

# *Promiscuity or Puritanism? Sex in Polish Sci-Fi Fan Fiction*

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## *Introduction – Researching Polish Fans*

It is not an easy task to research and write about Polish fans, be it music, film or television fans. It does not matter if a researcher is interested in soap opera, action adventure, fantasy or science fiction fandom. In each case she (or he) will encounter two main problems. Firstly, they must get used to strange glances that fellow scientists give them while discussing their studies. Colleagues try to understand what they talk about really hard, they try to grasp a researcher's field of study. It is something completely unknown to them and although they seem quite intrigued about it they never heard of anybody researching fans. They are unfamiliar both with canonical texts (like Henry Jenkins *Textual Poachers*)<sup>1</sup> and newer studies that approach fans.

I must clarify that in Poland one cannot observe processes described in *Fan Cultures* by Matt Hills (Hills, 2002, 8-15). Someone who researches fans is not treated like an alien, like not being a real scientist or being interested in trivial field of study. One cannot be treated this way simply because nobody heard anything about *fan studies*. It is hard to be criticized when no one has any idea of what you do. Like I mentioned before other scientists are interested and intrigued. What of it? They are not familiar with the context of the research, and not competent enough to say anything about it. Articles in Polish journals or speeches given on conferences about media publicity hardly ever concern fans. There are some exceptions, but generally speaking looking for something to do with Polish fan cultures is like looking for a needle in a haystack. That is why someone interested in Polish fans has no other choice, but to begin their research without any empirical or theoretical background. Maybe it would be more appropriate to say that one is addicted to foreign studies. It is not an issue (at least not a big issue) when one is carrying out theoretical considerations, it is a bit frustrating however, in case of empirical investigations. Very often one is forced to compare their empirical research with the one that had been carried out abroad. It is really hard to tell something specifically about Polish fans without comparing them to American or British. Any findings about Polish fans are instantaneously and unconsciously compared with findings of fellow scholar-fans from different countries. Scholar-fans who are not interested in Poland and Polish fan cultures.

The second problem anyone researching Polish fandom will encounter is connected not with the academia but with the subject of the study – the fans themselves. Polish fandom is still less organized than the one in US or Western Europe. Mostly because of the historical factors. Francesca Coppa in her *Brief History of Media Fandom* describes how Western fans emerged in sixties and how they have gradually become an important segment of publicity (Coppa, 2006). She shows that year by year, decade after decade, they have become more visible and organized. Fannish practices have broaden – for example fan fiction has become more complex, more conventions have been held, more people have attended them. The most important shift however came out just recently. With an advent of the Internet fans moved to cyberspace. Creation of fannish virtual

communities was imminent. Fandoms became more eclectic, fans could easily move in and out of them (“with a click of a computer mouse”) and choose many fandoms to participate in at a time. Communication problems, printable fanzines, difficulties with fan fiction distribution – it all became null and void.

Polish fans do not have the past described by Coppa. During the communistic period it was very seldom for people to organize themselves like the fans from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Poles were not prohibited to be fans and fannish behaviors were not restricted and prosecuted. Polish audiences simply did not have the need of being fans. Of course it had a political dimension. An access to foreign (American) pop culture was rationed which resulted in patterns of cultural consumption completely different from the ones in the West. In People’s Republic of Poland popular culture was in fact considered as high culture. People that were watching American movies and TV shows were in fact the elite with cultural competences superior to an average viewer (Kowalski, 1988).<sup>2</sup> They were the ones that had “an access”, the ones that were familiar with what was going on in capitalist countries. This division between “pop cultural elites” and “average masses” resulted in specific cultural phenomena, for example the emergence of fan clubs of literary science fiction.

I must underline, however, that fan clubs were completely different from Western fandoms. Members of clubs were the elite in a different sense than fans. Sci-fi fan clubs were a window with a view on freedom, with a view on a completely different world – a capitalist world. Their reception of pop culture was opposed to official politics of a state rather than opposed to producers. Producers were out of reach and therefore not worth fighting against. Clubbers did print zines (they were censored and restricted in capacity) but it is farfetched to compare them with Western fanzines. Zines did not contain any fan fiction nor were they improving members communication.<sup>3</sup> There were no conventions held and fan clubs of movies or TV shows (sci-fi or other) did not exist.

Times have changed. The abolition of communism brought economic, social and cultural changes. Poland opened itself for Western popular culture and soon enough Polish fandom emerged. Polish fans did make up for the lost time. They struggled to create their own culture (Siuda, 2007). Every day there are more conventions, more fannish web sites emerge, fan creativity boosts, fans write and share their work on the Internet. World Wide Web popularizes fan communities, allows instantaneous communication and organization (Siuda, 2008).

Why is researching Polish fandom somewhat problematic then? The problem lies in the relative novelty of this media phenomenon and Polish cultural history in which fandoms were not present. Polish fans are “fans without the past”. Unlike their equivalents from the West they have no tradition or heritage. Therefore they do not realize they are a part of something larger, something that has a long history and has been a part of media consumption for a very long time. One could say that the history of Polish fandom begins in the period Coppa describes as a “fandom’s postmodern moment”. Western fans came all the way to reach this moment, for Polish fans this exact moment is the beginning of an adventure with the popular culture. The lack of roots makes Polish fandom a specific and simultaneously interesting object of a study, it also makes the research problematic.<sup>4</sup> It is crucial to say that this lack of roots somewhat strengthens the first problem I have mentioned. Comparisons (with Western fans) that Polish researchers are bound to make are methodologically unfounded. One cannot compare Polish fans with their Western equivalents. This kind of comparisons become inappropriate because of a completely different background of Polish fans (or I should say: lack of this background). Paradoxically, the problems I have mentioned will influence the goals I am trying to achieve in this article.

## *Goals of the Study*

This article focuses on Polish science fiction fan fiction. To be more specific, it focuses on the following question: are Polish sci-fi fan stories promiscuous or puritan?<sup>5</sup> The goal of the research project I describe is to investigate if Polish sci-fi fan fiction is highly sexual or asexual. It must be said that by sexual I understand stories (not necessarily pornographic in content) that describe sexual activities of characters.

The goal is then a descriptive one: an exploration of a fan fiction of a particular type of fans. The project lies somewhere between the textual analysis of fan fiction and ethnographic encounters with fan communities (although my encounters are based on a quantitative method – an online survey). By trying to answer how much sex there is in science fiction fan stories I try to analyze a particular genre of literature (see Woledge, 2006). On the other hand by investigating motives that induce fans to write particular pieces of fan fiction I move beyond the simple textual analysis.

It is very important to stress that the article is not a theoretical study, its purpose is not to build a reliable model of a fan fiction genre. It is a picture of a certain segment of Polish fan fiction. Any conclusions I will come to may not be unambiguous. That is why my picture is like a snapshot - not clear, made in move, not framed properly. However it has one major advantage. It authentically describes a unique moment in time. I do not build up a theory and I make no definite conclusion because it is not the objective of a research project I conducted.

It is my belief that Polish fan cultures are in a special moment of time. A moment of sudden development in which making any definite statements is not advisable. This exact moment combined with previously described lack of theoretical and empirical background and “lack of the past” of Polish fans rules out any comparisons with Western fandom (as I have underlined before). This makes my goal credible. If one cannot compare or make any predictions, one can only try to describe what one sees as precisely as possible.<sup>6</sup>

## *Methodology*

To explore Polish sci-fi fan fiction I used two scientific methods: online survey and textual analysis. Before describing my research it is important to note that Polish fans do not use *LiveJournal* (or *GreatestJournal*, *InsaneJournal*, *JournalFen*, etc.) as a way of communication and community building (compare Coppa, 2006; Busse, 2006). Blogging is not very popular (yet?). Polish fans still use Bulletin Boards, in fact their popularity increases and nothing predicts their demise. I have researched fifteen Bulletin Boards, searching the Web for most sophisticated and busiest. It is without any doubt that fans of two major popcultural universes – Star Wars and Star Trek – come into existence on the Internet in bulk. I have examined five Star Wars and three Star Trek Fan Boards. I also researched Boards of Battlestar Galactica, Bat-Man, Doctor Who, Farscape, Star Gate and X-files (for a complete list see Appendix).

Textual analysis was quite easy to conduct – each Board contains a section that is specifically meant for fan fiction. Stories are not categorized, they just come in turn, they are not labeled in any way so it is almost impossible to tell what the fiction is about without reading it. Beta-reading comes as a commentary to messages containing fiction. Deciding if fan fiction is promiscuous or puritan requires careful reading of what fans created.

In addition to the textual analysis, I also conducted online survey. I distributed the questionnaires through Fan Boards. In each case I created an account that allowed me to post messages. Participation was requested by a posting for volunteers. It contained hyperlink to an internet survey.<sup>7</sup> All posting would be identically worded, and the questionnaires contained twenty two questions, some of which I will discuss later. The survey was active for one month – from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010. Solicitations for participation were placed on all Boards mentioned earlier.

Before disclosing any findings it is worth noticing that online survey is specific. It has many advantages over traditional one. Distribution is comfortable and cheap, it does not consume time because it does not require meeting respondents offline. It is easy to remind them of a necessity of answering questions (Gunn). I myself have used this feature during my research because after two weeks from the initial posting of solicitations I noticed a decline in responses. I posted another message in order to thank everyone who answered and to mobilize fans who did not yet responded.

The use of online survey rises an important question: how valid and reliable this scientific method is? (compare Kirby-Diaz, 2009, 71-73). Researchers conducting internet survey do not have any control over who responds, they do not control the sampling. Putting questions online and not restricting them by any means is equal to losing control over who answers them (Solomon, 2001). I am aware that I must be careful and thoughtful while generalizing findings. However, while it is probable that non fans did respond to the survey, it is also safe to assume that it happened only sporadically. First of all it is hard to imagine that someone who is not a fan would take pains to answer all the questions about fan fiction and motives fans are driven by. Secondly, fannish Bulletin Boards are hard to find if someone does not know how to find them. Therefore one can only guess for a reason for non fan to use them.

One hundred and twelve fans completed the survey. How valid and reliable is a survey on the Internet considering this number? According to Don Dillman one hundred respondents suffice for a reliable sample (Dillman, 2000). However, we must consider the possibility that a sample is still not truly random because it consists of invested fans only. As Mary Kirby-Diaz puts it while speaking about fans of TV shows: “only those fans who are most intensely engaged with a television series will search for a fan board to take part in online discussions related to a favorite television series. Once such a fan board is located, only the most committed (i.e. invested) fan will *cross the border*, de-lurk, then participate in order to maintain online commitment to a TV series” (Kirby-Diaz, 2009, 79-80).

In my opinion there is no clear solution if one wants to research fandom online. Nevertheless the problem of true random sampling may become irrelevant because of the increase of Web usage. Polish fans never had any other platform to communicate with one another. Therefore it is possible that for high percentage of them participating in an online survey is not a matter of intense engagement, and that the sample may be representative of the general population of fans.

### *Online Survey - Demographic Data of Polish Sci-Fi Fans*

**Universe.** I have mentioned before that one hundred and twelve fans answered solicitation to participate in a survey. I have also noticed that the most present on the Web are the fans of Star Wars and Star Trek. It

becomes perfectly clear when we look at how respondents answered to the question: “Which sci-fi universe are you the most invested fan of?” (open question – see Table 1).

**Table 1 - “Which sci-fi universe are you the most invested fan of?”**

Sci-fi universe	No of fans	Sci-fi universe	No of fans
Star Wars	70	Discworld	2
Star Trek	24	Lost	2
Doctor Who	15	Alien/Predator	1
BS Galactica	11	Dollhouse	1
Star Gate	10	EarthSea	1
Avatar	5	Fallout	1
Babylon 5	5	Fringe	1
Farscape	3	Honorverse	1
FireFly	3	Mass Effect	1
Lord of the Rings	3	Stanislaw Lem	1
Marvel Universe	3	The 4400	1
Warhammer 40k	3	Torchwood	1
Andromeda	2	True Blood	1
Buffyverse	2	X-files	1

Although the question indicates that a respondent should point to only one universe it was common for fans to mention a few sci-fi films, TV shows, games or books, it is evident that fans often indicated universes other than those concerned by Boards, including fantasy universes. Those that did so, chose more than one universe.

**Age, Sex and Education.** I hereby present demographics (Table 2).<sup>8</sup> I will discuss its relevance to fan fiction in following sections of the article.

**Table 2 – Age, Sex and Education**

Age	No of Fans	Sex	No of Fans
1 – 15	13	Female	34
16 – 20	40	Male	78
21 – 25	36		
26 – 30	11		
31 – 40	10		
41 and above	2		

  

Education	No of Fans
Primary School	24
High School	47
Higher School and University	39
Unanswered	2

### *Online Survey - Motives for Writing*

Is fan fiction an important part of fan experience? It is for about 37 of my respondents. They indicated that fan fiction is “very important” or “important” for fans (13 marked “very important” and 24 “important”). Many fans were undecided (27) and a majority indicated fan fiction is not important (30 marked “not important” and 18 thought fan fiction is “needless”). What about sexes? It is worth noticing that more men than women seemed to believe that fan fiction is an important part of fannish experience. As we can see in Table 3 females frequently marked “not important” or “needless”.

**Table 3 - “Sex” crossed with “Is fan fiction an important part of fan experience?”**

	Needless	Not Important	Hard to Say	Important	Very Important	Σ N=112
<b>Female</b>	6	13	7	5	3	34
	33,3%/18	43,3%/30	25,9%/27	20,8%/24	23,1%/13	30,4%/112
	17,8%/34	38,3%/34	20,2%/34	14,8%/34	8,9%/34	100%/34
<b>Male</b>	12	17	20	19	10	78
	66,7%/18	56,7%/30	74,1%/27	79,2%/24	76,9%/13	69%/112
	15,4%/78	21,8%/78	25,6%/78	24,4%/78	12,8%/78	100%/78
<b>Total</b>	18	30	27	24	13	112
	100%/18	100%/30	100%/27	100%/24	100%/13	100%/112
	16,1%/112	26,8%/112	24,1%/112	21,4%/112	11,6%/112	100%/112

Females or not, respondents read fan fiction. 37 fans read a fiction at least seven days before participating in the survey, 15 did so within two weeks before participating, 49 respondents marked that they read it “any time earlier”, 11 fans have never read any fan fiction. To conclude 89,4 per cent of fans did happen to read it (anytime), while only 11,6 did not. This result is somewhat contradictory to previously mentioned. Why do so many fans believe that fan fiction is “not important” (or even “needless”) and at the same time read it? 6 out of 18 fans who marked “needless” read it at least seven days before, 1 two weeks before the survey and 8 “any time earlier”.

This contradiction does not become clear when we compare answers to questions: “Do you write fan fiction?” and “Is fan fiction an important part of fan experience?”. In fact crossing them complicates the situation even further – writing fan fiction does not prevent fans from marking “needless” or “not important” (see Table 4)! The most probable explanation of it might be the fact that fans believe writing fan fiction in order to be a real fan is unnecessary. Non-writers’ experience is not poorer than writers’ (even in the eyes of writers).

**Table 4 – “Do you write fan fiction?” crossed with “Is writing fan fiction an important part of fan experience?”**

	Needless	Not Important	Hard to Say	Important	Very Important	Σ N=112
<b>I do write</b>	9	19	18	15	8	69
	50%/18	63,3%/30	66,7%/27	62,5%/24	61,5%/13	61,6%/112
	13,1%/69	27,5%/69	26,1%/69	21,7%/69	11,6%/69	100%/69
<b>I do not write</b>	9	11	9	9	5	43
	50%/18	36,7%/30	33,3%/27	37,5%/24	38,5%/13	38,4%/112
	20,9%/43	25,7%/43	20,9%/43	20,9%/43	11,6%/43	100%/43
<b>Total</b>	18	30	27	24	13	112
	100%/18	100%/30	100%/27	100%/24	100%/13	100%/112
	16,1%/112	26,8%/112	24,1%/112	21,4%/112	11,6%/112	100%/112

When talking about fans’ motives for writing it is advisable to take into consideration opinions of those who write and those who do not, bearing in mind that both groups do read fan fiction. I asked respondents an open question about reasons for writing, and my initial expectations were confirmed. Several types of answers occurred with only few recurring motives. Fans frequently underlined the need to “expand” the universe, to show scenes producers have not included in official productions, to change something according to their likings, to “be a part of” the universe, to have fun, to intensify the reception and pleasures stemming from it, to improve writing

techniques, to build up prestige in fan community, to interest others (non-fans) with the universe they like, to express their worldview or emotions, to show the world their talents, to fulfill their needs of creativity. A few statements are worth citing. So – “Why are fans writing fan-fiction?” (each statement comes with a nickname of a fan, their sex, age and an object of their interest).

Why? Because they can do it? Because they like it, and because just for a moment they can feel the power over their favorite characters. Because they have a feeling they are telling the untold, they are filling the gaps of canon. That is the only way they can develop their writing technique without the need to create an original universe or characters (nickname: Jasna; female; age 19; fan of: Doctor Who, Andromeda, Avatar, Stanisław Lem).

Sometimes a need arises, a vision occurs and it forces you to share it with others (nickname: Komandor Eire; female; age 20; fan of: Star Wars, Lord of the Rings).

Well, some want to add something to the universe they love, some want to interpret or even make some explanations to other fans, others rewrite certain elements which they do not like. Others try their creative powers by using the universe they know best (using acquaintances who will read their fiction as well) (nickname: Lord Sidious; male; age 30; fan of: Star Wars).

I think that fans create fan-fiction to develop certain plots they like but which they find neglected by screenwriters. Another reason for creating is a desire to deepen psychological aspects of characters or to make up their new adventures (it is so called slash fiction) (nickname: Katrill; female; age 18; fan of: Doctor Who).

The last statement I quoted contains the wrong usage of a specific terminology (slash) and is symptomatic of a problem that occurs within Polish fandom – the inability to distinguish between different genres of fan fiction and ignorance of terminology used by Western fans. I will bring up this issue further in this article. Sporadically there were some humorous answers like: “I don’t give a damn”, “To overcome their inferiority complex”, “To devastate universes they like with spam”, “For money, fame and chicks ;)”. These answers were isolated incidents. It is worth noticing that there were no answers indicating strictly sexual motives for writing fan fiction.

How many fans create fan fiction? In my study 69 out of 112 respondents confessed that they wrote fan fiction at least once in a lifetime. It is worthwhile to shed some light on fan writers demographics. It is evident that more men than women and that more young people (from 16 to 25) are penchant for creating fan fiction (for complete balance see Table 5 and Table 6). It is worth noticing that fans’ assumptions about proportions of men and women who write fan fiction do not tally with an actual state. As Table 10 shows the majority of fans believe that numbers of man and women writing fiction divides quite evenly. Fans are obviously mistaken.

**Table 5 – “Sex” crossed with “Do you write fan fiction?”**

	<b>I do write</b>	<b>I do not write</b>	<b>∑ N=112</b>
<b>Female</b>	23 33,3%/69 67,6%/34	11 25,6%/43 32,4%/34	34 30,4%/112 100%/34
<b>Male</b>	46 66,7%/69 60%/78	32 74,4%/43 40%/78	78 69,6%/112 100%/78
<b>Total</b>	69 100%/69 61,6%/112	43 100%/43 38,4%/112	112 100%/112 100%/112

Table 6 – “Age” crossed with “Do you write fan fiction?”

	I do write	I do not write	Σ N=112
<b>1 – 15</b>	8 11,6%/69 61,5%/13	5 11,7%/43 34,5%/13	13 11,6%/112 100%/13
<b>16 – 20</b>	22 31,9%/69 55%/40	18 41,9%/43 45%/40	40 35,7%/112 100%/40
<b>21 – 25</b>	27 39,1%/69 75%/36	9 30%/43 25%/36	36 32,1%/112 100%/36
<b>26 – 30</b>	9 13%/69 81,8%/11	2 4,6%/43 18,2%/11	11 9,8%/112 100%/11
<b>31 – 40</b>	3 4,4%/69 30%/10	7 16,2%/43 70%/10	10 9%/112 100%/10
<b>Above 40</b>	0 0%/69 0%/2	2 4,6%/43 100%/2	2 1,8%/112 100%/2
<b>Total</b>	69 100%/69 61,6%/112	43 100%/43 38,4%/112	112 100%/112 100%/112

### *Sex in Polish Sci-Fi Fan Fiction*

The goal of the study is to determine whether Polish sci-fi fan fiction is promiscuous or puritan. To what extent are fannish creations sexual – do fans write erotica? I have mentioned that I will not make any definite conclusion, describe any trend or build models of Polish fans’ creativity. The article is just a picture of a certain part of the science fiction fandom that we may call “sex in fan fiction”.

When considering the topic in more detail one should begin with paying attention to a problem I have mentioned previously - the inability of Polish fans to describe what they created. As I have signaled fan fiction is not labeled in any way and Polish fans are not aware of the existence of specific terminology that would allow them to put their writing in order. Of course because of the specific history of Polish fandom we cannot apply Western rules to Polish fans. It is not my purpose then to compare different regions. By showing that Polish fans do not know Western terminology I want to analyze sex in fan fiction. There is a tendency amongst Polish fans to recognize terms that are not connected with fan fiction containing sex. For example 93,8 per cent knows what “canon” is, 71,7 per cent understands what “cross-over” means, 58,4 per cent “beta-reader”, 23,9 per cent “hurt-comfort”, 23 per cent “marry sue”. Terms connected with fan fiction containing sex are less recognizable (“first-time” – 47,8 per cent; “slash” – 45,1 per cent; “pwp” – 19,5 per cent; “mpreg” – 16,8 per cent; “gen” – 14,2 per cent; “het” – 12,4 per cent).

Does this indicate that Polish fans are puritan? Although an analysis of terminology is a good starting point it is definitely too soon to establish this. One cannot say anything about sex in fan fiction in Poland only on the basis of terms, especially because a comparison to Western fans is not recommended. It would be helpful to gain further knowledge on the content of the fan fiction itself. I have analyzed it by questioning fans and reading randomly picked fiction.



Table 7 – “The majority of Polish fan fiction concentrates on (*please select only one answer*):”

	No of fans	Percentage
Action (battles, duels of characters, etc.)	42	37,5
Politics (political games, diplomacy, history)	2	1,8
Science (technological or scientific development)	1	0,9
Characters (development, new traits, biography, etc.)	24	21,4
Sexual activities	14	12,5
Something completely different	5	4,5
Hard to say	24	21,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8 – “Have you ever encountered Polish erotic fan fiction (one that describes sexual activities)”

	No of Fans	Percentage
Yes	50	44,6
No	62	55,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9 – “What is the reason for writing fan fiction?”

	No of fans	Percentage
The need to “expand” the universe one likes (to show what happens after or before the main events, show things “between the lines”)	87	77,7
The need to develop original characters (their traits, psychology, biography)	52	46,4
The need to depict sex between characters that are coupled in original productions	18	16,1
The need to depict sex between characters that are not coupled in original productions	17	15,2

Table 10 – Opinions about statements concerning Polish sci-fi fan fiction

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>Polish fan fiction is written mostly by women</b>	19 17,0%	33 29,5%	38 33,9%	18 16,1%	4 3,6%
<b>Polish fan fiction is written mostly by men</b>	9 8,1%	32 28,8%	39 35,1%	25 22,5%	6 5,4%
<b>Much fan fiction is highly erotic</b>	31 27,9%	34 30,6%	33 29,7%	11 9,9%	2 1,8%
<b>The majority of fan fiction is different from canon</b>	2 1,8%	28 25%	38 33,9%	31 27,7%	13 11,6%
<b>There is a lot of sex in fan fiction</b>	16 14,4%	29 26,1%	38 34,2%	24 21,6%	4 3,6%
<b>Sex is brought up in soap opera fan fiction and not in sci-fi fan fiction</b>	25 22,3%	36 32,1%	41 36,6%	9 8,0%	1 0,9%

In Table 7, 8, 9 and 10 I portrayed answers to several questions from the survey. The results are very interesting and worth analyzing. According to respondents the majority of Polish fan fiction stands for action and development of characters (original or created by fans). Only 12,5 per cent of fans indicated that sex is the core of fanfiction. It does not mean though that stories are not sexual at all. As Table 8 shows 44,6 per cent of respondents have ever encountered erotic stories. When we refer to the fact that a majority of surveyed fans read fan fiction, we can assume that most of them sometime in the past came across a story that described sexual activities, however this type of stories is not the most common. Results from Table 10 confirm this premise. Only 13 fans “strongly agree” or “agree” that fan fiction is highly erotic while 65 “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. 30,5 per cent of fans reject the possibility that fan fiction contains a lot of sex. It is interesting that while agreeing that the majority of fan fiction does not concentrate on sexual encounters fans do not agree that these encounters are brought up only in fan fiction of soap opera fans. This confirms that although in minority sexual sci-fi fan fiction exists.

In defense of this thesis it would be worthwhile to analyze some fan fiction placed on Fan Boards. I have decided to randomly pick some stories from Boards I mention in Appendix. Starting from number one in Appendix and reading every fifth fiction beginning with the oldest one on each Bulletin Board I have examined 51 stories. On some Boards there were less than five fictions – in this case I have read only one (selected randomly). Using categories presented in Table 7 I have marked each story with a single word. However, if a fan fiction contained elements of “action”, “politics” and “sexual activities” it was marked as belonging to each three categories. That is why although I have examined 51 stories if one sums up a number of stories belonging to each category, it will exceed 51. I have skipped fan fiction which does not belong to any of these categories, for example stories about fans, different parodies, satire and fairy tales. Below I show the results of my analysis. Examples of fan fiction from each category as well as nicknames of fans who created it, their sex and object of their fandom are to supplement it.

**Table 11 - Textual analysis of Polish sci-fi fan fiction from fifteen Fan Boards (see Appendix in this article for full list)**

Category of the stories	No of stories	Examples of the stories from each category	Authors of the stories
Action (battles, duels of heroes, etc.)	37	1. Story set in the Star Wars universe: An attack of Sith army on planet Ilum, a place of extracting crystals needed to construct lightsabers. Fan fiction describes cosmic battle and duels between Jedi and Sith.	1. chazz_duran male age 22 Star Wars
Characters (original or new) (development, new traits, biography, etc.)	28	1. Story set in Star Trek universe: It is set in Captain Picard era and describes adventures of newly promoted ensigns serving on board their first ever starship. Fan fiction concentrates on personal development of characters who are becoming "good" Starfleet officers.	1. Alucard87 male age 23 Star Trek Babylon 5
		2. Story set in the Doctor Who universe: Adventures of Doctor and his companion, Martha. Author describes new traits of characters which appear while fighting against bad aliens.	2. Anonymous writer
Sexual activities	6	1. Story set in the Star Wars universe: A smuggler that works for the Empire falls in love with a member of the Rebellion. He becomes a defector and is forced to escape from the Empire. Fan fiction contains erotic scenes: kissing and sexual encounters (without pornographic descriptions though).	1. Anonymous writer
		2. Story set in the Doctor Who universe: It is about Donnie - a daughter of Doctor Who and his companion, Rose. The plot revolves around the fact that Doctor and Rose are trapped in an alternate reality. They gradually fall in love, get married and have children (Donnie and Jack). The story concentrates on Donnie. Fan fiction describes sexual encounters between Doctor and Rose (also without pornographic descriptions).	2. Katrill female age 18 Doctor Who

A tendency observed when analyzing fan answers is confirmed by the textual analysis of fannish stories. As we can see only few are sexual. One will not find any fan fiction that is solely erotic ("pwp"), which depicts sex without describing action or focusing on character development. Erotic scenes very often are just an extension of main plot. To sum up, in the case of Polish sci-fi fan fiction we are dealing with puritans rather than promiscuous fans. Erotica is rare, and although we can encounter stories that are sexual, they are in minority.

Lets get back to fans. We can use the survey and try to determine why erotic fan fiction (although in minority) is created. The survey contained an open question about reasons for creating stories with sexual

content. Every respondent that ever encountered erotic fan fiction (44,6 per cent) could express their opinion. It might be useful to cite a few statements:

Fans create erotic stories because they lack sexual content in official productions. Maybe they want to make their favorite movie or TV show to be more mature or hotter (Anonymous respondent; male; age 23; fan of: Star Wars).

To depict scenes that do not exist, and to show something someone would like to see in official productions, or to expand existing sex scenes and even to deepen the interpersonal relations between characters. All in all to have fun (M.F. Luder; female; age 21; fan of: X-files).

Maybe to show that sex needs to be an important part of science fiction (nickname: Lo'Rel; male; age: 27; fan of: Star Trek).

Because they are not sexually satisfied (Anonymous respondent; female; age 21; fan of: Star Wars).

Basically there are two reasons. Firstly, there are fans with an idea. An idea for a story in which sex is an important part of a plot. And then there are stupid, horny teens who after watching their first porno movie see sex everywhere (nickname: Komandor Eire; female; age 20; fan of: Star Wars, Lord of the Rings).

Within Fan Board "Polski Bastion Star Wars" most erotic fan fiction is written by people of age between 13 and 15. They just cannot relieve sexual tension any other way, maybe because they just discover their sexual needs. In case of Star Wars sometimes one has a need to add something to the universe one likes, add a scene that was completely overlooked by producers (nickname: Lord Sidious; male; age 30; fan of: Star Wars).

Statements cited above give a full range of answers. Most fans expressed similar opinions.

What about homosexual fan fiction? Does it exist at all? Out of 50 fans that encountered erotic fan fiction, 22 did read Polish fan fiction that described sex between homosexuals (gay or lesbian). When asked about reasons someone writes slash fiction (or femslash) these 22 fans most frequently indicated that this kind of work is a result of a need of artistic fulfillment offering pleasures that ordinary fiction does not provide. Other answers that were frequent underlined political reasons, the need to manifest one's erotic fantasies, the need to create unique stories and producers' reluctance to depict homosexual relationships (see Table 12).

**Table 12 – “What is the reason for writing homosexual fan fiction (depicting sex between lesbian or gay)?”**

	<b>No of fans</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>The need to “express” oneself because of being homosexual</b>	5	22,8%/22
<b>The need to latently show what heterosexual relationships should look like</b>	4	18,2%/22
<b>The need to show that women have another (more masculine) side of personality.</b>	5	22,8%/22
<b>The need to show that men have another (more feminine) side of personality.</b>	2	9,1%/22
<b>The need to show one’s sexual fantasies</b>	10	45,4%/22
<b>The need to evoke outrage</b>	3	13,6%/22
<b>The need to evoke sexual arousal</b>	4	18,2%/22
<b>The need to underline that homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals</b>	8	36,4%/22
<b>The need to feel artistic fulfillment (to feel pleasures that ordinary fiction does not provide)</b>	14	63,6%/22
<b>The need to describe something producers neglect</b>	11	50%/22
<b>The need to create unique stories</b>	10	45,4%/22

Let us get back to the cited statements about reasons for creating erotic stories. “Komandor Eire” described “horny teens who after watching their first porno movie see sex everywhere”. “Lord Sidious” noticed that “most erotic fan fiction is written by people of age between 13 and 15”. Is this really the case? Are most writers of stories containing sex young? What are their demographics? Out of 69 fans that admitted to writing fan fiction, only 12 had ever written erotica. Both “Komandor Eire” and “Lord Sidious” are mistaken. Most writers of erotica are between 21 and 25 years of age. In fact there is only one fan who is less than 16. It is not true that erotic fan fiction is written mainly by men (that was a general tendency). 58,4 per cent of erotic fiction writers are females (for further data see Table 13 and 14).

Table 13 – “Sex” crossed with “Have you ever written erotic fan fiction?”

	I have	I have not	Σ N=69
<b>Female</b>	7 58,4%/12 30,4%/23	16 28,1%/57 69,6%/23	23 33,3%/69 100%/23
<b>Male</b>	5 41,6%/12 10,9%/46	41 71,9%/57 89,1%/46	46 66,7%/69 100%/46
<b>Total</b>	12 100%/12 17,4%/69	57 100%/57 82,6%/69	69 100%/69 100%/69

Table 14 – “Age” crossed with “Have you ever written erotic fan fiction?”

	I have	I have not	Σ N=69
<b>1 – 15</b>	1 8,3%/12 12,5%/8	7 12,3%/57 87,5%/8	8 11,6%/69 100%/8
<b>16 – 20</b>	3 25%/12 13,6%/22	19 33,3%/57 86,4%/22	22 31,9%/69 100%/22
<b>21 – 25</b>	5 41,7%/12 18,5%/27	22 38,6%/57 81,5%/27	27 39,1%/69 100%/27
<b>26 – 30</b>	1 8,3%/12 11,1%/9	8 14%/57 88,9%/9	9 13%/69 100%/9
<b>31 – 40</b>	2 16,7%/12 66,6%/69	1 1,8%/57 33,4%/69	3 4,3%/69 100%/3
<b>Above 40</b>	0 0%/12 100%/0	0 0%/57 100%/0	0 0%/69 100%/0
<b>Total</b>	12 100%/12 17,4%/69	57 100%/57 82,6%/69	69 100%/69 100%/69

## Conclusion

In the survey I asked fans to respond to several statements about sex in fan fiction (see Table 15). Their answers are a good summary of my study. Polish sci-fi fans are rather puritan than promiscuous. It is undoubtedly true that sexual content is present in a minority of fan stories. Most of fan fiction writers concentrate their efforts on creating works which involve character development or action.

Of course conclusions may not be so unambiguous. One cannot decide beyond any doubt that fans are puritan. Mainly because some fans do write erotica. Of course even though they are not a speck in the ocean statistics show they are definitely a smaller slice of the cake. There is no point in repeating all the statistics and facts I have mentioned before. One is obliged to say though that despite being puritans Polish fans are tolerant and open. If they were not how could they disagree to the fact that only heterosexual sex is accepted (see Table 15). They disagree even though they do not believe sexual content is an important part of fan fiction. It may be

the case that they have the potential to become promiscuous<sup>9</sup>. Who knows? Maybe some time from now Polish fans will become more lustful.

**Table 15 – Opinion about statements concerning erotica in sci-fi fan fiction**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>Sex should not be the main topic of fan fiction</b>	2 1,8%	9 8,1%	24 21,6%	51 45,9%	25 22,5%
<b>Sex is an important part of fan fiction</b>	36 32,7%	40 36,4%	20 18,2%	13 11,8%	1 0,9%
<b>Sex in fan fiction is a way to show producers that there is too little erotica in official productions</b>	25 22,9%	31 28,4%	37 33,9%	12 11%	4 3,7%
<b>Sex should not be the main topic of fan fiction because it is absent in official productions</b>	15 13,8%	46 42,2%	23 21,1%	13 11,9%	12 11%
<b>Stories with sexual content are the best</b>	64 58,7%	30 27,5%	10 9,2%	4 3,7%	1 0,9%
<b>Sex is advisable only when heterosexual</b>	41 37,3%	27 24,5%	22 20%	12 10,9%	8 10,9%
<b>Homosexual sex should not be the main topic of fan fiction</b>	32 29,4%	22 20,2%	25 22,9%	7 6,4%	23 21,1%

I will purposely end this article with a repetition that its goal was not to compare Polish and Western fans. Such comparisons are not possible because of the specific past of Polish fandom. I hope I will be excused for a descriptive character of my study. I own up to missing some sci-fi productions, but whenever I decided I would not put something in my study it was well grounded. The choice of Fan Boards was not accidental. I chose the biggest and busiest virtual communities of Polish sci-fi fans. I decided to take into consideration only those sci-fi productions that beyond any doubt are science fiction. This allowed me to omit certain movies or TV shows that are highly controversial in the light of being a “real” science fiction genre. That is the reason why I did not research fans of *Lost* – a TV show that is incredibly popular in Poland. Another thing worth straitening up is that I did not concentrate on fans of a specific show or movie. I must underline that I do not compare Polish fans of different universes. I treat them as a whole. The purpose of the study was not to compare for example fans of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* or fans of *Doctor Who* and *Star Gate*. Although fans of some did occur more frequently than other, it is a matter of temporary fashion and media landscape rather than result of planning. It certainly does not affect the final outcome of this study.

## Appendix

The following list contains names and addresses of web pages (as well as fictional universe these pages refer to) on which I have placed online survey:

1. Bastion polskich fanów Star Wars - <http://www.gwiezdne-wojny.pl/index.php> (Star Wars)
2. Battlestar Galactica - <http://www.bsg.com.pl/> (Battlestar Galactica)
3. Bydgoski Fanklub Star Wars <http://www.bfsw.fora.pl/> (Star Wars)
4. Doctor Who - <http://drwho.pl/forum> (Doctor Who)
5. Farscape - <http://www.farscape-pl.com/forum> (Farscape)
6. Forum BatCave - <http://www.forum.batcave.098.pl/> (Bat Man)
7. Forum Zakonu Force Crusaders - <http://force-crusaders.org/forum/> (Star Wars)
8. Holonet 3.0 - <http://holonet.pl/> (Star Wars)
9. Orion-Tokra Forum <http://forum.gwrota.com> (Star Gate)
10. Stargate Worlds - <http://www.stargate-worlds.pl/> (Star Gate)
11. Star-trek.com.pl - <http://star-trek.com.pl/forum> (Star Trek)
12. Starwars.pl - <http://www.outerrim.pl/Forums> (Star Wars)
13. Trek.pl - <http://www.trek.pl/forum/> (Star Trek)
14. USS Phoenix - <http://startrek.pl/> (Star Trek)
15. X forum - <http://xforum.prv.pl/> (X-Files)

## Notes

1. It is not that Henry Jenkins is an anonymous author and researcher. In fact he is renowned for his works and studies. However his fame results from his general research into participatory culture and changes cultural industries are undergoing. Very little attention is paid to the fact that he is one of the main scientists of *fan studies*. His works which are considered milestones of this subgenre of cultural studies are not present in Polish academia.
2. Of course this is true only to a point. There were periods in Polish history in which American pop culture was restricted without any exceptions. The fifties and so called the Stalinist Period (it ended in 1956) is the prime example. Historians of Polish popular culture indicate that the Thaw Period began in the seventies. During that time communistic countries became more open to Western culture.
3. Most of them contained novels or short stories of professional Western science fiction authors. The reason for that was very simple - sci-fi books were a rare commodity.
4. Of course it is true of fans from other post-soviet countries.
5. It is appropriate to explain that I do not want to investigate fans sexual behaviors, customs or habits.
6. Of course I cannot prevent my readers from making comparisons on their own. It would not worry me much if someone were to be inspired to make such comparisons. In fact it wouldn't come as a surprise. Comparisons do come to mind and seem quite obvious. In spite of this I do not compare.
7. It was created on the basis of the Web service available for Polish researchers – ebadania.pl (<http://www.ebadania.pl/>). Using this page I was able to carry out computer coding of the survey.
8. One should be aware of the differences between Polish and US educational systems. There are three main levels of education in Poland: Primary Level (Primary School), Mid Level (“Gimnazjum” and High School) and High Level (Higher Schools and University).
9. Especially because they believe that sex should not be the main topic of fan fiction only because it is absent in official productions.

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