Hills Cop* (Martin Brest, 1984), the youth-addressed *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1985), and even *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984–1989).

Despite the diversity among the above-mentioned and many other films, it is often difficult to classify them according to genre, which, paradoxically, is itself a common trait unifying most entertainment productions of the 1980s. This was observed in 1986 by the Polish film critic Jerzy Płażewski in his article "Nowa przygoda" – *i co dalej?*

(“*New Adventure*” and *What’s Next?*), in which three features of popular films were noted: “depoliticalisation, parodic character and technical perfection”,¹ with only the last of the three being valued positively. At the break of 1986 and 1987 “Sight & Sound” published the article *Out of the Blue*, whose author Terrence Rafferty points out that the *Star Wars* series set the pattern for mixing film genres.² For Płażewski too, Lucas, next to Spielberg, is a director who shaped the cinematography of the 1980s.³

Apart from discussing the main stream of cinematic productions of those times, the essay *Out of the Blue* mentions three less central movies from 1986: Jonathan Demme’s *Something Wild*, David Byrne’s *True Stories* and David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet*. Rafferty was not the only one to link Demme’s and Lynch’s films; a reviewer writing for “Variety” about *Something Wild* mentioned *After Hours* and *Blue Velvet*,⁴ whereas a reviewer discussing *After Hours* in Polish newspaper “Echa dnia” referred to *Blue Velvet* and *Something Wild*.⁵ Despite the passing of time, these productions, beside such pictures as Lawrence Kasdan’s *Body Heat* (1981), Brian De Palma’s *Body Double* (1984), John Landis’ *Into the Night* (1985), Susan Seidelman’s *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985) and Adrian Lyne’s *Fatal Attraction* (1987) are still included in critical overviews for a number of reasons. Distinguishing and discussing their common features will throw some light both on the films made in that period and on their place in the history of cinema.

¹ J. Płażewski, „*Nowa Przygoda*” – *i co dalej?*, “Kino” 1986, No. 5, p. 37 [own translation]. Jerzy Płażewski (1924-2015) – Polish film critic and historian; author of the course book *Język filmu (Film Language)* and other publications.

² T. Rafferty, *Out of the Blue*, “Sight & Sound” 1986–1987, Vol. 56, No. 1, p. 31.

³ J. Płażewski, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁴ Cart., [review] *Something Wild*, *Variety’s Film Reviews: 1985–1986*, Vol. 19, New Providence 1987 [no page numbers].

⁵ T. Wiącek, [review] *Wielkowiejska dżungla*, “Echo Dnia” 1988, No. 192, p. 10.

Minimally postmodern yuppie

...progressive in every inch of my own self ...*

In his article *Rich and Strange: The Yuppie Horror Film* Barry Keith Grant links *After Hours* and *Something Wild* with *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Fatal Attraction* and some other movies from the early 90s, referring to them as yuppie horror films.⁶ This view is questioned by Leighton Grist, author of a monograph on Scorsese, who claims that Grant in fact mixes two separate trends: yuppie nightmare with yuppies in peril.⁷ For Grist, it is the first trend where *After Hours* belongs, next to *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Something Wild*, *Blue Velvet*, *Fatal Attraction* and Roman Polanski's *Frantic* (France and USA 1988).⁸ Grist's considerations are taken up by Kelly Konda in an essay published on the web site *We Minored In Film*; keeping the term yuppie nightmare, the author connects *After Hours* with *Into the Night*⁹ – a film not taken into account in the previous discussions.

Yuppie, the acronym for a Young Urban Professional is due to Dan Rottenberg, who – as reminded by Teddy Wayne in “The New York Times” article *Tell-Tale Signs of the Modern-Day Yuppie*¹⁰ – was the first to use this term in the article *About That Urban Renaissance...* published by the magazine “Chicago”:

* All the quotes under the titles of this chapter's sections come from Dominik Damian's novel *Drugie dno (Hidden Meaning)*, D. Damian, *Drugie dno*, Warsaw 1963, pp. 42, 155, 5, 189, 288, 7, 63 and 224.

⁶ B. K. Grant, *Rich and Strange: The Yuppie Horror Film*, “Journal of Film and Video” 1996, Vol. 48, No. 1–2, p. 4. The movies from the 1990s discussed by Grant include *Poison Ivy* (directed by K. Shea, 1992) and *Single White Female* (directed by B. Schroeder, 1992).

⁷ L. Grist, *Yuppies in Peril*, in: L. Grist, *The Films of Martin Scorsese, 1978–1999: Authorship and Context II*, Basingstoke 2013, p. 135.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹ K. Konda, *Into the Night & After Hours: How BB King, John Landis and Martin Scorsese Fit Into the Yuppie Nightmare Cycle*, *We Minored in Film*, <https://weminoredinfilm.com/2015/05/15/into-the-night-after-hours-how-bb-king-john-landis-and-martin-scorsese-fit-into-the-yuppie-nightmare-cycle/> (access: 16.09.2016).

¹⁰ T. Wayne, *Tell-Tale Signs of the Modern-Day Yuppie*, “The New York Times”, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/fashion/tell-tale-signs-of-the-modern-day-yuppie.html> (access: 16.09.2016).

“Yuppies” – young urban professionals rebelling against the stodgy suburban lifestyles of their parents. The Yuppies seek neither comfort nor security, but stimulation, and they can find that only in the densest sections of the city.¹¹

Only three years later, however, a yuppie was no longer perceived as someone seeking stimulation but as a social climber. In 1983 a parody called *The Yuppie Handbook* by Marissia Piesman and Marilee Hartley is released, from which we learn that the young professionals’ favourite words are “postmodernism” and “minimalism”,¹² that they value style more than comfort,¹³ and that when they go to a restaurant, what they primarily want is “a piano player who specializes in *As Time Goes By*”.¹⁴ Exaggeration can be seen in the very definition proposed by the authors, who claim that the yuppie “lives on aspirations of glory, prestige, recognition, fame, social status, power, money or any and all combinations of the above”.¹⁵

In Poland two articles on the yuppies appeared in the magazine “Res Publica” in 1987: *Czy już jesteś „yuppie”?* (*Have You Turned “Yuppie” Yet?*) by writer Grzegorz Musiał¹⁶ oraz *Kim jest japiszon?* (*Who is the Yuppie?*) by sociologist Paweł Śpiewak.¹⁷ The latter author takes the following perspective on local urban professionals: “They wanted to stand out from the crowd. They were influenced by intellectual trends that originated in New York and were alien to the Polish mundane reality: depth psychology, Asia, mysticism, Buddhism, they also discovered Jewish culture”.¹⁸ Many years later, this essay was discussed by Olga Drenda, the author of *Duchologia polska (Polish Ghostology)*,¹⁹

¹¹ D. Rottenberg, *About That Urban Renaissance...*, “Chicago”, [http://www.chicago-mag.com/Chicago-Magazine/May-1980/Yuppie/\(access:16.09.2016\)](http://www.chicago-mag.com/Chicago-Magazine/May-1980/Yuppie/(access:16.09.2016)).

¹² M. Piesman, M. Hartley, *The Yuppie Handbook. The State-of-the Art Manual for Young Urban Professionals*, New York 1984, pp. 22–23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54. *As Time Goes By* – a song composed by Herman Hupfeld in 1931, used in the film *Casablanca* (directed by Michael Curtiz, 1942).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁶ G. Musiał, *Czy już jesteś „yuppie”?*, “Res Publica” 1987, No. 6, pp. 105–108.

¹⁷ P. Śpiewak, *Kim jest japiszon?*, “Res Publica” 1987, No. 6, pp. 109–112.

¹⁸ P. Śpiewak, W. Świetlik, Paweł Śpiewak, “Playboy” 2010, No. 4, p. 44 [own translation].

¹⁹ O. Drenda, *Duchologia polska. Rzeczy i ludzie w latach transformacji*, Kraków 2016, pp. 55 and 85.

who stated in an interview that the yuppie image portrayed by Śpiewak resembled “present-day dreams of slow life – hand-made stuff, walking barefoot, dinners with friends, culinary experiments, but no money or perspectives; plenty of practical and logistic problems instead”.²⁰

The picture emerging from the above-mentioned examples is that of a person, regardless where they live, who either wants to achieve more than he/she has, or has reached the desired social status. His/her aspirations are unfortunately limited to expanding or maintaining a social and financial position – even if they appear to concern spiritual matters. The yuppie is thus shallow, focusing only on the superficial things others can see. But what happened to the yuppie then, in the 1980s, that deserved to be called “a nightmare” or “horror”?

Innocent noirball

*You're a film-maker and artist,
and you were so easy to take in*

The films discussed by Grant, Grist and Konda, as well as by reviewers assessing them when they were released or later, are not always linked because of a yuppie character. As Noel Murray points out, “Not every protagonist who headed into the night in the ‘80s was a yuppie. Some were just losers, like Craig Wasson in *Body Double*”.²¹ Writing on *Into the Night*, Dave Kehr links Landis’ film with *After Hours* and *Something Wild*²², without referring to the yuppie either. What unites the movies under discussion, apart from a certain type of protagonist, not necessarily a yuppie, is a starting point for a plot and its subsequent development. In Murray’s parlance, this involves “one anxious character (or group of characters) embarking on an illicit

²⁰ O. Drenda, A. Gruszczyński, *Opowiem wam o duchach transformacji*, gazeta.pl, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,20259722,olga-drenda-opowiem-wam-o-duchach-transformacji.html> (access: 16.09.2016) [own translation].

²¹ N. Murray, *Back Into The Night: How Superbad Recalls The Restless Soul Of '80s American Movies*, *A. V. Club*, <http://www.avclub.com/article/back-into-the-night-how-superbad-recalls-the-restless-1798212316> (access: 16.09.2016).

²² D. Kehr, *Into the Night*, in: *John Landis*, edited by G. D’Agnolo Vallan, Milwaukie 2008, p. 308.

adventure”.²³ For Konda, the films portray “a white yuppie being pulled into a world unknown to them, usually a white male by a mysterious white female”.²⁴ This type of schema has its sources in classical Hollywood cinema: film noir, screwball comedy and innocent-on-the-run thrillers.

As Grist puts it “The yuppie nightmare cycle combines elements from two apparently contrasting genres: screwball comedy and film noir”.²⁵ The film noir canon includes Billy Wilder’s *Double Indemnity* from 1944, considered the most typical representative of the genre by British Film Institute²⁶, and the screwball canon can be exemplified by Howard Hawks’ *Bringing Up Baby* from 1938.²⁷

The cycle, however – Grist goes on to say – retrospectively clarifies their similarities. Both genres represent male characters who are drawn into chaotic and illogical realm by transgressive female figures: the screwball heroine and the *femme fatale*. [...] Both screwball comedy and film noir are marked by complex, convoluted plots.²⁸

In his book *The Suspense Thriller* on films inspired by Hitchcock, Charles Derry juxtaposes *Into the Night* and *After Hours* in the context of the innocent-on-the-run style, “organized around an innocent victim’s coincidental entry into the midst of global intrigue”.²⁹ Kehr too observes the influence of the Master of Suspense on Landis’ film: “The screenplay, by Ron Koslow, borrows perhaps the most benign of Hitchcock’s favourite story structures: the couple film, in which romantic pair is brought together by shared adventure (*Rich and Strange*,

²³ N. Murray, Op. cit.

²⁴ K. Konda, Op. cit.

²⁵ L. Grist, Op. cit., p. 126.

²⁶ A. Frost, M. Patrick, *Infographic: What makes a film noir?*, bfi.org.uk, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/infographic-what-makes-film-noir> (access: 16.09.2016).

²⁷ W. D. Gehring, *Screwball Comedy: Defining a Film Genre*, Muncie 1983, p. 3.

²⁸ L. Grist, Op. cit.

²⁹ Ch. Derry, *The Innocent-on-the-Run Thriller*, in: Ibid, *The Suspense Thriller. Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*, Jefferson and London 1988, p. 270.

The 39 Steps, Saboteur, North by Northwest)³⁰. As was noted above, the title *Rich and Strange* was incorporated into the title of Grant's essay on the yuppie horror.

The most typical hero of the yuppie nightmare or horror genre thus appears to be a man living an ordinary life, although often only seemingly, who may be longing for a change or feel bored. The factor responsible for pulling him out of his stable world is a woman. She may destroy the man, or incite him to become active. At the beginning of *Fatal Attraction* there is nothing to suggest that Alex, with whom Dan is flirting, is obsessed with him. Audrey in *Something Wild* is not sincere with Paul either, wearing a black wig and introducing herself as Lulu. Similarly, Ned in *Body Heat* does not suspect that he is being manipulated by his lover Matty. A woman could likewise be a victim, e.g. the yuppie Margaret in David Mamet's *House of Games* (1987) or Alva in Robert Bierman's *Vampire's Kiss* (1988).

The image of independent and resourceful heroines, emerging from many films, might be seen as a reflection of the hard-fought and increasingly strong position of women in the 1980s culture and society. Female directors that debuted at the time include Barbra Streisand (*Yentl*, 1983), Amy Heckerling (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, 1982), Susan Seidelman (*Desperately Seeking Susan*) and Penny Marshall (*Jumpin' Jack Flash*, 1986). Madonna started her musical career, whereas Cyndi Lauper, Whitney Houston and Belinda Carlisle began to appear as solo artists. Alice Walker received the Pulitzer Prize for her epistolary novel *The Color Purple* in 1983, in 1985 the designer Donna Karan launched her fashion company, and in 1986 Oprah Winfrey started her television show. American housewives could learn household tricks from Martha Stewart, style from Princess Diana, and irony from Ann Magnuson, a performer from New York suburban night clubs.³¹

The above-mentioned wig and fake name used by Audrey are reminiscent of the heroine played by Louise Brooks in Georg Wilhelm Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (Germany 1929).³² This connection gives rise

³⁰ D. Kehr, Op. cit. p. 310.

³¹ M. Dowd, *Youth-Art-Hype: A Different Bohemia*, in: *The Times of the Eighties. The Culture, Politics, and Personalities that Shaped the Decade*, edited by W. Grimes, New York 2013, p. 197.

³² M. McCarthy, *Surface Sheen and Charged Bodies. Louise Brooks in "Pandora's*

to the idea that some of the films under discussion show how artificial the fictional universe is, which is inevitably linked to the very essence of the cinema. One of the scenes in *Into the Night* shows Ed Okin in a film studio, where he mistakes fake props for real objects. The hero of *Body Double* is not aware that sometimes he watches a neighbour and sometimes her double. Artificiality need not be confined to films, it may as well apply to art as such. In *After Hours* Paul visits an artist's studio, and she changes him into a papier-mâché sculpture, in *Blue Velvet* Ben lip-syncs to Roy Orbison's *In Dreams*, which is discussed by David Van Leer in *The Queening of America* as an example of "gay camp",³³ and Clifford, the hero of Jerry Kramer's *Modern Girls* (1986) dresses as the singer Bruno X. Sometimes the kitsch-like artificiality brings out the tragedy of the hero's position: when Peter from *Vampire's Kiss* cannot afford a vampire's glass teeth, he buys the cheapest plastic fangs.

Saturday Night Horror

*On Saturday evenings I was always
overwhelmed by anxiety*

In the 1980s many Americans sat in front of their TV sets at night to watch satirical programmes about the society they were part of, such as *Saturday Night Live* aired from 1975 on. In one of the sketches called *White Like Me* from 1984, when an Afro-American got off a bus, other passengers started to party. Sitcoms like *Married... with Children* (1987–1997) were also becoming increasingly popular. Others enjoyed the entertainment offered by night clubs, as evidenced in Floyd Mutrux's *The Hollywood Knights* (1980), *Modern Girls*, *Vampire's Kiss* and two 1988 pictures: Greg Beeman's *License to Drive* and Tom E. Eberhardt's *The Night Before*. The night became synonymous with

Box" (1929), in: *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, edited by N. Isenberg, New York and Chichester 2009, p. 233.

³³ D. Van Leer, *The Queening of America. Gay Writers of Straight Fiction*, in: *The Queening of America. Gay Culture in Straight Society*, edited by D. Van Leer, New York and London 1995, p. 63.

breaking away from the problems of everyday life, being a substitute for holidays. Writing about the films “escaping into the night”, Noel Murray stated “Sometimes they happen over a whole summer, in the blazing light of day”.³⁴

The time after twilight may be also associated with crime, and because of that “in the Western world, the night has indeed drawn special attention on the part of lawmakers, since it was recognized as a setting to which the rules provided for daytime did not apply”.³⁵ Ed, the hero of *Into the Night*, meets Iranian secret police SAVAK agents and Walter Hill’s *The Warriors* (1979) tells a story of rivalry between city gangs. The night can be also thought of as a setting for activities of people and groups transgressing societal norms, such as subcultures or sexual minorities (Paul in *After Hours* visits a bar, where he meets a homosexual couple). The night is sometimes used as a means of intensifying the impact of some events: in *License to Drive* Les is driving a car, even though he failed his driving licence test, the heroes of Michael Nankin and David Wechter’s *Midnight Madness* (1980) are treasure-hunting, whereas the couple from Steve De Jarnatt’s *Miracle Mile* (1988) meet up for a date, and their encounter turns into a struggle to survive the impending within hours doom.

The action of *The Hollywood Knights* takes place during the night preceding Halloween. The night, whether Halloween or not, is the time suitable for horror tales. In many of the 1980s horrors, the plot is set mainly after twilight, e.g. in Tom DeSimone’s *Hell Night* (1981), Tom Holland’s *Fright Night* (1985) or Fred Dekker’s *Night of the Creeps* (1986). According to Grant, “the yuppie horror employs – but modifies – codes and conventions of the classic horror film”.³⁶ Grant points to a number of characteristic elements of the genre he is discussing, such as making a yuppie apartment an equivalent of old dark house³⁷ and the presence of human monsters, such as Alex from *Fatal Attraction*.

³⁴ N. Murray, Op. cit.

³⁵ J. Galinier, A. M. Becquelin, G. Bordin et.al., *Anthropology of the Night: Cross-Disciplinary Investigations*, “Current Anthropology” 2010, Vol. 51, No. 6, p. 833.

³⁶ B. K. Grant, Op. cit., p. 5.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 6. Among film plots taking place in mysterious houses are James Whale’s *The Old Dark House* from 1932 and its remake from 1963 under the same title, directed by William Castle.

tion or Ray from *Something Wild*, who “seem implausibly unstoppable like their supernatural counterparts Jason, Michael Myers and Freddy Krueger”³⁸.

Although Grist considers the horror element marginal in the films discussed by Grant,³⁹ combining various genres can be interpreted as part of a wider strategy, namely, that of shifting the film universe towards unreality. This conception has received various treatments: for Aleksander Ledóchowski *After Hours* was a kind of “trip or hallucination journey cinema”;⁴⁰ hallucinations were mentioned also by Pauline Kael in her review of *Blue Velvet*;⁴¹ Sergio from *Tipping My Fedora* defined the mood of *Into the Night* as an “increasingly surreal tone”;⁴² and the critic writing for “Ekran” on *Frantic* said “Polanski’s Paris is as if unreal, deprived of its charm”.⁴³ When watching *The Miracle Mile*, the reviewer for “The Monthly Film Bulletin” kept wondering if the film plot would turn out to be the main protagonist’s dream.⁴⁴ Making things unreal by turning something ordinary into something strange and unusual can be thought of as typical of dreams.

It feels sleepy and a bit unreal

*She started the swindle.
She started selling dreams*

Putting American films aside for a while, let us turn to two Polish productions. One of them is Tomasz Zygadło’s⁴⁵ *Ćma* (aka *The Moth*)

³⁸ Ibid, p. 7. The protagonists come from the series *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, respectively.

³⁹ L. Grist, Op. cit., pp. 134–136.

⁴⁰ A. Ledóchowski, [review] *Po godzinach*, “Film” 1990, No. 52, p. 15 [own translation].

⁴¹ P. Kael, [review] *Blue Velvet*, „The New Yorker”, <http://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/movies/blue-velvet> (access: 18.09.2016).

⁴² Sergio, *Into the Night (1985) – Tuesday’s Overlooked Film, Tipping My Fedora*, <https://bloodymurder.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/into-the-night-1985-tues-days-overlooked-film/> (access: 18.09.2016).

⁴³ J. Skwara, [review] *Amerikanin w Paryżu*, “Ekran” 1989, No. 33, p. 6 [own translation].

⁴⁴ P. Strick, *Miracle Mile*, [review] “Monthly Film Bulletin”, February 1991, p. 52.

⁴⁵ Tomasz Zygadło (1947-2011) – Polish film, television and theatre director; began

from 1980 and the other is a film novella which was never actually filmed, titled *Nocna korekta* (*Night Time Proofing*) by Jolanta Słobodzian⁴⁶ and Marek Kreutz. Handed in to the film production company “Rondo” in 1984, it was meant to be a two-part television film directed by Słobodzian. The ending of the novella is an adaptation of Edward Stachura’s⁴⁷ short story *Pokocham ją siłą woli* (*I Shall Fall in Love With Her by My Will*),⁴⁸ whereas the preceding events are inspired by other elements of the story. Additionally, the viewpoint changes from a male perspective to a female one.⁴⁹

The Moth is classified as a representative of the cinema of moral unrest, a Polish cinematic movement developing in the period 1976–1981.⁵⁰ Rafał Mielczarek in his article *Rzeczywistość w fazie liminalnej* (*Reality in the Liminal Phase*) points out that using meaningless rituals and empty slogans, the communist system created the world of propaganda, functioning outside the real life. Because of that, filmmakers often chose provincial settings for their plots, believing that they would be truer to life than centres of communist power.⁵¹ According to critic Krzysztof Mętrak, the plots often focused on “manipulating an individual [...], the character of human relationships and social bonds, as well as dubious consequences of social promotion”.⁵² Mariola Jankun-Dopartowa, author of the essay *Falszywa inicjacja bohatera* (*The Hero’s False Initiation*),⁵³

his career as a documentary maker; often preoccupied with the problem of human identity.

⁴⁶ Jolanta Słobodzian (1942-1999) – Polish director, mostly known as an activist of Film Society and coorganiser of Star Festival in Międzyzdroje. See M. Koryciński, *Rosebud given to Jolanta Słobodzian*, this volume.

⁴⁷ Edward Stachura (1937-1979) – Polish poet, writer and translator; dealt with the problem of a human being torn apart between the ordinary course of life and a need to rebel against conventions.

⁴⁸ E. Stachura, *Pokocham ją siłą woli*, in: *Ibid*, *Się*, Zakrzewo 2010, pp. 176–188.

⁴⁹ J. Słobodzian, M. Kreutz, *Nocna korekta* (manuscript signed 2260 stored in Filмотeka Narodowa library).

⁵⁰ M. Kornatowska, *Nurt moralnego niepokoju*, in: *Ibid*, *Wodzireje i amatorzy*, Warszawa 1990, p. 174.

⁵¹ K. Mętrak, *Kino „moralnego niepokoju”*, in: *Ibid*, *Po seansie*, Warszawa 1988, p. 87.

⁵² R. Mielczarek, *Rzeczywistość w fazie liminalnej*. „Kino moralnego niepokoju” jako forma międzypokoleniowego dramatu społecznego, “Folia Sociologica” 2008, No. 33, pp. 229–233 [own translation].

⁵³ M. Jankun-Dopartowa, *Falszywa inicjacja bohatera*. Młode kino lat siedemdziesiątych wobec założeń programowych Młodej Kultury, in: *Człowiek z ekranu*.

wrote “The hero of this cinema is a human being who opened his eyes. He realised that a true social initiation is still ahead of him”.⁵⁴ Representatives of this trend include Andrzej Wajda’s *Człowiek z marmuru* (aka *Man of Marble*) and Krzysztof Zanussi’s *Barwy ochronne* (aka *Camouflage*) from 1976 as well as Feliks Falk’s *Wodzirej* (aka *Top Dog*; 1977), Agnieszka Holland’s *Aktorzy prowincjonalni* (aka *Provincial Actors*; 1978) and Krzysztof Kieślowski’s *Amator* (aka *Camera Buff*; 1979).⁵⁵

Zygadło’s movie is a story of Jan, a radio presenter, who hosts a nighttime program *Radiotelefon* (*Call the Radio*), in which callers confess their problems. At some point Jan says that he feels like “a trash bin into which everyone can throw anything and just walk on”, whereas he is the one left with other people’s pain. His professional crisis coincides with convoluted relationships in his private life, which he is splitting between his wife, ex-wife and a lover.

We meet Ola, the main protagonist of *Nocna korekta*, when she is discharged from the hospital after an unsuccessful suicide attempt. Suffering from insomnia, she gets a job as a proof-reader, taking it over from Anna, who quit due to a mysterious disease. During her first night at work she meets a journalist, whose advances she will soon reject, not being able to have a relationship with someone she does not love.

As evident, work is, at least to some extent, a source of problems for Jan, but for Ola it turns out to be a remedy for insomnia, most probably resulting from the problems that perplexed her before. Leaving the differences between the sources of the protagonists’ problems aside, their life routines get reversed; the night becoming the time when they are professionally active. This reversal is reflected, to varying degrees, in the form of both films.

Zygadło’s film was made in black and white. For historian Tadeusz Lubelski this move enhanced the meaning of the title by alluding to the obsolete sense of the Polish word for “moth” denoting “darkness”. He notes that “[...] the night life of Jan’s interlocutors took place

Z antropologii postaci filmowej, edited by M. Jankun-Dopartowa and M. Przyłipiak, Kraków 1996, pp. 89–121.

⁵⁴ Ibid, *Aktorzy w teatrze życia codziennego*, in: Ibid, *Gorzkie kino Agnieszki Holland*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 115 [own translation].

⁵⁵ M. Kornatowska, Op. cit., p. 174–175.

in the sphere of unofficial matters, involving fuzzy criteria, covert actions”.⁵⁶ Darkness, both as the time-space where the plot unveils and as an element of the film poetics, brings about associations with noir. Jan smokes a lot, and the light getting into the studio through the window blinds forms parallel straps on the wall. Despite those associations, the creators of the film did not mention any sources of inspiration, claiming that a black and white picture, being more technically difficult than a colour one, is but a challenge to them.⁵⁷

“All kinds of things can happen...”⁵⁸ – Ola is warned by her boss on her first day at work. The offices where the proof-readers work at night neighbour on a printing house, the realm of male workers. That is why the noise made by machines, resembling chirping crickets, mixes with the sound of reading out loud, and shouting mixes with quiet sobbing. “It feels sleepy and a bit unreal”,⁵⁹ as Słobodzian and Kreutz capture the atmosphere of the place. In one of the scenes the journalist and Ola found themselves in a restaurant; at a certain point their conversation is interrupted by a flying headless chicken. The surreal character of the situation is underscored by fact that the menu includes a dish called “poule à la Buñuel”.⁶⁰ In *The Moth*, there is a recurring scene showing Jan’s dream or vision, in which he sees the smoke-filled and unnaturally lit radio studio, with a non-existent in reality door frame in the middle.

One of the returning threads in *Nocna korekta* is the motif of game or pretence: the heroin watches a Lotto advertisement, plays cards with her ex-husband, and when in hotel, she pays attention to wigs and false moustache of the hotel employees. She dismisses the journalist’s advances by saying “[...] you failed to learn your role properly”.⁶¹ Zygadło presents a scene in which a psychotherapist advises Jan to distance

⁵⁶ T. Lubelski, *Epoka moralnego niepokoju*, in: Ibid, *Historia Kina Polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, Katowice 2009, pp. 399–400 [own translation].

⁵⁷ I. Lępkowska, *Światło. O realizacji filmu Cma Tomasza Zygadły*, “Film. Magazyn ilustrowany” 1979, No. 47, p. 6.

⁵⁸ J. Słobodzian, Marek Kreutz, Op. cit., p. 7 [own translation].

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 8 [own translation].

⁶⁰ Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) – Spanish director associated with surrealism. Author of a short movie *Un chien andalou* (aka *An Andalusian Dog*; France 1929), made in collaboration with Salvadore Dalí. Poule – hen/chicken in French.

⁶¹ J. Słobodzian, M. Kreutz, Op. cit., p. 11 [own translation].

himself from his job because “an actor crying with his true tears on the stage is not a professional”. Both these utterances may suggest that human relations consist in acting out roles, like in the theatre. In *Nocna korekta* this applies to female-male relations, whereas in *The Moth* to professional life, but there are other ways of interpreting these films as well.

When Ola discovers that Anna is dead, the music of *Petrushka* is being played from a record. Igor Stravinsky's ballet, telling a story of a puppet, which is brought to life and falls in love with another puppet during the carnival, corresponds to problems experienced both by Anna and by Ola. The former wanted to open up in front of another human being, but all she noticed in herself was emptiness and because of that she feared that no one would love her. The latter was constantly tormented by the question about the force that keeps people alive. Not being able to find the force in herself, she could not solve her problems.

In this way the themes of life, death and complicated relationships bring the unfinished Słobodzian-Kreutz project close to the cinema of moral unrest. It should also be noted that the critic Janusz Skwara sees it as “the cinema of existential unrest”.⁶² Both *Nocna korekta* and *The Moth* show similarities to the American productions discussed above, even though in theory their creators were separated by geographical, cultural and historical distance.

Keeping in mind that the political systems of the United States and the then communist Poland were completely different, it is worthwhile to consider common points in those films, proving universality of the cinema of moral unrest and the yuppie films. After all, both trends showed human beings in their professional environments and put emphasis on the gap between broadly conceived falsity and what seems to be true. They also included a message that a once achieved status may not last long and that an unexpected social initiation can occur at any moment.

⁶² J. Skwara, *Kino moralnego niepokoju?*, “Argumenty” 1980, No. 42, pp. 8–9 [own translation].

A marginalised human

You had absurdity in you since you were born

The Moth and *Nocna korekta* include scenes in which all the major protagonists meet. In the Słobodzian-Kreutz script it happens during a dream-like sequence in a hotel garden. In Zygadło's movie it is the final scene showing a meal, which can be interpreted in the following way: Jan has returned from a resort, where he distanced himself from his everyday problems and, most probably, regained decorum in his professional and private life. At this point, two crucial questions arise about the films under discussion: what is the significance of the events shown on the screen for their heroes? Do the adventures they experience affect their personalities, lives, relationships with others? As Dave Kehr notes:

In both Scorsese and Demme films, the heroes are lured into their predicament by the promise of sex. They are being punished (...) for committing the sin of lust (...) But Landis's Ed Okin is being neither punished nor tested; the world that opens up for him is (...) a landscape of fantasy and escape.⁶³

The paths that the film protagonists travel influence them in various ways, then, even though there may be one common schema in them. To explain this issue, it is worthwhile to refer to the ideas of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. The former described the rites of passage from one state to another and distinguished three phases that constitute such rites: separation, transition and incorporation.⁶⁴ Following van Gennep, Turner points out that individuals who find themselves in the liminal phase, i.e. after separation but before incorporation, are suspended between the states, which is often manifested as darkness, bisexuality or physical remoteness. It is at this stage that *communitas* is created, i.e. "society as an unstructured [...] community", all subject

⁶³ D. Kehr, Op. cit., p. 308.

⁶⁴ A. Van Gennep, *Classification of Rites*, in: Ibid, *The Rites of Passage*, London and Henley 2004, p. 11.

to the same laws of liminality.⁶⁵ After passing this stage, individuals reincorporated into a society can function in it thanks to abilities acquired in the liminal phase or resulting from the change they underwent in that phase.

The heroes of the films analysed in this chapter take part in events uprooting them from their stable lives – either because they want to, like Jeffrey in *Blue Velvet*, or because they are more or less forced to, like Ed in *Into the Night* or Richard in *Frantic*. Sometimes they get disconnected from their previous lives symbolically, by being taken away an object linking them with the past: Ed has to part with his car; Paul in *After Hours* loses money; Charlie in *Something Wild* is tied to a bed by Lulu and loses independence. Dorothy puts lipstick on Jeffrey's lips, symbolically taking away his masculinity, and Richard has to face the kidnapping of his wife.

In the course of subsequent events, the heroes have to overcome obstacles jointly with another character: Ed with Diana, Charlie with Audrey, Jeffrey with Sandy, Richard with Michelle, and Chris with her charges. The heroes can break the law (Charlie, for instance, leaves a restaurant without paying the bill), act at night time (as Ed and Diana or Chris with her charges), or do something that was not part of their previous life, for example Ed carries out negotiations with the boss of the Iranian mafia, Charlie fights against the diabolical Ray, Jeffrey and Richard turn detectives, Chris sings a blues song in front of an audience. As they struggle to overcome the obstacles together, they form a bond based on common experience.

When they succeed in pursuing their aims, their lives change (Paul discovers dormant wildness in himself; Ed will probably leave his unfaithful wife and stay with Diana), or ways of looking at their lives change (Paul will probably come to terms with his job). Sometimes they go back to their previous states, which have been upset in various ways – Richard finds his wife, and Dorothy his son. The ending of one cycle and beginning of another is often marked in the storyline: Ed watches an ad of a car dealer Cal Worthington be-

⁶⁵ V. Turner, *Liminality and Communitas*, in: *Ibid, The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*, Ithaca, New York 1991, pp. 94-97.

fore embarking on his adventure and when it is over. A restaurant is a place of the first and the last of Charlie and Lulu's encounters, Jake in *Body Double* imagines an alternative life when lying in a coffin on a film set, *Frantic* starts and ends with a long shot of the camera on a motorway, and *Vampire's Kiss* is similarly framed between the shots of Manhattan view at twilight.

Juxtaposing *Nocna korekta* and *The Moth* with American films draws attention both to differences and similarities between them. Such elements as opposition of light and darkness, truth and artificiality, or mixing conventions may not appear in each of the productions analysed, or at least not always be equally vivid. In the majority of movies scrutinised by Grant, Grist, Konda and Murray, and also in *The Moth* they play a similar role: they are factors facilitating initiation, just like Turner's liminality phase. Because of that, all these pictures can be subsumed under one term: films-on-initiation.

Nocna korekta cannot be interpreted according to Turner's model because Ola does not undergo metamorphosis. All that Słobodzian and Kreutz are after is a gradual unveiling of the heroine's identity. The visual and factual elements connected with darkness and pretence are employed to make this intention clear. They are put to different use, then, than in the American productions discussed so far.

To describe the schema underlying the cinema of moral unrest, Jankun-Dopartowa reaches for *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp. The analogy used by the author makes it possible to find some counterparts for the American trends in their native environment. It could be the coming-of-age genre, in which, as explained by Don Lort in the book *Coming of Age*, "a child or a teenager reaches a critical turning or event that results in a loss of childhood innocence".⁶⁶

Films representing this genre show, as pointed out by Parley Ann Boswell and Paul Loukides in *Reel Rituals*, rites of passage that the youth undergo.⁶⁷ In the 1980s the coming-of-age films included John Hughes' *Sixteen Candles* (1984), Rob Reiner's *Stand by Me* (1986) and Peter

⁶⁶ D. Lort, *Coming of Age: Movie & Video Guide*, Laguna Hills 1997, p. 7.

⁶⁷ P. A. Boswell, Paul Loukides, *The Ritual Occasions of Childhood*, in: *Reel Rituals: Ritual Occasions from Baptisms to Funerals in Hollywood Films, 1945–1995*, edited by P. A. Boswell and P. Loukides, Bowling Green 1999, pp. 25–42.

Weir's *Dead Poets Society* (1989).⁶⁸ Their predecessors were *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (aka *The 400 Blows*; France 1959) by François Truffaut, Mike Nichols' *The Graduate* (1967), Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* (1971)⁶⁹ and George Lucas' *American Graffiti* (1973), the action of which takes place within one night.⁷⁰

The question is, however, if the endings of all the yuppie initiation movies should be interpreted literally. Perhaps Paul in *After Hours* gives in, when he returns to work? Let us recall the finale of *The Moth*: is Jan truly healed when he leaves the resort and does Ed in *Into the Night* recover from insomnia thanks to his adventure? "The hero was pulled to the zone of the light, got normal" these words by Tadeusz Lubelski could adequately refer to the ending of *After Hours*, even though they were written about Zygodło's film. For this author, the ending of *The Moth* was however ironic and alluded to Federico Fellini's *8½* (Italy 1963).⁷¹

The opening credits of *Blue Velvet* are shown against the background of idyllic views of a small town, only to plunge between grass leaves later and see lurking worms. In the closing scene, a mockingbird – a symbol of love, according to Sandy – is holding a worm in its beak. An optimistic interpretation could be that here is love that conquers evil lurking under a colourful surface of the reality. The critic Piotr Maksymczak, however, spots ironic notes: in Lynch films good feeds on evil.⁷² Similarly metaphorical, although overtly pessimistic, is the message of *Miracle Mile*. De Jarnatt's hero visits an exhibition of extinct species, and in the final scene dies in the very same museum, thereby – in the context of the nuclear disaster – himself becoming a representative of an extinct species.

⁶⁸ R. Uytendwilligen, *The 25 Best Coming-of-Age Movies of The 1980s*, *Tastes of Cinema*, <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2016/the-25-best-coming-of-age-movies-of-the-1980s/> (access: 25.09.2016).

⁶⁹ T. Aquino, J. Wood, M. Barone et al., *The Best Coming-of-Age Movies of All Time*, *complex.com*, <http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/08/best-coming-of-age-movies-of-all-time/> (access: 20.09.2016).

⁷⁰ D. Lort, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷¹ T. Lubelski, *Op. cit.*, p. 400.

⁷² P. Maksymczak, [review] *Droga przez piekło*, "Gazeta Lubuska" 1987, No. 305, p. 4.

Ewa walks at night with her eyes wide shut

*Have you received your fee
for "Eva doesn't want to sleep"?*

Notwithstanding the reservations and doubts signalled above, the films under analysis were often interpreted by critics and commentators in a similar way. *The Moth* inspired the following comments: "[...] in the present-day world [...] true bonds between people give way to cascades of meaningless words"⁷³ ("Gazeta Wyborcza"); "it is a film about loneliness most painfully experienced by a person living in a block of flats, about the threat of isolation"⁷⁴ ("Życie Warszawy"). Rafał Marszałek compared Zygadło's film with the 1933 novel *Miss Lonelyhearts* by Nathanael West, mentioning "the era of a crisis of values"⁷⁵. For Grist, the yuppie nightmare trend "suggests the presence of tensions beneath the confident, public, ardently patriarchal façade of mid 1980s USA"⁷⁶. "The dilemma between stabilisation and anarchy is visible [...] in the social life of the USA"⁷⁷ maintained Tadeusz Wiącek in response to *Something Wild*. Magdalena Lengren in her essay for "Kultura" characterised the hero of *After Hours* in the following manner: "Just like it is for all of us, his life is illusory, untrue, liquid, nameless, fragmentary, banal, and common, as if it was taking place on television and in newspapers."⁷⁸

Comparing the Scorsese picture with *Into the Night*, Charles Derry notes that "both films clearly reflect the sensibilities of the Reagan era within a culture of narcissism", and the Landis movie "refuses to explore the moral implications of the actions of its characters and instead seems

⁷³ W. Świeżyński, [review] *Ćma*, "Gazeta Telewizyjna" No. 73, supplement to "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26 March 1999, p. 4 [own translation].

⁷⁴ M. Dipont, [review] *Wentyl bezpieczeństwa*, "Życie Warszawy" 1980, No. 248, p. 7 [own translation].

⁷⁵ R. Marszałek, [review] *Usługi dla ludności: naprawa serc*, "Zwierciadło" 1980, No. 46, p. 14 [own translation].

⁷⁶ L. Grist, Op. cit., p. 125–126.

⁷⁷ T. Wiącek, [review] *Dzika namiętność*, "Echo Dnia" 1988, No. 108, p. 10 [own translation].

⁷⁸ M. Lengren, [review] *Między życiem a fikcją*, "Kultura" 1987, No. 47, p. 12 [own translation].

to celebrate and support whatever yuppies do to get ahead, providing that those yuppies are intelligent and attractive.”⁷⁹

Reading selected interpretations of the movies, one could think that the 1980s were distinguished from the other decades by the presence of a crisis, or that they were a culmination of a long-lasting crisis. On the other hand, authors working in the 1980s were not essentially different from their predecessors as far as a pessimistic attitude towards their own epoch is concerned. What is more, such an attitude was often manifested in reviews of films resembling those of the 1980s.

In 1923 a German drama *Die Straße* (aka *The Street*) was made by Karl Grune. It tells a story of a man who, instead of having dinner with his wife, leaves home and loiters in the city at night. A few years later, in 1929, a Polish film *9:25. Przygoda jednej nocy* (*9:25. One Night Adventure*) is released. This film, by Ryszard Biske and Adam Augustynowicz has not survived until today, but its plot is known: a young girl leaves her family and travels with man unknown to her.⁸⁰ In the second half of 1950s, Tadeusz Chmielewski makes the comedy *Ewa chce spać* (aka *Eva Wants to Sleep*). The heroine, coming too late to be let into a students hostel, is looking for a place to sleep. The beginning of the 1960s sees the seventh full feature film by Michelangelo Antonioni, called *La notte* (aka *The Night*; Italy 1961), and by the end of the 20th century Stanley Kubrick's last picture *Eyes Wide Shut* is released (USA, UK 1999). In these productions both directors focus on family problems, showing small fragments of family lives, spanning a day and a night in Antonioni's film and two days and two nights in Kubrick's film.

Siegfried Kracauer observes that a change took place in the society of Weimar Republic, where Grune's picture was made. The change could be measured by the metamorphosis of the cinema itself: Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (aka *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; Germany 1920) was supposed to incite an individual to rebel, whereas *The Street* presented an individual who was punished for having a desire to experience adventures.⁸¹ The reflection, presented in the book *From*

⁷⁹ Ch. Derry, Op. cit., p. 316–317.

⁸⁰ W. Banaszkiewicz, W. Witczak, *Historia filmu polskiego*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1989, p. 232.

⁸¹ S. Kracauer, *From Rebellion to Submission*, in: *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psycho-*

Caligari to Hitler, indicates that for Kracauer such films as Grune's *The Street* paved the way to Nazism in Germany. The ending of *The Street* was similar to that of *9:25. Przygoda jednej nocy* (assessed favourably by writer Maria Jehanne Wielopolska but called "gloomy bunk"⁸² by writer Antoni Słonimski): the movie's heroine returns to her husband in a miserable condition.⁸³

After WWII, Germany became divided and Poland, relocated to new state borders, found itself in the communist camp. The censorship got slightly loosened after 1956, when Chmielewski produced his comedy *Eva Wants to Sleep*, which, even though it contains elements of surrealism and burlesque,⁸⁴ was usually interpreted in the context of the communist system. As Zbigniew Pitera wrote in "Film", it is a "deeply Polish movie, firmly rooted in our world, and its departure point is realistic."⁸⁵ When *Eyes Wide Shut* premiered, more than fifty years had passed since WWII, and in fact Kubrick reached for a much earlier source – he adapted Arthur Schnitzler's *Dream Story*, which "dealt with problems of the waning Austro-Hungarian Empire", as Tomasz Raczek put it.⁸⁶ Some of these problems remained valid for critic Jan Olszewski, who was alarmed after seeing the movie: "Watch out! – there are women full of sexual desires who can't have them satisfied in socially acceptable conditions."⁸⁷ For Antonioni, Hermann Broch's observations, whose book *Sleepwalkers* is discussed by the heroes of *La notte*, must have been likewise current. According to philologist Jakub Lichański, this novel indicates that "our world has become totally dissolved, it fell apart and became [...] a dream, in which we wander."⁸⁸ This perspective can be useful for interpreting not only

logical History of the German Film, Princeton 1966, pp. 118-128.

⁸² A. Słonimski, 1929, in: Ibid, *Romans z X Muzą. Teksty filmowe z lat 1917–1976*, Warszawa 2007, p. 175 [own translation].

⁸³ W. Banaszekiewicz, W. Witczak, Op. cit.

⁸⁴ T. Chmielewski, P. Śmiałowski, *Jak rozpętałem polską komedię filmową. Tadeusz Chmielewski w rozmowie z Piotrem Śmiałowskim*, Warszawa 2012, p. 77.

⁸⁵ Z. Pitera, [review] *Ewa chce spać*, "Film. Magazyn Ilustrowany" 1964, No. 25, p. 7 [own translation].

⁸⁶ Z. Kałużyński, T. Raczek, *Zeppelin z prezerwatywy*, "Wprost" 1999, No. 51, p. 110 [own translation].

⁸⁷ J. Olszewski, *Od snów do czynów*, "Film" 1999, No. 11, p. 40 [own translation].

⁸⁸ *Lunatycy Hermanna Brocha*, cycle *Finezje literackie*, part 2, in: *Ninateka*, <http://ninateka.pl/audio/finezje-literackie-1998-lunatycy-hermanna-brocha-odc-2> (access:

Antonioni's work but also some reviewers' and directors' views on the present-day culture.

The films under analysis are linked not only by hermeneutic similarities but also by resemblance in form. Apart from the night, their common denominator is also city space. The city can be unreal, as in the Chmielewski film, in which a policeman plays hopscotch, or neorealist, as Antonioni's Milan full of poor alleys. Sometimes a city becomes a horror scene: when Grune's protagonist passes a woman in a street, her face looks like a skull for a moment. The men in *The Street* and in *Eyes Wide Shut* lead similar, monotonous lives, interrupted for a while by unexpected adventures. Both are rather disappointed and encouraged to return to their respective families. The gap between expectations and reality, or perhaps between the subjective perception of reality and its objective state is underscored by Kubrick, who first imposes a crime-story staffage on his movie, only to undermine the sense of this plot towards the end of the movie. Chmielewski, too, distances himself from the fictional world, showing the crew filming *Eva Wants to Sleep*. A similar move was applied later on by Peter Bogdanovich in the comedy *What's Up, Doc?* (1972): when the couple of the main protagonists meet on a plane, a Bugs Bunny cartoon is being played for the passengers, Bugs' favourite saying being the title of the Bogdanovich movie.

Schnitzler's novella and Broch's novel send us back in time to the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and to the beginning of the 20th century. To understand the century marked by two world wars, it is worthwhile to go back to the previous one. In the 19th century art, growing popularity of nocturnes can be observed, i.e. romantic paintings showing the twilight or night. The interest in darkness is naturally much older and can be traced back to Baroque painters, such as Georges de la Tour,⁸⁹ or Renaissance ones, as Giovanni Savoldo,⁹⁰ the only difference being that the candles lighting bedrooms were replaced by lamps and street

18.09.2016) [own translation].

⁸⁹ See J. Thuillier, *The Advent of the Night Pictures*, in: Ibid, *Georges de La Tour*, Paris 2003, p. 115–119.

⁹⁰ See M. Gregori, *Caravaggio and Lombardy: A Critical Account of the Artist's Formation*, in: *Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy* (exhibition catalogue), edited by A. Bayer, New Haven and London 2006, p. 36.

lights in the 19th century, as is well evidenced by nocturnes painted in Munich and Paris by Aleksander Gierymski.⁹¹ Historian and writer Tadeusz Cegielski in his monograph *Detektyw w Krainie Cudów* (*A Detective in Wonderland*) describes details of the then metropolises, where crime flourished next to factories and offices, and an individual could vanish in the crowd overflowing the streets.⁹² The author mentions the fashionable lifestyle of those times, characterising the flâneur. “He was more than an idler and a dandy”, says Cegielski, “he was also a loiterer”,⁹³ for whom “night time walk in the city is [...] a method for familiarising himself not so much with the place but with people who live there and with their matters which are invisible during the day”.⁹⁴

The heroes of the 1980s seem to bear affinity to the flâneur: *Modern Girls* seeking night time adventures, as well as Paul, Ed, Jake, Richard or Chris exploring the dangers of cities and small towns. The development of phenomena on a massive scale that took place in the 19th century is a clue not only to the themes dealt with in the 1980s films but also to the sources of their possible interpretations.

The crisis of the category of crisis

*Don't you know that in 1929 the world crisis began,
and unemployment, and the growing wave?...*

In 1963, as part of the popular Dachshund series⁹⁵ published by Czytelnik Press, a novel titled *Drugie dno* (*Hidden Meaning*) came out. The story presented by Dominik Damian focuses on a few days from

⁹¹ See E. Clegg, *Miasto nocą. Aleksander Gierymski w Monachium i Paryżu*, in: *Aleksander Gierymski 1850–1901* (exhibition catalogue), edited by Z. Jurkowlanec, M. Porajska-Hałka and M. Jurkiewicz, Warszawa 2014, pp. 32–37. Aleksander Gierymski (1850–1901) – Polish realist painter; one of his best known pictures is *Pomarańczarka* (aka *Jewess with Oranges*) from 1880/81.

⁹² T. Cegielski, „Człowiek tłumy” i *nocni spektatorzy*, in: *Ibid*, *Detektyw w Krainie Cudów. Powieść kryminalna i narodziny nowoczesności 1841–1941*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 122–123.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 125 [own translation].

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 124 [own translation].

⁹⁵ The Dachshund series included mostly crime stories. Other Polish publishing houses offered alternative thematic series, e.g. Wydawnictwo Śląsk published horror stories as the Gold Horse Shoe series.

the life of Melchior Faust, a film set designer, born on Halloween in 1929. Becoming a grass widower for a weekend, he decides to eat out, even though he is afraid of Saturday nights.

After he returns home from his night adventure, he cannot find the money he was paid for his latest movie *Ewa nie chce spać* (*Eva Does Not Want to Sleep*),⁹⁶ finding a dead woman body in his bathtub instead. From then on, many unexpected things happen: the corpse disappears from the bathroom and the hero meets a matrimonial deceiver, allegedly selling dreams. Most people he meets are members of Secret Organisation of Nonsensers. The hallmark of nonsensers is the way they communicate: mysterious and possibly hiding covert meanings. As it turns out soon, Melchior was put to test in order to bring out his absurdity. He is not however acquitted from the murder charges since he is to become the organisation's emissary in penitentiary institutions all over the country.

The figure of Dominik Damian himself bears an element of hidden meaning, since no such writer existed. It was a pen name of Adam Bahdaj, an author of popular books for children, e.g. *Podróż za jeden uśmiech* (*Trip for One Smile*) and *Wakacje z duchami* (*Holiday with Ghosts*), filmed for television by Stanisław Jędryka.⁹⁷ The crime story discussed above, which should be in fact dubbed an anti-crime story, has a common trait with his young adult fiction, namely, the protagonists speech: in the case of *Wakacje z duchami* stylised for the Warsaw working class dialect, and in the case of *Drugie dno* resembling the style of Gombrowicz⁹⁸ or Witkacy⁹⁹. The title of the novel may symbolise the hopelessness of looking for hidden meanings in art because there may not be any. One of the threads in the plot presents a story

⁹⁶ Note that this title alludes to the previously mentioned Tadeusz Chmielewski film.

⁹⁷ The TV series mentioned are: *Wakacje z duchami* (Poland 1971) and *Podróż za jeden uśmiech* (Poland 1972) and the full feature film is *Podróż za jeden uśmiech* (Poland 1972).

⁹⁸ Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969) – Polish writer and playwright, used varied linguistic means of stylisation, such as dialects and jargons; his best known novels include *Ferdydurke* and *Cosmos*.

⁹⁹ Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, pseudonym Witkacy (1885-1939) – Polish writer, playwright, photographer and painter linked to catastrophism. One of his best known novels is *Farewell to Autumn*. Employed neologisms and pseudoacademic register in his fiction. See also A. Jabłońska, this volume.

of an empty piano, possibly alluding to John Cage's "composition" 4'33'.¹⁰⁰ If this interpretation is accepted, Damian's method can be seen as surrealism, manifested in unusual associations, e.g. an empty piano like empty art. Many years later a similar joke appeared in the Słobodzian and Kreutz novella: The Little Dead Man Bar offers "pettitoes à la Gustaw Holoubek",¹⁰¹ eaten by Melchior with a glass of vodka.

Describing a meeting with friends, the main protagonist says: "At Karina Midajska's place, the society was in-tel-lec-tu-al [...]. Even the sighs were intellectual".¹⁰² He refers to a famous composer in the following way: "I was facing such a spiritual man, that he did not fit into the three dimensions".¹⁰³ The "society's" favourite film is *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (aka *Last Year in Marienbad*; France, Italy 1961) by Alain Resnais, the film which "brutally treads in muddy shoes into the very heart of the human soul",¹⁰⁴ and their favourite expression is "kind of". This brings to mind the figure of Barbara Wolańska, one of the protagonists of the film dilogy *Kogel-mogel* (aka *Hotch-Potch*) by Roman Załuski¹⁰⁵ made at the end of the 1980s. Wolańska uses the particle "kind of" in unsuitable contexts, which results in a comical effect. For example, when visiting some friends' house for the first time, she exclaims to her husband "Roman, this place is kind of luxurious!".¹⁰⁶

The intellectuals portrayed in *Drugie dno* are not significantly different from the yuppies as depicted in Śpiewak and Musiał's papers or in Piesman and Hartley's book. Their common trait is, in Śpiewak's parlance, being easily influenced by "intellectual fashions".¹⁰⁷ Such fashions

¹⁰⁰ 4'33" is a piece by American progressive composer John Cage written in 1952, consisting only of pauses. No instrument is used to play the piece, making silence and accidental noises made in the concert hall music.

¹⁰¹ D. Damian, Op. cit., p. 124 [own translation]. Gustaw Holoubek (1923-2008) – Polish theatre and film actor, working with Polish top film directors Wojciech Jerzy Has in *Manuskrypt znaleziony w Saragossie* (aka *The Saragossa Manuscript*; Poland 1965) and Tadeusz Konwicki in *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko* (aka *How Far Away, How Near*; Poland 1972).

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 44 [own translation].

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 200 [own translation].

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 45 [own translation].

¹⁰⁵ The films are *Kogel-mogel* (Poland 1988) and *Galimatias, czyli kogel-mogel II* (aka *Topsy Turvy, or Hotch-Potch II*; Poland 1989).

¹⁰⁶ The quote comes from *Galimatias, czyli kogel-mogel II*.

¹⁰⁷ P. Śpiewak, W. Świetlik, Op. cit., [own translation].

include obsession with crisis: seeing the signs of downfall in civilisation and its products, including art. As Leszek Kopciuch points out in his book *Kryzysy, kreatywność i wartości* (*Crises, Creativity and Values*), “it is in the 20th century [...] that the pessimistic belief became prevalent that Western culture is in the state of crisis”.¹⁰⁸ One of the reasons why culture may be diagnosed with crisis is prejudice against its mass character. It should be noted that the above-cited fragments of the review of *The Moth* were concerned not with the communist context, which prevailed still in the 1950s when *Eva Wants to Sleep* was made, but rather with the supranational problems that were of interest to Grist, Wiącek, Lengren and Derry, and that included stabilisation, affluence or mass media.

Poet and translator Stanisław Barańczak in his essay *Słowo-perswazja-kultura masowa* (*Word-Persuasion-Mass Culture*) claims that the critique of mass culture espoused by Nietzsche, Ruskin, Ortega y Gasset, Spengler, MacDonald and Hauser could be dubbed “aristocratic” because it assumes that high culture patterns are deteriorated by mass culture.¹⁰⁹ The echoes of this critique are present in Musiał’s essay *Czy już jesteś „yuppie”?*, when he writes that young professionals are “all made of Form, by Form and for Form [...]”. They were loved by Gombrowicz, himself a yuppie in the pre-war Warsaw [...]. He predicted (as did Ortega y Gasset before) the hopeless dwarfing of forms”.¹¹⁰

Despite the similarities between *Drugie dno* and the essay *Kim jest japiszon?*, it is easy to spot a fundamental difference between them: Śpiewak’s diagnosis is much milder than that of Damian. It is not surprising, as the former confessed “I am the yuppie”¹¹¹ after some years, paraphrasing a saying attributed to Flaubert. Kevin L. Ferguson (*The*

¹⁰⁸ L. Kopciuch, *Kryzysy a „dehumanizacja”*, in: *Ibid, Kryzysy, kreatywność i wartości*, Lublin 2015, p. 89 [own translation].

¹⁰⁹ S. Barańczak, *Słowo-perswazja-kultura masowa*, “*Twórczość*” 1975, No. 7, pp. 44–45 [own translation].

¹¹⁰ G. Musiał, *Op. cit.*, p. 108 [own translation]. Gombrowicz’s form can be understood as a set of human physical and mental features (gestures, facial expressions, language, posture, etc.) as well as consciously or unconsciously assumed social roles, habits and conventions; this concept is connected to human relations (e.g. form as an attitude towards others) and to the perception of the world by individuals (form as a simplifying or subjectifying interpretation of some phenomena).

¹¹¹ P. Śpiewak, W. Świetlik, *Op. cit.*, p. 41 [own translation].

Yuppies and the Yuckies) cites Jane Feuer, who locates the authors of *The Yuppie Handbook* among “yuppies who knew they were yuppies, were unable to admit it, and instead ridiculed other yuppies for their shared values”.¹¹² Similar observations are put forward about the cinema: William J. Palmer in his book *The Films of the Eighties* cites Tony Hoffman, for whom Spielberg and Lucas are yuppies owing their recognition to high profits earned by their movies.¹¹³

In the light of these considerations, attention should be drawn to the following facts: Musiał’s and Śpiewak’s essays are variations on the themes included in *The Yuppie Handbook* (with Musiał citing the handbook directly). In his definition of the yuppie, Grant refers to the one proposed by Piesman and Hartley.¹¹⁴ It turns out, then, that some of the researchers and commentators writing on the yuppies, hold an exaggerated image of this figure, which they have modelled on the satirical book.

Much as Feuer’s ideas can be interpreted as merely shedding doubt on the intentions of those who parodied yuppies, John Hammond in his article *Yuppies* goes far beyond that, pondering whether the films on young urban professionals showed an existing social group, or they were but a product of skilful marketing.¹¹⁵ If we assume that the yuppies did not exist at all, at least the kind of yuppies known from the television or cinema, we can feel like Ed, the *Into the Night* protagonist. When he is visiting a film studio, he leans against a wall, which turns out to be a prop and yields under the weight of his body. A metaphorical reading of this scene could be that the hero transferred his life experience to the universe of the cinema, thinking that the laws of the former apply to the latter, since the cinema is often the reflection of real life. In other words, the cinema lulled and deceived Okin, endorsing the structured model of society to which Ed belonged be-

¹¹² K. L. Ferguson, *The Yuppies and the Yuckies: Anxieties of Affluence*, in: Ibid, *Eighties People: New Lives in the American Imagination*, Basingstoke, New York 2016, p. 86.

¹¹³ W. J. Palmer, *The Yuppie Texts*, in: Ibid, *The Films of the Eighties. A Social History*, Carbondale and Edwardsville 1995, p. 281.

¹¹⁴ B. K. Grant, Op. cit., p. 5.

¹¹⁵ See J. L. Hammond, *Yuppies*, “Public Opinion Quarterly” 1986, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 487–501.

fore he started his adventure. The yuppie movies likewise lulled their viewers, making them believe in the authenticity of the screen heroes.

It is however possible to come up with a different interpretation of this scene: by promoting self-consciousness, art teaches how to develop distance to oneself and educates all those who treat it as a carrier of objective truth, encouraging them to form independent opinions. Such independent or critical opinions could be held, for example, on some reviews and analyses of the cinema. This interpretation is supported by the ending of *Drugie dno*, suggesting that all the events may be Melchior's dream, or of *Body Double*, in which the crime story plot turns out to be Jake's vision, or finally, by the closing scenes of *Eyes Wide Shut*, which have been discussed above. In the 1980s there are many productions beguiling the viewer by the seemingly objective vision of reality, only to undermine its status later on, even though not always suggesting that what we have seen was a dream. This can be observed in Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (USA, UK 1986), Wolfgang Petersen's *The NeverEnding Story* (USA, Germany 1984) and in Masami Hata and William T. Hurtz's *Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland* (Japan, USA 1989). A somewhat different perspective is taken in the series *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, in which dreams constitute an alternative matrix-like reality.

Let us return at this junction to the observations put forward by Ledóchowski, Kael and Sergio, who discerned elements of hallucinations and surrealism in the Scorsese, Landis and Lynch films. In 1924 André Breton wrote in the first *Surrealist Manifesto* "We are still living under the reign of logic".¹¹⁶ The same year saw the origins of another manifesto called *Poetism* by Karel Teige, who claimed that "We are hungry for individual freedom", adding „A man who has lived as a working citizen wants to live as a human being".¹¹⁷ If we assume, then, that the lives of Ed, Paul, Jeffrey and William followed the rules of logic, their adventures, deprived of such rules, or governed by a dream-like logic,

¹¹⁶ A. Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, in: *Ibid, Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor 1972, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ K. Teige, *Karel Teige's Poetism (1924), Modernist Architecture*, <https://modernistarchitecture.wordpress.com/2010/10/21/karel-teige's-poetism-1924/> (access: 10.08.2016).

can be seen as expression of the heroes' hidden or muffled desires. The protagonists depicted in Damian's novel as well as in the films by De Palma, Kubrick, Henson, Petersen, Hata and Hurtz, even though they made imaginary or dreamt-up mistakes, they could also learn from them and turn an unreal and therefore safe adventure into a lesson on how to avoid these mistakes in the future.

Aren't viewers immersed in the darkness of a movie theatre in a similar position?

Closing remarks: new classicism or the cinema is a dream

*I'm fed up with Butor, Ionesco, Beckett, Pinter,
the subconscious, psychoanalysis, hidden meanings...*

In 1993 Jacques Derrida published the book *Spectres of Marx*, in which he presented the concept of hauntology. Ten years later Mark Fisher applied this category to music,¹¹⁸ and Olga Drenda, first in her blog, and then in *Duchologia polska* used it to describe the political transformation in Poland. In 2008 the book *Remix* was released in free access, whose author Lawrence Lessig describes the remix culture, i.e. using existing forms in order to create new, independent works. In 2011 the book *Retromania* by Simon Reynolds was published, with a significant subtitle *Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. A common denominator of the above-mentioned theories is the belief, to which they subscribe to various degrees, that the past exerts enormous influence on the present time.

American popular cinema of the 1980s offered entertainment based to a large extent on the forms that had been around for some time and which were wrongly assumed to be outdated. The noir trend was reflected not only in *Into the Night* or *Blue Velvet*, but also in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (Hong Kong, USA, UK 1982),¹¹⁹ William

¹¹⁸ M. Fisher, *The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology*, "Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture" 2013, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 42–55.

¹¹⁹ S. Doll, G. Faller, *Blade Runner and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction*, "Literature Film Quarterly" 1986, Vol. 14, Issue 2, pp. 89–100.

Friedkin's *To Live and Die in L.A.* (1985)¹²⁰ and Alan Parker's *Harry Angel* (Canada, USA, UK 1987),¹²¹ referred to as neo-noir. Screwball comedy inspired not only the directors of *After Hours* or *Something Wild*, but also, e.g. Jay Sandrich and Garry Marshall, the directors of comedies starring Goldie Hawn – *Seems Like Old Times* (1980)¹²² and *Overboard* (1987),¹²³ respectively. Reminiscent of Hitchcock were *Frantic*¹²⁴ and *Body Double*¹²⁵, as well as Jonathann Demme's *Last Embrace* made at the end of the 1970s,¹²⁶ Paul Verhoeven's *The 4-th Man* (The Netherlands 1983),¹²⁷ Sidney Poitier's *Hanky Panky* (1982), Richard Franklin's *Cloak & Dagger* (1984) and Penny Marshall's *Jumpin' Jack Flash*¹²⁸.

Making use of the existing trends and mixing them within one work is not however a distinctive feature of the 1980s cinematography since similar tendencies occurred earlier, the only exception being that they were confined to particular directors. Karl Grune combined realism with expressionism in the 1920s,¹²⁹ Tadeusz Chmielewski drew on René Clair and Jacques Tati in the 1950s,¹³⁰ and in the beginning of the 1970s Peter Bogdanovich paid homage to screwball comedy with his *What's*

¹²⁰ E. Gallafent, *Worlds Without Consequence: Two Versions of Film Noir in the 1980s*, in: *Neo-noir*, edited by M. Bould, K. Glitre, G. Tuck, London and New York 2009, pp. 75–89.

¹²¹ J. J. Abrams, *Space, Time, and Subjectivity in Neo-Noir Cinema*, in: *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*, edited by M. T. Conard, Lexington 2007, p. 11.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ [Author's name not given] *Overboard* [review], in: "Variety", <http://variety.com/1986/film/reviews/overboard-1200427160/> (access: 18.09.2016).

¹²⁴ J. Maslin, *Film: "Frantic", From Polanski*, "The New York Times", <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=940DE6DA173AF935A15751C0A96E948260> (access: 19.09.2016).

¹²⁵ Ch. Dumas, *How to Operate the Hitchcock Machine*, in: *Ibid., Un-American Psycho: Brian De Palma and the Political Invisible*, Bristol and Chicago 2012, pp. 60–64.

¹²⁶ M. Sragow, *Jonathan Demme: on the Line*, in: *Jonathan Demme: interviews*, edited by R. E. Kapsis, Jackson 2009, p. 21.

¹²⁷ D. Keesey, *Paul Verhoeven*, Köln, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo 2005, p. 82.

¹²⁸ Ch. Derry, *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

¹²⁹ S. Kracauer, *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

¹³⁰ T. Chmielewski, P. Śmiałowski, *Op. cit.*, p. 68–69. René Clair (1898–1981) – French director employing burlesque and surrealism, his films include *Sous les toits de Paris* (aka *Under the Roofs of Paris*; France 1930). Jacques Tati (1907–1982) – French actor and comedy director, known for *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* (aka *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*; France 1953).

Up, Doc? Let us also mention films alluding to 1980s productions and having a plot that takes place within one night: Shawn Levy's *Date Night* (2010), Michael Dowsy's *Take Me Home Tonight* (2011) or Greg Mottola's *Superbad* (2007), which inspired Noel Murray to write his essay about films escaping "into the night".¹³¹

The distinctness of the 1980s cinema then, relies on the magnitude and popularity of the strategy involving new applications of old trends, enjoyed both among directors and producers as creators exploring this strategy, and among viewers as its recipients. Because of that, the strategy was noted by Płażewski and by Rafferty, who, to varying degrees, evaluated it negatively. The term that should be used to describe it fairly is cinematic classicism.

The term can be understood in two ways. In a narrow sense it will denote drawing on the classical cinema, whereas in a broader sense it refers to the extant genres, poetics or even specific films, regardless of the time when they were created. It never means copying the patterns but their continuous modifications, as evidenced by the mechanisms frequently employed in 1980s: setting the plot in the contemporary times with simultaneous drawing on the poetics and genres associated with other epochs.

Classicism makes us aware of the fact that art can be constructed out of what is individual – part of one's own experience and what is collective – part of other artists' experience. The present time meets universality. If the timeless form (not to be confused with a form detached from time) accommodates current problems, then these problems expressed in and through this form are not in fact confined to "here" and "now". As Musiał put it, "Yuppism is as old as civilisation and big cities; the Roman baths were nothing else than yuppie meeting places".¹³² For Beata Świerczewska, author of *W poszukiwaniu tożsamości, czyli pieszo po miejskim bruku* (*Seeking Identity, or Walking on City Pavements*) also the flâneur "as a personification of specific features has existed since forever".¹³³

¹³¹ N. Murray, Op. cit.

¹³² G. Musiał, Op. cit., p. 108 [own translation].

¹³³ B. Świerczewska, *W poszukiwaniu tożsamości, czyli pieszo po miejskim bruku. Flâneur oraz idea flânerie na przestrzeni dziejów – zarys problematyki*, Opole

When the directors of films classified as the yuppie initiation trend wanted to depict vices of contemporary people, they made use of genres associated with heroes uprooted from the regular rhythm of life and then entering an unknown world. And this world was typically an opposite of everyday life and orderliness. Through exploring the opposite state, we can notice the true nature of the object we are negating. The structure looks into the antistructure, and the human belonging to both of them is given a chance to be transformed. In this way, the yuppie lifestyle, often founded on mistaken desires, is reflected in the world revealing its illusory and provisional character.

That is why many of the 1980's films partly reflected contemporary human beings, and partly presented their caricature. The term "caricature" does not have to be negatively connoted, it is after all typical of art to sharpen the real or fictional elements, which makes it similar to dreams. It is important, though, to make cautious interpretations. When writer and publicist Stefan Kisielewski was reviewing *Eva Wants to Sleep*, he noted: "If we assume that every work of art [...] automatically reflects reality [...], what kind of conclusion can we then derive from such French films as *The Red Inn* or *Rififi*? Surely that France is a country of murderers and sadists".¹³⁴ The cinema may be a mirror of reality, though often a cracked one. The distortion alleviates it into art, whereas ignoring its duality impoverishes its significance.

In the first part of Robert Zemeckis' *Back to the Future* (1985), Marty McFly travelled in time to the 1950s, when directors shaping the cinema of the 1970s and 80s were born or educated – Lucas, Demme, Spielberg, Landis and Zemeckis. Perhaps the reason why they mixed genres was that they rebelled against the aristocratic purity of some directors or commentators opposing syncretism, drawing from the world of imagination, pulp fiction and comics? What helped these directors achieve success was money – not thought of as something

2014, p. 21 [own translation].

¹³⁴ S. Kisielewski, *Remanenty kanikularne (III)*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1959, No. 28, p. 8 [own translation]. Kisielewski refers to the comedy *Lauberger rouge* (aka *The Red Inn*) directed by Claude Autant-Lara (France 1951) and the crime film *Rififi* (France, Italy 1955) directed by Jules Dassin. The former, based on a novella by Honoré de Balzac, is a story about serial killers, the latter, based on a novel by Auguste Le Breton, tells about the life of gangsters.

commendable in the yuppie context – or, more precisely, capitalism. In the 1980s, phenomena that originated in the preceding decades, such as blockbusters,¹³⁵ merchandising¹³⁶ and video industry¹³⁷ are on the rise. In a way, it is thanks to capitalism that some artistic strategies became close to millions of viewers all over the world. Of course, though, not all films that were made at that time can be considered classicistic.

After all, the cinema of the 1980s had many faces.

Yuppies were not the only ones to come full circle; it also happened to me when I was looking for the text of Nocna korekta. I started at the FilMOTEKA Narodowa library, then I set off on a journey, which ultimately brought me to the library again. I would like to express my thanks to those that I met on the way: Anna Kowalczyk and Paulina Plata, Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska, Professor Piotr Zwierzchowski as well as Adam Wyżyński and Krzysztof Berłowski of the FN library.

¹³⁵ R. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema. Second Edition*, Malden, Oxford, Carlton 2003, pp. 160–161.

¹³⁶ M. Adamczak, *Model hollywoodzki – funkcjonowanie*, in: *Ibid, Globalne Hollywood, filmowa Europa i polskie kino po 1989 roku. Przeobrażenia kultury audiowizualnej przełomu stuleci*, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 65-68.

¹³⁷ R. Maltby, *Video and New Markets*, in: *Ibid, Op. cit.*, pp. 191–205.

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