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POLISH SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY LITERATURE

ANGLO-AMERICAN INFLUENCES

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EDITORIAL

While science fiction and fantasy are inarguably international genres, they have not developed in a uniform manner across the globe. The literary output of any nation is always shaped by many factors, including the country's mythology, history, politics, and culture. Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, speculative fiction, an umbrella term that embraces all narratives including the elements of the fantastic, the supernatural or the futuristic, has challenged the norms of mimetic novelistic discourse, become a vehicle for the re-interpretation of cultural and literary heritage, and offered a commentary on the issues important for its times. This is certainly true as far as Polish science fiction and fantasy literature are concerned, since their present condition—though, undoubtedly, determined also by the achievements of foreign writers (but to what extent?)—has been affected by the nation's difficult yet rich past, which has in turn been reflected in the writers' attempts at re-creating the country's history, in the multiple references to its socio-political reality, and in the return to Slavic mythology and traditions.

However, beyond the borders of Poland, few of the country's science fiction and fantasy writers have gained literary and scholarly recognition. Though foreign readers are generally acquainted with the works of Stanisław Lem and Andrzej Sapkowski, they know little about other noteworthy Polish authors. This is hardly surprising, since not many critical publications on Polish sf and fantasy are available in English. Our collection of essays will, hopefully, satisfy that demand and suggest at least a few more directions for further exploration and future research.

The following issue of *Crossroads* comprises six papers which deal with various aspects of Polish speculative fiction or, more generally, with the state of sf and fantasy literature in Poland. By analyzing several Polish novels and short stories, the authors of these papers offer a glimpse into the variety of motifs, themes, and sub-genres used by Polish writers. By discussing certain similarities between Anglo-American and Polish texts, they point to the possible influences of the former on the latter. By paying attention to Polish editions of foreign works, they highlight the problems of translation and retranslation. Finally, by examining a range of Polish works, they seek to expand foreign readers' knowledge of Polish sf and fantasy beyond the novels of Lem and Sapkowski. Having this last goal in mind, our authors wanted to provide scholarly analyses which would be accessible and thought-provoking, not only for people working in literary studies, but for everyone interested in the topic of non-Anglo-American science and fantasy fiction.

In "Did Aldous Huxley read science fiction literature in Polish? *Brave New World*, Intertexutality and Mieczysław Smolarski", Grzegorz Moroz examines the one-sided conflict between the Pol-

ish writer, Mieczysław Smolarski, and Aldous Huxley. By analyzing and comparing the works of both writers, Moroz explains why Smolarski's claims that Huxley plagiarized his work should be dismissed. His analysis is supported by a study of the correlations between Polish and English sf novels, with particular reference to Smolarski's and Huxley's works.

In "On the Hermeneutic Ontology of Language in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its Latest Polish Retranslation", Beata Piecychna investigates the most recent retranslation of Carroll's work (published in 2015) in order to prove that, contrary to the claims of the translator, the text does not render the 'spirit' of the original work. The framework for the analysis of both texts is Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontology of language and the concept of *ontological parallelism*—a key notion in the theory of translation.

Ewa Drab, in "Time and History at the Crossroads of Polish Imaginary Genres: Krzysztof Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery* and Andrzej Pilipiuk's *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia*", analyzes the interrelation of time and history in selected Polish steampunk and science fiction novels. This analysis is preceded by a general discussion of the roles of time and history in Anglo-American steampunk and science fiction novels—a discussion which is complemented by the author's exploration of the differences between the Polish and Anglo-American variants of the selected sub-genres.

Agnieszka Dzięcioł-Pędich and Marcin Pędich, in "Constructions of the Other in Polish Fantasy Literature", investigate the problem of Otherness in several Polish fantasy novels. By examining a range of characters, the authors are able to explore various dimensions of Otherness, which allows them to suggest that being 'the Other' is one of the key tropes of fantasy literature. This analysis is supported by references to similarly constrained characters in Anglo-American fantasy.

In "Fairytale Fantasy, Secondary History, and Female Empowerment: Discovering the Many Dimensions of Anna Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo*", Weronika Łaszkiewicz examines selected aspects of Anna Brzezińska's much acclaimed collection. By posing questions concerning the sub-genre of fairytale fantasy, elements of fantastic world-building, and female empowerment in fantasy fiction, Łaszkiewicz demonstrates that Brzezińska consciously subverts the characteristic tropes of fantasy and fairy stories, and creates an intricate and compelling secondary world.

Mariusz M. Leś, in "Top Seven Polish Science Fiction Novels of the Communist Era (Lem aside)", presents his selection of Polish science fiction novels written between 1949 and 1989, i.e. the period of the Soviet communist regime. The aim of this selection is to provide a counterpoint to the works of Stanisław Lem, which still overshadow—perhaps unfairly as Leś suggests—other novels of that period. By analyzing the works of, e.g. Janusz A. Zajdel, Marek Oramus, and Wiktor Żwikiewicz, Leś highlights the impressive wealth of ideas and narrative techniques hidden in those—now largely forgotten—texts.

We hope that the following issue of *Crossroads* will contribute to the growth of scholarly interest in Polish sf and fantasy, and, more generally, in science fiction and fantasy novels from outside the Anglo-American milieu. Since all of these works are shaped by a given country's history, politics, and culture, to read them means not only to discover imaginary never-lands created by the authors, but also to explore the history and culture that lie beneath them. This, in turn, allows one

to perceive Polish speculative fiction as entangled in a wider web of literary and cultural influences, the examination of which proves a fruitful and fascinating task.

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Brave New World, Intertextuality and Mieczysław Smolarski

Abstract. In 1948, Polish science-fiction writer Mieczysław Smolarski wrote an open letter to Aldous Huxley in which he accused Huxley of plagiarising, in his famous novel *Brave New World* (1932), two novels which Smolarski himself had written in the 1920s: *Miasto światłości* (*A City of Light*) and *Podróż poślubna pana Hamiltona* (*Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon*). The key argument presented in this paper is that even if Huxley had read these two novels (which is very unlikely), *Brave New World* would not have been altered in any considerable way, and that in 1931, the year in which he wrote *Brave New World*, Huxley was already a distinguished novelist and a profound thinker capable of writing a masterpiece without resorting to plagiarism.

Key words: Huxley, Smolarski, plagiarism, *Brave New World*, science fiction, dystopia, intertextuality.

In this paper I will approach the issue of plagiarism, of which Aldous Huxley was accused by a Polish writer, Mieczysław Smolarski, in 1948. The strategy of those Polish scholars who felt that Huxley was (or at least may have been) not guilty of plagiarism[1] was to point out the limited number of conceptual and ideological schemata in operation within Polish, British and world science fiction and catastrophic literature in the first four decades of the 20th century. Even Antoni Smuszkiewicz, who abstained from pronouncing Huxley not guilty of plagiarism, felt obliged to admit that: "Visions of the world dominated by technology, causes of cosmic catastrophes, applications of extraordinary inventions (rockets, killing rays, etc.) and the motive of an escape from a planet on the verge of destruction point to so limited a number of motives that one really is under the impression that all these different novels were created by one author" (Smuszkiewicz 1982: 204, my translation). However, as I consider myself an Aldous Huxley scholar, not a science fiction scholar, I would like to construct my defence of Huxley using a different strategy. I would like to show that the erudition of Huxley, the range and depth of his reading, made *Brave New World* a truly intertextual novel, and that the dystopian ideas crucial in the construction of the World State and the

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1 Two Polish critics who disagreed with Smolarski were: T. Grzebieniowski "Smolarski versus Huxley", *Odrodzenie,* 1948, 13-14, 16, and M. Karnasowa, "Mieczysław Smolarski", *Życie i Myśl,* 1967, 2, p. 144.

New Mexico Indian reserve central to *Brave New World* are to be found not in Smolarski's novels, but in Huxley's own experiences and in the numerous books and essays Huxley had read, many of which became more or less obvious intertexts in *Brave New World.* And that even if Huxley had miraculously and surreptitiously learnt Polish and read Smolarski's novels, *Brave New World* would not have been altered to any considerable degree. I will also attempt to show in the second part of this paper that Huxley's erudition, intellect and concern for the future of the world led to him write both works of non-fiction and fiction (*Brave New World Revisited* and *Island*, respectively) which developed ideas he introduced first in his novel from the early 1930s.

In 1948, sixteen years after the publication of *Brave New World,* Mieczysław Smolarski, the author of a few science fiction novels and short stories written in the 1920s, wrote a newspaper article in the Polish literary magazine "Nowiny Literackie" ["Literary News"]. The article had the form of an open letter, entitled "List do Aldousa Huxleya" ["A Letter to Aldous Huxley"]. Smolarski started his letter with self-promotion, listing novels he had written, and translators who had approached him to have his books translated. Yet the only book of his that he presents as actually having been translated into a foreign language is a historical novel for young readers about the Polish king Władysław Warneńczyk. Smolarski reports that during WWII he was approached by an acquaintance of his who had told him that he had read this novel in Bulgarian. For Smolarski this is clear proof that because of "the loose morality pervading the international book market" there exist numerous translators "who want to avoid paying royalties" (Smolarski 1948: 7, my translation). Smolarski immediately moves to report another conversation with another acquaintance of his that he had during WWII. This unnamed acquaintance asked him: "Please, tell me this: have you robbed Huxley or has Huxley, in *Brave New World,* robbed you?" (Smolarski 1948: 7, my translation). Smolarski now shows that he is indignant; he takes it for granted that some 'robbery' must have been committed, and because he had written both *Miasto światłości* (*A City of Light*) and *Podróż poślubna pana Hamiltona* (*Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon*) earlier than Huxley's *Brave New World*, it is obvious to him that Huxley had committed this hideous crime and should pay compensation.[2]

The main part of Smolarski's letter consists of attempts to show that the similarities between his two novels and *Brave New World* are not accidental, and that his *Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon* contains a serious "philosophical idea" which is as unique and novel as the ideas which are associated with such key novels as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and H.G. Wells's

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2 One may really wonder at this point why Smolarski waited for fifteen years to bring up his charges against Huxley. The Polish translation of *Brave New World* by Stanisława Kuszelewska was published by Rój in 1933, just a year after the original version had been published, and it is hardly imaginable that Smolarski, a writer and a critic, learnt about it only in 1940 from a conversation with an unidentified friend. Smolarski's letter, I think, may be read in the context of the ideological cold war that was being waged in post-war, communist Poland. Smolarski's accusation that Huxley may have stolen Smolarski's ideas through a co-worker of his "scavenging on Slavonic literatures" ("żerujących na literaturach słowiańskich") (Smolarski 1948: 7) supports this perspective.

The War of the Worlds. And that it is this unique idea of the World State, with its stability, happiness through uniformity, but also some brewing dissent, which Huxley "robbed" Smolarski of. Smolarski adds some more similarities which supposedly proves Huxley guilty of theft. He states: "In my novel Hamilton is the supervisor of a huge block of flats of 50 floors and 20000 inhabitants; in Huxley's book we find 60 floors, 36 floors (sic!) and 7000 rooms, etc." (Smolarski 1948: 7, my translation). Smolarski compares the love affair between his "savage" Andrzej and Maja with Huxley's John the Savage and Lenina Crowne. He points out the fact that at one moment both Andrzej and John become disenchanted with "cities of light". Smolarski writes about the "electric wall" which divides civilization from barbarity in both novels as other proofs of the "robbery".

Yes, it is true that in *Brave New World* there is the World State with evident stability, but also moral and intellectual shallowness and discontent, and that in *A City of Light* Smolarski had displayed similar features a few years earlier, and that there also exists the World State in Smolarski's *Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon.* But as science fiction literature historians tell us, the concept of the World State had been used by writers before Smolarski and Huxley, from Louis-Sébastian Mercier *L'An 2400* [*Year 2440*] published in 1772, to Yevgeny Zamiatin's *We* (1924). For example, in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) we have the fundamental dichotomy between the civilized, effeminate and promiscuous Eloi and the barbarian, savage Morlocks, a dichotomy which appears as central, albeit in altered forms, both in *A City of Light* and in *Brave New World.*

Smolarski is not by any means the only writer whose megalomania and greed has carried him away to the borders of the ludicrous; for it is ludicrous indeed, at least in my opinion, to compare the uniqueness of his *Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon* with *Gulliver's Travels, The War of the Worlds* or *New Atlantis*, and to claim to have coined the phrase "darkness visible". His weird, and, in my opinion, unfounded accusations still resonate, to some considerable degree, thanks to the Polish literary critic Antoni Smuszkiewicz. Smuszkiewicz's *Zaczarowana Gra: Zarys Dziejów Polskiej Fantastyki Naukowej* [*The Enchanted Game: An Outline History of Polish Science-Fiction Literature*] (1982) dealt with the issue of Smolarski's accusations of Huxley's *Brave New World* being a plagiarism of *Miasto Światłości* and *Podróż poślubna pana Hamiltona*. In chapter IX of his book, entitled "Katastroficzne wizje przyszłości" ["Catastrophic Visions of the Future"], Smuszkiewicz summarized and briefly analysed these two novels by Smolarski, and then he noted:

> The same philosophical ideas, the same basic content, and even the same system of social organizations could, a few years later, be found in the famous novel by Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), which became a great success and is still considered as a teasing answer to the utopian visions of the world in the future popular in the West at the beginning of the 20th century. The opening chapters of *Brave New World* very closely resemble *Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon*, while the following chapters—starting from Chapter VI of Huxley's novel— resemble *A City of Light*. Do we have here an unbelievable similarity of concepts, or is it a case of crude plagiarism committed on the novels of our writer? It is difficult to establish without undertaking scrupulous research, which could become an object of a separate study. (Smuszkiewicz 1982: 202, my translation).

Later on, Smuszkiewicz added that Smolarski's letter was delivered to Huxley, "who preferred not to answer it, although he, as a respected writer, was bound to do so" (Smuszkiewicz 1982: 203, my translation). Three years later, in 1985, Smuszkiewicz wrote an Afterword to the new edition of *A City of Light* (which was published in 1988). He still refrained from the final verdict of plagiarism, but insisted that: "regardless of whose side of the story literary history will belatedly take, one thing is certain: this anti-utopian concept based on lack of conviction in civilizational progress, and the critical attitude to the development of social mechanisms first appeared in the works of Mieczysław Smolarski (Smuszkiewicz 1988: 244, my translation).

Why did Smuszkiewicz not re-read *Brave New World*, and why did he not decide for himself if Huxley had plagiarized Smolarski's novel? Why did he leave it for some mysterious "history of literature" to make its (belated) pronouncement in some more or less distant future? Perhaps it was because Huxley's novel was banned in Poland in the pre-1989 era of communism, and we are faced with a classic case of self-censorship. Of Smuszkiewicz being constrained by the political climate of that time. Perhaps he felt that the summary of *Brave New World* and its comparison with Smolarski's novel would be cut out by censors.

When I read Smolarski's accusations I became very curious about the content of his two novels. I got hold of them, read them, then re-read *Brave New World*. It turned out that I had embarked on an interesting journey through literary traditions in Anglophone and Polish science fiction in the first three decades of the 20th century. After a close reading of these three novels I would like to argue that the similarities between Smolarski's novels and *Brave New World*, which he enumerated in his "Letter to Aldous Huxley", should not be considered in the light of being accidental (or not), but, rather, in the light of being superficial. The background, and the ways in which two different communities, of the World State and the New Mexico reserve, are constructed in *Brave New World* could be explained clearly and fully without referring to Smolarski at all.

In the spring and summer of 1931, when Huxley was writing *Brave New World* in his house in Sanary-sur-mer on the French Riviera, he was 37 and he had written four novels, two books of poetry and numerous essays. The first two volumes of the collected essays of Aldous Huxley, edited by Robert Baker and James Sexton, cover the years 1922-1929; they contain almost a hundred essays and run to more than one thousand pages of essays Huxley wrote in that period. These essays are divided by the editors into four sections: I. Architecture, Painting, Music, Literature, II: History, Politics, Social Criticism, III: Science, Philosophy, Religion, IV. Travel. The range, scope and depth of these essays best illustrate the point that Huxley was one of the best predisposed men to write a poignant dystopian prophecy. In a letter to a friend, Mrs. Kathevan Roberts, dated 18 May 1931, Huxley wrote:

I am writing a novel about the future [*Brave New World*]—on the horror of Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it. Very difficult. I have hardly enough imagination to deal with such a subject. But it is none the less interesting work. (Huxley 1969: 348)

So, one of the key inter-textual sources for the book is unravelled here: the utopian but also dystopian science fiction of H.G. Wells. One may as well add here the long English/British tradition of utopian literature, from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) to William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890); the tradition was very well known to Huxley, who had, after all, studied English Literature at Oxford. There are many other intertexts in *Brave New World*, from William Shakespeare and John Milton, but also from writers contemporary with Huxley, like a friend of his, T.S. Eliot. Before I move on to deal with the issue of the intertextual elements used to construct two distinct communities in *Brave New World*, I will try to offer some alternative intertextual sources to the ones which Smolarski suggested in his "Letter to Aldous Huxley".

In his letter Smolarski accused Huxley of "stealing" the notion of "darkness visible" from him. It is true that Huxley did not invent this phrase; he simply took it from a writer whom he knew probably rather better than Smolarski knew him, namely from John Milton, who, in *Paradise Lost* (1667), in his description of hell, wrote: "yet, from those flames no light, but darkness visible" (1.62f).

Smolarski accuses Huxley of "stealing" the idea of old books being the source of wisdom, which is forgotten in the World State. And he recalls that in his *A City of Light* the monk found some books from which he taught ancient wisdom to Andrzej, whereas John the Savage found a copy of Shakespeare to teach himself. In Smolarski's novel we learn very little about the contents of these books, but we might tentatively assume that they are theological treatises on Christianity, or books which told Andrzej that he lived in a place that used to be called Poland (Smolarski 1988: 10). On the other hand, the role of Shakespeare, his language and his mindset, is absolutely fundamental to the whole understanding of Huxley's novel. Shakespeare's poetry in *Brave New World* represents both humanism and the ultimate beauty of the English language, the only two values which Huxley could muster in 1931 against the soma-induced happiness in the World State on the one hand, and the despair of John the Savage, leading to his suicide. There are more than fifty direct quotations and paraphrases from Shakespearean plays and poems in *Brave New World*. (On the intricate play of these quotes and paraphrases, see, for example, www.shmoop.com › Literature › Brave New World › Analysis). While illustrating differences in Smolarski's and Huxley's treatment of love themes I will comment on Huxley's textual appropriation of two phrases from Shakespeare: "Impudent strumpet!" and "O brave new world![...]"

It seems worthwhile, while dealing with the issues of intertextuality, influences and similarities in Huxley's and Smolarski's novels, to compare how differently the love affairs of the paired lovers (John the Savage and Lenina Crowne, Andrzej and Maja) are represented. In Smolarski's *A City of Light* the lovers make a narrow escape in a space rocket, a typical popular fiction happy ending. In Huxley's novel, the differences between the sexual life-styles of the World State and the reserve (sexual promiscuity in the former and the predominance of the model of 'sexual fidelity' in the latter) are constructed in such a way that they create serious repercussions for plot development. When John realizes that the woman he is love with, Lenina Crowne, has casual sex with other partners (a habit encouraged by the World State and therefore in her view harmless)

he falls into a rage and attacks her with the very words Othello used before killing Desdemona: "Impudent strumpet!" (*Othello*, Act 4, scene 2, Huxley 1984: 175). A 'strumpet" was Shakespeare's archaic word for a 'whore'. It is not a case of Huxley's 'plagiarism' performed on the 'holy texts of the Bard of Stratford', but a part of the complex network of the intertextual play of words and ideas. The guilt of these two women is not real; it is created in the heads of the jealous lovers. Desdemona was framed by Iago, and she was not unfaithful, whereas Lenina's 'infidelity' was merely part of John's mindset, of his desire, and his inability to think in terms of inter-cultural difference. In Huxley's novel Lenina's sexual behaviour is presented as one of a few key events which mark the growing disillusionment of John with the World State as 'the brave new world'. And we have the whole spectrum of John's emotions with which he repeats the words of Miranda, "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world that has such people in it" (*The Tempest,* Act 5, scene 1), from original wonder and fascination, through disillusionment and rejection of it, to final despair and suicide.

The textual construction of both social organizations—the World State and the Indian community living on the reserve—created by Huxley in *Brave New World* can be easily accounted for without referring to Smolarski's two novels. As far as the World State is concerned, there is little doubt that its origins should be found not so much in the future, but in the present, in the rise of the Soviet Union and the formation of the League of Nations in response to the Great War. During his round the world trip of 1925-1926 the Huxleys arrived in San Francisco in the spring of 1926. They stayed in California for a few weeks and then on the way to New York they spent a few days in New Mexico and became acquainted with the pueblo Indian culture there (Higdon 2008: 137). Huxley's travel book *Jesting Pilate* was published in the same year. In *Jesting Pilate,* from the moment Huxley describes their landing in California and then travelling through it, the narration, earlier detached, aloof and essayistic, changes into a syncopated frenzy:

> Jazz it up, jazz it up. Keep moving. Step on the gas. Say it with dancing. The Charleston, the Baptists, Radios and Revivals. Uplift and Gilda Gray. The pipe organ, the nigger with the saxophone, the Giant Marimba-phone. Hymns and the movies and Irving Berlin. Petting Parties and the First Free United Episcopal Church. Jazz it up! "N.C. Beskin, the CONVERTED JEW, back from a successful tour, will conduct a tabernacle campaign in Glandale." 'WHY I BECAME A CHRISTIAN?' Dressed in Jewish garb […] *Third Movement.* Mother's Day (Mr. Herring of Indiana, "The Father of Mother's Day." But why not Flapper's Day? It would be more representative, more democratic, so to speak. For in Joy City there are many more Flappers—married as well as unmarried—than Mothers […] Thousands and thousands of flappers, and almost all incredibly pretty. Plumply ravishing, they give, as T.S. Eliot has phrased it, a "promise of pneumatic bliss,"[3] but of not much else, to judge by their faces. So curiously uniform, unindividual, and

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3 "promise of pneumatic bliss" comes from T.S. Eliot's poem "Whispers of Immortality" (1920), where the appropriate fragment reads: "Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye/Is underlined for emphasis:/Uncorseted her friendly bust/ Gives promise of pneumatic bliss."

blank, Hardly more expressive to the foreign eye, at any rate—than any of the other parts of that well-contoured anatomy which they are at such pains to display. (Huxley 2001b: 551)

The Los Angeles, Joy City, of 1926, with its economic boom, bootlegged cocktails, and promiscuous flappers emanating "pneumatic bliss", could be treated as a starting point for the London of the World State in the year 632 After Ford, as depicted in *Brave New World*, where its heroine, the promiscuous Lenina Crowne, is described as possessing "pneumatic bliss" a few times, and the Solidarity Service Day with its syncopated rhythm and lyrics "Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun,/Kiss the girls and make them One./Boys at one with girls at peace;/orgy porgy gives release."(Huxley 1984: 84)[4] may be seen as a combination of weird religious services and the wild jazz age parties described in *Jesting Pilate.* Obviously, the London of 632 A.F. possesses many features that were not there in the L.A. of 1926. Huxley's extensive interests in science (especially biology) and social sciences had led him to construct a sophisticated, prophetic vision of the dystopian World State. The World State's motto "Community, Identity, Stability" is achieved through social engineering, neo-Pavlovian conditioning, Bakchanovsky's eugenics, Malthusan belts and hypnopaedia (the process of teaching, or to be more precise, 'conditioning' young boys and girls while they sleep). These concepts are witty prophecies on developments in such areas as biology, physiology, demography and psychology. The seriousness of Huxley's purpose to create the world of the future derived from the present developments of sciences (which, after all, is one of the key futures of the s-f genre) can also be detected in two texts which are commentaries on *Brave New World,* "The Forward", which was written for the 1946 edition of the novel, and, more importantly, *Brave New World Revisited* (1959). The latter is a collection of scholarly essays taking the World State as presented in *Brave New World* as a point of departure and tracing developments in such disparate areas as: I. Overpopulation, II. Quantity, Quality, Morality, III. Over-Organization, IV. Propaganda in a Democratic Society, V. Propaganda under a Dictatorship, VI. The Art of Selling, VII. Brainwashing, VIII. Chemical Persuasion, IX. Hypnopaedia, X. Education for Freedom, and XI. What Can Be Done. As we can see from the titles of the chapters (each chapter could be read as an 'independent' essay), after nine of them showing the real and potential dangers in the development of social organization, both in free, democratic countries and in dictatorships (of diverse origins), the two final chapters explore positive, utopian perspectives; a very unusual thing indeed in the 20th century. It should be noted that Huxley is, to the best of my knowledge, the only writer audacious enough to write after a truly dystopian novel (*Brave New* World) not only non-fiction with an optimistic bias, but also truly utopian fiction. Huxley, as he admitted in the 1946 forward to *Brave New World,* while writing this novel in the summer of 1931, had not been prepared intellectually to offer a positive, utopian solution, and acknowledged that he was able to construct only

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4 This is yet another case of Huxley's intensive intertextual approach. These lyrics are a joyful travesty of the famous, traditional nursery rhyme: "Georgie Porgie, Pudding and pie,/ Kissed the girls and made them cry/ When the boys came out to play,/ Georgie Porgie ran away."

this horrible alternative "between insanity on the one hand, and lunacy on the other" (Huxley 1984: 6). But after his pacifist and mystical conversion of the late 1930s, the situation altered. First we got the 'perennial-philosopher' John Propter in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), not only making philosophical comments on the horrible state of mankind at the threshold of the Second World War, but constructing a positive utopia in the shape of a local, Jeffersonian democracy. In Huxley's final novel, *Island* (1962), the utopia is much more widespread. The island community of Pala is based on a synergically positive mixture of Eastern mysticism with Western rationality, a 'perennial philosophy' shown as a reality in the brief moment of peace and tranquillity before the deadly attack of the imperialist neighbour greedy for Pala's crude oil.

One of the key arguments Smolarski used in his plagiarism letter was that the world of affluence and plenty was separated from the world of barbarity by the electric fence. This is true, but whereas in Smolarski's novel it is the "city of light" which is the exception, and all the world outside it is rank barbarity, in Huxley's novel the situation is more or less opposite. The reserve in New Mexico is the only place outside the World State preserved as a reserve for scientific (specifically eugenic) research. The whole concept of setting the reserve in New Mexico, among the Indians practising *Penitente*-ism, is owed to a large extent to D.H. Lawrence and the role he played in Huxley's life. Huxley was at first fascinated by Lawrence: his internal dynamism, his 'religion of blood' and his non-conformism in life. Huxley scholars agree that the only person of integrity in Huxley's complex novel *Point Counter Point* is Mark Rampion, a figure clearly modelled on D.H. Lawrence (see, for example, Firchow 1972: 109). Lawrence was fascinated by New Mexican Indians, their culture and rituals (the Lawrences owned a ranch in Taos, close to an Indian pueblo), and Lawrence described both their culture and rituals in his non-fiction—in the travel book entitled *Mornings in Mexico* (1927)—as well as in the novel entitled *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). Jerome Meckier, one of the most renowned Huxley scholars, has quite recently convincingly argued that the character of John the Savage was based on D.H. Lawrence. Meckier stated that: "Lawrence succumbed to tuberculosis in 1930 at the age 44, dying rather pathetically before Aldous's very eyes, virtually in Maria Huxley's arms. Two years later, Huxley caricatured his erstwhile mentor, killing him off in *Brave New World* as John Savage" (Meckier 2007: 185). And later in his paper Meckier added: "Because Huxley felt that Lawrence had no answer to death, his *alter ego* in the novel can find no answer either[...] Lawrencian philosophy, the desire for an allegedly simpler, nobler, more vital way of life, has no future; it is no more death-proof than Lawrence was. (Meckier 2007: 187) (See also, Hidgeon 2008, and Moroz 2013).

The conflict between the values of the World State and the values represented by John the Savage is described by Huxley in a detached third person narration and in the 'unmarked' English of the educated elite of the 1930s. But key parts of the novel are written in two very different and very distinguished types of English: the language of propaganda, indoctrination and conditioning, and the powerful, poetic (and poignantly archaic) language of William Shakespeare's plays and poems.

In Chapter III, for example, Huxley introduces an unusual technique, modernist in a sense, when the flow of the narration gets broken and we have shorter and shorter snippets of condition-

ing slogans interspersed with the thoughts and conversations of the key characters. For example, the slogans to stimulate consumption in the World State are repeated over and over again. Two of them are a playful travesty of slogans in English which were used to stimulate something opposite to consumption: prudence and thrift: "Ending is better than mending, the more stitches the less riches" (Huxley 1984: 54). While Bernard Marx (the World State intellectual) reveals the mechanism of hypnopeadia: "One hundred repetitions three nights a week for four years, thought Bernard Marx, who was a specialist on hypnopaedia. Sixty two thousand four hundred repetitions make one truth. Idiots." (Huxley 1984: 52).

All these features make *Brave New World* a unique and powerful novel, rightly regarded as one of the most important novels of the twentieth century, a novel whose prophetic powers have not diminished with the passage of decades (see, for example Margaret Atwood's text on the new edition of *Brave New World* in 2007). Both *A City of Light* and *Mr. Hamilton's Honeymoon* are basically adventure stories with prominent romance themes, which happen to be placed in the distant future, which is presented more in terms of some technical gadgets and a catastrophic threat than of a coherent, dystopian vision. They are of interest only to a diligent historian of Polish science-fiction literature. I am deeply convinced that even if Aldous Huxley had learnt Polish and read Smolarski novels, or even if he had employed 'scouts' to 'scavenge' through Slavonic literature in search of great ideas to steal (these two options are suggested by Smolarski in the closing paragraph of his "Letter to Aldous Huxley"), *Brave New World* would not be altered in any significant way.

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On the Hermeneutic Ontology of Language in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its Latest Polish Retranslation[1]

Abstract. In 2015, the latest retranslation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, produced by Grzegorz Wasowski, appeared on the Polish book market. As the translator explained in his afterword (Wasowski 2015: 159-173), the main aim of producing a new translation was to render the idea of the source text and to avoid word-for-word translation. Wasowski intended to render the so-called 'English spirit' contained within the original version by means of the richness of the Polish language. And although Wasowski accentuated the necessity for adapting a language to the wealth of human imagination, at the same time he claimed that the whole process must be completed moderately, within particular linguistic bounds. The main objective of this paper is to analyse whether the latest retranslation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* meets the fundamental requirements specified by its translator, that is, whether the version renders the 'spirit' of the source text and whether the attempts which have been made might be referred to as moderate. The facets and dimensions of language depicted by Lewis Carroll are illustrated as juxtaposed against Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontology of language. Finally, the idea of so-called *ontological parallelism* is put forward, which stands for another type of equivalence, a key notion in the theory of translation.

Key words: retranslation, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll, Grzegorz Wasowski, hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontology of language.

Introduction

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland belongs to the so-called translation series. In the Polish context, the process of retranslation of the work started in 1910. The first translation, published by Wydawnictwo M. Arcta, located in Warsaw, and entitled *Przygody Alinki w Krainie Cudów*, was produced by Adela S.[2] Since then, more than ten different translations have appeared, a figure that is all the more impressive since translations were completed by famous Polish novelists, poets or

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1 I wish to express my immense gratitude to the reviewers of this paper for the valuable comments on the article.

2 The surname of the translator is unknown.

translation theorists, for example, by Antoni Marianowicz, Maciej Słomczyński, Jolanta Kozak, and Elżbieta Tabakowska, to mention just a few. Also, investigating the ways in which *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was translated over time, in terms of proper names, domestication and foreignisation strategies, equivalence, etc., is a continuing concern within the field of Translation Studies.

Regardless of whether the emphasis is placed on the so-called passive or active retranslations (see Pym 1998: 82-83), they always pose significant challenges to the translation profession. These challenges can be seen on many levels: linguistic, pragmatic, cultural and social. The question arises, however, of what the motives behind the decision to retranslate a given text are. As Venuti (2013: 104) rightly suggests, retranslations are to challenge a previous version of the source text, as well as "to signify and call attention to their competing interpretation." Nevertheless, it is also often the case that retranslations are produced with the aim of addressing a different readership or even of creating a new one, of responding to certain social changes or to the changes of translational norms, as well as of modernizing the language which was used in previous target versions, particularly with regard to fiction which still enchants both younger and older readers.

One of the reasons why *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has gained so much popularity among not only readers but also translators is its deliberate entanglement in language. By employing parody, neologisms, puns and word plays, Lewis Carroll explored nonsense and used language as the basis for play with standard ways of communicating, as well as drawing readers' attention to the possibility of breaking the rules of language and, indirectly, to a lack of sense in conventions typical of everyday speech. More significantly, Carroll's linguistic intuitions found their ways into what linguists and philosophers of language ruminated about in the 20th century.

Lewis Carroll's publication proved a great success not only in England but also in many countries across the globe; it has to be noted that the book has been translated into more than forty languages. As Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens (2016) note, Lewis Carroll was quite confident that the novel had a market abroad. The first two translations (into German and then into French), published by Macmillan, appeared in 1869. It is worth remembering that it was Carroll himself who decided that the book be translated into French by Henri Bué and into German by Antonie Zimmermann. At the same time, however, the author was perfectly aware of the fact that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* proved to be, at least to some extent, untranslatable, especially with relation to the rendition of puns, word plays and whole poems (Collingwood 2008: 136). As well as being cognizant of its untranslatability, Carroll devoted considerable attention to the readership of the renditions of his work:

> For Carroll, child readers remained central to the act of translation, and both the acknowledgments for the German and French editions include a reference to the substitution of parodies of English childhood poetry for those that would be specifically intelligible to a child reader from another nation. Thus, for example, in the French edition Bué substitutes a parody of Fontaine's fable of 'Le Corbeau et le Renard' in place of Carroll's rewriting of Issac Watt's 'Against Idleness and Mischief'. Whilst the politics of the originals are rather different, both are clearly moralistic and are intended to teach a child lessons, and

thus their parodies provide a playful inversion in keeping with Carroll's primary interest in Wonderland. (Jaques, Giddens 2016: 111).

Nevertheless, it was not only the textual dimension that became Carroll's focus of attention. While the author successfully managed to choose his preferred translators for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* he also carefully scrutinized the manufacturing processes, regularly checking and verifying the formatting of the translated editions, the quality of paper, size of the book, etc. (Jacques, Giddens 2016: 109).

By employing a team of other writers and editors, Carroll intended to ensure that the translations into German and French were as accurate and idiomatic as possible:

> Carroll here strongly wished to mark the production of these editions with his stamp of quality, evaluating the proof copies according to his own high standards. But when it came to analysing the standard of the textual translation itself, he had to call upon a wider team. Clearly, having handed over the act of translating his text to other writers – a necessary undertaking but one, like the employing of an artist for the English publication, which was not without issue for a protective author – Carroll was keen to be assured of the quality of the work. Although he had received the first full proof-translation of Wonderland from Bué by June of 1867, Carroll took pains to circulate copies among various friends, colleagues . . . (Jaques, Giddens 2016: 109-110).

For Carroll, the selection of a competent translator appeared to become equally important. The author even wrote to the House of Macmillan and requested assistance in finding "a man fit to try it", someone "who had written something of the sort, so as to have some sort of sympathy with the style" (Cohen and Gandolfo 1987:50). Hence, in the following sections of this paper, our attention will be focused on stylistic manifestations of the philosophical structure of language in the source and target texts.

Although the retranslations of the well-known fantasy work have received considerable critical attention both in Poland and abroad, most studies have only been carried out in a small number of areas, for example, in terms of the ways in which puns or word plays have been rendered by individual translators or in relation to the possible impact of a given translation on its readership. On the basis of the criteria which are often not well-established most of the studies conducted have been mostly restricted to limited comparisons of the source and target texts. Such expositions are unsatisfactory because in the majority of cases their authors did not take into account the necessity for conducting a detailed analysis of the source text in terms of genre, style, narration, or the relationship between the world of the narrative and general knowledge about the world existing outside the field of a literary work. More significantly, no single study exists which examines thoroughly the role of language performed in the work under investigation by applying a 'translation perspective'. Furthermore, the generalisability of much published research on the retranslations of the work is problematic, mostly due to the fact that the authors of such studies clearly have

not paid close attention to the role of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors in the creation of the work in question.

In 2015, the newest retranslation, produced by Grzegorz Wasowski, appeared on the Polish book market. As the translator explained in his afterword (Wasowski 2015: 159-173), the main aim of producing a new translation was to render the idea of the source text and to avoid word-for-word translation. Wasowski intended to render the so-called 'English spirit' and multi-genre of humour contained within the original version by means of the richness of the Polish language. The translator is a craftsman, according to Wasowski; however, as he underlined, it is advisable that he/she becomes the co-author of a given work, in particular while translating children's literature. And although Wasowski accentuated the necessity for adapting a language to the wealth of human imagination, at the same time he claimed that the whole process must be completed moderately[3], with some sort of restraint on the part of the translator. He also emphasized (2015: 161) that his purpose was neither to compete with Lewis Carroll nor to give vent to immense pride in one's actions. Furthermore, the aim of the 'unfaithful translation'—as the translator put it—was not to make an attempt to impersonate Carroll, an action resulting from inability to create a new work, because, as Wasowski underlined, it is much better to be a brilliant translator than a poor author (*ibid*). Crucially, however, it is important that a translator constantly controls himself/herself so that he/she does not perform a prominent role, which an author deserves, according to Wasowski (*ibid*).

Jolanta Kozak (2000: 167) rightly highlights the need for diagnosing the source text before the analysis of the target text can be attempted. According to the author, if the diagnosis is right, only then is a researcher able to determine the translation problems which the translator is likely to encounter. Nevertheless, establishing such a diagnosis is not an easy task. One should decide what factors ought to be taken into consideration, because an in-depth analysis of all possible dimensions is simply beyond the scope of any paper. Hence, for the purposes of the study, the following aspect is considered: the philosophy of language hidden beneath the source text structure. This aspect serves in the paper as a basis for establishing whether Wasowski's version meets basic criteria specified by the translator and whether it renders the 'spirit' of the original version.

The main objective of the paper, as stated above, is to verify whether the latest retranslation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2015) meets the fundamental requirements specified by its translator, that is, whether the version renders the 'spirit' of the source text and whether the attempts which have been made might be referred to as moderate. The first part of the discussion proper focuses on the philosophy behind the linguistic structure of the work in question presented against the backdrop of Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontology of language. The second section discusses the linguistic philosophy in general and stylistic devices in particular in the Polish rendering of the work under investigation. In the third and final part of the paper the author reflects upon the so-called *ontological parallelism* in translation.

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3 A moderate translation should be understood as a kind of translation produced within reasonable limits of linguistic creativity on the part of a translator, without making significant changes to the style of the source text.

Lewis Carroll's philosophy of linguistic structure in light of the hermeneutic ontology of language[4]

Lewis Carroll's work abounds with references to cultural, historical and social figures and regional names, many of which come from English nursery rhymes. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is full of examples of perverted logic, personification of sayings, as well as striking examples of English humour, the protagonist of which is notably the English language itself (O'Sullivan 2004: 198). Nevertheless, despite a large number of allusions, linguistic riddles, word plays, puns, neologisms, blends, syllogisms and metaphors, it has to be observed that the novel was written in the so-called Queen's (or King's) English, typical of southern parts of England. In other words, in spite of the extensive exploitation of the arbitrary nature of the meanings of English words, a feature which has been closely associated with the author's interest in logic and language, linguistic symbols and signs, letters and anagrams, as well as with the so-called philological ferment of the Victorian era (see Sutherland 1970), Carroll's narration in general and style in particular could be referred to as grammatically correct, clear, coherent and harmonious in terms of syntax and style.

On the surface, then, everything seems to be clear and logical; however, by digging deeper into the linguistic structure of the narration, it becomes obvious that for Carroll it is the matter of linguistics which fills the plot, providing abundant opportunities for the author not only to depict the absurdities of communication among representatives of a wide variety of linguistic communities, but also to touch upon the nature of meaning and language, as well as upon their relationship with the world. As Sutherland (1970: 28) rightly observes:

> Language thus became a vehicle for play in a more comprehensive sense than the merely manipulatory. Questions into the nature of meaning, into the character and functions of names, and into the formal structures of language which aid or thwart attempts at communication are exploited for humorous effect simply because they are capable of being so exploited, and because Carroll saw them as such. The whimsical use of language phenomena enabled Carroll to indulge his own delight in playing with language, to puzzle his readers, and – although this was not his paramount intention – to comment indirectly upon the nature of language itself.

Most notably, however, the role which language performs in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is far more than this. It needs to be pointed out that language in the work in question is not only one of the main themes of the story but also a paramount element of the world depicted, or even the world itself. One could go so far as to say that, hermeneutically speaking, the portrayed reality as presented by Carroll is constituted linguistically; the reality forms the world which is conditioned by the explicit use of language on the surface of the text. Closer observation suggests that language, which here has gained ontosemantic primacy, becomes a meaningful part of Wonderland.

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4 In this paper, the hermeneutic ontology of language has been presented as exemplified by Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideas on the linguisticality of human existence.

Language, as Gadamer once put it, constitutes a universal medium through which understanding of the Other occurs; language is also the place where 'being' resides. Both language and the world, then, are intertwined and closely related. Language cannot exist without the world, and the world cannot exist without language, according to Gadamer.

Similarly, language in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* cannot be treated as a simple tool used to puzzle the readers, because language is the medium through which the world unfolds (Bronk 1988:294). The linguistic unfolding of the world is depicted at the very beginning of the second chapter of the novel, when Alice becomes keenly aware of her own "linguistic metamorphosis": "'Curiouser and curiouser!' cried Alice (she was much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English) . . . " (Carroll 2016: 21). Here, it is worth referring to Gadamer, according to whom "Whoever has language 'has' the world" (Gadamer 2004:499). What does he mean? Firstly, the well-known statement points to the inescapable conclusion that language is where the world presents itself, where it unfolds; secondly, language is the place where man may encounter other beings; thirdly, language is also a place where it is possible for human beings to relate to the world (Gurczyńska-Sady, Sady 2012: 80) as well as to create it. The interpretation holds true with regard to the main differences between the two worlds presented in Carroll's prose, namely, between Wonderland and the 'real'[5] world from which Alice came. The statement "Whoever has language 'has' the world" also implies that the kind of language one speaks makes a significant impact on the world which one inhabits. Indeed, the language which lies on the surface of Carroll's novel may be said to represent the so-called 'real' world where human beings live and from which the main protagonist came; however, the language of the underworld, full of instances of perverted logic and nonsense manifested in the use of strange non-existent words and illogical ideas (see Baldick 2008: 232), points to the robust conclusion that utterances produced by the strange creatures living in Wonderland are symbols of another world, possessed by beings who are different from humans in a very distinctive manner. Both human beings and the strange creatures from Wonderland 'have' their own worlds, which are perfectly illustrated by the way they speak and express themselves, as well as by the subject matter behind the words used. Let us refer to a famous example from the chapter *A Mad Tea-Party*:

> The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. 'There's *plenty* of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.
> 'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.
> Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.
> 'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.

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5 The term used here appears in its common meaning, as employed in the so-called pre-philosophical considerations. The distinction between realism and idealism perhaps needs to be borne in mind; however, the notion is definitely beyond the scope of the paper.

'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare.

'I didn't know it was *your* table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.'

'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; it's very rude.'

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?' (Carroll 2016: 82)

Obviously, Alice's bewilderment arises from a misunderstanding between herself and the strange creatures from Wonderland, who do not see anything wrong in what they say. What might be perceived as rude by inhabitants of the so-called 'real' world is certainly deemed normal for the March Hare and for the Hatter. As previously indicated, the misunderstanding clearly results from the fact that Alice and the strange creatures from Wonderland come from radically different worlds, a situation leading to cultural dissonance (see Cara 2017: 110). Alice, governed by the values that she has absorbed and representing the philosophy of Victorian culture, struggles to understand the rules which govern Wonderland discourse (*ibid*). As Cohan and Shires (2013: 5) rightly suggest, "Alice's adventures are, in fact, *linguistic* misadventures." Wonderland appears strange to Alice, because it seems that she experiences insurmountable difficulties in understanding that here sense is certainly not 'common' and that the odd characters from Wonderland, by constantly challenging the logic of common sense, point to an inseparable link between language and sense (*ibid*: 9). The challenging of the logic of common sense[6] has been realized in the most expedient manner in the same chapter through the depiction of the Hatter's and the March Hare's, as well as of Alice's, approach to time:

The March Hare took the watch and looked at it gloomily: then he dipped it into his cup of tea, and looked at it again: but he could think of nothing better to say than his first remark, 'It was the *best* butter, you know.'

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. 'What a funny watch!' she remarked. 'It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!'

'Why should it?' muttered the Hatter. 'Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?'

'Of course not,' Alice replied very readily; 'but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.'

'Which is just the case with *mine*,' said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could. (Carroll 2016: 84)

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6 It seems that the strange creatures are cognizant of the fact that they are challenging sense as is widely accepted in Alice's world (the *real* world). I am grateful to one of the reviewers for this valuable comment.

If one accepts that, as Gadamer put it, the world exists only to the extent in which it is mediated by language, then the obvious conclusion is that Wonderland unfolds through linguistic and (il)logical means, as used by its inhabitants. Therefore, the whole place exists as long as puns, riddles, word plays, metaphors, neologisms, cases of perverted logic, etc. are created. The nature of any world relies on interpretation, which in turn is determined by a particular use of linguistic conventions, because language is an all-embracing explanation, and/or interpretation, of the world. Gadamer (1972: 239) also argues that when a human being enters the world, he/she encounters a concrete world conditioned by the language which is used there, as well as by the way the world is presented in language.

The most important finding for this study—as derived from what the author of *Wahrheit und Methode* claims—is that Alice also comes across a world which has been determined linguistically. Because Wonderland unfolds in language, in Alice's case the so-called linguistic experience of the world encompasses all being that has ever existed and will exist. Thus it is not Wonderland that constitutes the object of language, but it is the object of human cognition (of Alice's cognition) which is being embraced by a wide horizon of language (see Gadamer 1965: 426). That is why, putting aside the strange events taking place, it is possible both for Alice and for readers to recognize the eccentricity of Wonderland.

In Carroll's novel, language serves as a demarcating line between the two worlds. From the narrator's perspective it seems that everything is clear and coherent; however, a significant change occurs the moment the odd creatures from Wonderland start producing utterances. This also accords with the main tenets of Gadamer's ontology of language, where it is shown that language cannot exist without a world, and, in a similar vein, a world cannot exist without language. In other words, it is language which influences the world, and it is the world which influences language. What is crucial at this point is to what language, in light of Gadamerian hermeneutic ontology, pertains. It seems fair to say that "language withdraws in order to serve up its message, in order to communicate . . . language is mostly silent about itself" (Schmidt 2015:345). Language, then, is not so much about particular words or phrases which are employed in order to express any sense; rather, language is a being which constitutes and forms the so-called hermeneutic experience connected with meeting the Other. Once more, the emphasis should be placed on the way Carroll wrote, i.e. by means of a very standard form of the English language, in a clear, coherent and harmonious style, even when what he referred to was certainly illogical in terms of the rules with which Alice, as a little Victorian girl, was acquainted. Let us refer to a famous episode from the chapter *Pig and Pepper*:

> Alice went timidly up to the door, and knocked.
>
> 'There's no sort of use in knocking,' said the Footman, 'and that for two reasons. First, because I'm on the same side of the door as you are; secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you. . .
>
> 'Please, then,' said Alice,' how am I to get in?'
>
> 'There might be some sense in your knocking,' the Footman went on without attending to her, 'if we had

the door between us. For instance, if you were inside, you might knock, and I could let you out, you know.'
(Carroll 2016: 69)

The above episodes point to the firm conclusion that, contrary to what is commonly held in literature, it is not so much the language itself manifested in particular words or expressions but rather what is hidden behind those words and expressions which performs a fundamental role in the work under investigation. Although Wonderland—as mentioned—unfolds in language, the language shall be understood as *logos*, mediating between man and the surrounding reality, and certainly not as an instrumental multitude of linguistic signs (see Bronk 1988: 291). Following Hans-Georg Gadamer's idea about the linguistic functioning of a human being in the world, one can conclude that because all being which could be understood is language, then Wonderland itself can be referred to as some sort of language. It is the language that denotes a myriad of potent symbols extolling the symbiotic relationship between human beings and the surrounding reality in all its facets, including manifold cases of perverted logic. These cases are typical not only of such fictitious worlds as Wonderland but, first and foremost, of the world which is so often depicted as 'real.' Lewis Carroll—as it seems—in his work created two distinct worlds, and yet the worlds overlap each other with regard to language. Despite the daunting challenges posed by the odd creatures from Wonderland with relation to logic and so-called 'common sense', the language, to a large extent, is clear and perfectly understandable, and sentences are logically structured in terms of grammar. As a consequence, lexical and syntactic means remain, at least to some extent, hidden and dormant. Kozak (2000: 171) rightly observes that Wonderland had been created in a quasi-fantastic convention, meaning that the whole situation is seemingly possible to accept in a fantastic convention, and that this is only a reflection which reveals the genesis of realism in the world depicted in the novel (as opposed to a quasi-realistic convention), and that the metaphor, being a basis for the development of the narration, is made real and transformed into a metamorphosis which is, however, not fairy-tale-like, because not all connections with a realistic convention were broken (*ibid*: 172). It should be noted that the language in this novel perfectly illustrates the idea. The non-conventional use of words, as well as cases of perverted logic and nonsense (manifested not only in language but also in the behaviour of the strange creatures), among other elements, clearly point to a fantastic convention; however, firstly, the fact that the creatures use the same language as human beings do, and, secondly, that they produce utterances according to the syntactic and pragmatic rules as agreed in the so-called 'real' world from which the main protagonist came, explicitly indicate the extent to which the real world permeates Wonderland and its linguistic conventions. Despite the use of manifold word plays, puns, riddles or neologisms, for the strange creatures which Alice encounter, Wonderland is 'real' in the sense of their feeling of belonging and their familiarity with their surroundings. Therefore, the whole narration being conducted in language typical of the educated English represents the abovementioned realistic genesis of the plot; however, the linguistic interpolations as manifested in the creatures' extraordinary ways of expressing themselves stand for the inversions of the realistic convention, thus leading to

the creation of a quasi-fantastic dimension where, linguistically speaking, everything is possible,[7] even for no valid reason at all, as in the famous scene when Alice listens to the Dormouse's story:

'They were learning to draw,' the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very sleepy; 'and they drew all manner of things – everything that begins with an M –'

'Why with an M?' said Alice.

'Why not?' said the March Hare.

Alice was silent. (Carroll 2016: 90)

Interestingly enough, the main protagonist of the novel often becomes painfully aware of her linguistic adapting to Wonderland, for instance in the second chapter, in which she says: ". . . O dear, what nonsense I'm talking!" (Carroll 2016: 22). She also quickly takes cognizance of the striking differences between her world and Wonderland:

'It was much pleasanter at home,' thought poor Alice, 'when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole – and yet – and yet – it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what *can* have happened to me! When I used to read fairy-tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one! There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I'll write one – but I'm grown up now,' she added in a sorrowful tone; 'at least there's no room to grow up any more *here*.' (Carroll 2016: 44)

Owing to this state of utter bewilderment, Alice encounters considerable difficulties in finding proper words to express herself, as in the scene with the Caterpillar, when she replies politely: "'I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'" (Carroll 2016: 55), as if finally accepting that Wonderland has been constituted linguistically and everything there has its own linguo-(il)logical structure.

Crucially, both language and the world depicted in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are of a speculative character. For language does not possess an innate system of logic; it simply expresses the way people speak. What is expressed, though, does not acquire a second existence, but it presents its own way of being (Gadamer 1965: 450). "The speculative character of language is simply the notion that every determination of meaning is dynamically related to a whole of meaning, a whole that is infinitely beyond itself" (Risser: 2010: 14). As Davey (2016: 244) rightly highlights, "the speculative capacity of words therefore refers to their power to insinuate an infinite horizon of possible meaning. When operating speculatively, the word reveals our existence in the primordial horizons of linguisticality, horizons which transcend each and every one of us." Words, then, should be considered to be separate entities from what is hidden beyond their structure. It would

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7 It also accords with Kozak's idea about "Alice's semantic adventures" (see Kozak 2000: 172).

not be too gross a generalization to say that a word is one thing and what it expresses is another. Obviously, the word and its content, forming two distinct dimensions of a hermeneutic experience, are not juxtaposed against each other but rather closely interrelated. Concerned not so much with the *internal structure* of words themselves as with what is conveyed *through* them, Carroll, by creating Wonderland, offers startlingly astute observations of how superficial the language and linguistic means employed by man are, and how very thin the line dividing sense and nonsense is. To this end, perhaps, Carroll chose to 'hide', at least to some extent, the linguistic reality of Wonderland, with its numerous word plays, riddles, neologisms and cases of perverted logic and nonsense, under the cloak of 'standard and correct' English, presumably to demonstrate how the two worlds in the novel under investigation are distinct, and yet how they mutually overlap each other, their uniqueness and separateness so often dissipated. Let us now consider whether, and to what extent, the philosophical structure presented above has been rendered in the latest retranslation of this novel.

Language[8] in Grzegorz Wasowski's translation
– results of the analysis

It is not a word-for-word translation—unless it is possible—but rather an idea-for-idea rendering that should be followed, according to Wasowski (2015: 160). As the translator claims, he would reflect upon one word for weeks, and the moment he finally settles for a word that is less than ideal signifies that a given word is not rendered with great panache (161). Wasowski employed the following translation strategies: adding, deleting and replacing (162-173), primarily with the aim of entertaining his readership. This aim—it seems—has been realized through disrupting the harmony of the style, so evident in the source text, on the following three dimensions: simplicity, concision and homogeneity (based on Markowski 2005: 120-1). These dimensions were chosen because, as indicated, this novel was written in a simple, concise and relatively homogeneous style; hence, simplicity, concision and relative homogeneity succinctly characterize the style of the source text.

Although a literary work, generally speaking, should not be analysed in terms of stylistic functionality (see Markowski 2005: 119), it has to be underlined that in order to verify whether the requirements as specified by Wasowski have been fulfilled and to what extent the philosophy behind the linguistic structure in the source text has been reflected in the Polish retranslation, one has to follow certain criteria, in particular when comparing the source and target texts within the field of translation. Owing to the fact that, as mentioned, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was written

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8 The discussion of the notion *language* is definitely beyond the scope of this paper; therefore, the stress here is laid solely on the stylistic dimension as presented in the target text. Besides, as Jin Di (2014: 148) rightly suggests, "Style has been very much neglected in translation studies because of its deceptive simplicity. Yet it is the subtlest part of literary writing and in any translation certainly one of the most outstanding factors that contribute to the effect the translation produces on its readers". It also goes without saying that a sensitive translator should make all reasonable efforts to analyse the style of the source text.

in the standard Southern British English spoken in educated circles (for more on writing in Victorian fiction see Chapman 2014:16), the stress will here be laid on the way the stylistic component has been rendered in the target version. On the basis of the remarks made about style, provisional conclusions regarding the extent to which the philosophy behind the linguistic structure of the source text has been rendered in the target version will be drawn.

The abovementioned disruption is realized, first and foremost, through disturbing the first dimension, namely, simplicity of style. The simplicity of style comprises a selection of the most natural lexical elements for a given text, the use of simple grammatical structures, as well as the avoidance of such linguistic means which are employed solely for so-called 'ornamental' purposes (Markowski 2005: 120-1). A systematic analysis of the target text has shown that Wasowski used a myriad of such means, which might be referred to as some forms of 'pretence.' They are manifested, among others, in the use of so-called pseudo-elegant vocabulary:

Example 1.

*(Alicja nie miała bladego pojęcia, co kryje się pod określeniami „szerokość" i „długość geograficzna", nie potrafiła sobie jednakże odmówić wypowiedzenia słów tak, jak mniemała, **uroczo podniosłych***).* (Carroll 2015: 14)	*(Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they were nice **grand words** to say.)* (Carroll 2016: 13).

In addition to employing a pseudo-elegant style, the translator used pseudo-scientific lexis which oftentimes alternates with lexical items such as those exemplified above. An illustration is provided in Example 2.

Example 2.

*I rzeczywiście tak było: mierzyła teraz tylko dziesięć cali i jej twarz rozjaśniła się na myśl, iż **dysponuje** wreszcie odpowiednim wzrostem, aby móc przejść przez drzwiczki do najśliczniejszego ogrodu.* (Carroll 2015: 18)	*And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that **she was now** the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden.* (Carroll 2016: 18).

Finally, the disruption of the simplicity of style is also manifested in the extensive use of trendy, overused words (such as 'iż,' 'wszakże,' 'bynajmniej,' 'albowiem,' etc.[9]), which make the style of the target version a rather pretentious and inflated one; the so-called figurative suitcases, or portmanteau (such as 'srogostro,' 'głupiudno,' 'całkompletnie'), employed in those fragments in which Car-

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9 The English counterparts could be as follows: that, nevertheless, nowise, since; however, they by no means mirror the semantic and pragmatic dimension of the Polish words in question.

roll used very standard and neutral lexis; as well as a huge number of archaisms which can easily be identified even within the very first sentence of the narration:

Example 3.

*Alicję ogarniało narastające wciąż znużenie, wynikłe z przesiadywania na skarpie obok siostry i **mitrężenia** czasu na **próżniactwie**.* (Carroll 2015: 13)	*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of **having nothing to do** . . .* (Carroll 2016: 11)

The disruption of the harmony of style also occurs in the dimension of concision. It seems that Wasowski purposefully added a large number of lexical items which are, however, wholly unnecessary, making the story too wordy and lengthy and, above all, changing the meaning dimension of the narration (for more on semantics in translation see Stolze 2011: 116-124):

Example 4.

*Alicję **ogarniało narastające wciąż znużenie, wynikłe z przesiadywania** na skarpie obok siostry i **mitrężenia czasu na próżniactwie**. Raz czy **też może** dwa zajrzała do czytanej przez siostrę książki, ale nie dojrzała w niej ni obrazków, ni dialogów. „Co i komu może przyjść z książki bez obrazków i dialogów?" – pomyślała i zajęła się rozważaniem (na tyle, na ile w ogóle było to możliwe, jako że spiekota dnia zanurzała w senność i ją, i jej rozum) **zagadnienia**: czy **wyrzeczenie się pozycji siedzącej na rzecz stojącej**, a następnie **mozół zrodzony z własnoręcznego nazrywania stokrotek zdoła sobie powetować, choćby w części, przyjemnością, którą (w końcu nie od razu) czerpać będzie z uplecenia (ze stokrotek tychże) wianka**, gdy nagle przebiegł tuż koło niej Biały Królik o różowych ślepkach.* (Carroll 2015: 13)	*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversation?' So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.* (Carroll 2016: 11-12)

The third disturbed dimension of the style is its relative heterogeneity. In the target text the disruption is manifested, first and foremost, in a style alternating between colloquial and bookish. Such alternations, it seems, lead to potential confusion in the readership because of a radical change in the perception of Alice: in some scenes she acts as a sentimental little girl who uses vocabulary typical of the very beginning of the 20th century, so reminiscent of *Anne of Green Gables* in Bernsteinowa's translation, while at other times she employs linguistic means indicative of youth slang:

Example 5.

*Zaraz, zaraz, rozsądniej chyba będzie **trzymać z nimi sztamę** – zmitygowała się raptem Alicja – **bo w przeciwnym razie mogą nie zechcieć udać się tam, dokąd ja się udać zechcę.*** (Carroll 2015: 23)	*I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you: you must manage the best way you can; – but I must **be kind to them**,' thought Alice, **'or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go!*** (Carroll 2016: 22)
*„Dina zapewne **okrutnie będzie tęsknić** za mną dziś wieczorem – jak mogłam nie wziąć tego pod uwagę!"* (Carroll 2015: 15)	*'Dinah'll miss me **very much** to-night, I should think!'* (Carroll 2016: 14)
*„Wydostańmy się **tedy** na brzeg, a **zapoznam cię z mą przeszłością**, i nie będziesz się już dziwić, dlaczego aż tak **nie trawię** psów i kotów".* (Carroll 2015: 29)	*'Let us get to the shore, and then **I'll tell you my history**, and you'll understand why it is **I hate** cats and dogs.'* (Carroll 2016: 31)

The examples provided above convincingly demonstrate that the philosophy of language as presented in the second part of this paper has not been rendered in the translation produced by Wasowski (2015), in particular with regard to the 'speculative' nature of language. Following Sołtysiak's arguments (2004: 95-98), one can claim that because Wonderland is constituted linguistically, language is the medium through which the reality unfolds; however, the medium is, to some degree, 'invisible', and thus it hides beneath that which it reflects itself. The relative invisibility of the linguistic medium is, paradoxically, pronounced in the source text where Carroll employs so-called standard English and writes in a clear and homogeneous style. By 'hiding' language, which in the target version is manifested in the disruption of the harmony of style, Wasowski brings the strange reality of Wonderland out, making it possible for readers to differentiate between the two worlds depicted in the novel. At this point, however, one could assert that the 'speculative' nature of language also applies to how the reality is interpreted by a reader, or by an interpreter and a translator. On the other hand, though, the way things are presented in language is not an "outer" activity but the unfolding of the 'thing' itself (*ibid*: 95). Wonderland and language, then, form a speculative unity, which means that words do not reflect a given being so that it is possible to contain the being in the words, but they assume a particular attitude towards the whole being, allowing it to speak (*ibid*: 96). Thus, words in Wonderland might be considered to function only because of what is conveyed *through* them. They exist only to dissolve in what has been said (see Gadamer 1965: 450). In the target text, though, it seems that words in Wonderland do not melt away in order to depict the fictitious world, but they gain a second existence. Wonderland in Wasowski's interpretation does not constitute a speculative unity of language and portrayed reality, and this leads, as a result, to the differentiation between the world depicted and the linguistic means employed by the translator. Words and phrases used in the target text do not reveal Carroll's Wonderland but rather a totally different world: a world of linguistic signs and infinite possibilities of language. In other words, Wasowski, in a way, failed "to capture the said within the context of unsaid" (Lawn, Keane 2011:136). For Carroll, by reducing the 'ornamental' aspects of language, he created a significant opportunity to "give meanings to the chain of meanings in the said" (*ibid*),

or, put differently, to generate an infinity of meanings. Wasowski, on the other hand, by exploiting the said to a greater extent than Carroll did, caused the gradual disappearance of the unsaid.

Language in the source and target texts performs markedly different roles. While in the source text language should rather be referred to as a specific set of senses (Bronk 1988: 315) *through* which contents are transmitted (also about the language itself), in the target text it assumes a more instrumental role and becomes the means by which its mere 'creative' possibilities are exploited. A provisional conclusion, then, is that Wasowski did not render the capacity of language to go beyond itself. In the target text, language does not exist to convey what is said *through* it, but rather presents itself as the most important component of the whole narration, as if it were a private individual language of the translator. It is not so much Wonderland but rather the translator that unfolds himself throughout the rendering—all the more so when the style of the translator is analysed, for example, on the basis of his afterword, in which all three dimensions of the disruption of the harmony of style can be readily identified. While in the source text language starkly and gradually reveals a quasi-fantastic reality in which the main protagonist finds herself, in the target text it is the language itself that is revealed, with all its possibilities and shortcomings, and of which almost a caricature is made.

Final remarks

This essay has discussed the extent to which the philosophical structure of language as presented in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been rendered in the latest Polish retranslation (Wasowski 2015). The main goal of this paper was also to assess whether Wasowski has managed to render the so-called English 'spirit' of the text and whether the actions undertaken have been conducted moderately, within particular linguistic limits, as the translator intended before he proceeded with the translation. Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that there are two utterly distinctive ontologies of language presented in the source and target texts. Despite the fact that Wasowski intended to render the English 'spirit' of the source text in the translation by means of the richness of the Polish language, it seems that his perception of the text was too narrow to successfully complete the task. In his afterword, Wasowski precisely explained the motives behind his decision to adopt a particular translation strategy, referring to his own rendering as an 'unfaithful translation.' While one, generally speaking, agrees with the translator's intention to translate the idea of a text and not its words, there is, however, a big controversy surrounding Wasowski's postulate that the 'spirit' of the source text should be rendered, among others, by means of a wide variety of Polish lexis (2015: 161). While a large number of excellent translation solutions have been supplied by Wasowski, at the same time it has to be underlined that he did not manage to show great moderation in his attempts, alternating between various incompatible styles and distorting the harmony which accurately defines the source text. Wasowski's apparent disregard for these principles should be altogether surprising given the fact that he himself claimed how important it is for a translator to stay within particular bounds of practice so that it is the author of the source text who plays the most decisive role in the whole process.

In a similar vein, one can hardly agree with Wasowski's statement that the richness of one's own imagination should keep pace with the richness of a language, with a picture frame and a picture being equally important (2015: 161). While it is undoubtedly true that both form/sense or content/style (see Hatim, Munday 2004: 10) should be carefully treated by a translator in any translation process, the question which arises here is whether, and to what extent, the form contributes to sense (*ibid*) in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. If one accepts that in this novel form and sense (or content/style) are, indeed, equally important (see considerations above regarding a quasi-fantastic convention and its realistic genesis), then Wasowski, despite aiming for such a unity, did not manage to achieve it. Paraphrasing Stolze (2003: 296), it might be concluded that Wasowski unnecessarily prioritized one component, i.e. a wide variety of Polish vocabulary, thus leading to the narrowing of the so-called "truth of the text." While it is not possible to encompass in a translation all potential perspectives defining a source text, the crucial point is to retain overall responsibility and remember that a translator's task is, first and foremost, to act as a mediator and *co-author* rather than *a second author* (see Stolze 2003: 207-224). Finally, it seems that the target text is lacking in a necessary "oversummativity" and "multiperspectivity", a set of manifold narrative perspectives which have to overlap each other (for more see Paepcke 1986a). In the case of this novel, the perspectives might include: a quasi-fantastic convention with a realistic genesis, ontology of language manifested in a wide array of relationships between man and language, stylistic conventions, ideological factors (the Victorian period and the issues of education) or *ontological parallelism*, to mention but a few.

Let us concentrate on the final element among those mentioned above. While the notion of equivalence has fulfilled a prominent role in translation theory, all too often it has been referred to as some sort of "equality" between two texts and closely entwined with an almost mathematical sameness. Wasowski's inclination towards producing an unfaithful translation, however, does not allow us to derive definite conclusions regarding the extent to which the two texts are equivalent. Besides, what seems interesting to note is that the discourse of sameness does not make sense in the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), because the relationship between text and translation is fiendishly complicated. What is more, the basis of the relationship is not equivalence but "parallelism in an opposition" (Paepcke 1986b; 144-149, after Bukowski 2012: 25). Hence, it seems reasonable to consider yet another type of relationship between the source and target texts, one which is not subject to the discourse of identity, namely, *ontological parallelism*.

Ontological parallelism should be understood as the use of such linguistic means, including syntactic structures, to balance the ideas contained within the source and target texts, with regard to the being(s) existing in the world depicted. In the case of the novel under question, the being filling the principal role is Wonderland, and it is this component that should capture the translator's meticulous attention. Wonderland, as a place of fantastic provenance, is immersed in conventions typical of the *real* world (Kozak 2000), the two dimensions aptly fitting each other. More significantly, Wonderland, as yet another type of language in itself, is parallel to the world from which Alice came. It acts as a mirror of certain conventions of the *real* world, in particular of linguistic

ones, *presenting and disclosing* rather than *reflecting or representing* (see Lawn, Keane 2011: 136). The meanings which are mirrored, however, are "never entirely uttered" (see Grondin 1995: 13). To recapitulate, Wasowski, by distorting the harmony of style and exploiting to a great degree the semantic potential of the Polish language, uttered, perhaps, too much, precluding, or limiting, the immense possibilities of a widely understood interpretation. In adhering to the uttered words themselves, the translator did not manage to reach "the dimension of the unsaid" (*ibid*). As a result, he managed neither to achieve *ontological parallelism* nor to render the 'spirit' of the English version of the novel, creating a vastly different world from the one which Carroll invented; a world in which comic effects predominate over the unfathomable mystery of the linguistic functioning of a human being.

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Time and History at the Crossroads of Polish Imaginary Genres. Krzysztof Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery* and Andrzej Pilipiuk's *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia*

Abstract. The present article is an attempt to examine the meaning of time and history in Polish steampunk and science fiction, where time-related concepts constitute the foundations of the genres. As it locates steampunk in a precise period of the 19th century, history determines its definition, regardless of the nationality of the author. What differs in the Polish variation of steampunk is the spatial, not temporal, frame, a modification clearly visible in Krzysztof Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery* (2016), where the Polish fight for independence is presented through the prism of the protagonist's journey across European countries. In science fiction, the determinant factor is time in time travel, as well as the historical perspective of the idea of progress. The presentation of Andrzej Pilipiuk's *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia* (2006) proves the importance of time in science fiction and points to the paradoxes which SF authors have to face. All in all, the examination of both novels shows the difference in the approach adopted by two 21st century Polish writers towards different, yet similar, concepts.

Key words: History, time, Krzysztof Piskorski, Andrzej Pilipiuk, Polish fantasy, steampunk, science-fiction.

Introduction

The flow of time, history and the prediction of the future constitute an important part of the narratives and world-building in fantasy, science-fiction and kindred genres. Concepts related to history are employed even by the representatives of fantasy and science fantasy, in which the question of time is not necessarily raised. Fantasy is typically set in an imaginary version of the Middle Ages. In other words, history serves as a source of inspiration for a construction of fantasy universes, such as the Continent from the stories about *The Witcher* (1993-1999) by Andrzej Sapkowski. In science fantasy, the scientific part may refer to a time machine which transports the characters to a magical land, as happens, for example, in *Witch World* (1963) by Andre Norton. Nevertheless, it is steam-

punk and science fiction which explore the notions of time and history in depth. Steampunk draws from history, or from 19th century history to be more precise, to tackle the topics of change and revolution, whereas science fiction is a means of interrogating progress and technological development, including time travel and its ensuing paradoxes. In the Polish variations of the said genres, clear examples of their close connections with history and time are provided by Krzysztof Piskorski in *Czterdzieści i cztery* (2016) and by Andrzej Pilipiuk in *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia* (2006). However, before embarking on the analysis of these particular relations in the above-mentioned novels, it is crucial to ponder upon the role of history and time within steampunk and science fiction in greater detail. Consequently, the examination of each text will be preceded by a short review of theory.

History in Steampunk

History is rooted in the very nature of steampunk literature. Definitions, even if dissonant, usually point to the given historical period which constitutes both the subject and the backdrop of the genre. The Victorian era, with its process of industrialization and social unrest, fuels steampunk and allows the literature to explore universal truths. K.W. Jeter, perceived as the originator of the name of the genre, called what later became steampunk Victorian fantasies (Mielke, LaHaie 2015: 243), which actually illustrates well the clash between the historical context of the genre and its imaginary side. The purpose of steampunk is to "explore the past, mainly the 19th century, by describing and researching the consequences of the alternative and hyperbolized process of industrial revolution[1]" (Lemann 2015: 133). Not only does steampunk refer to history, but it also reinvents it to pinpoint aspects that reflect the maladies of the present. The representatives of the genre need to be able to delve into history in order to manipulate it and to reshape meanings in ways that illuminate 21st century issues and dangers.

The phase of acquiring the necessary knowledge of the given period should be followed by the stage of picking and emphasising the elements which could easily undergo this transformation process. The re-shaping of the selected aspects of 19th century history becomes an intrusion of the imagination and an interpretation of the influence history exercises on the subsequent periods. In effect, steampunk authors combine "...what is known and what is strange" (Mielke, LaHaie 2015: 244) to see the past in the new light and draw fresh conclusions about the potential direction in which the present is moving. The adoption of a new perspective is possible thanks to the rebellious character of steampunk literature. The approach becomes visible in another definitional attempt to explain what the genre represents, which would be "past technologies (steam) […] that govern alternative settings […] in order to critique and/or rebel (punk) against social, political, and cultural ideologies of the past, the present, and the future" (Mielke, LaHaie 2015: 244). On the one hand, industrial development, by deeply impacting upon society, plays a crucial role in the steam-

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[1] "...eksploruje przeszłość, głównie wiek XIX, opisując i badając konsekwencje alternatywnego i zhiperbolizowanego w stosunku do rzeczywistego przebiegu rewolucji przemysłowej..." (all the translations of Polish sources are mine).

punk take on history, but these are all revolutionary turns and breakthroughs which allow for a contemporary commentary. On the other hand, the combination of history and attractive fantasy alternatives provides the reader with entertainment and may induce them to explore real history in order to be able to distinguish between a crafty illusion and facts. Yet, the critique makes the reader ponder upon the network of interconnections between the role of an individual and the collective, and on how particular decisions give rise to a certain course of history. Therefore, the reader is given an opportunity to deliberate further on the impact of the past upon the present.

By adopting the perspective based on a general historical reflection, it is possible to understand steampunk outside of the Victorian period. As a genre which transforms and embraces elements of diverse origin, it may be easily re-shaped to espouse the local context or at least a different one in comparison to the traditional take on the Victiorian era. Hence, authors use the poetics of stempunk and the 19th century setting, as well as the genre being prone to expressing rebellion against the social and political order to comment on the important events within their own culture. Polish steampunk has developed in a way which constitutes a realization of the said model, namely by referring to Polish history, parallel to the circumstances of the Victorian period. Natalia Lemann (2015: 136) points out that the Polish version of steampunk could be seen as an attempt to adapt what is global to the local context, or to Polish history and social conditions.

Lemann (2015: 136, 139) underlines the fact that the perspective changes as well: while the British occupy the position of a colonizer, the Polish face the fate of the colonized. It is so because Polish steampunk is centered upon the period of partitions, when the country was divided between and occupied by Austria, Prussia and Germany. Therefore, Polish authors explore the revolutionary character of steampunk literature and frequently focus on the 19th century national insurgences and Poland's fight for independence. Clearly, the historical core of steampunk becomes more political, and even the construction of surprising machines and inventions is determined by political choices. Moreover, Polish steampunk confronts different ideologies and approaches towards the invaders. As a result, the genre becomes, at least partially, a historical reflection on the juxtaposition of revolution and dialogue (Lemann 2015: 145). The above-mentioned aspects of Polish steampunk are visible in the most popular oeuvres by Krzysztof Piskorski and Andrzej W. Sawicki.

Apart from adapting the genre's tropes to a local context, the writers move steampunk literature aesthetics to a different culture as they wish to avoid its stagnation. The steampunk traits are often introduced into a story representing another related genre, for example fantasy, and, furthermore, embedded in a culture which constitutes a variation of an existing non-English and non-Victorian culture, or which has been entirely invented by the author. Jay Kristoff's *Stormdancer* (2012) delivers a good illustration of the former by incorporating steampunk tropes in an alternative fantasy Japan-like realm, whereas China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (2000) combines steampunk elements with a setting of an imaginary city, which could be associated with urban fantasy. In his creation, a reference to steampunk, as well as to other aesthetics, may also offer "a way of foregrounding possibilities for radical change" (Ganapathiraju 2012: 3), where such possibilities emphasize the potential of steampunk as a genre. Unfortunately, depriving steampunk of the histori-

cal focus limits its impact and reduces it to a form of diversification aimed at making the narrative more attractive to the reader, even if it proves the genre's susceptibility to hybridization, which means that steampunk elements can be easily inserted into the framework of other similar genres. In the context of Polish steampunk, the importance of history is visible, for example in the work of Krzysztof Piskorski, the pioneer of the Polish steampunk variation. His books also prove that in the Polish texts the fight for independence remains a pivotal concept.

Alternative Histories in *Czterdzieści i cztery*

Krzysztof Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery* is a 2016 steampunk-fantasy hybrid novel centered upon the adventures of a Polish spy, Eliza Żmijewska, and set within a frame of multiple alternative versions of Europe. The protagonist is haunted by a tumultuous past, including her participation in the 1830 November Uprising against Russia at the side of Emilia Plater, a captain of the Polish insurgent forces. The reader follows her steps when, fourteen years later, Eliza embarks on a dangerous mission to find and murder a British entrepreneur of Polish origins, Konrad Załuski. In order to complete her task, the protagonist attempts to travel to London by means of a teleport gate, whose copies have been installed in various points in Europe and aimed at connecting parallel realities. Because of numerous complications and hardships, Eliza journeys from London to revolutionary Paris and, subsequently, to Cracow at the time of the partition and Poland's submission to Austria, Russia and Prussia, which started in 1772 and ultimately lasted until the restoration of the country's sovereignty in 1918. During her trials and tribulations, Eliza faces internal moral conflicts, regarding personal and national loyalty, and is confronted with dangers as well as with the opportunities offered by the scientific discovery of alternative worlds. The introduction of parallel Europes permits the author to play with the concepts of time and history. Consequently, Piskorski draws abundantly on the traditions of science fiction, readily employs steampunk tropes, and refers to Slavic imagery by stitching the aforementioned elements together with the use of Polish history and culture.

The author introduces into the novel the most important steampunk tropes with virtuosity and ease. Indeed, Piskorski has experience in the creation of steampunk plots, as he demonstrated this particular ability prior to *Czterdzieści i* cztery. Natalia Lemann (2015: 138) points to his two-volume *Zadra* (2008) as the first undiluted Polish steampunk novel. The story presented in the books accurately illustrates the author's style, which moulds the narrative in *Czterdzieści i cztery* as well. In other words, Piskorski combines alternative European history with the real Polish endeavours of regaining independence and with the fantasy / SF concept of parallel realities, which manifests itself through the discovery of the New Europe, accessible via portals created with the use of ether technology. Moreover, the number of parallel realities is multiplied to infinity, where each can be accessed through the ether gates set in slightly different positions.

The multitude of alternative settings justifies all possible transformations of history as the reader knows it. Piskorski exploits history and reconfigures it to achieve a given goal, but remains respectful in reference to the actual turn of events in the real history of Poland and Europe. The approach towards the concept of the co-existence of universes within the world of the novel leads

to a self-aware, self-mocking ending. Condemned to a solitary existence away from the troubles of the country she used to know and fight for, the protagonist hides in the only timeline where she can avoid meeting Konrad Załuski. An enthusiastic young journalist pays her a visit to write an article about her remarkable story. Eliza shows him a book she was offered by the representatives of an insectoid nation, a gift which has ultimately saved her life. The insect-like people, thanks to her help in obtaining the ether technology, progressed greatly in an alternative timeline, devised a method of traveling in time and, consequently, came from the future in order to warn their friend. The book recounts all of Eliza's adventures and experiences, including the conversation with the journalist. By describing the image from the cover, the author suggests that the said book is in fact Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery*, which implies the existence of separate multiple timelines, including one for the author and one for the reader, and lends credence to the realities of the events presented in the novel. Piskorski's heroine comments on the origins of the book by saying it comes from a different, less civilized Europe with different time and history, hence the poor quality of paper and terrible language[2] (Piskorski 2016: 533). Furthermore, she stresses the problem of the unequal development of the parallel histories, thus delivering both a justification for the interactions between the timelines and an indication of how the multiverse functions.

Piskorski plays easily with the notions of time and history by interlacing various threads of divergent realities. But what references to the real history of Poland and Europe does the author use and in what way does he reshape them? Interestingly, *Czterdzieści i cztery* not only adopts steampunk aesthetics to make them match a different historical background and fit the Polish context, but also merges the elements of traditional steampunk set in the Victorian era with the local variation. The said adjustment is possible because the author makes Eliza reside for several weeks in London, where she encounters real historical figures and shows the reader around the steampunk version of the British capital. The boldest use of a real person from the history of British culture is connected to one of the missions the protagonist burdens herself with. Eliza searches for an encoded message regarding her task of assassinating Załuski, but in fact finds more than one. Curious as to what the nature of other conspiracies is, she deciphers the password and heads to the meeting of a secret organization. This particular thread of the story refers to the poets of the pre-Victorian movement. The first indication is the password itself, namely *Ozymandias*, meaning the title of the famous sonnet written by Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the greatest Romantic poets. Furthermore, Piskorski (2016: 134) pinpoints the character of the chapter and the part of the story by introducing into the text a translated citation from the sonnet.

However, steampunk authors do not limit their creation only to references, such as a well-known poem. The common tendency is to include a historical figure as an active character. As a result, in *Czterdzieści i cztery*, Eliza decrypts not only the title of Shelley's sonnet, but also meets one of the

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2 " ...nie wszystkie Europy żyją w jednym czasie. Istnieją nastawy, które prowadzą do miejsc, gdzie historia stoi na innym stopniu rozwoju. To książka z jednego z takich światów. Z mniej cywilizowanej epoki. Stąd, proszę wybaczyć, fatalny papier. I naprawdę okropny język".

other representatives of the movement in person, namely George Gordon, Lord Byron. In Piskorski's version (2016: 134), Byron, as a wheelchair-bound invalid, occupies the position of a leader of a secret association operating against the ether technology, which allegedly causes terrible mutations. Eliza, an amateur poet herself, is both thrilled to meet a living legend and overwhelmed by the discovery of the association (Piskorski 2016: 133). Nevertheless, references to Shelley and Byron, both advocates of freedom and justice in real history and in the anti-ether alternative presented in *Czterdzieści i cztery*, are accompanied by others as well. At the beginning of the chapters or within the text, the author introduces citations from famous poems or transforms them in a way which suggests an alternative provenance, with the applicable annotation regarding the implemented changes. Among the authors Piskorski (2016: 102, 109) refers to are, for example, William Wordsworth and William Blake. The first instance is used in order to create the atmosphere of early 19th century England and to portray Eliza as an educated woman and a poetry enthusiast. Inspired by an encounter with a poor boy, she is attempting to write a poem about his misfortune when she remembers a similar poem by Wordsworth, namely *We Are Seven* (1798). Another citation from a poem, this time *London* (1794) by William Blake, introduces a new chapter. Since it presents the adventures the protagonist is to have in the British capital, Blake's poetic description of the city, bleak and oppressive, prepares the reader for what is to enfold in the later part of the chapter and it grounds the narrative in the period.

Piskorski refers to historical figures, mainly to artists and poets, but also to politicians and rulers, in the Polish context as well. In the afterword, the author (2016: 539-547) draws attention to the fact that he has used numerous references to Polish history and culture, and would like to encourage readers to learn more about the characters who really existed and events which became a source of inspiration for the story presented in the novel. Therefore, English Romanticism is balanced with examples of Polish Romanticism, with the introduction of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and their literary work. The author even underlines the contact between Adam Mickiewicz and Lord Byron: "Eliza knew that George Byron was corresponding with Adam Mickiewicz, who had translated many of his works into Polish. Apparently, Adam, like Juliusz Słowacki, played a game of his own"[3] (Piskorski 2016: 136). Both Słowacki and Mickiewicz are presented not only as great poets, but also as conspirators in the Polish fight for independence. Piskorski uses them as characters whom Eliza actually meets and, furthermore, their poems serve as a commentary to and a background of the story. Słowacki assigns Eliza to assassinate Konrad Załuski and, in the time of riots, offers her shelter: "...Eliza wondered whether among peaceful, rich bourgeois, far from the rumble of gunshots, it was easy for him to write about the philosophy of genesis, bloody revolutions and Zeitgeist"[4] (Piskorski 2016: 374). Thus, the author alludes to Słowacki's real work and philosophy.

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3 "Eliza wiedziała, że George Byron korespondował z Adamem Mickiewiczem, który przełożył na polski wiele jego dzieł. Widocznie Adam, podobnie jak Juliusz Słowacki, prowadził jakąś własną grę".

4 " ...Eliza zastanowiła się, czy między spokojnymi, bogatymi mieszczanami, daleko od huczących wystrzałów, łatwo było mu pisać o genezyjskiej filozofii, krwawych rewolucjach i Duchu Dziejów".

The protagonist encounters Adam Mickiewicz in Cracow, when she desperately searches for Załuski. To lend weight to the character, the author refers to Mickiewicz's poems. Eliza has written a letter to the master poet in order to enumerate all the historical imprecisions he committed in *Śmierć pułkownika* (1837), a poem about the November Uprising leader, Emilia Plater (Piskorski 2016: 476, Dzieje.pl 2017: online). The author (2016: 260-261) cites the poem earlier in the novel as a reminder of the events that obsess Eliza. In the prologue of the story the reader learns that Eliza fought in the November Uprising at the side of Emilia Plater, her dear friend and role model. The uprising takes place a year later than in reality, probably to justify the fantasy and steampunk modifications to historical events. In the alternative version, the forces led by Plater are massacred by otherworldy creatures controlled by Russians, whereas Eliza leaves her friend to die. In reality, Emilia Plater fell ill during the insurgence and died despite the treatment she had received (Dzieje. pl 2017: online). What is interesting is that Piskorski transforms the poems, Mickiewicz's *Śmierć pułkownika* and Słowacki's *Oda do wolności* (1830) (2016: 154), to stress the fact that various time-lines exist and to adapt the historical poetry to the requirements of the steampunk world. Nevertheless, he does not interfere with the citation from *Dziady Part III* (1832), from which comes the title of the book (Piskorski 2016: 499).

Time in Science-fiction

As steampunk merges often with other genres, it can also be coupled with science fiction. Such a combination allows for an exposition of both time and history. It is visible in the opening volume of Mark Hodder's book series *Burton and Swinburne*, entitled *The Strange Affair of Spring Heeled Jack*, where the eponymous character travels in time back to the England of the Victorian era and triggers an alternative course of events. In short, a science fiction concept, namely time travel, enables the author to create a steampunk archetypal story, with multiple references to the Industrial Revolution and historical figures, such as one of the favourite inventors of steampunk writers, Charles Babbage. The same pattern is employed in Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery*. It clearly shows the meaning of the time travel concept within the framework of the science fiction genre and beyond it.

If history is located at the heart of steampunk, time determines science fiction. Katarzyna Gadomska (2002: 22) claims that time is an obligatory component of every SF text, and the focus on time leads to the topic of time travel, whether it refers to the portrayal of future societies, i.e. a metaphorical excursion in time, or to the physical movement between moments in time, meaning the literal travelling on a given timeline or jumping between different timelines. Gadomska (2002: 23-24) provides a review of different methods of time travelling devised by numerous authors, not only of contemporary science fiction, but also of the pioneering or precursory work in the genre. Upon a short inspection, it is possible to conclude that the initial strategies were simple, for example, the excursion in time could be induced with the use of drugs. Nevertheless, the most common system of time travel in science fiction is a time machine, whose name and rules of functioning vary depending on the author's decision or imagination, and the actual technologies available at the time. The close description of such processes is, however, mostly tackled by the authors of hard

science fiction, which gives space for detailed scientific explanations, taken for granted in texts focused on the futuristic story rather than on the intricacies of technological speculations.

Before pondering the nature of time travel and its possible ramifications, Sara Bernstein (2015: 158) provides a simple definition of her study subject by claiming that "time travel occurs when an object or a person is relocated in time through means other than continuing to exist," which clearly alludes to the science fictional exploitation of time machines and other transportation methods. What is more, Bernstein analyzes different modes of time travel, lending focus more to time-consuming, lengthy time travel, where the characters involved have to experience a long journey, and merely mentioning for comparison purposes so-called instantaneous time travel, where the travellers relocate promptly to their destination in the next moment on the timeline.

Nonetheless, regardless of the variation of time travel, the sole notion of the physical change of location within time, being as much a futuristic as a philosophical question, nurtures science fiction. Time travel should be perceived as physical since it usually does not reverse the process of growing old or accelerate it, but literally relocates the protagonist within their lifespan. It results in "doubling" the character, creating the co-presence of both their young and old versions. Time travel may also be understood as a method of relocating the traveller beyond their life, to eras that would not be normally accessible to them, be it in the past or in the distant future. Whichever it is, time travel remains one of the core concepts of science fiction because it opens a path towards possibilities. The genre centers upon the possibilities presenting themselves at the present moment or in the future. Moreover, it concentrates on the repercussions of progress, mainly technological and scientific, but also social and emotional, whether the (d)evolution is observed starting back in the past or now. Time is needed in order to be able to examine the consequences of progress or regress and, hence, it constitutes both subject matter and the analytical tool of science fiction.

While discussing the nature of science fiction, researchers and academics tend to deliberate not only upon the concept of time travel, but also on the related paradoxes. David Lewis (1976: 145), while analysing the question of time travel from the philosophical point of view, observes that science fiction authors are frequently more interested in the effect of time travel than in the logic of a valid explanation of the process. The philosopher is, on the other hand, invested in examining the contradictions which emerge from the attempts to understand the concept of time travel. Therefore, Lewis (1976: 145) responds to the question of the meaning of time travel with the following words:

> Inevitably, it involves a discrepancy between time and time. Any traveler departs and then arrives at his destination [...]. But if he is a time traveler, the separation in time between departure and arrival does not equal the duration of his journey [...]. How can it be that the same two events, his departure and his arrival, are separated by two unequal amounts of time?

Apparently, an attempt to understand the process of time travel and its use within the framework of science fiction leads to the analysis of various paradoxes contradicting the logic of the concept. The problem of the lapse of time between the departure and arrival of the traveller, which

could be explained thanks to the theory of spatiotemporal dimensions, is only one of several time-related science fictional paradoxes. Lewis (1976: 148) delves into the grandfather paradox, connected with the question of changing the past, often the premise for many science fiction texts. On the one hand, the past has already happened, hence, it is impossible to manipulate it. But, on the other hand, a time traveller should be easily capable of doing anything that the other people met at the moment which the traveller has reached are capable of. Nonetheless, if he or she does something as radical as killing their grandfather, they may even cease to exist, if the grandfather has not yet fathered their parent. But if they no longer exist, they cannot travel in time and kill the grandfather in the first place.

A similar problem presents itself with the retro-suicide paradox, where the traveller can and at the same moment cannot kill their younger version because it would contradict the very possibility of time travel (Vranas 2009: 521-522). Clearly, playing with time is an ambitious task, which determines science fiction as a genre. The paradoxes are inscribed in the time manipulations and have become the subject of a science fiction story a number of times. Polish SF authors also tackle the question of time travel and the related repercussions, both in 'pure' science fiction and in hybrids. Naturally, the most acclaimed Polish SF writer, who explored the notion of time in his work, for example in *Return from the Stars* (1961), is Stanisław Lem. However, another example may be provided by Andrzej Pilipiuk, an author known for fantasy, science fiction and adventure stories.

Time Travel in *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia*

Krzysztof Piskorski enriches steampunk aesthetics with borrowings from other genres, whereas Andrzej Pilipiuk subordinates the adventure and thriller genres to the conventions of science fiction. His 2006 novel *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia* is an SF story which does not explore futuristic states and societies, but examines the past and its influence on later developments and progress. Despite the fact that the narrative sends the main characters into the past, and the major part of the narrative takes place in previous centuries, the author never allows his readers to forget about the science fictional provenance of the story, especially in reference to time travel, which made it possible for the characters to visit the past. The point of departure of the novel is a future very close to the year of its publication, namely 2012. Due to unfortunate decisions of the Polish president, Paweł Citko, terrorists take possession of secret nuclear missiles, of which no other European country is aware. Thus, World War III breaks out and, as the reader learns indirectly from the following chapters, provokes the annihilation of the majority of the population. In 2014, a group of young people are chosen to participate in a dangerous mission aimed at changing the tragic past of mankind and saving the world from the destruction of nuclear war. In order to succeed, they are to use the advanced technology of time travel. Therefore, they travel back to the end of the 19th century to find the president's ancestor and to inject him with a modified mumps virus, which causes sterility. However, the time travel technology being unstable, it may lead to changes in the plan, for example due to the mistakes in the calculations regarding the exact time and place of the destination. As

a result, one of the team's members is caught and interrogated, but the rescue requires one more jump in time, which takes the protagonists to the 17th century, thus leaving one colleague behind.

Pilipiuk combines contemporary references with science fictional descriptions of time travel technology and the related risks, as well as with the portrayal of different historical periods. The first part of the novel is focused upon the explanation of the specification of the mission. The students who have been chosen to accomplish the mission infer from the surroundings in the base where they are to complete their training that their employers have developed a time machine: "'So they have a time machine here,' the student mused. 'We prefer to call it a spatiotemporal communicator,' a commanding, however melodious, voice filled the room"[5] (Pilipiuk 2006: 29). With reference to the observations of Katarzyna Gadomska (2002: 24), time machines are provided with different names, yet the devices always work upon the movement on the timeline. In Pilipiuk's narrative, the concept of time travel and its paradoxes are closely examined.

The first paradox emerges at the beginning of the protagonists' visit to the training base, when they notice brass plates honouring those who have sacrificed their lives in the service of the mission. The names are followed by their date of birth in the 20th century and the date of death, often located much earlier in time: "Dr Michaił Kolcow 1976-1901, Dr Jan Przeździecki 1980-1901..." (Pilipiuk 2006: 27). This is a good illustration of the paradoxes indicated by David Lewis, as quoted earlier in the text, when he muses upon so-called personal time, or the time flow for a given person, i.e. the time traveller, and external time, meaning the general timeline of history (Lewis 1976: 146). On the one hand, because of the excursion in time effected by the deceased heroes, their personal time, or the time they actually lived, equals the period between their birth and the date of their departure in the time machine with the addition of the time they had spent in the past until the day they died. On the other hand, the external time should be perceived in this particular case as disturbed, because the date of death preceding the date of birth contradicts the rules of logic.

For the safety of the participants in the project, the instructors caution them about the dangers of the time travel process. In order to increase the chance of succeeding with the task, the protagonists also learn about the details of the procedure itself (Pilipiuk 2006: 52, 55). For instance, the instructor explains that during the jump in time 'a blister' of matter is isolated from the surrounding world and the traveller needs to fit inside of it for them to be transported to their destination point. Any additional matter elements that have not been embraced by the blister would be obliterated. The blister has been adjusted to match the normal direction of the time flow, which is crucial for the traveller's natural processes. If the flow of time was not in harmony with the human organism, the traveller's body would not be able to survive the journey. This is exactly what happens to certain materials, like metals, which are destroyed in the process and, hence, are included on the list of items that cannot be equipped during time travel.

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5 " – A więc oni mają tu wehikuł czasu – zadumał się student. – Wolimy nazwę „komunikator czasoprzestrzenny" – rozległ się za nimi melodyjny, acz władczy głos."

Nevertheless, the most important rule to remember is the one referring to the mass which can be relocated in time (Pilipiuk 2006: 51). Because of the consumed energy only seventy-five kilograms are allowed for transportation into the past and only seventy on the way back to the present moment. Any excess disintegrates or is disfigured to the extent of not being recognizable anymore. The rule is strictly connected with the explanation of the time travel process based on the analogy of a rubber band, where the rubber band stretched above the surface of the table symbolizes the present, and the table itself designates the past (Pilipiuk 2006: 65). To reach the past and to be able to return, the rubber band has to be weighed down. This is possible thanks to the use of a metal ball, which symbolizes the blister created by the time machine. The blister touches the table, or the past, which it refers to, yet it needs plenty of energy to make the return possible. The rules introduced to the story by Pilipiuk give order to the chaotic concept of time travel and help organize the narrative. Thanks to them, both readers and characters know what to expect from the experiment.

Having understood the process and risks that must be taken, the protagonists learn about the paradoxes. They discuss the grandfather paradox, the principle of non-interference, and the butterfly effect (Pilipiuk 2006: 80-83). The author provides an explanation of the grandfather paradox because in the novel it becomes a tool of completing the mission. The task is based on the assumption that the past can be changed and, therefore, the participants of the project are able to sterilize the president's ancestor, thus preventing the president from being born. Nicholas Smith (2016: online) claims that SF authors tend to introduce the figures of time guardians who control the travellers to preclude them from damaging the natural flow of time on the timeline. Pilipiuk incorporates in the novel the characters of the instructors, who warn the travellers and formulate the principle of non-interference. Hence, the protagonists must not rescue anyone in danger or interact with too many people, since even an apparently insignificant encounter may lead to a great change in history, which would influence the present moment and the future deeply. The so-called butterfly effect describes such a situation well. The analogy presents the assumption that if a butterfly flaps its wings, the gradual accumulation of wind disturbance will, in time, create a storm on the other hemisphere. If the participants of the project did not limit their interference to the past world, the negative effect would exceed the positive effect of their mission.

When the author finally sends the protagonists back in time, he never abandons the science fictional setup. History, along with the description of 19th and 17th century reality, becomes an element of the science fiction genre. In Piskorki's steampunk the setting, the background and a particular character impact upon the actions of the heroine. In Pilipiuk's SF thriller story, history constitutes a part of the time travel process. Distant and difficult to understand, the past is a stage which the protagonists need to reach in order to be able to influence the future and accomplish their goals. Nonetheless, even if history serves a slightly different purpose in science fiction than in steampunk, as shown in previous examples, the author describes historical realities diligently, for example in a scene when the characters reach the 17th century and observe the state of development of Warsaw (Pilipiuk 2006: 330-331).

Conclusions

The described examples and theory clearly prove that both history and time define steampunk and science fiction. Consequently, the importance of time-related concepts allow the representatives of these particular genres to borrow tropes from both in order to examine the question of time flow or history in the development of nations in numerous different aspects. 19th century history, i.e. the very subject matter of steampunk, provides the authors, such as Krzysztof Piskorski, with tools which help them in investigating the notions of historical change and revolution, especially visible in the Polish, insurgence-focused version of steampunk. Surprisingly, the approach towards time and history in science fiction is both similar and different to the one found in steampunk. As the example of Andrzej Pilipiuk's work shows, it is similar because the author is interested in the continuity of history and its impact on the later periods of time. The difference consists in manipulating time, for instance in time travel, in order to manipulate actively the influence the past has on the present and the future.

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Constructions of the Other in Polish Fantasy Literature

Abstract. Even though it often follows the heroic cycle of Campbell's monomyth, because it is exomimetic, fantasy literature lends itself to the presentation of characters who are set apart from society by their nature, not just by their heroic status. These are characters such as wizards, who in fantasy are often elevated from the position of secondary characters they held in fairy tales to the stories' protagonists. This makes fantasy works a good vessel for a discussion of the problems of otherness. As the genre evolves, the presentation of the Other becomes more complex. In modern works they are often portrayed as the Other on multiple levels. As readers have become more accustomed to Tolkienian wizards, dwarves, or rangers set apart from human society, the protagonists of modern fantasy stories are often made the Other to their own in-groups. The article presents a number of such characters from selected modern Polish fantasy novels and short story cycles.

Key words: the Other, otherness, fantasy, Polish literature.

Introduction

The term Other can be used to indicate all possible differences between people, perceived as such in a given society, group, etc. (Zaniecki 1930: 173; Zamojska 2013: 192). According to Bauman (1991: 8), the notion of Otherness is crucial to the way in which societies establish categories of identity which are set up as dichotomies. Similarly, Okolie (2003: 2) stresses that social identities are relational as groups usually define themselves in relation to others: "(…)identity has little meaning without the "other". So, by defining itself a group defines others". This makes the Other necessary for creating group identity. Therefore, it is no wonder, as De Beauvoir (1974) observes, that the category of Otherness is as old as human consciousness and is a "fundamental category of human thought". As Kapuściński (2007: 36) points out, man needs another man, they seek the Other, they realize that they are unable to live without the Other.

On the other hand, the first meeting with the Other will be characterized by mistrust, uncertainty and fear. These are feelings and states that cannot be easily controlled. Although, as Kapuściński (2007: 16) argues, the Other can be perceived as an enemy and as a client, it is the circumstances that dictate whether people see a friend or a foe in one and the same person. The meeting with the Other is not simple and automatic but it involves will and effort not everyone is ready and willing to make (Kapuściński 2007: 25).

By its very nature, fantasy and SF literature, which is exomimetic (Trębicki 2009: 9), calls for a protagonist who stands out from society and is by some virtue exceptional. It is therefore understandable that the otherness of the hero has become something of a trope in this genre. Although Tolkien's (1994, 1999) hobbits begin, following the pattern of Campbell's monomyth (Winkler 2012), in a state of normality, as regular and even upstanding citizens, most of his other main characters are Others: Dwarves are the Others for both humans and hobbits, as are the elves, and the Wizards, who are singular beings set apart from the world of men. Aragorn, even though he is the heir to the throne of Gondor, as one of the Dúnedain rangers, is the Other to most of human society. And Bilbo and Frodo, as they become ring-bearers, are separated from their peers and in the end have to leave Middle Earth, as they are no longer a part of it. By not allowing them to resume a normal life, the Lord of the Rings breaks the cycle of the hero's journey, which Tolkien otherwise follows quite faithfully.

This pattern, where the protagonist either is the Other by virtue of an inborn talent or fate or becomes the Other as he answers the call to adventure, repeats itself in many other works of fiction. LeGuin's (1975) Ged/Sparrowhawk, Card's (1994) Ender, and, more recently, Rowling's (2004) Harry Potter, are all separated from both society and their peers, by their inborn talents and fates, while the latter two are also shown to be the Other (at least initially) for other social reasons (Ender as the third child in a two-child society, Harry Potter as an orphan). This can in part be seen as a response to the feeling of rejection which many young people experience at some point in life. As such, they are likely to identify with the protagonist, who feels the same way, and draw consolation from it, as the character's rejection by society turns out to be intertwined with their ultimate triumph against adversity. As the fantasy and SF genres develop, authors become aware of this trope and start applying it consciously, often twisting its details or using it as a commentary on the fate the Other in our society. Thus, the genres become "a vehicle for carrying deeper meanings, often concerning matters of ultimate importance (Adamiak 2015: 189)"[1].

This article discusses the construction of the Other in a number of modern Polish fantasy and SF novels and short story cycles. Three of them are fantasy stories, two are set in an alternate modern world with supernatural elements, and the last two are nominally science fiction, set on distant planets, but with strong fantasy elements. The discussed titles are:

- *Tkacz Iluzji* by Ewa Białołęcka (1997)
- The *Wiedźmin*[2] cycle by Andrzej Sapkowski (1990 – 2000)
- *Arivald z Wybrzeża* by Jacek Piekara (1994, 2008)
- *Nocarz* by Magdalena Kozak (2015)

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1 Pol. "(…) może się ona stać wehikułem do przemycania głębszych treści, niekiedy dotyczących spraw najważniejszych". Authors' own translation.

2 Even if an English translation of a given work exists, we are preserving the original Polish titles for the sake of consistency. The professions of the characters will be translated where possible, but personal names will be preserved.

- *Załatwiaczka* by Milena Wójtowicz (2007)
- *Takeshi: Cień Śmierci* by Maja Lidia Kossakowska (2014)
- *Pan Lodowego Ogrodu* by Jarosław Grzędowicz (2005 – 2012)

Tkacz Iluzji – born Other

The protagonist of Ewa Białołęcka's short story is a boy named Kamyk, whose otherness is an integral part not only of his main story arc, but also of his entire life. He is the son of a saddler, orphaned at an early age and born deaf, but with the gift of creating magical illusions. Thus, his otherness begins at a very early age, making him a lonely child.

After his parents' death during an epidemic he is adopted by a mage named Płowy. Despite his foster father's efforts, he does not learn to speak, although he does master sign language. Kamyk's world is a collection of soundless images (Białołęcka 1997: 8) and so are the illusions he weaves: impeccable but silent reflections of reality. This separates him even from other "weavers of Illusion", mages such as him. As his foster father says, a deaf child with a magic gift is a cruel twist of fate (Białołęcka 1997: 7).

Płowy leads a simple and modest life, but Kamyk still has more toys, books, and better clothes than other village children. He does not have to work as hard as them and enjoys more freedom (Białoęcka 1997: 194). Other boys are constantly jealous of his privileged social position and make his life unbearable, which becomes another reason for his being the Other among children. Consequently, he prefers to be left alone, to be able to read books undisturbed, and the price he pays is that he has no friends.

With age, Kamyk becomes more and more aware of the gap between him and other people. He feels deeply hurt and increasingly rebellious (Białołęcka 1997: 9). Kamyk is also convinced that having a faulty talent means that he is only a piece of a mage (Pol. *kawałek maga*) (Białołęcka 1997: 13). It is this belief that his talent is broken, along with the feeling of being different, that push Kamyk to leave his foster father's home to look for help and shape his further life. He wanders the country searching for someone who would be able to either cure his hearing or replace it. For that purpose he seeks out the help of a Creator mage named Pływak, who tells him that there is always a price to pay if one is born with a powerful magic gift. Until he met Pływak, Kamyk thought of his talent as good, useful, and sometimes even profitable, but little more than entertainment (Białołęcka 1997: 21). However, during his stay at Pływak's he is reminded of the story of Biały Róg, the greatest Weaver of Illusion, whose talent took away his ability to walk (Białołęcka 1997: 26). To Kamyk's surprise, Pływak tells him that he is an even more talented mage than Biały Róg was. Unfortunately, because of the connection between Kamyk's talent and his disability, Pływak is unable to help him.

Kamyk finally finds help in the form of a young dragon known to him as the Devourer of Clouds. When they meet, the dragon attempts to scare Kamyk with his roar and fails for obvious reasons, which intrigues him, leading him to establish mental communication with the boy. Thanks to the dragon's mind powers Kamyk is for the first time able to hear through his new friend's ears. In

the end, thanks to this, Kamyk learns to add sound to his illusions. After he learns about Kamyk's powers, the dragon promises to stay with him, so that he can fix his talent. Thus, it is Kamyk's otherness that enables him to befriend the dragon.

Starting with Tolkien's Gandalf himself, a wizard's separation from society is a well-established trope in fantasy. It is also not uncommon for the protagonist to be additionally separated from his peers by exceptional power, talent, or expectation of greatness. Such is the fate of LeGuin's Sparrowhawk/Ged or Rowling's Harry Potter. What makes Kamyk distinct from these characters is his disability, which makes him an Other on a whole new level in both society at large and among magic users.

Wiedźmin – the professional Other

In creating the character of the Witcher[3] in his original short story "Wiedźmin", Andrzej Sapkowski (2000) deliberately distanced himself from the common fantasy and fairy tale hero tropes, and in doing so he almost inadvertently made his protagonist the Other. In Campbell's monomyth (Winkler 2012) the hero receives the call to adventure in a situation of normality and often initially refuses the call. By making his character a professional monster hunter, motivated by money rather than heroism, Sapkowski circumvents both of these steps. What is adventure to us is a situation of normality for his protagonist, and there is no refusal of the call – his character is ready and willing to perform the task if the money is right. This reverses many of the common tropes of the selfless hero and, by denying the protagonist any sort of normality, it makes him the Other.

In later stories, by making the witchers a rare and dying profession, Sapkowski isolates the character even from the traditional Others in fantasy, such as the wizards. However, his isolation allows the protagonist to interact more easily with the Others of society, both at the top of the social ladder (wizards, nobility) and at its bottom (the downtrodden elder races: the elves, the dryads, the dwarves). In fact, in the novel series Geralt's party of adventurers is almost exclusively made up of Others, such as the female warrior-archer Milva or the elder vampire Regis (Sapkowski 1996). Even the most normal of his friends, the bard Jaskier, is a man from the fringes of society.

Thus, the witcher series becomes a natural vessel for presenting the problems of otherness, which the author makes use of in many of his stories. For example, in "Pani Jeziora" Sapkowski (1999) shows a pogrom of non-human races in Rivia. More poignantly, in stories involving the non-human guerrillas known as the Scoia'tael, who wage a war against the oppressive human society (Sapkowski 1994, 1996), the author not only showcases the plight of the Other in society, but also comments on the blurry line between a partisan and a terrorist (before terrorism became a buzz topic). In the acclaimed short story "Mniejsze Zło"[4] (Sapkowski 1990), the ex-princess Renfri (who is a dark and twisted version of Sleeping Beauty) is both a (presumably) innocent victim of

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3 This translation of *wiedźmin* is used both in the English editions Sapokowski's books and in the highly acclaimed computer game of the same title.

4 The title translates to "The Lesser Evil", which is a reference to the moral dilemma in the story.

torture and persecution, and a heartless murdering monster. Torn between two evils, Geralt is in the end forced to kill Renfri and her band of brigands before they murder the whole town. The author tears down the key fantasy tropes. There is no good or evil, as everyone involved in Renfri's tragic story, including Renfri herself, is evil. All the hero can do is choose between evils, and in the end receives no prize or recognition.

Perhaps the most 'Other' character in all the witcher stories is the golden dragon Villentretenmerth, also known by the human name of Borch Trzy Kawki, who appears in one of Sapkowski's finest works, "Granica Możliwości". As the equivalent of a witcher among dragons, who are themselves a rare and solitary species, Villentretenmerth is one of the most 'Other' beings in the world. In a deliberate reversal of common fairy tale tropes, Sapkowski makes the poor cobbler and the common village folk the actual villains of the story, thus deepening the protagonists' isolation by showing that whether they win or lose there is no place for them in this society. And yet, the conclusion of the story is hopeful: with the help of Geralt and his companions the dragon triumphs and receives his prize (a chance to further his breed), the king learns valuable, if not particularly humane, lessons, and Geralt himself gets a chance to reconnect with the love of his life.

Differently to what is seen in the monomyth and its many iterations, the witcher's world does not seem to offer a way out for the Other – there is no return from the abyss to normality. At the end of "Chrzest Ognia" (Sapkowski 1996: 333) the witcher is knighted by the Queen of Rivia and Lyria, officially receiving his so far assumed name, Geralt of Rivia, for his somewhat accidental heroics at the battle for the Jaruga bridge. Just before he receives the name the witcher introduces himself, in a moment of bitter honesty, as Geralt of nowhere (Sapkowski 1996: 332), asserting his lack of a place in society, almost as a declaration of injustice. Ostensibly, the knighting gives him this place, but the author makes it very clear that it does not provide the protagonist with a sense of belonging. On the contrary, the irony of officially receiving an assumed name he had used for years is not lost on the character. It is as if by officially receiving the name he actually loses his assumed identity, along with whatever else previously guaranteed his sense of self, and is left with nothing.

Predictably, this brief and somewhat ironic attempt at integrating with the "normal" society ends rather quickly, as Geralt abandons his new lady to pursue the personal quest for his adopted daughter Ciri. Later, during their stay in the "fairy tale" duchy of Toussaint, the whole party seem to find their place there, but as time passes they become increasingly restless and finally leave to continue with Geralt on his quest (Sapkowski 1999). Once more denying the tropes of fantasy and the cycle of the hero's journey, the author shows that the Other has to remain the Other.

Arivald z Wybrzerza – the Other among the Other

Unlike Kamyk and Geralt, Jacek Piekara's Arivald z Wybrzerza is neither born nor brought up to be an outsider. Although he is a wizard when we meet him in Piekara's short stories, he has actually spent most of his career as a mercenary and a bard, only learning magic later in life. This has made him an exceptionally strong individual, but a rather inept mage. It seems that being self-taught at his age is an indication of unparalleled magical talent, but at the point of Arivald's

entry into the world of wizardry his skills are laughable. Part of the humour of one of his early adventures – "Sekrety Tajemnego Bractwa"[5] (Piekara 2008: 27-102) – is that his ineptitude and ignorance of protocol are taken by other wizards as a sign of power. These qualities make him the Other among his magic-wielding peers, who start their magical education early and at Arivald's age are significantly more skilled and knowledgeable than him. However, his lack of power is also what allows him to triumph where they could not, when he is able to avoid a number of powerful magical traps by simply refraining from using magic, which he is not sure he can perform correctly, and relying instead on his incredible physical strength and survival skills.

Unlike most wizards in fantasy, including the world described by Piekara, Arivald is also quite well integrated into the society of the small coastal principality he calls home. This is largely due to the fact that he is not a particularly powerful or imposing wizard. In fact, he actively tries to perpetuate this image, to avoid distancing himself from the princess' court. This is one of the plot points of "To, co najważniejsze" (Piekara 2008: 5-26). After successfully fending off an invasion of his homeland, Arivald finds himself separated from his companions at court by their newfound respect for him, even though his success is due to guile rather than magical prowess. In the end Arivald purposefully pretends to fumble a spell to re-establish his status as "just one of the guys".

His later adventures show Arivald as more powerful and learned, but his unusual background still gives him a distinct outlook on the world, frees him from many of the wizards' prejudices, and allows him to perform well in situations which might be challenging to his peers, such as in one of the darker stories in the series "Arivald i Wiedźmy" (Piekara 2008: 373-428), where he manages to get along with the wizards' traditional enemies, witches, or in "Ani Słowa Prawdy" (Piekara 2008: 315-372), where he is able to impress a dwarf with his physical strength and shows a deeper understanding of dwarven psychology than others would. Arivald breaks the common trope of fantasy by being the Other among his magic-wielding peers, but an accepted member of the society at large. Therefore, unlike Kamyk or Geralt, he is not a tragic figure.

Nocarz – the Other of the Other of the Other

Similarly to Arivald, Jerzy Arlecki does not start out as an Other. Although he is separated from his peers when he graduates from medical university, by not going into the medical profession but choosing to become a medical sales representative, this is hardly a radical choice. Neither is he particularly successful at selling drugs to medical professionals (Kozak 2015: 38) and he desperately needs a change from his dull and stifling life. Even though he manages to live a comfortable life, despite his mediocre successes, the feeling of being suffocated by his daily routines pushes Jerzy to accept a badly paid job offer with the Internal Security Agency (Pol. *Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*).

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5 The original title of the story was "Arival z Wybrzeża" (Piekara 1994), but was later changed for publication in book format (Piekara 2008)

Jerzy is surprised and does not really know why the Internal Security Agency wants him to join their ranks: he is not particularly fit, nor would his intelligence make him a Mensa member. This again shows him as an everyman character. He cannot think of any reason why the Agency wants him, other than that he is able to act both flexibly and consistently: features which might have been noticed by a professor he tried to sell medicine to, who put him in contact with the Agency. Little does he realise that he will be transformed into a vampire and become a member of an elite team fighting vampire renegades. Suddenly this everyman truly becomes the Other.

Contrary to his expectations, the vampires he is expected to work with are different from the ones depicted, among others, in urban legends and myths. They are the Others within the vampire community: they feed only on blood produced in laboratories, and protect humanity against other vampires. They are called *Nocarze*[6] and are bound by Law, not by blood.

However, Jerzy or, as he is now called, Vesper, becomes the Other among the Others. His initiation, i.e. his first kill, goes well but only up to a point. He comes into direct contact with the victims of a skirmish too quickly: the sight and smell of real blood appear before he is ready to experience them. In such circumstances a *Nocarz*, might be tempted to hunt for real blood and consequently fall in with the renegades. To Vesper's knowledge, however, none of them has ever done such a thing. From that time on he is constantly being watched by Nidor, a captain and second in command to the team leader, who is appointed a guardian for Vesper and burdened with the task of stopping him if the worst should happen. This is a task in which he ultimately fails, as Vesper joins the renegades.

As the Other, Jerzy/Vesper is a Chinese box character: his ordinary origins and problematic transformation set him apart from his comrades, who are themselves the Other for the vampire race, which is the Other for humanity. Unlike Arivald, his otherness among his peers does not help him connect with the broader society. It is perhaps this multi-level otherness and inability to connect that allow the renegades to manipulate him, and lead to his ultimate fall from grace.

Załatwiaczka – the unwilling Other

As a Polish student at Exeter University, Małgosia already starts out in the story as the Other. However, it is not a significant burden on her – being a foreigner does not affect her academic and social life, she has a good command of English, and even wins the university beauty pageant. The only thing she seems to find problematic is crossing the street: she never knows which way to look.

She truly becomes the Other when she inherits a house and a job from Miss Willoughby, who worked as a "fixer"[7]: a person who is able to provide people with anything they desire, as long as

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6 This is a neologism coined by the author, which derives from the Polish word for Night, and so would roughly translate to English as "Nighter".

7 The Polish word used here (and as the title of the book) is "załatwiaczka", which is a neologism created by the author and is derived from the word "załatwiać", which in Polish means to "get something done" or "obtain an item or service", usually through irregular means.

they make a wish using the phrase: "Załatw mi …" (Eng. "Get me…"). Małgosia is nice to Miss Willoughby and in return she receives a house and, unknowingly, the post of fixer attached to it. At first she gladly accepts the offer. She even feels as if she is Cinderella who has met her fairy godmother (Wójtowicz 2007: 13), although she quickly begins to have reservations.

Being a fixer comes with a number of benefits, as in order to be able to meet every possible demand of the clients, one becomes almost omnipotent. Fixers are practically immortal, since the Corporation they work for is not keen on losing its employees before their contracts terminate, and the moment a fixer is killed, they are resurrected almost instantly. Another advantage of the job is the possibility of meeting a variety of people and supernatural beings such as demons, banshees, wizards, etc. to make their clients' wishes come true. There are also no financial constraints on the fixer, and the Corporation makes its employees resistant to powers that could possess their minds (e.g. they cannot be manipulated by vampires). However, all this power and responsibility builds a barrier between the fixer and normal society. Furthermore, the moment one takes up the job one is snowed under with so many errands that social life becomes virtually impossible. This is what happens to Małgosia: her round-the-clock working hours and the fact that she can discuss her job only with people connected to the Corporation make her a recluse (Wójtowicz 2007: 35). Her roommates from the students' dormitory (where she continues to reside even after she inherits the house) start calling her: "the strange Polish girl" (Wójtowicz 2007: 317). She has no time to visit her family in Poland. She takes anti-sleep medication to be able to work non-stop. She becomes so consumed by her professional life that she does not even pay attention to her appearance anymore. She used to wear dresses and high-heeled shoes which, according to Phillip the vampire, requires a lot of self-determination in hilly Exeter (Wójtowicz 2007: 10). Now, she wears sneakers and baggy dungarees with huge pockets, where she keeps her notebook, with all the necessary business cards, phone numbers, addresses, etc. She is frequently tempted to cut her hair short or shave it off, but this would mean that her job has affected every possible aspect of her life and appearance. For that reason, Małgosia keeps her hair long and always dyed the same colour.

What distinguishes Małgosia from others in her profession is her desire not to isolate herself from the world, as most fixers do; as indeed Miss Willoughby had done, spending her life in the retreat of her living room managing her clients' requests on the phone. Even though she inherited a comfortable house, Małgosia still resides in the students' dormitory, because it gives her the illusion that there is more to her life than professional entanglements. She even tries to be romantically involved with Dominik, the boss of a commando of half-trolls employed by the Corporation to protect Małgosia from the unexpected consequences of her clients' demands and their unpredictable reactions to their dreams becoming a reality.

Małgosia also wants to find a way to terminate her contract as quickly as possible. The book ends with her determined to dig through tons of the Corporation's regulations to discover a clause that would free her from professional obligations. The source of her strength in the pursuit of freedom is her newly found love: a client who craved a new heart, which is now growing in his chest.

Takeshi – no way out of being the Other

When readers meet Takeshi, he is unsuccessfully trying to hide the fact that he is the Other. He is a talented artist and decorator, wandering the country looking for a job. One day, he is asked to paint a portrait of Haru, the mayor's daughter. Bored with posing for the painting and irritated by Takeshi's resistance to her charms, the girl tries to guess who the painter is. At first sight he seems plain and boring, taciturn, stooping and old, but when he is surprised by a sudden noise or flash of light he moves quickly and swiftly. His hands do not resemble the hands of a peasant or even an artist. He wears many layers of clothes and hides his face under the wide brim of his hat. To her amazement Haru discovers that her portraitist is the man who singlehandedly killed 15 armed thugs in a tavern fight. She immediately falls in love with him.

The men killed by Takeshi served Mariko, a bored and violent young woman who, impressed by Takeshi's swordsmanship, furious because he slaughtered her henchmen, and in dire need of excitement, challenges Takeshi to a duel. The duel, Mariko's death, and the need to protect Haru from Mariko's brother make Takeshi discard the persona of an artist. This is one of the moments when he feels free, faithful to his true calling (Kossakowska 2014: 241). Takeshi's inability to discard his otherness parallels that of the witcher (Sapkowski 1996, 1999).

The duel shapes the course of subsequent events in the novel and lets the reader discover the Otherness of Takeshi, who is an adept of the Order of Black Water (Pol. *Zakon Czarnej Wody*), a magical organization dedicated to training extremely dangerous, intelligent, and ruthless warriors, spies, and killers. The years of relentless training and numerous trials took away a part of Takeshi's humanity, as he is deprived of the simplest human reactions: he cannot scream in fear or pain, he never loses consciousness, and he is immune to the effects of painkillers and drugs; even the powerful Truth Serum would not be able to break his mental barriers. Similarly to the previously discussed characters (with the possible exception of Arivald), these great benefits come with a price, the price of becoming the Other.

Nevertheless, Takeshi retains a part of his humanity, thanks to his love for an adept of another order, named Fumiko. He dares to follow a path not planned by the masters, which makes him the Other even within the order (which he will later leave).

When the masters of the order unexpectedly switched sides and betrayed some of their men during a botched revolt against the shogun, many of the adepts left the order. They were relentlessly pursued and cruelly punished. Takeshi is one of the last surviving renegades, which adds yet another level to his alienation, both by barring him from the one place he could call home and by forcing him to continually avoid capture. This requires Takeshi to hide his otherness and blend in with society, whether he wants to or not: a task at which he is, as we have seen, unsuccessful.

A discussion of this tale must include an interesting exchange between Takeshi and Fumiko, who states that "A man must (…) belong somewhere, have rules and authority figures. Be a part of

a community. You want to decide everything on your own? By what right?"[8] (Kossakowska 2014: 288). By this statement she expresses a typically Confucian, collectivist point of view, while Takeshi, who sticks to his own personal sense of honour, represents a more western, individualist attitude. This is noteworthy, as the novel's setting is inspired by medieval Japan, but the book is written by a western author. The novel's setting lets the reader assume that the sentiments expressed by Fumiko are shared by most of the presented society, adding yet another reason for Takeshi to be the Other.

One more thing which separates Takeshi from others is his future, for he seems destined to perform great deeds and even save the world. He is, however, himself unaware of this destiny. Does it make him the Other if neither he nor the people around him are aware of this? If nothing else, it is yet another reason why he cannot stop being the Other, as fate itself seems to be against it.

Pan Lodowego Ogrodu – because he is the Other

The otherness of Vuko Drakkainen, also known as Ulf Nitj'sefni (which means the Night Wanderer in the local dialect), the main protagonist of Jarosław Grzędowicz's voluminous novel "Pan Lodowego Ogrodu" (Grzędowicz 2005-2012), is perhaps more obvious than in the other analysed books and, although Grzędowicz does not use it as a platform for discussing modern day problems, the author spells it out very clearly, especially at the beginning of the story (Grzędowicz 2005: 55-56).

The action of the novel is set on an Earth-like exoplanet, Midgaard, which makes Vuko Drakkainen an alien to the natives. He could hardly be more Other, even if he is no different in appearance from the human-like locals and speaks their language, especially since this is not a space opera and the natives are not a space-faring people accustomed to aliens. Furthermore, due to his training and biological modifications he has abilities far beyond the normal warriors of Midgaard. Although the need to remain incognito limits his use of Earth technology, at least some of his equipment is much better than what is available on Midgaard. As the story progresses Vuko loses his equipment and enhancements but develops the ability to wield what serves as magic on Midgaard (Grzędowicz 2007), replacing one form of otherness with another.

However, Vuko is not just the Other to the natives. Due to their training and biological enhancements, his whole team would stand out from most of humanity, and Vuko himself stands out from the team because he is, unlike them, a mere civilian, not a hard-as-nails special operations officer (Grzędowicz 2005: 10). In fact, his otherness is the reason why he is selected for the mission, when it turns out that only one person will be allowed to land on the planet. As his commander explains in a poignant scene at the start of the novel (Grzędowicz 2005: 55-56). He is the oldest on the team and therefore still remembers what it is like to be the only sentient species in the universe, much like the natives of Midgaard believe themselves to be. His mother is Polish, his father Finnish, and he grew up in Croatia; as his commander puts it: "Culture shock is an everyday

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8 Pol. "Człowiek musi (…) Przynależeć gdzieś, mieć zasady i autorytety. Być częścią wspólnoty. Chcesz o wszystkim decydować sam? Na jakiej podstawie?" (authors' own translation)

occurrence for you"[9] (Grzędowicz 2005: 56). Vuko is also a zealous individualist, who believes in moral law and common sense more than he does in the state and its laws. These qualities would make him unsuitable for the task if the whole team were to go, but if one person is to be sent, such qualities make Vuko the best candidate for the job. Or at least the least likely to die doing it.

Vuko, or Ulf, as he is known to the natives, does indeed manage to blend in with the locals, at least as well as can be expected under the circumstances. As his commander predicted, his unusual outlook on life, his otherness, is largely what allows him to achieve that. It seems that, regardless of his skills, enhancements and newfound powers, his attitude is essential to his survival. Vuko even expresses admiration for the simple yet honourable ways of the people of Midgaard, which are so different from Earth. He notes how his promise to Fjollsfinn, bound by his honour, is both different and more binding than a written contract on Earth (Grzędowicz 2012: chapter 4). He admires how Sylfana shakes off the shock of her brutal captivity, and how the pure simplicity of her attitude is a rare thing on Earth (Grzędowicz 2009: chapter 5). It seems that he is more suited for this more rugged civilisation than for his homeworld. Perhaps, in the end, he is more Ulf Nitj'sefni than Vuko Drakkainen. Despite being an alien interloper on Midgaard, he finds, like many outsiders in similar circumstances, both in mainstream fiction and in SF, that he is less the Other there than on his home planet.

Conclusions

The strongest common feature of all the presented characters is that they are the Other among the Others. Kamyk (Białołęcka 1997) is separated from other mages by his disability and unprecedented potential. Geralt the witcher (Sapkowski 1990-2000) is separated from his order mostly by his superb skills, but the rarity of his profession makes him stand out among other magic users. Unlike other wizards, Arivald (Piekara 1994, 2008) is a late-comer to the profession, with less magical prowess than them, but incredible physical strength, a different outlook, and an unusually friendly relation to the broader society. Vesper the *Nocarz* (Kozak 2015) starts out on a career path different from his colleagues, even before he becomes a vampire, and when he does he is both the Other to most vampires and to his vampire-hunting peers. Unlike most fixers, Małgosia (Wójtowicz 2007) does not embrace her new profession, and strives to preserve her link to humanity. In this, she is like Takeshi (Kossakowska 2014), who is furthermore considered a traitor by his order. Vuko Drakkainen (Grzędowicz 2005) is chosen for his mission precisely because he is the Other to his peers.

The other common motif in all of the discussed stories is the multi-dimensional nature of being the Other. All of the protagonists are the Other on a number of levels and for multiple reasons. Kamyk is a disabled mage of unparalleled power. Geralt the witcher is a mutant, a professional monster hunter, a man with no roots and no hopes for normality. As a wizard, Arivald would be the Other to most people, but due to his origins is also the Other to wizards. Vesper (Kozak 2015) is the Other to society as a vampire, the Other to vampires as a *Nocarz*, but also the Other to *No-*

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9 Pol. "Szok kulturowy to dla pana codzienność" (authors' own translation)

carze. Małgosia the fixer (Wójtowicz 2007) is a foreigner who gains supernatural powers, which she (unlike other fixers) wants to get rid of. Takeshi (Kossakowska 2014) is an almost superhuman warrior, but a traitor to his order, an individualist in a collectivist society, and a man destined for greatness. Vuko Drakkainen (Grzędowicz 2005) is an alien who has supernatural powers and is chosen for his mission because he is the Other to his own society and team on a number of levels.

As is common in fantasy literature, in all these works being the Other is a source or side effect of the protagonists' power. Be it Kamyk's magical talent, Takeshi's fighting prowess, or a fixer's network of connections, the power is what makes the heroes the Other, but it is also being the Other which gives them power. This is a well-established trope in fantasy – it applies to classics, such as Tolkien's Gandalf, and to numerous later works. However, for many of the characters presented in this article, their otherness with respect to their own group of Others is a source of additional strength. Kamyk's unparalleled talent is inextricably linked to his disability. Arivald overcomes many obstacles by falling back on the skills he obtained before he became a wizard. Vuko is chosen for his mission specifically because his otherness from his peers makes him particularly suited for it.

Modern Polish fantasy literature tackles the issues of otherness in a variety of ways. The discussion of the problem of the Other is sometimes straightforward, but often approached more subtly, through the lens of the protagonists' separation from society and their peers. This separation usually occurs on a number of levels simultaneously, creating a more complex image of the problem. The construction of the Other in the analysed works goes beyond the most frequent image of the Other as a member of a different nation/race/culture. Finally, as in many fantasy stories, otherness is connected to the protagonists' power, but in these stories they are also the Other to their own communities.

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Fairytale Fantasy, Secondary History, and Female Empowerment: Discovering the Many Dimensions of Anna Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo*

Abstract. The aim of the following paper is to examine Anna Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo*—a collection of short stories set in a fantastic world resembling Renaissance Italy. The paper will, first of all, present Brzezińska's work as being representative of the sub-genre of fairytale fantasy. Secondly, it will investigate how the interplay of history, religion, and magic developed in the collection affects the shape of Brzezińska's imaginary world. Thirdly, it will analyze the theme of female empowerment, which reappears in subsequent stories.

Key words: Anna Brzezińska, fairytale fantasy, secondary history, female empowerment.

Anna Brzezińska (b. 1971), a medievalist and writer of fantasy fiction, made her literary debut with the short story "A kochał ją, że strach," published in 1998, for which she soon received the Janusz A. Zajdel Award.[1] Her following works also quickly gained critical recognition, and Brzezińska was awarded the Zajdel for the novel *Żmijowa harfa* (2000)—the third volume in her series about the adventures of Twardokęsek, a bandit living in a quasi-medieval world—and another one for the short story "Wody głębokie jak niebo" (2004). Brzezińska later included that story in a collection which she also entitled *Wody głębokie jak niebo* (*Waters as Deep as the Sky*, 2005).[2] Set in a realm reminiscent of Renaissance Italy, the collection depicts the fate of heroes involved in

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[1] The Janusz A. Zajdel Award is an annual prize which the Polish fandom of science fiction and fantasy gives to the authors of the best novel and short story published in a given year.

[2] Unless indicated otherwise, the Polish titles are translated by the author of this paper.

the affairs of mages whose gradual rise and eventual downfall the stories loosely chronicle. The aim of this paper is, first of all, to present *Wody głębokie jak niebo* as a representative of the sub-genre of fairytale fantasy. Secondly, this paper will investigate how the interplay of history, religion, and magic developed in the collection affects the shape of Brzezińska's imaginary world (whose complexity and richness deserve critical attention). Finally, since the majority of the collection's protagonists are females who struggle to survive in a world dominated by men, the proposed analysis will also investigate the theme of female empowerment, which Brzezińska subtly develops throughout the volume.

Wody głębokie jak niebo as fairytale fantasy

According to Małgorzata Tkacz, Brzezińska's fiction represents two out of the three sub-genres which dominate in Polish fantasy literature, i.e. high fantasy and fairytale fantasy (2012: 18).[3] The stories collected in *Wody głębokie jak niebo* clearly exemplify the latter. Tkacz defines fairytale fantasy as a sub-genre operating with motifs and figures typical for fairy stories and folktales, depicting an often hostile secondary world, and relating dramatic events which seldom lead the protagonist to a happy ending (2012: 18). The borrowings from fairy stories and folktales are often significantly modified in comparison to the elements identified by Vladimir Propp[4] as characteristic of folktales; for instance, in fairytale fantasy the witch might be young and pretty rather than old and ugly, and the hero might not receive a just reward for his endeavors (Tkacz 2012: 112-114). By modifying well-known figures and motifs, Polish writers of fairytale fantasy intend to surprise, shock, or entertain the adult reader who is the assumed recipient of the story.[5] Also, only adult (or more knowledgeable) readers will be able to discover the inter-textual references which frequently appear in fairytale fantasy (Tkacz 2012: 12-124). Finally, Polish fairytale fantasy is also characterized by elements of humor and irony, as well as by scenes of or references to violence and sexuality (Tkacz 2012: 129). The seven stories comprising Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo* display all of the abovementioned traits.

Brzezińska never directly describes the imaginary world that serves as the setting of her tales. It is only because of the Italian-sounding names (e.g. Graziano, Bosco Nero, Porta d'Argento, Valle delle Lacrime) and brief glimpses of lofty, ornate structures that readers can eventually recognize the realm—simply called the Peninsula—as inspired by and reminiscent of Renaissance Italy. Brzezińska's world is permeated by magic: the realm is ruled by blue-eyed prince-mages who can enslave demons and lock them into various forms according to their own desires. Buildings and objects bound with a demon gain beauty and permanence, whereas people fused with these super-

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3 The third dominant category is historical fantasy (Tkacz 2012: 18).

4 See Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928; English translation available in 1958).

5 Of course, Polish fantasists are not alone in their attempts at transforming and retelling traditional fairy stories. For a note on British and American writers with a similar objective see Clute and Grant (1997: 332-333) and Stableford (2005: 141-143).

natural beings become completely obedient to the mage. Because demons dwell among the stars (where they can be traced only through meticulous calculations provided by maps of heaven), and are described with names such as choirs, cherubim, and seraphs (Brzezińska 2005: 28, 123), it can be concluded that they are, in fact, angelic beings whom mages summon and trap in the physical world (an act which the fictional church is, therefore, right to condemn). According to the rules governing Brzezińska's world, a mage can enslave and command a demon only three times. Afterwards, the being regains its freedom and can attack its former master. In Brzezińska's world only men are granted access to magic, and any woman trying to usurp their power is cruelly punished. Finally, apart from demons, the imaginary realm is inhabited by beasts and monsters (werewolves, gnomes, stregas and many more) that dwell in the wilderness and pose a constant threat to the human communities. All in all, the imaginary world crafted by Brzezińska is one in which the breathtaking beauty of the mages' work is overshadowed only by their cruelty and insatiable thirst for power. Living in such a world, the protagonists suffer and struggle to protect what they hold dear, all the while knowing that for all their efforts, they might never win against the magic-wielding rulers of the Peninsula.

It is necessary to briefly discuss the plot of all seven stories in order to demonstrate how they subvert the patterns of traditional fairy stories and to prepare a background for further analysis. The first story, "Życzenie" ("A Wish"), begins when young Graziano learns that long before his birth the village was threatened by a golden dragon. Eventually, one of the shepherds, aided by a princess kidnapped by the dragon, managed to kill the beast with a magic sword and was rewarded by the princess with a promise that he and his descendants would have a single wish fulfilled once in their lives. Graziano, ostracized by his village because he was born during the plague, discovers that he is one of those descendants. Thus, one day, unable to bear the harsh treatment any longer, the boy uses the dragon wish to liberate himself from his miserable life. As a result, his village is attacked by a group of mercenaries, and his parents are killed. Before he leaves his shattered community, Graziano learns that the tale about the dragon and the princess was never true. It was the princess who was the beast that, when defeated, cursed her slayer with the fatal promise of wishes fulfilled, since death and destruction always follow in the wake of a dragon wish. Graziano, who ultimately becomes a ruthless warrior, is doomed to suffer the consequences of his own desires. His fate is an implicit warning against naïve belief in fairy tales and their deceptive promises.

In "Róże dla Sirocco" ("Roses for Sirocco"), the eponymous daughter of a mage ruling the city of Brionia flees from Duilio di Monti Serpillini, who defeated her father and thus can claim all of his treasures. In the usual manner of fairy tales, the kind-hearted and well-mannered Sirocco is aided in her escape by people and animals. Yet eventually there is no place left to run. When Duilio finally approaches her, the girl learns that he has been following her not for the maps of heaven that she stole, but because he fell in love with her. To prove his feelings, he bestows on Sirocco his silver daggers (a symbol of his life and death) and she accepts. Their marital bliss lasts for years, until Duilio is challenged by a younger mage, Ercole. Yet it is not Ercole who ultimately

kills Duilio, but Sirocco. To prolong his own life, a mage can sacrifice his offspring. Recognizing that Duilio is gradually becoming a threat to their sons, Sirocco kills her husband to protect their love and their children. Afterwards, she commits suicide. While classic fairy stories usually end with a remark that the protagonists lived happily ever after, in Brzezińska's story even pure love is eventually overpowered by ambition, greed, and fear.

"Zaćmienie serca" ("The Eclipse of the Heart") is set in the city of Brionia, restored by Ercole after his victory. The protagonist, Arachne, is told by her mother that she and her brother (all blue-eyed) are descendants of one of Sirocco's exiled sons. Arachne's difficult, yet happy life changes drastically after both her brother and mother die. Alone in the world, the girl earns her living with embroidery and devotes herself to the pursuit of magic. She sacrifices years of work and even her virginity to buy several maps of heaven from a usurer, because her goal is to enslave a demon and kill Severo (Ercole's son). However, contrary to fairy stories, the rightful heir is unable to avenge her family and reclaim her heritage. Though thanks to Arachne's efforts Ercole falls in love with her, he binds the girl with a demon, so that she will never betray him. Thus, Brzezińska subverts the fairytale ending of a marriage between the prince and the oppressed female into a tragic finale, in which the protagonists forsake their chances of finding true love, because they are marred by their fears and hatred.

In "Jej cień" ("Her Shadow") a scribe documents the miraculous life of Luana—the prioress of a cloister established in the ruined Brionia after the death of Ercole and Arachne's last descendants. Though the scribe secretly hates the old woman for her affinity with magic, he believes that her story should be written down as a warning for future generations. The plotline, focusing on Luana and the scribe, is interwoven with the narrative that follows the events that led to the fall of Brionia. Diamante, the only son of Rocco di Brionia, is weak and unable to use magic, which is a tangible sign of the family's demise. Imprisoned by his father, the boy is visited by the ghost of Arachne, who—like the godmother figure of fairy tales—offers him consolation and protection. Young Luana is Diamante's cousin and fiancé. In the course of the story they are eventually forced to get married. But again there is no romantic happy ending for the prince and the princess: Diamante is accidentally killed by his father during the wedding feast, the city is destroyed by demons, and Luana—the sole survivor of the ensuing massacre—devotes herself to religion and celibacy.

"Filary Nieba" ("Pillars of Heaven") starts with a short note on how the Peninsula has been ravaged by wars and demons after the fall of Brionia. Only a few places, Valle delle Fiamme among them, remain relatively safe and prosperous. When the prince-mage of the valley dies in a tragic accident, his children—Nino and Fiametta—are taken captive by Igino, the new ruler. Nino, blinded by the mage, is sent to a monastery, whereas Fiametta, corrupted by Igino's power, becomes his wife. It is not until several years pass that the siblings are reunited. Fiametta comes to Nino's monastery to seek protection for her son, because, though blinded, her brother still possesses in-born powers which he unknowingly weaves into his hymns. Unable to make sense of Fiametta's and Igino's intrigues, Nino eventually confronts them, armed only in his faith in God and music. Standing on a holy bridge, the monk signs one of his hymns and asks for truth. In response to his prayer, a pillar of fire comes from the sky, and spares only the protagonist, leav-

ing him on a fragment of the ruined bridge, where he presumably remains for the rest of his life. Though it can be argued that Nino manages to avenge himself on Igino, his fate is far from a fairytale happy ending.

Because the previous stories repeatedly commented on the growing animosity between mages and the church, the friendship of master Benilde and fra Gioele presented in "Śmierć czarnoksiężnika" ("The Sorcerer's Death") is all the more surprising. Benilde and fra Gioele, two old men who find pleasure in their long disputes and currant wine, live in Askalon—a city ruined by years of domestic wars and currently threatened by an invasion from the Arimaspi, who are led by a man on a holy mission to eliminate all mages. When attacked, the citizens of Askalon want Benilde to surrender himself for their sake. But fra Gioele discovers that the old mage is already dead. In order to protect the city, fra Gioele approaches the leader of the Arimaspi as Askalon's mage. During their conversation, the monk learns that the leader is, in fact, also a mage who intends to enslave all demons in jars and throw them into the sea. Horrified by the man's cruelty and arrogance, fra Gioele manages to free the demons, for which he is later tortured and killed. Though the monk is no great warrior, by a twist of events his death brings about the destruction of the Arimaspi and their malevolent leader.

The last story in the collection, "Wody głębokie jak niebo" ("Waters as deep as the sky"), focuses on Sancha, a girl from a fishing village. Because the village is tormented by beasts and sea monsters, its inhabitants live in constant fear, which father Barnabo uses to sustain his control over them. One day, the village is visited by a storyteller (presumably a former mage). His stories shed more light on the nature of monsters and their relationship with Sancha's people, but it is not until it is too late that the girl understands the truth. Only after Sancha's friend, Bianco, is revealed to possess a third eye (for which he is crucified on the village's holy tree) does the girl realize that the islanders have mixed their blood with monsters for decades. Thus, in Brzezińska's story the boundaries between humanity and monstrosity are successfully blurred, and readers may suspect that ultimately Sancha will also fall prey to her village's hypocrisy.

When all seven stories are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the magical enchantment woven into Brzezińska's tales is balanced by ubiquitous violence, indifference to suffering, and threat of death. There is no "happily ever after" for the protagonists, and no reward for their efforts and perseverance. The orphans and the downtrodden do not achieve fame and success, and true love does not conquer all. Instead, generations come and go, splendor turns into ruin, the magnificent city of Brionia is destroyed and rebuilt only to be destroyed again, and even magic gradually but inevitably fades from the world. Though Brzezińska's imaginary realm is not altogether ominous and hostile,[6] the heroes cannot expect to be delivered from trouble by divine providence, and readers cannot hope that anyone will be spared from suffering and death. But it is

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6 While analyzing Brzezińska's other works, Tkacz notes that they contain no evil creatures, only dangerous ones, and that it is mostly people who are responsible for evil (2005: 182). The same can be said about the world depicted in *Wody głębokie jak niebo*: evil and grief have their source in people's desires and obsessions.

precisely because the protagonists live in such a world that their little acts of defiance and heroism are so dramatic and poignant.

The interplay of history, religion, and magic

Though every story features a different character, by depicting the fate of individuals from subsequent generations the seven tales form a loose chronicle of the Peninsula's history. Much of this chronicle follows the fate of Sirocco and Duilio's descendants, until their bloodline—like everything else in Brzezińska's world—comes to an end. Though the protagonists of every story deal with their private desires and misfortunes, their struggles are presented against the backdrop of historical transformations, among which the growing animosity between magic and religion (strongly resembling Christianity) has the greatest impact on the condition of the imaginary realm. Readers observe how the descendants of Sirocco and Duilio (named the Principi dell'Arazzo, because Arachne wove a grand tapestry which was supposed to protect the family) gradually gain and lose their power and status, till they are completely supplanted by the church and its servants who wish to liberate the Peninsula from the corruption of magic. The city of Brionia becomes a striking symbol of this shift in power. Once the greatest of cities, it is ultimately destroyed by demons and only an abbey is later built among the ruins. Unable to enslave demons or to cast great spells, mages eventually yield to the domination of the priests. If the old storyteller appearing in Brzezińska's last tale is truly a former mage as the text suggests, then his poverty, frailty, and meekness stand in bitter contrast to the pride, majesty, and audacity of his predecessors.

Depicting the fate of subsequent generations, Brzezińska managed to create an "organic" secondary world which changes and evolves together with the heroes. Consequently, her creation offers the reader an illusion of historical continuity. This continuity is perpetuated not only by references to certain figures and events from the past, but also by recurring items and phrases. For instance, white roses are a symbol which reappears on several occasions and becomes a thread that leads the reader from one narrative to another. These flowers appear for the first time in the story of Sirocco, when she tricks Ercole into sparing her people by having him promise that he will spare her roses. During the invasion, Sirocco gives a white rose to every man, woman and child, which guarantees them safe passage through Ercole's army. Afterwards, white roses become associated with Sirocco, and Brzezińska uses them in an indirect manner to identify her descendants. Arachne weaves white roses into her hair before attending a ball, during which she plans to challenge Severo. The prioress Luana cultivates white roses in her garden. Nino, the last descendant of Sirocco's line, cherishes a single rosebush growing in the little garden of his monastery (Brzezińska 2005: 237). What is more, the collection begins and ends with stories that feature child protagonists (Graziano and Sancha) who are mistreated by their villages and doomed by their own misinformed actions. And when Sancha begs the old storyteller for help by

saying: "Whatever I am, I am real" (Brzezińska 2005: 356),[7] her words are an echo of the words spoken centuries ago by Sirocco when she announced that the love and happiness shared by her and Duilio had been real (Brzezińska 2005: 61).

By discovering that the figures and events presented in every new story depend, in one way or another, on the previous tales, the reader gradually becomes immersed in the unstoppable flow of (fictional) time and gains intimate knowledge of the secondary world's past. Intimate, because while the inhabitants of Brzezińska's world distort their own history and transform it into myths, the reader is put into the position of an omniscient witness who is the only one to know and remember the truth about the past. For instance, subsequent generations remember the gentle and kind-hearted Sirocco as a malevolent strega (witch). Moreover, even her own descendants do not know that it was Sirocco who killed her husband, and they believe that after Duilio's fall she tried to fight with her husband's murderer. Thus, just three generations after their death, the truth about Sirocco and Duilio's fate is already lost. The same happens in the case of Arachne and Severo. While the official version of history claims that both died when they protected the Peninsula from an invasion, Diamante learns that it was the demon in Arachne who actually killed Severo, thus fulfilling the girl's initial wish. Nino's confrontation with his sister and her husband is remembered as a battle between a saint and a possessed woman protected by demons (Brzezińska 2005: 349). Fra Gioele, who defeated the Arimaspi invaders only because of a lucky coincidence, is later also hailed as a great saint, and his triumph continues to rekindle people's religiosity. Thus, Brzezińska indirectly presents history as a mixture of manipulations, exaggerations and wishful thinking, in which certain individuals are venerated and others condemned through no fault or merit of their own. Yet seldom are Brzezińska's heroes happy when they discover the truth about the past, because the truth is often less attractive than the fiction they have come to accept as fact. Faced with this relativism of fictional history, the reader is also left to wonder to what extent his/her own knowledge of the past can be questioned and potentially invalidated.

When public memory fails to account for the past, individual memory in the form of storytelling can become a defense mechanism against the process of forgetting. Yet in Brzezińska's world the stories passed between characters also present a distorted or only fragmentary version of the past, which always proves more harmful than helpful. Graziano (from "Życzenie") learns how dangerous it might be to put too much trust in a story. The tale about the dragon and the princess is eventually revealed to be a lie. It is not clear if Graziano's mother deliberately modified the story so as to forget about the tragedy which she caused when she used the dragon wish, or if she was also oblivious to the truth and only wanted to console her ostracized son with a tale in which he becomes someone important. Either way, because Graziano's knowledge of the past is distorted, he is doomed to repeat the mistakes of his predecessors, thus perpetuating his family's cycle of sin and grief. While Graziano is too dependent on a story, Rocco, from "Jej cień", disregards stories altogether, which also proves fatal. Readers learn that there are two legends pertaining to the tap-

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7 Translation mine.

estry woven by Arachne. According to the first one, Severo infused Arachne's work with demons, apparently to provide their family with everlasting protection. According to a different source, Arachne told her firstborn son that the tapestry contains the glory and the fall of the family, and should therefore be protected (Brzezińska 2005: 145). Rocco disregards both stories and foolishly destroys the tapestry to manifest his power, which results in his death and the destruction of Brionia. While Rocco does not heed the warnings offered by legends, Sancha and the villagers from "Wody głębokie jak niebo" are unable to perceive the truth about their monstrous heritage hidden in the tales of the old storyteller. This inability highlights not only their own ignorance and hypocrisy, but also the ineffectuality of storytelling as a means for preserving memories and instructing the younger generations.

To finish the analysis of the components comprising Brzezińska's imaginary world it is necessary to indicate the borrowings from the Old Testament and classical myths, which enrich the author's creation and add another layer to its secondary history. As far as biblical stories are concerned, three major elements of Brzezińska's tales seem to be indebted to this tradition: the trumpets used by the Arimaspi invaders to destroy cities, the pillar of fire which appears in response to Nino's prayer, and Nino's fate after he prays for help. In the Bible, seven trumpets were used to destroy the city of Jericho (Ferber 1999: 221), and a pillar of fire signified divine presence (Ryken et al. 1998: 646). If the elements present in Brzezińska's stories are read through the prism of biblical tradition, they unveil the spiritual dimension of the conflicts in which the heroes participate. As for Nino, who spends the rest of his life on a pillar left from a destroyed bridge, he is reminiscent of St Simeon the Stylite and other eastern ascetics who lived on top of pillars (Child and Colles 1971: 167). This analogy reinforces the image of Nino as a (fictional) saint.

As for classical myths, Brzezińska borrowed a handful of figures and motifs, which strengthen the connection between the secondary world and the ancient worlds of Italy (the Roman Empire) and Greece. Firstly, Arachne, who is a talented embroideress, is clearly named after the girl who faced Athena in a weaving contest and was later transformed into a spider (Ferber 1999: 198). Though the latter does not happen to Brzezińska's protagonist, the image of a spider does appear: Arachne's mother, Despina (whose name is derived from Despoina—the daughter of Poseidon and Demeter), is likened by her son to a spider that sits in dark corners and cares for nothing except her webs (Brzezińska 2005: 82). Secondly, the storyteller from "Wody głębokie jak niebo" tells Sancha about Skylla—a girl that was turned into a monster because she spurned a mage who was in love with her. This tale is a reworked version of Greek myths which feature the monstrous Scylla (Cotterell 2006: 32). Thirdly, when the prince-mage from "Filary nieba" dies, killed by a boar, his death is similar to that of Adonis, Aphrodite's beloved (Cotterell 2006: 19). In addition, when Luana is told by a demon that she will be safe as long as she follows him without opening her eyes, this warning is reminiscent of the conditions set on heroes who wish to emerge from the underworld, e.g. Orpheus, who is told not to look back at his beloved Eurydice (Cotterell 2006: 67).

Finally, it is worth noting that one of the tales recounted in "Wody głębokie jak niebo" is a reworked version of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844). Hawthorne's tale, set

in medieval Padua, revolves around the forbidden love between Giovanni and Beatrice. Beatrice, the eponymous character, lives in a garden created by her father. Because the garden contains poisonous plants (the most spectacular among them is a plant with purple flowers, which grows in the middle of the garden), after years of taking care of them the beautiful girl has also become poisonous. Rappaccini, blinded by his insatiable thirst for knowledge and his scientific ambitions, does not worry about the fate of his child. On the contrary, he secretly observes the development of Beatrice and Giovanni's relationship, treating it as yet another of his experiments. Needless to say, the love affair is terminated by Beatrice's untimely death.

In Brzezińska's version, the storyteller informs Sancha about the origins of dafnises. According to his tale, a long time ago a mage created beautiful and rare plants by combining ordinary vegetation with demons. His finest creation was a magnificent and lethally dangerous plant with purple flowers. One day, the mage's daughter, Dafne, was accidentally consumed by the demon in the plant, thus forever becoming a part of it (Brzezińska 2005: 343-346). Yet because the mage truly grieved for his lost child, he decided to forsake all of his work and magic. Brzezińska's tale is clearly a reworking of Hawthorne's story. Given her interest in the history and culture of Italy, it is not surprising that she found Hawthorne's work interesting and decided to incorporate it into her fictional Italy.

Female empowerment in a patriarchal world

Brzezińska's imaginary world is not a good place for women to live in. Wives and daughters are expected to obey their husbands and fathers. The man is commonly recognized as the head of his family, and the woman should therefore act according to his wishes. If she does not, the man is fully entitled to punish her—if a husband beats his wife, inhabitants of the Peninsula will not interfere, believing that she deserves her punishment. In the case of mages, no one will dare voice any objection to how a mage treats his wives and daughters, because they are viewed as his "property" (and because no one will dare oppose a mage in anything). This social belief of women as inferior and subordinate to men partly stems from the teachings of the fictional church, which claim that women are weak creatures prone to sin and demonic temptation (Brzezińska 2005: 31), hence they require external control and discipline. What is more, because women are so easily corrupted, they are not allowed to learn how to read and write, lest they should reach for forbidden knowledge, i.e. magic. Consequently, even though it is generally asserted that women do not possess any magical power, any woman caught reading a book or dabbling in magic will be sentenced to death (Brzezińska 2005: 121). Education and magic are viewed as an exclusively male domain.

Even so, Brzezińska's heroines are far from being weak and subservient to men.[8] On the contrary, Sirocco, Arachne, Luana, and Sancha are brave, clever, and independent women who are not afraid of disregarding social norms and expectations in the pursuit of their own goals—even if it means risking their lives. When her father is defeated, Sirocco takes his maps of heaven and flees

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8 Only one story, "Śmierć czarnoksiężnika", has no prominent female character.

from Duilio, eventually impressing him with her determination and perseverance. In Duilio, she finds a partner who respects her independence and her wishes (since he agrees to never rejuvenate her with his magic). Yet the woman is strong enough to sacrifice him for the sake of their children, and also clever enough to trick Ercole into sparing her people. Even long after her death, Ercole remembers her beauty and strength. Thus, though the men around her seem more powerful, it is Sirocco who actually has control over their hearts and minds. Similarly, Despina and Arachne are independent women who are able to earn their own living through embroidery. Despina also teaches her daughter how to read and write, thus offering her more power in a world that limits female education. The ability to read and write then becomes the means to Arachne's revenge on Severo: she diligently studies maps of heaven in search of a demon that she can enslave. Though in the end she does not manage to kill the man, she does manifest her freedom and independence, which—paired with her beauty—make Severo fall in love with her. To avoid demonic possession, in her final act of defiance Arachne throws herself into the fire. Luana also does not yield to her tormentors. Maltreated and threatened by her uncle, the girl still rebels against his orders, and this indirectly contributes to the man's downfall. She is then the only one to survive the destruction of Brionia. After years of solitary life in the ruins of the city, Luana—who was always very religious— becomes a prioress. Because of her kindness, charisma, and deep faith, after her death she is hailed as a saint. Even Sancha—who, as a poor peasant girl mistreated by others, is the least significant of Brzezińska's heroines—asserts her autonomy when she tries to rebel against her village's hypocrisy and injustice. Finally, it is worth adding that in two stories it is the female who serves as the antagonist: the dragon princess exacts her revenge on Graziano's family, and Fiametta tries to use her brother Nino as a pawn in the power-struggle with her husband. Still, it can be argued that these female antagonists are not motivated by inborn cruelty and malevolence, but by tragic circumstances: the princess was killed because she was betrayed by a man from Graziano's family, and Fiametta, initially fiercely protective of her brother, was "poisoned" by Igino's magic. Even so, both females have to be defeated, since they become a threat to innocent people.

Apart from allowing her heroines to demonstrate their independence and perseverance, Brzezińska empowers them in a literal sense: though the inhabitants of the Peninsula almost unanimously agree that women do not have any magical powers, Sirocco, Arachne, and Luana prove otherwise. These heroines do possess inborn magical skills, which they eventually use in an intuitive manner, because arcane knowledge and formal training are available only to men. Consequently, it is art that becomes an outlet for repressed female magic. Sirocco is a gifted musician, sensitive to the sounds of nature and voices of individual demons (Brzezińska 2005: 63). With her magic-infused music she is able to tame wild beasts (2005: 45), soothe demons (2005: 52), and even command them for a brief period of time. Ercole acknowledges her powers when he says that demons served her more willingly than they ever did him or Duilio (Brzezińska 2005: 62). Arachne's powers manifest themselves in her embroidery (which is a very feminine art). Initially, there is nothing supernatural about her works, as she obtained her skills through hard work. Yet when the girl begins her search for a demon, she creates several beautiful cloaks which she then exchanges

for maps of heaven. Devoted solely to her goal, Arachne fails to notice that embroidering and magic gradually become one: she unknowingly summons demons—each time a more powerful one—and imprisons them in the images embroidered on her cloaks. Even Severo is impressed by her work (Brzezińska 2005: 122). Luana is different from the previous characters, because faith, not art, becomes the embodiment of her innate strength. Yet like Sirocco and Arachne, the girl is aided by a demon even though she has never been trained to summon or enslave one. During the fall of Brionia, Luana is protected by a demon and given a precious pearl. With this pearl and her ardent faith she is capable of performing miracles, e.g. she purifies contaminated water. Finally, it should be mentioned that Nino, the last of Sirocco's line, also expresses his powers through art. Though Nino is a man, he is also deprived of access to formal training and he experiences repression (he is blinded by Igino and placed in a monastery). Lacking any other outlet, his inborn powers are channeled through music: Nino's religious hymns heal and console people in need, and at the end of the story protect the man from danger. By and large, if spells and rituals are unavailable, in Brzezińska's world art becomes the alternative medium for repressed magic. Arguably, it is not the male way of formalized rituals and detailed maps of heaven, but the female way of art and creativity that produces some of the greatest mages of the Peninsula.

Conclusions

Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo* is a unique work in the body of Polish fantasy fiction. First and foremost, within the confines of a single volume,[9] Brzezińska managed to construe a rich and believable world filled with palpable history and several allusions to myths and religion. Though some might diminish her achievement by arguing that creating a secondary world based on a historical period in the development of an existing country does not take that much creative effort, it is enough to remind them that other writers who use similar premises for their fiction have written several volumes and they have yet to achieve the complexity of Brzezińska's work (Jacek Piekara's series about the adventures of Mordimer Madderdin is a case in point). Secondly, not many Polish fantasists have chosen Renaissance Italy as a model for their secondary worlds. Thus, Brzezińska's creation is both original and refreshing. Thirdly, by subverting patterns and motifs typically encountered in fairy tales and combining them with intertextual references, her stories play with the reader's expectations. By the end of the volume the reader is sure of one thing alone: there is no happily ever after for the protagonists, as every action and decision comes at a high price. Moreover, with its subtle themes of female empowerment the volume avoids perpetuating the stereotypical images of women as damsels in distress and objects of romantic love so often appearing in fantasy fiction. Brzezińska's heroines manage to assert their independence and power without having to reject their femininity. Finally, it is also worth adding that Brzezińska's writing style abounds in lyrical metaphors which evoke a myriad of striking images. All in all,

9 The book is 356 pages long, which is not much considering fantasy fiction's propensity for extensive world-building and multi-volume series.

Wody głębokie jak niebo is a fine literary achievement for which Anna Brzezińska deserves to be acknowledged and praised as a skilful fantasist.

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Top Seven Polish Science Fiction Novels of the Communist Era (Lem aside)

Abstract. With the exception of Lem's works, Polish science fiction of the communist era is largely forgotten. Anglo-American readers know only fragments of Lem's literary work, and they know almost nothing about other Polish science fiction writers. The aim of this article is to familiarize Anglo-American audience with seven Polish science fiction novels written in the communist era: *Farther than Hatred* (*Dalej niż nienawiść*) by Wojciech Bieńko (1963); *Aspasia* (*Aspazja*) by Andrzej Ostoja-Owsiany (1958); *To Drain the Sea* (*Wyczerpać morze*) by Jan Dobraczyński (1961); *Arsenal* (*Arsenał*) by Marek Oramus (1985); *Paradisia* (*Paradyzja*) by Janusz A. Zajdel (1984); *The Robot* (*Robot*) by Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg (1977); *Imago* (*Imago*) by Wiktor Żwikiewicz (1985).

Key words: science fiction, novel, Polish, communist era.

Is there still a need for writing about Stanisław Lem's influence on Polish science fiction after World War II? Is that not peculiar and actually boring that every "the very best" list anybody could imagine is filled tightly and almost completely with Lem's works? And it does not matter whether we choose novels or short stories. Anglo-American readers know only fragments of his literary work, and they know almost nothing about other Polish science fiction writers.

Consequently, I think it is worth trying to delve into the shadow cast by Stanisław Lem, primarily because we (readers, critics, scholars, and writers) are no longer living under it. The nearest future will bring a wave of re-evaluation of the famous writer's oeuvre. It is already happening in reference to futurological and philosophical works. But, let us be fair, it happened, at least in Poland, from the beginning of Lem's aspiring efforts in that field, just after he had made them public. It is true that Lem did not compete with anybody, he was just trying—in his own awkward way—to establish a real dialogue with minds like Leszek Kołakowski's. Without a satisfying effect (Csicsery-Ronay 1964: 452). Far from it. Lem was genuinely disappointed.

And then, the crowd (mainly "fandom") famously crowned another king—Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg—by selecting his novel, *The Robot* (1973), as the best fantastic novel of the three post-war de-

cades in Poland. It was something new and quite fresh. *The Robot* was of course followed by several Lem's novels-"loosers". Perhaps, inevitably, it was quite "Lem-ish", on the wild side of the master.

And today? Today Stanisław Lem seems to be just another entry in contemporary literary history. He is defined by *Solaris*, *Cyberiad* and *Star Diaries*. Other works by Lem matter for academics and for young adult readers, who just put them on the "to read" list, on the far end of it. Actually, the throne was not taken by anyone. There were aspiring writers, of course: Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg in the '70s, Janusz A. Zajdel in the '80s. Yet the throne of the most influential, or even "the best", Polish SF writer remained empty, hidden in a cold dry place and covered in dust. But a radically new constellation of writers emerged in the 1990s. And it looks like one of them—Jacek Dukaj (Kozicka 2013: 109-112), the quite "Lem-ish" one—has been building his own "throne". Unlike Lem, though, he does like the science fiction? genre, mainly for its experimental nature and for the immersive world-building (Maj 2015: 391-391). Or, it is not a matter of such things as "thrones" or "podiums" anymore. Now, it is important to be in the center of the stream, to be non-stop present. The future-present orientation, characteristic of societies built on competition, prefers the promise of continuity to dwelling in the abstract past. Michael Kandel, a prolific translator of Lem's works, is now promoting a contemporary Polish writer Marek S. Huberath. It is important—and ironically enough—because still requires remembering Lem. Huberath's novel *Nest of Worlds* (*Gniazdo światów*) was published recently and the publication was recorded in the milieu (Huberath 2014). It received well deserved critical and readerly notice.

Let us come back to the earlier, shadowy landscape. The Soviet regime, communist cultural and social pressure, cold war, the Iron Curtain and the birth of the Solidarity movement defined forty years of Polish literature, 1949 to 1989. My generation—people born in the '70s—used to think it was a very long period of time, mainly because we spent our childhood within its last phase, but that is not quite right. Let us consider: 1989 happened almost 30 years ago. Many have yet to make full sense of that time, in a way that would allow them to move on with new energy. Many of us are still stuck in "eighties-haties", as Morrissey once called the decade[1]. Many of us completed literary and musical self-education in those colourful years, but got ready to be overwhelmed by something really, really big. The future was unclear, and the year 2000 almost a fairy-tale. We were just "a waiting generation". But we read a lot, and had stable preferences already "worked out".

My aim in this paper is to share my own view, perhaps nostalgic, and controversial in few cases, on those forty years when science fiction was not welcome in the Polish academia (Lem aside) and super-official literary institutions. My primary motivation is to unleash, discover the meaning of Polish science fiction with Lem "suspended". I gathered, in memory and on my table, all Polish SF novels I have read and remembered, and then took seven of them, which counted then and count now, albeit differently. These were the two conditions: the past future had to be worth reading in its own nostalgic way, or just "re-futured", read as science fiction as it would be written today.

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1 `http://urbandictionary.com` – haties [17.10.2017].

So, here come seven Polish communist era novels that should be, in my opinion, remembered,. Some of them are being forgotten in the very moment of writing this sentence. Just remember, most of them could be kicked out or down by Lem's novels, but not without discussion. And the discussion is everything I hope for.

7. Wojciech Bieńko: *Farther than Hatred* (*Dalej niż nienawiść*), 1963

Science fiction has been built by insiders, genre writers and genre fans. It evolved with them, got significantly better when they learned more and more about the genre's potential, its flaws and merits, until finally they reached a point of creative distance from the genre's center. But there were also outsiders, writers who had the comfort of looking from the mainstream, ignorance or the avant-garde. One of them, not specifically established as a writer, was Wojciech Bieńko. His not-so-famous novel reintroduces a discursive mode of fiction, so you can often "hear" the grinding between narration and the idea. The story of a mathematician discovering possible worlds and, through the process of discovery, turning them into real alternatives, is nevertheless still important.

The narration is awkward in itself, not very well balanced between the first-person and third-person poles, but the flaws are not meaningless here. On the contrary. They make the complete sense. Lem's futurological and xenological treatises are the nearest references. Bieńko and Lem were quite close to didactic narratives, but both of them resisted banal transparency. It is fiction in itself and science fiction for its own reasons. Bieńko's effort is not even close to Lem's in terms of literary value, but it is still comprehensive in terms of cosmic and existential semiotics (when signs reveal worlds). As science fiction it still matters. The plotting is quite fine sometimes, and sometimes it seems like pulp-driven boredom. Nothing is lost. Remember, as Samuel R. Delany wrote, science fiction is a "paraliterature" and should therefore be judged by its own criteria, as idiosyncratic fiction not fond of invasive mimetic reduction.

6. Andrzej Ostoja-Owsiany: *Aspasia* (*Aspazja*), 1958

This novel, though sometimes very rough in terms of style and rhetoric, offers an interesting view of colonialist wars. Mars has to be explored just because it is resistant to exploration. A pack of Earthmen of a subsequent rescue and exploration expedition meets a Martian intellect that is seductive, alien, and so natively safe at the same time. But the human urge for knowledge is destructive. Humanity is a Borg-like entity assimilating every otherness it meets. Martian bee-like aliens, organised in a swarm manner, are buried under a tone of proliferating theories, mirroring effects, ethical hesitancy, and indecisiveness. Ostoja-Owsiany took an exercise in depicting two models of the collective mind: extrovert humankind and introvert Martian pseudo-society. Both are stable in an illusionary way. Their main goal is to keep the illusion going.

Ostoja-Owsiany's novel cannot be counted among the best science fiction novels because of its mediocre character and plot building, but it remains interesting and quite ahead of its times as far as thematic concerns are taken into account. It predates a gender buzz combining it with the

now trending idea of the collective mind. If the reader is able to separate idea and narrative, it is a must-read.

5. Jan Dobraczyński: *To Drain the Sea* (*Wyczerpać morze*), 1961

Dobraczyński's novel, depicting the restoring of the Catholic Church after nuclear disaster, was translated into English, among few other languages. As an almost typical representative of the post-apocalyptical subgenre, it takes its chance to clarify the situation, and to introduce utopian-dystopian intellectual and moral dynamics. It is an obvious counterpoint to Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. If humankind (western civilization) is to survive and grow, it has to learn a lesson and rebuild its self-esteem and moral stability. The crisis stimulates personal activity and requires order and hierarchy of beliefs. The knowledge of the past must be gathered to test the re-ordering power of the extreme.

To Drain the Sea is a fine read and thorough testing exploration of values characteristic of Catholic societies. It could start quite a discussion, since it is controversial in a few cases, but—after all—what is not?

4. Marek Oramus: *Arsenal* (*Arsenał*), 1985

Oramus is a representative of the generation born just after the war. They came to their voice right before the Martial Law and strengthened their presence thanks to the dystopian subgenre accompanying the political transformations of the eighties. This sub-genre also articulated, on some level, the changes that were occurring. What is worth mentioning in the case of Oramus's novel is its vivid style, very natural, essentially satirical. The plot is not easy to recount. The novel is not a very easy read, because of the visual allegory and onirism mix projected onto traditional "first contact" plot, a tale of the totalitarian (and a bit messy) approach to the contact. Polish critics of the generation were fascinated by the turn from outer space to "innerspace", psychology and personal world-vision.

The novel is original, but also dominated by an attitude close to Lem's, who became a touchstone of dark humor and pessimism, perhaps even of misanthropy.

3. Janusz A. Zajdel: *Paradisia* (*Paradyzja*), 1984

Zajdel's novel belongs to the famous—at least in Poland—literary movement called "fantastyka socjologiczna", a subgenre of dystopia born in the late seventies. Very lively between 1979 and 1989, this sub-genre officially focused on universal frames of social behaviour in totalitarian states (Leś 2008). Most literary critics see the movement as a counterpoint to the rise of Solidarity ideas, contestation of communism, and finally—the fall of socialist economics. Being an allegory and a systematic analysis of repressive paradigms of power at the same time, "fantastyka socjologiczna" (Polish science fiction focused on social, totalitarian system issues) is full of indirect political allusions.

The most fascinating thing in the novel, when you read it today, could be the world: grey and colourful at the same time, plain and complicated, official and hidden. Zajdel was very precise in *Paradisia*. The relation of Earth to Paradisia, the great lie, propaganda, and fiction form almost a "fractal" narrative, where each element reflects others and entails them. Nothing is left out.

Paradisia is a complex analysis of transparency and opaqueness in politics, everyday life, and artificial humans in artificial worlds. Nikor, the fictional science fiction writer living on Paradisia, is very close to the truth. Zajdel's novel touches the very essence of fiction (including science fiction) writing. A complex, self-conscious vision, rich in allegory, irony, and metaphor. On the other end, the matter inevitably deteriorates. Things change because they exist. The rust gives hope.

2. Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg: *The Robot* (*Robot*), 1977

The story about the illusionary contact with an alien intellect and a robot seeking his identity is beautifully unbalanced and fiercely overdone. It has the kind of cognitive shock science fiction is meant to have.

This is the novel that was leading the pack of Lem's novels in the famous voting mentioned earlier in this paper. It was fresh then, clever and wild at the same time, characteristics that became a significant part of Lem's oeuvre, as visible in *Futurological Congress*. But there was also a difference or differences. Immersion. Identifying with a fictional character and the world he lives in, emotional reembodiment, whatever you call this phenomenon. While reading Lem's novels I was committed to the admiration of the author's intellect. And, when I project my feelings onto the chronological order of Lem's writings, things are getting worse and worse. The admiration became cold-hearted. *The Robot* required the same intellectual attitude, which every skeptic or every astute reader adopts on the high-brow level, mainly the belief that there is something out there we do not know about, and very limited faith (or strong doubt) in the effectiveness and authenticity of communication. In this particular case, this attitude was emotionally undermined. You can feel the struggle.

1. Wiktor Żwikiewicz: *Imago* (*Imago*), 1985

This was a writerly story fans did not really like. It is the thickest of all the books mentioned here, originally published in two (paperback) volumes. Żwikiewicz brilliantly refreshes and obscures the plotting pattern of exploration and confrontations with an alien point of view and being, but he does it in his own severely weird way. No summary can convey this weirdness, the complexity and overdose of metaphorical and tricky rhetoric. The reader takes it all, but never wins. The dense style connects living language, cognition, visions and known-unknown biology. The novel is a wonderful mix of crossword-like mysteries confronted with the reader's rejection of enigmatic world-building. It is an exercise in cross-genre imagination, an almost mystic or, at least, psychedelic one. It may be close to Lem's *Solaris*, but far weirder, extended, bravely deconstructed. A satisfying and memorable effort, and yes – hard to read. But, the reader's active patience mirrored by the protagonist's boredom should finally pay off.

Lem aside, Polish science fiction of the communist era is largely forgotten. Although not really competitive with the Anglo-American model of the genre, it does have its brighter (or actually darker, dystopian) side. As mentioned above, the choice of seven novels was a result of my own sentiments, but, sadly perhaps, there is not much more material to build another, totally different, list.

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