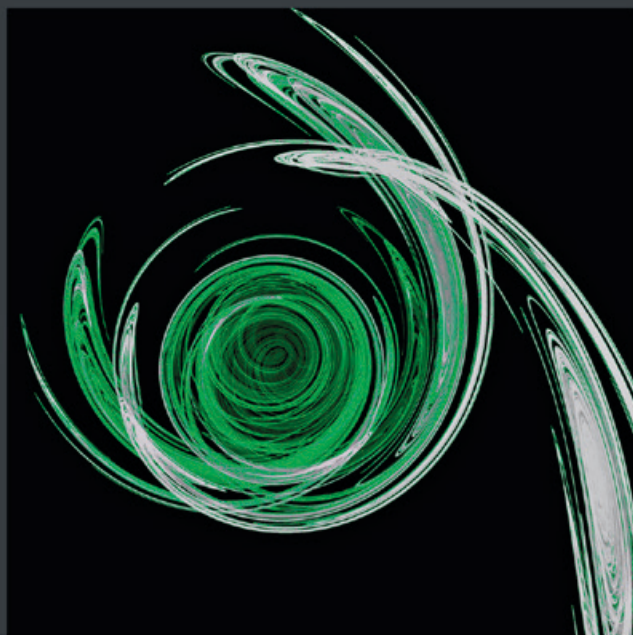


CROSS-ROADS. POLISH STUDIES IN CULTURE,  
LITERARY THEORY, AND HISTORY 23

Maryla Hopfinger

# Literature and Media

After 1989



PETER LANG

Maryla Hopfinger

## Literature and Media

This book discusses the direction of changes in contemporary culture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Poland on the example of mutual relationships between literature and the media, such as film, radio, TV and the Internet. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by the author combines literary and media studies with the perspectives of social communication, anthropology and sociology of culture.

The book focuses on topics such as reconfiguration of culture, expansion of the media, situation of literature and the central place of audio-visual parallels (auteur film, TV series, PC games). The author notes that both literature and the media are situated between art and communication today and both share the meta-cultural role of natural languages.

### The Author

Maryla Hopfinger is a theorist of culture, social communication and literature, and media expert. She is a professor in the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. She lectured at the University of Warsaw and in the Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

## Literature and Media

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Translated by Andrzej Wojtasik



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PETER LANG  




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*to Stefan Amsterdamski  
my husband and my closest friend  
with love*



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## From the author

I am interested in contemporary culture, the becoming, the direction of transformations, the mechanisms of continuity and change. A special insight into this problem can be provided by the observation of two areas of culture: literature and media.

Literature as the art of word has a very long tradition; from the invention of script, and later of print, it has taken the leading position not only on the Parnassus, but also in the entire culture, it has performed model-forming functions both for its readers and for other fields of culture.

Media – from film and radio to television and the Internet – illustrate well the mechanisms of transformation from silent film to audiovisual television, from analogue to digital techniques.

Mutual relations between literature and subsequent media create an important area of transformations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These are the issues I address in the first part of the book titled “Contemporary Cultural Context.” On the basis of the reconstruction of the current situation of literature and the media, I formulate questions about the change of the place of literature in culture, and I formulate a thesis on the reconfiguration of social communication and the entire culture. In the second part of the book titled “Varieties of Literature”, I analyse these consequences of changes on the platform of communication which leads to the emergence of new forms of literature – audial literature and electronic literature – and to transformations of printed literature. In the third part of the book titled “Audiovisual Parallels”, I discuss the most characteristic, as I think, examples of relations between literature and the media: auteur cinema, the closest to literature, narrations in TV series, and role-playing video games. These examples also show the development of contemporary audiovisual narratives.

Cinema used experiences and achievements of literature for its own cultural and artistic advancement. Literature, besides being a model for film, became a still-valid reference system and a repository of stories for television, and the latest media. Yet, at the same time literature infiltrates media, joins them, and changes itself thanks to their presence and impact. Cinema, imitating literature, would often become the Tenth Muse<sup>1</sup>. Television was mainly the domain of

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1 Ed. note: the Tenth Muse is a popular synonym of film in Poland due to the fact that Karol Irzykowski's book *X Muza. Zagadnienia estetyczne kina* (*The Tenth*

communication. Similarly, the Internet. Today, literature and media are situated between art and communication.

We move through these and other areas of culture thanks to language, which plays a metacultural role as a unique system enabling interpretive operations and the primary common platform allowing inter-semiotic translation. The thesis about the contemporary reconfiguration of social communication and the entire culture includes the suggestion of a new, common platform – the digital one – developing in front of us.

The contemporary reconfiguration had two phases. It began in the nineteenth century with the invention of photography and sound recordings. Its climax has been shaped by analogue media: sound film and television which have transformed the verbal type of culture into the audiovisual culture. The second phase of this audiovisual reconfiguration is associated with digitization processes. They form a new, common platform on which all previously known ways of expression meet and the new ones come into being.

Contemporary transformations of the entire culture are of a great importance and cause significant consequences. Braudel's perspective of *longue durée* suggests a comparison with the only such fundamental transformation that took place in the distant past and over many centuries caused the transition from orality to the culture of writing and then printing. The foundation of this change was the invention of the phonetic alphabet. The second phase of the current change is based on digitization. While working on this book, I was becoming aware of this direction of changes.

However, I am focusing on the twenty-year period that began after the 1989 breakthrough. I derive my empirical material mainly from these two decades. For us it was a time of great change. The launched mechanisms, the exposed processes provide arguments for the main point and at the same time illustrate our changes. Hence the title: *Literature and Media. After 1989*.

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*Muse: Aesthetic Problems of Cinema*) published for the first time in 1924 was the most important achievement of Polish film theory before World War II. Its following editions appeared after the war, establishing it a classic collection of essays on film in Poland.

## Post scriptum

I am honoured to be able to present this book to English-speaking readers. It was originally published eight years ago, yet my views on the changes of culture in Poland after the 1989 breakthrough have not changed since then. What has changed for the last three years, however, is the officially controlled style of culture. I did not foresee the dismantling of the democratic foundations of the political system and the drastic division of the communication platform into the faction associated with the Law and Justice Party, the Catholic church, using nationalistic and clerical rhetoric, and supporting authoritarian style of government on one hand and the faction supporting pluralistic, civic, pro-democratic, and pro-European positions on the other hand. At the same time, from today's perspective, the direction of changes in the whole culture persists and strengthens – we are still a part of global modernity. Thus today I would have removed the cautious question marks put in the Polish edition of the book where I was discussing a changing place of literature and the change of the entire culture.

The audiovisual analogue culture is becoming more and more a digital culture. The role of the Internet as an arena of cultural institutions and various dimensions of life – including literary life – has been confirmed and is increasing. The virtual and digital space is more and more interwoven with the real space. New technologies generate new phenomena (for example, streaming services) and new communication tools (for example, smartphones). The digital environment shapes its own communication patterns, and ways of distributing contents – assuming communication activity of the users. It is conducive to creation of printed literary works that benefit from the lessons learned from the Internet and use online platforms for their practices. In the Web, electronic literature – genuinely digital, and redefining the properties of signs and literary texts – has been created for thirty years. This form of literature, different from the print and audio form, became the object of thorough analyses of the researchers.

Printed literature not only changes its place on the shared communication platform where it coexists with other significant ways of expression. It also changes itself: from art to communication, from uniqueness to everyday life, from fiction to non-fiction, and from contemplative to performative reception. And on the publishing market, it still remains popular and takes up unevenly more space than its digital or audial form. What is more, the growing popularity of non-fiction literature means that “paper is back” and publishers are looking

for faster printing lines. Moreover, literary works that favoured the artistic ennoblement of many films and were the basis of numerous TV series, are now still chosen for adaptation by gigantic streaming platforms. The output of literature also today is an inspiration for the media. And the literature uses the media experience in its own peculiar way.

For me, literature and media after 1989 remain an area of intriguing questions<sup>2</sup>.

*Warsaw, Fall of 2018*

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2 Ed. note: Maryla Hopfinger's book was published in Poland in 2010. It is an original proposal to look at the relations of literature and media in Polish culture after the fall of communism, when Poland regained its independence and entered the path towards full democratization of social life. The volume can also be read as a testimony of the reception not only of Polish but also of foreign literature on the media, which has been translated into Polish, and shaped the discussion about the role of the media in Polish culture between 1989 and 2009.

## **Part one. Contemporary cultural context. After two decades**

The breakthrough events of 1989 opened to the Poles the path to freedom and democracy. Transformation of the political system, acceleration of processes of civilizational advance, as well as social and economic transformations triggered hopes and fostered delusions that led both to inevitable disillusionments and undisputed successes. The latter include the rapid growth of technological infrastructure and the development of higher education. The modernized technological infrastructure expanded and intensified the base and access to social communication, while the enlargement of educational institutions contributed to the increase of abilities of participants of culture. The achievements of the two decades after the 1989 breakthrough certainly did not meet many expectations. However, changes caused by the breakthrough have had enormous consequences for the entire culture and for its various domains, especially since the political transformation made it possible to remove barriers separating Poland from the rest of the world. The new opening, apart from the macroscale transformations, changed our way of experiencing culture.

I have always treated the category of culture as an integrative concept. In such a view, “culture” constitutes a comprehensive complex of areas, phenomena, practices and behaviours, aspects and dimensions, patterns and symbols. It connects everything what we call material culture and spiritual culture, individual culture and collective culture, mass culture and elite culture, high culture and low culture, humanistic culture and technical culture, symbolic culture and popular culture, traditional, as well as modern and postmodern culture. All these distinctions co-create our present day. This integrative approach has been chosen deliberately to let us avoid early assessment and selection of particular components/texts of culture. It allows to incorporate into culture anything that is meaningful for a given segment of society, what is considered valuable; only in such a constructed entity particular elements can become a subject of evaluation. Assessments and choices resulting from them establish hierarchies of values and decide on styles of culture, yet not on what can be considered a culture.

This integrative concept of culture refers to the tradition of classical anthropology that I have long been interested in: the classical European and American anthropology, in particular works of Franz Boas, James Frazer, Bronisław Malinowski, Edward Sapir, and Ruth Benedict. Anthropology, born of the desire to know and understand different cultures, became an important source of knowledge, but also of self-knowledge. In his essay *Looking for the Barbarians*, Leszek Kołakowski identified a specific feature of the European culture which was conducive to the rise of anthropology, namely the ability to self-challenge, to look at oneself through the eyes of others, to be interested in the others, and to be able to suspend one's own perspective of understanding the world while observing them<sup>3</sup>. In the twentieth century, anthropology turned the researchers' attention to foreign cultures and differently organized societies. It opened Europe to other continents, other social worlds, other repertoires, and hierarchies of values. It learned to overcome ethnocentric approaches, attitudes, and conventions of its own societies. As much as possible, it intentionally suspended its own perceptive, mental, moral, and aesthetic habits. It strived for a description and analysis based on a view free from normative, evaluating assumptions; it aspired to understanding deprived (if possible) of its own projections. Anthropologists, going beyond the circle of their own culture, were able to see patterns of the foreign culture and consciously reflect on its foundations and mechanisms of its functioning. At the same time, they realized the need to distance themselves from their own culture, and justified the adoption of an observer's attitude in their own society. It supported meta-reflection<sup>4</sup>.

At the same time, classical anthropological reflection emphasized the integral character of particular cultures, and consequently diagnosed their peculiar distinctiveness. It exposed cultural differences, and combined them with the concept of national societies. After two decades of opening our culture to the world, such an attitude, narrowing rather than broadening the view, seems absolutely insufficient. Problems and tensions caused by multiculturalism are becoming

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3 Leszek Kołakowski, *Looking for the Barbarians: The Illusions of Cultural Universalism*, in: idem, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, transl. Stefan Czerniawski, Wolfgang Freis, Agnieszka Kolakowska, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1990.

4 The importance of efforts of classical anthropologists seems to us more clearly when we remember about territorial conquests, and missions to "introduce civilization" and "evangelize pagans". After all, the European expansion was founded not only on the prospects of real material benefits but also on the conviction of the undisputed superiority of own culture. On the consequences of colonialism see: Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction*, New York: Columbia University Press 1998.



ours. Profound modification of the role of space, distance, and time; intensification of flows of information, patterns, and images; increasing human mobility; and real local consequences of global events – positive and negative alike: all these aspects have brought us closer to other cultures, and have transformed our aspirations and experiences. Opening to the world does not cancel differences and diversities, yet it extends and transforms cognitive horizons, and introduces new components and values. With them, new areas of conflict and tensions, new opportunities, and new threats invade our world. Elements of distant cultures now are mixed up like never before<sup>5</sup>.

Theoretical issues of classic anthropology have become real practical dilemmas for people living today. Various hierarchies of values turn out to be difficult to adjust, differences may be impossible to overcome, and they lead to fundamental conflicts. Sometimes it seems that instead of approximation of cultures we face their collision – especially if we recall images of the events of September 11, 2001, which in contemporary imagination became a symbol of a particularly extreme manifestation of the conflict of different hierarchies of values in today's globalized world<sup>6</sup>. For all these reasons, I think that the gained experiences and the lost illusions of classical anthropology turn out to be an indispensable reference system in thinking about the cultural contemporariness of the late twentieth and early twentieth century.

They also help in the problematization of situation of our own culture in the aftermath of the breakthrough events of 1989. The transformation of the political system made possible to articulate deep differences, and to establish pluralism as a permanent, though not easy, feature of this time. For over two decades after the breakthrough, in the period of building democracy, various options – followed by various repertoires and various hierarchies of values – would come to the fore and clash. The breakthrough disclosed many inner social diversities; experiences of classical anthropology allow us to see them not only as an obvious

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5 See, e.g.: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996; Gordon Mathews, *Global Culture/ Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*, London and New York: Routledge 2000; Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell 2009.

6 See: Jacek Amsterdamski, *Na oczach świata. Analiza społecznych wymiarów wybranych wydarzeń medialnych*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2004, nr 4; Maryla Hopfinger, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne: latarnia czarnoksiężska i obraz wydarzeń z 11 września 2001*, in: *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie. Analizy kulturowe*, eds. Ryszard Nycz, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska and Barbara Giza, Warsaw: SWPS Academica 2008.

implementation of the democratic postulate of pluralism, but also as a polarization of options being in a permanent conflict, and hampering the acceptance of a dialogue and a compromise, necessary for social life.

So how to study Polish culture that opened to the world after 1989? In the study of those highly complicated contemporary times, after Stefan Żółkiewski<sup>7</sup> I distinguish the category of *style of culture* and the category of *type of culture*. The category of style culture is a configuration of repertoires and hierarchies of values corresponding to the real system of social forces. It is dynamic, its components are subject to fluctuations, and they are more or less permanent. They can be and they are subject to disputes and arguments. This is how it has happened for two decades since memorable 1989. The category of style, rooted in the sphere of attitudes, views, and behaviours, is one of the basic means of problematization of culture in the Żółkiewski's concept, which, in my opinion, is extremely important. However, it is not the style of culture that is the main subject of this work.

I am focused mainly on issues related to the other category distinguished by Żółkiewski: the category of *type of culture*. It refers to technological infrastructure, to material facilities of culture permanently affecting participants of culture and the way they perceive the surrounding world. The types of cultures go through stages of development and transformations; they have their periods of climax, stagnation, and decline. Their cultural impact and results are subject to conflicting opinions and fierce debates. However, they cannot be socially negotiated, and directions of their transformations are caused by the force of cultural coercion: for example, there is little sense in persuading people not to use television or the Internet, although it is necessary to discuss how the media works and how they are used. Critical view on evolution of culture – that may result (and usually does result) from conservative beliefs and hierarchies of values – cannot change a dominant type of culture, albeit it is able to enforce prolonged existence of anachronistic styles. As examples of distant and closer past has proved, a dominant type of culture can be changed by new social practices, by conversions of human societies, and by factors related to technology and communication. In short, such a shift is caused by real transformations, and not by their

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7 Stefan Żółkiewski, *Wiedza o kulturze literackiej. Główne pojęcia*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna 1980; Idem, *Teksty kultury. Studia*, Warsaw: PWN 1988; see also: Maryla Hopfinger, *Stefan Żółkiewski – teoretyk kultury*, in: *Sporne postaci literatury współczesnej. Krytycy*, ed. Alina Brodzka-Wald, Tomasz Żukowski, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 2003.

interpretations, although the latter give meaning to changes, or at least participate in creating and maintaining preferred hierarchies of values. The mutual relations between much more stable *types of culture* and diverse and volatile *styles of culture* are complex and complicated, and they need to be analysed separately. It seems certain that the category of *type* integrates culture in the long run, while the category of *style* is associated with differentiation and changing preferences of values and their hierarchy.

How to describe the main tensions of contemporary *type* of culture? How to recognize the direction of changes?

My question refers to the areas selected for this purpose: literature and media. Literature represents a very well established domain of culture. History of media is completely different. Cinema, the oldest of them, celebrated its centenary not far ago, radio has been operating for over eighty years, television began in Poland a little over half a century ago, while PCs, the Internet, and mobile telephones have been in use for about twenty years. During this time, the material dimension of the entire platform of communication has developed and transformed thoroughly. Both “old” and “new” media have been clearly modernized, and social communication has been located in the centre of culture.

The audiovisual type of culture, emerging in the twentieth century in the paradigm of verbal culture, consisted in taking the leading position by social practices based on the joint registration and reproduction of visual and auditory dimensions of reality. In comparison with literature, the new narrative practices, which in the first place show demeanour of people in various life situations and contexts, change the ways of presenting a human being and his/her relationship with others, with the world of objects and with the world of nature. They reveal a complex syntax of behaviours and interactions. They give importance to aspects and areas that were unnoticed or underestimated. They redefine the anthropological situation approaching the fulfilment of human dreams of repeating and stopping reality. The audiovisual type of culture establishes its own criteria and hierarchies, principles, and preferences. It evokes anthropological effects shaping a new way of perception: the audiovisual one. In this type of culture, new techniques are constantly sought. Their task is to connect pictorial matter with verbal one, with sound, and with motion, which evoke and inhere reality. The character of audiovisual signs – including those intrinsically containing spoken or written words – differs fundamentally from the character of abstract, arbitrary linguistic signs present in verbal messages. A special relationship with reality, consolidated by similarity of representations and everyday experience, is the foundation of audiovisual messages, both the analogue (image and sound connected with photography) and the digital (coupled with simulation, but most

often, so far, also referring to the principle of similarity). Reading out the similarity merely initiates understanding of audiovisual texts, the sense of which is more complex because of semantic complexity of the present images-sounds, as well as because of various complications of narration.

The audiovisual type of culture developed and consolidated during the two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989. First of all, television, which [before 1989] used to offer only two channels [and had been a state-owned enterprise], became multi-channelled, and private stations could be established [in result of new legal regulations]. Satellite devices and cable TV networks allow access to the global offer. Program offer of the state-owned Polish Radio is complemented by nationwide, supra-regional, and local commercial stations. Audiovisual messages have become easily available; they can also be viewed individually on a variety of media. Before we became used to it, digital media and devices gradually began to oust analogue ones. First, PCs appeared in our homes and institutions, soon followed by multimedia computers. Internet connections [via telephone lines] are being replaced by broadband access and wireless technology. The use of digital media is constantly expanding, and their role in people's lives is growing. Not only can we watch audiovisual texts chosen by us, but also – thanks to digitalization – we are able to record and edit audiovisual materials without professional training. For a long time, literary works have also been created in other semantic milieus than writing and printing, namely in the audio milieu, and more recently in the electronic milieu. This is what I will try to take a closer look at.

I am also going to present selected audiovisual phenomena parallel to literature: auteur cinema, TV series, and computer games. In these examples, I am going to show how the type of culture and our experiences have recently changed. Although TV series and computer games are now in the course of ennoblement as texts of culture, I am convinced that the process will be carried out.

The law of continuity and change ruling the way cultures function expresses itself, among others, on the so-called platform of communication. This platform is a meeting point of all previous forms and means of human communication: media as well as old and new practices – face-to-face communication, press and radio, cinema and theatre, painting and music, literature and television, professional and amateur photography, analogue and digital photography, cartoons and postcards, sound records of different generations, stationary and mobile telephony, computers and the Internet. These and other new media and practices join the already existing ones on the platform, while the old ones do not disappear. The dominance of audiovisual messages does not exclude the functioning of formerly developed ways of expression, yet changes their place in the

new configuration and the functions they perform today. It is therefore impossible to claim that we are facing the break of communication experiences. The platform of communication is cumulative<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, the convergence takes place between various media<sup>9</sup>.

Transformations of communication affect the situation of literature – the art of word, which gains new carriers, enters new areas, and finds new recipients. However, in the opinion of critics of contemporary changes, the power of its influences and the range of its impact have decreased. What is the current place of literature in culture when using some of the new media and transforming itself thanks to them? What do audiovisual media (first analogue, now digital) bring, how do they change the existing platform of communication, and even the entire contemporary culture?

Shifts on the platform of communication concern, among others, fine arts, which occupied a high and unique position, and at the same time had a strong formative impact on newly emerging practices. For example, photography was initially intended to spread and disseminate reproduced artistic works, and then it imitated painting genres, such as portrait, landscape, and genre scenes; film, which from the beginning was intended to become the Tenth Muse, used the patterns of literary culture to construct and differentiate their statements and to understand the diverse needs of cinema audiences. Today, fine arts occupy a less prominent place, yet sometimes it happens that art is created also in new media and it follows the rules specific to such media – for example, artistic photography, phonographic works, auteur cinema<sup>10</sup>, radio dramas, and teleplays. The borders between art and non-art have been also shifted in strategies of artists, and in perception of critics and other participants of culture. Art, formerly considered to be particularly important for entire culture, now seems only a segment of culture, though an important one. It is social communication that has become

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8 See: Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press 2001.

9 See: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York and London: New York University Press 2006.

10 Ed. note: The concept of author's cinema played a special role in Polish culture before 1989. Auteur cinema was synonymous with film art, works reviewed and discussed in a special way, treated – in a sense – as the 'real' cinema, the only one that deserves serious reflection. The cinema of genres, popular films, were treated with reserve as not deserving of serious reflection, or to become the topic of academic research. That is why Maryla Hopfinger in her entire book refers first of all to films from auteur cinema, recognizing them as works deserving to be combined with literature.

the main domain of culture – especially thanks to the development of media in democratic environment. Social communication transcends the sphere of art, and mixes with everyday life, or is a part of it. It is not for the moment a “lower” or “worse” art. Art and communication have different assumptions, different goals, and different audiences, although domains of their activities intersect and can compete with each other for popularity and recognition<sup>11</sup>.

Transformations in the two-decade period after the breakthrough events of 1989 are conducive to broad access to participation in culture. Thanks to fulfilment of important political, social, economic, and technological conditions, democratization of culture in Poland became a fact. However, this does not mean that the patterns of culture considered to be elitist became broadly accepted. It does not mean either that these patterns had been universally accepted before. Literature and literary culture – so highly valued in Poland – have always been the share of a minority-within-minority: those trained to read literary text, being only a part of those who could read and write. We must remember that both traditional and new artistic practices require special interests and high competence from their participants. Art has always been the domain of few. On the other hand, social communication assumes a different range of participation, and it is directed to a broad audience. Interest in popular issues and average abilities are enough to take part in it. Many people can meet such requirements.

Nowadays ability to use new media and its conscious application is becoming necessary. In our current communication experience, indirect interactions, related to technologies of recording and transmitting, are becoming as important as writing and printing, for direct interactions based on speech and body language do not exhaust our contacts<sup>12</sup>. But the richer the platform of communication, the greater the choice of means and ways of expression. Our competence is the condition of participation.

The scale of the impact of modern media is enormous, and it creates unprecedented possibilities. It can be conducive to activity and creativity that is not necessarily artistic and does not always mean the reception of the message in accordance with intentions of its originators. Internet, especially in the Web 2.0 phase, changes the position of all participants in this communication practice.

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11 This issue is discussed extensively in: Maryla Hopfinger, *Sztuka i komunikacja: sygnały zmian całej kultury*, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. eadem, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005.

12 John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 1995.

In any case, it not only creates conditions conducive to participation in receiving present messages, but also makes it possible for every Internet user to create messages, facilitates not only contact with the sender, but also rapid communication between users and common activities, not only communicative ones<sup>13</sup>. Culture of participation becomes possible thanks to the democratization of culture. Certainly, it also creates many threats, and triggers negative phenomena<sup>14</sup>.

The audiovisual type of contemporary culture and its democratic character are mutually reinforcing. The dominance of messages built from analogue signs, based on their resemblance of reality, not only permanently affects our perception, it also shapes our imagination. At the same time, by reference to everyday experiences, it creates the illusion of easy diagnoses and intuitive interpretations. This is nothing but an illusion, for understanding of such audiovisual messages cannot be limited to simple statements of similarity. It requires knowledge about the rules of their internal functioning; it requires familiarity with their references to external contexts. The specificity of the contemporary situation lies in the easy access to media, in the apparent simplicity of the images they contain, and in the unprecedented scale of this impact.

In this audiovisual type of culture, a natural language still plays a fundamental metacultural role, while language abilities are the basis for participation in social communication. Contemporary presence and availability of images is enabled and provided by technologies, yet regardless of the expansion of images, language still plays irreplaceable functions in our lives – we think in the language; we express our observations, views, and opinions in it. Speech and script are the most obvious ways of private and public communication. Language opens horizons of our cognition and imposes restrictions on it. In the audiovisual type of culture, language is not replaced by an image, although the function of the latter in the domain of constructing of meanings has been strengthened; it not only *presents*, it also *means* – as it was claimed by abstractionists and surrealists as early as in the first decades of the twentieth century. In today's type of culture, the leading position is taken not by an image as such, but by verbal-pictorial and audiovisual forms using both an image and a word.

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13 See: Anna Gumkowska, Maciej Maryl, Piotr Toczyski, *Blog to ... blog. Blogi oczyma blogerów. Raport z badania jakościowego zrealizowanego przez Instytut Badań Literackich PAN i «Gazeta.pl»*, in: *Tekst (w) sieci*, ed. Danuta Ulicka, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2009.

14 See, e.g.: Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the Rest of Today's User-Generated Media Are Destroying Our Economy, Our Culture, and Our Values*, New York: Doubleday 2008.

Today, the accumulation of communication-related practices and experiences is accompanied by a dizzying rhythm of changes. It took centuries for verbal culture based on the dominance of speech, script, and print to develop. Audiovisual culture has been developing for over a hundred years, and it has been accelerating since the mid-twentieth century. Contemporary generations have witnessed the proliferation of television, vinyl LPs, cassette tapes, and VHS/VCR. Today they are witnessing another great transformation: computerization, access to the Internet, explosion of mobile telephony, MP3 audio files and iPods, the growing popularity of flash films, and the digitization of many analogue tools of communication. We can see how the most recent media affect the others, how they make us acquire new skills, and how they change our habits. The rapid rhythm of changes itself becomes a change, and the contemporary civilization forces us to assimilate.

In the reconstruction of the contemporary context, I try to combine two perspectives – a close one, that creates the two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989, and the one called by Fernand Braudel the perspective of *longue durée*. Used together, both perspectives are to allow us to notice phenomena arising before our eyes and to situate them both in the process of long-term changes, to see the place they occupy and can occupy in contemporary experiences, and also to understand their meaning in the ongoing changes.

Literature as the main art of word played a socially accepted and important role in verbal culture, especially in Polish culture. This was primarily due to the existential issues raised by the writers, particularly problems important for existence and consciousness of the nation. But it was also due to peculiarity of the verbal type of the culture and technical capabilities of circulation of written and printed texts in social space. This situation also persisted in the situation of the state monopoly until 1989.

The rapid development of media coupled with the audiovisual type of culture resulted in creation of many audiovisual texts in favourable political system and propitious technological conditions, and social communication has proved to be a central practice. Today, literature is not less present; yet there are far more other texts of culture. This is probably the main change in the position of literature. I also emphasize classifying new ways of expression as literature, and entering literary forms into new areas. New varieties of literature are emerging thanks to new carriers. Circles of readers of literature now seem wider and more numerous, and more differentiated than ever before.

Then I ask about the situation of media, which in two decades after 1989 became very present and popular. At the same time, they did not gain social prestige, especially among the elites – an exception to this rule were films of the



Polish School<sup>15</sup> made between 1956/1957 and 1961/1963. Although their impact on people's lives is recognized, in critics' opinion it is rather negative influence, and – according to them – changes go in the wrong direction: at least they block or even destroy culture. There are, however, reasons to formulate a different opinion.

I am also trying to justify the belief in the fundamental role of language in modern culture. The platform of communication is dominated by not an image, but by audiovisual communicates that are co-constituted by the language. Above all, however, language is a code of culture codes, and it has fundamental functions in our perception of the world, in understanding of culture, in reflection, and self-reflection. This metacultural role of language is not currently emphasized, and it may not even be noticed. And although the language itself changes, its role in life of individual, of collective, and of culture remains unchanged. Language is therefore common for literature and for media, although it manifests differently in them.

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15 The Polish School is also known as the Polish New Wave was the most vibrant era in the history of Polish cinema (1956–1963). The phenomenon developed after the changes of the post-Stalinist thaw of 1956, enabling filmmakers to move away from socialist realism in cinema. Movies that form the canon of the Polish School were directed by the young graduates of the Lodz Film School (Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Kazimierz Kutz, and Tadeusz Chmielewski) as well as the filmmakers of the older generation (Wojciech Jerzy Has, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and Stanisław Różewicz). Their films dealt mainly with the themes of war and Nazi occupation of Poland. The majority of them were adaptations of Polish contemporary literature. The most important titles from this trend of Polish auteur cinema are Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* (1957) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958); Andrzej Munk's *Eroica*, *Bad Luck* (1960) and *The Passenger* (1963); Kazimierz Kutz's *The Cross of Valor* (1958) and *Nobody Is Calling* (1960); Tadeusz Konwicki's *The Last Day of Summer* (1958); Wojciech Has's *Noose* (1958), *Farewell's* (1958), and *How to Be Loved* (1963); Stanisław Różewicz's *The Birth Certificate* (1961); Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Night Train* (1959) and *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1961); and Tadeusz Chmielewski's *Ewa Wants to Sleep* (1958).



# 1 Situation of literature: A change of place?

The place of literature in our culture is changing. But how? And what is it like? Do contemporary changes create opportunities for literature to play an important role? And what is this role? What do today's participants of culture need literature for – if they need it at all? And what does pass for literature today?

Relevance of these questions has become particularly evident in Poland after 1989. Together with the political breakthrough and the hopes connected with it, we awaited the prosperity of independent literature – the full, fascinating literary voice expressed in masterpieces in the ideal conditions of freedom...

Culture, liberated from political easements and restrictions of censorship, changed both its type and its style. In the past, it was dependent mainly on out-of-date printing techniques on poor-quality paper. [After the political transformation] it saturated with media infrastructure and audiovisual messages, while its participants largely preferred ludic values, and aspired to the model of life and style of consumption popular in the West. The breakthrough events of 1989 launched and at the same time revealed a significant development of audiovisual culture, a clear democratization of participation in culture, and the closing of the historical mission of literature – the newly regained political independence freed literature and writers from the obligations adopted in the era of Romanticism, and continued (with exception for the interwar period) until now. The change in the situation of literature itself and the change in the dominant role of literary culture became a reality.

Nevertheless, literature as the art of word by many contemporary ones is still associated in the first place with the incomparable works of the Romantic era, with the poetry and dramaturgy of Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki. In the nineteenth century, literature was the most important form of transmission of Polish culture, and the above-mentioned authors were discussing in their works the most crucial issues. Romantic literature asked the most fundamental questions about national existence, about the place of the Polish nation in history, about defence against enslavement. Today, the repertoire of expectations with regard to literature has fundamentally changed, yet it still involves social hopes for important diagnoses, for revealing hidden truths about our individual and collective existence.

Meanwhile, long before 1989, it turned out that those obvious functions of literature, which would decide about its unique position in Polish culture, could be taken up by cinematography – a new audiovisual way of expression that began in

the last century. With all the cultural differences, in the mid-twentieth century, the experiences and achievements of the Polish School became an important signal of a possible change on the platform of communication – the change based on the advancement of significance and artistic quality of other-than-literary forms of transmission of culture. The importance of this change was cemented by the flourishing of the auteur cinema in the 1960s, convincingly discussed by Andrzej Werner in his book *Dekada filmu*<sup>16</sup>.

In the era of new and even newer media, the issue of the future of literature leads to the search for factors actuating – or maybe redefining – its location and transformations. Among them, it seems evident and important that literature is created by means of new media, that it functions in new areas, and that literary culture has many new potential and real participants.

## New carriers

Still, we believe that literature is traditionally related to printing and is published in a book or magazine. Printing, although supported by computer technologies, remains the main way of producing and multiplying literary works. This situation gains additional justification in a long tradition confirming the special role of written word in intellectual interpretation of reality and in taking over the prominent place in the public sphere by printed word. Certainly, technical transformations, the acceleration of the rhythm of civilizational changes, and the rhythm of life influence the way of formation and circulation of literary messages in social space. While in the past, books were expensive, durable, and elitist, they have become relatively cheap and almost universally available. While in the past literary works were objects of intellectual and aesthetic contemplation, now they are object of a single act of reading. Printing in the press among other texts and fast circulation of information are conducive to creation of pieces for instant reading, “just for one evening”, rather than of works for future generations and intended for constant presence in culture<sup>17</sup>.

Since the mid-1920s – since the radio exists – there has been a new opportunity to disseminate literature<sup>18</sup>. From the very beginning, radio stations, also in Poland, have benefited from this opportunity. A prerequisite for the presence of a literary work on the radio is the presentation of its contents in audio form. The

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16 See: Andrzej Werner, *Dekada filmu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1997.

17 Cf.: Janusz Lalewicz, *Literatura w epoce masowej komunikacji*, in: Idem, *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1985.

18 See chapter “Audio Literature”, pp.???

text removed from the space of a printed book or magazine – transformed into a text for listening and incorporated into a radio program – changes both its semi-otic matter and the context of its reception. It becomes “audio literature”. Even if the piece is only read by a lector, it becomes an interpretation inevitably imposed by his/her voice and personality. The degree of modification by audio performance depends, among others, on the genre characteristics of the piece itself. Poetry, which originates from a spoken word and still retains some structural properties of the spoken form, is particularly suitable for listening. The auditory reception is additionally supported by its relatively small volume. Programs of many radio stations are to a large extent filled with songs in various styles. On the other hand, prose is closely related to writing and seems less adapted to the audial form of communication. Especially a novel, coupled with a book, presented as a text for listening undergoes significant transformations. Although a “novel in audial edition”, read in sections, is no longer associated with an individual reading of a novel in a book form, nevertheless it encounters the custom of placing subsequent fragments of prose in daily newspapers and magazines. Audial form of communication without editing and additions is associated more with performance than with adaptation.

Dramatic literature, on the other hand, is a subject to adaptations by radio and being changed into a radio drama, considered as a strictly radio form.

Novels and audio reportages are part of the radio literary genres, besides radio drama. Moreover, consecutive technological achievements – a vinyl record, especially LP, a cassette tape, and finally a digital CD – become carriers of audio literature. Such carriers preserve statements expressed by famous people, authors presenting their works, interviews and reports, and fairy tales for children. Since recently, the sound form of acting recordings on CDs or in MP3 format is given to novels which are listened to by literature fans while driving, for example. This kind of reception is becoming more and more popular.

Various technical carriers of “audio literature” create different conditions for recordings: some require studio work, others are mobile and allow recordings in more natural circumstances, and conducive to immediate registering utterances and events, they facilitate production of documentary and para-documentary programs. Audio reportage has developed thanks to such possibilities<sup>19</sup>.

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19 Cf., e.g.: Jerzy Tuszewski, *Paradoks o słowie i dźwięku*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2002; Klaus Schöning, *Literatura foniczna jako potencjalny przedmiot badań literackich*, transl. Halina Żebrowska, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. Maryla Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005; Sława Bardijewska, *Sluchowisko jako tekst słowno-dźwiękowy*, in: *Nowe media...*; Elżbieta

The basic difference between traditional literature and audio-literature lies in the use of different kinds of natural language<sup>20</sup>: the former uses a written language, the latter – a spoken language, preserved thanks to sound recording techniques, and thus indirect. Literature based on writing and printing uses abstract signs, silent words detached from their utterers, and specific situations in which they were uttered. Audio literature, created thanks to recording and transmission techniques in the twentieth century, is based primarily on speech and the range of natural and specific sounds; semantically, it is related strictly to the people uttering words, to their specific vocal, personal, and social characteristics. The recorded contemporary spoken word is anthropologized, and above the technical recording it refers to elementary anthropological situations specific to communication in direct contacts; and through technical preservation, it became an important component of contemporary social communication. Intermediate spoken language, enriched with non-linguistic acoustic matter, shaped and modified thanks to technical innovations, became the matter of the original creative work, the substance of audio literature<sup>21</sup>.

Works of audio literature received aurally by means of radio or another sound carrier, analogue or digital, find their recipients: mass and niche, educated and uneducated, and avid and random listeners. This does not eliminate a certain difference between the reception of a specific program from the offer of a particular radio station and listening to transmission from another “private” source. As digital technology progresses, literature finds a new digital basis, and the new medium clearly promotes its spread in the electronic environment<sup>22</sup>. Saved to a floppy disk, a CD, or at the address on the Internet it is read from a computer monitor. If it is on the Web, it gains a new environment. Its immediate context can be an online literary magazine, an internet library, or an author’s personal website. A literary work at the screen level appears as a print-like electronic magazine and it is read from the monitor. It is said that there is basically no semantic

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Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, *Słuchowiska Polskiego Radia w okresie piętnastolecia 1925—1939*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Biblioteka 2000, v. 1–2; Anna Sadowska, *Powieść radiowa jako forma społecznego kontaktu*, in: *Szkice o sztukach masowych w Polsce*, ed. Alicja Helman, M. Hopfinger, Maria Raczewa, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974.

20 Ed. note: See. *Literatura ustna*, ed. Przemysław Czapliński, Gdańsk: Słowo obraz terytoria 2010.

21 Ed. note: See also. Konrad W. Tatarowski, *Literatura i pisarze w programie rozgłośni polskiej Radio Wolna Europa*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS 2005.

22 See chapter “Electronic Literature”, pp.???

difference between a text contained in the book and a text transferred to a digital medium. However, a literary work in a digital form takes up little space; it can be restored to a printed form, or sent by e-mail to other people. An electronic text is well-suited for distribution and promotion, as well as for storage.

However, the mere replacement of print as e-book will have far-reaching consequences: a shift from literacy based on handwriting and printing to computer literacy based on digitization of writing and on word processor. For example, Michael Heim links these changes with the end of models of subjectivity, knowledge, and language related to printed book, the end of an age of the civilization based on literacy and book<sup>23</sup>.

Umberto Eco, as it seems, does not think that an electronic journal could replace a printed book. In his opinion, a traditional literary book, unlike encyclopaedias, dictionaries, or textbooks, will remain in the social circulation simply because of the ease and convenience of its use<sup>24</sup>.

While “literature *on* the Web” seems to only use the digital version to acquire new customers well-settled in the electronic environment, “literature *of* the Web” uses the digital medium for its own purposes, to construct a new form of literary works, to create new rules of literary practice and communication. Printed pages of a book are replaced by an inactive computer screen. Configurations of words enriched with illustrative images are replaced by electronic journals, which can complement other visual and audio components. A static, finite, closed, and linear form of a printed book gives way to literary hypertext, composed of mini-narrations – a kind of database, segments of text (*lexias*, as they are called by Roland Barthes), connected by hyperlinks, through which the reader can wander freely.

Lexia, or a unit of hyper-fiction, is a relatively coherent and autonomous fragment of the entire work; lexias connected in many ways with hyperlinks establish a dynamic, open, non-linear, or multi-linear arrangement, although a reading path of particular lexias chosen by a recipient has, of course, a linear character. Only a few lexias are available on the computer screen at a time. Almost every hypertext has a map; it resembles a table of contents in a printed book, but it has a dynamic character, that is, it shows the relations between particular blocks of text. Such a map combined with the so-called navigation device

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23 Cf.: Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, New York: Oxford University Press 1993.

24 See. Umberto Eco, *Nowe środki masowego przekazu a przyszłość książki*, transl. Adam Szymanowski, in: *Nowe media...*

allows a recipient to get an idea of his/her location within the entire system. In order to use the full potential of virtual environment, computer programs must be able to transgress two-dimensional record. The Storyspace program currently available does not provide this option. Only the three-dimensional environment allows to capture multitrack nature of memory, and multi-thread nature of tales. Scholars list few examples of hypertext novels, such as: *afternoon. a story* the first electronic hyper-fiction by Michael Joyce, written in 1986; *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson, a novel about a woman–Frankenstein; and *Victory Garden* by Stuart Moulthrop. The first Polish hypertext novel is *Blok* by Sławomir Shuty, describing residents of a tower block in Nowa Huta. The reader chooses a particular name from the list of tenants and learns the history of its owner, “visiting” residents of the building in free order. Other attempts of hyper-fiction taken by Polish authors include *Koniec świata według Emeryka* by Radosław Nowakowski or *Stokłosy*, the micronovel by Michał Kaczyński.

A literary hypertext allows both authors and readers a completely new experience. A literary work published as a printed book is a physically separate object, but in the semantic plan it is connected through intertextual relations with other printed works, with the Library. The author entrusts the work to the reader, who – within the scope of his/her qualifications and abilities, and entangled in various contexts – reads and interprets the text. A digitally written literary work, placed in an interactive environment, becomes a subject of various potential virtual relations. The author’s role in the hyper-fiction changes, though it does not equate with the reader’s role, because the author proposes a repertoire of lexis and establishes a network of connections between them. It is the author who must think out such fragments that are autonomous and integral units which could be combined in any order and in any combination. The role of the author of digital literary work is – just like in traditional works – a role of demiurge, while it consists of creating a structure of principles which are different than traditional rules, and, in my opinion, very difficult and still rarely used. The role of the recipient is also complicated. Although he/she fulfils an exploratory function, freely wandering through lexis, at the same time he/she must decide which way to go in a highly uncertain situation in which he/she is put by the map and the navigational mechanism. In some cases he/she can comment on a given passage and have the pleasure of transforming the author’s ideas being offered prerogatives of the author-demiurge.

However, questions arise. For example, if the literary hypertext, besides electronic script, can contain other digitally recorded components – what about the exclusivity of the language material? Such a situation already occurs in the audio literature and does not cause problems in creating literary communicates.



Moreover, if the hyper-fiction has a dynamic hypertext structure, how does it differ from other hyper- or cyber-texts? By means of function? By means of genre? Experts of the current hyper-fiction rate among them: “text adventure games, hyper-text novels, and hyper-media narrative forms using film and television, digital performance or kinetic poetry”<sup>25</sup>.

Perhaps, there is a kind of digital audiovisuality that will be dominated by an electronic script and about which we will be able to say that it is literary. After all, it is similar in the case of written language, as well as in the case of a spoken language immersed in the audio-sphere. And yet an electronic script on a computer screen uses the same alphabet, and the same natural language used in handwriting or in print. And although we recall metaphors known from the printing culture, such as “text surface”, “page”, “volume”, “paragraphs”, “columns”, or “editing” – and although the image of a digital text reaches us like a printed text – the digital record opens up new, though uncertain, possibilities, to the literature.

Therefore, when we talk about literature today, we can mean not only works traditionally published in print, but also literature in a form of audio records or created digitally.

## New areas

Each epoch, in a specific way, formulates its literature and creates its own repertoire of literary genres, which responds to the needs addressed by the participants of culture towards literary works. Belles-lettres, characterized by a dominant aesthetic function, was usually based on fiction – both the fiction of the described events and the fiction of the characters. The events and the characters could be taken from life, yet they should be processed to suit the standards of fiction. Besides, the world presented in the literary work was supposed to have a certain degree of probability. The truth was also expected in the description of the characters’ experiences and the relations between the protagonists. The entire work, however, was supposed to have a fictional character, including the reservation: any similarity to people and real events should be considered as accidental.

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25 Mariusz Pisarski, *Hipertekst i hiperfikcja*, in: *Liternet.pl*, ed. Piotr Marecki, Krakow: Rabid 2003, p. 286; see also: *Liternet. Literatura i Internet*, ed. P. Marecki, Krakow: Rabid 2002; *Język @ multimedia*, eds. Agnieszka Dytman-Stasięńko, Jan Stasięńko, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005.

Nevertheless, literature has been associated with non-fiction for a long time. In the first decades of the twentieth century, patterns taken from novels, journals, autobiographies, letters and memoirs, as well as reportages and essays began to be included in narrative structures of novels. New mixed and border genres came to exist. In the second half of the twentieth century, the situation radicalized and such forms as diaries, journals, autobiographies, reportages, and essays became recognized as belles-lettres.

The authors of the literary genre called personal document were mostly prominent (or just famous) persons. However, this group was gradually extended to include people able to tell their true story in an interesting way. Their strength is the witness's authority, guaranteeing the authenticity of events and experiences, and realism of presentations. The literary criteria change before our eyes. Texts based on non-fiction, attributed to so-called documentary literature, often written by non-professionals make outstanding careers.

Importance and popularity of the publication of a personal document, as well as the increasingly common need for expression, the willingness to share one's views, opinions, impressions, and privacy have found a vivid expression in the more and more popular phenomenon of online journals – blogs, photo blogs, and video blogs. The Internet has become an unusual, egalitarian communication channel in which every Internet user can write about any topic<sup>26</sup>. Norms and rules adopted in the literary life of the Gutenberg era – such as approval for publication by editors, opinions of literary press and critics – are no longer valid here. Professionalism is superseded by amateurs, qualifications – by the so-called freshness of perspective, originality – by the receivers' need of sharing experiences.

In the genre of documentary literature, intentionally based on non-fiction, a separate and special place was taken by reportage. As a journalist-literary genre it was formed and shaped along with the development of the press. It combines information elements with personal interpretation, authentic material with characteristics of characters, and reconstruction of events with author's commentary. In the 1920s and 1930s such literary currents as the New Objectivity (*Neue*

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26 Cf.: Małgorzata Czermińska, *Autobiograficzne formy*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku*, eds. Alina Brodzka et al., Wrocław: Ossolineum 1992; Roman Zimand, *O literaturze dokumentu osobistego w ogóle, a o diarystyce w szczególności*, in: idem, *Diarysta Stefan Ż.*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1990; Jerzy Kandzióra, *Zmęczeni fabułą*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1993; Maria Cywińska-Milonas, *Blogi (ujęcie psychologiczne)*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*; Marta Olcoń, *Blogi — internetowe dzienniki*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2004, nr 4.

Sachlichkeit) or Authenticism were conducive to that. Various forms of documentary film also contributed to that. However, it was only since the 1960s that books of reportages have become very popular, and even – in some opinions – gained a certain advantage in the reading market over fiction<sup>27</sup>. The new recording techniques, which facilitated the registration of information sources, material documentation, its selection, and assembly, were also conducive to talking about real people and real events. At the same time, reportage as a genre occupies an important place in radio as photojournalism in the press, especially full colour press, as well then on television. The reporter's profession becomes the hallmark of seekers fascinated with history, discovering the truth about events and people. *Professione: reporter* (1975), an excellent film directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, well reflects entanglements and ambiguities of this profession.

Yet another variation of non-fiction now considered to be literature is essay<sup>28</sup>, a genre of reflexive writing of a very long tradition. Its matter and strength are not so much the facts and the authority of the witness as the ideas, problems, views, and intellectual authority.

With such great interest in literature rejecting fiction as its base – non-fiction works, documentaries, and also, though to a lesser extent, essays – one might ask about the specific polarization of readers' expectations and the huge increase in popularity of works that are classified as fantastic fiction: horrors, science fiction (SF), and fantasy. Fantastic fiction usually played an important role in literature for children and adolescents. Fairy tales were read to children before they themselves were able to become readers of literary works. Today this custom is also maintained and popularized by the slogan "Cała Polska czyta dzieciom" [All of Poland reads to children]<sup>29</sup>. However, also contemporary adult readers are equally attracted by various subgenres of fantastic fiction. Fantastic short stories, horror novels fashionable in the nineteenth century, exploiting the game of fear and dismay, have lots of enthusiasts. Science-fiction literature combining the problems of contemporary scientific and technical civilization with the work of imagination about the future gained extraordinary publicity in the twentieth

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27 Cf.: Krzysztof Kąkolewski, *Reportaż*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej...*; Zygmunt Ziątek, *Głód rzeczywistości*, in: idem, *Wiek dokumentu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1999.

28 Ed. note: see also books published after 2010: Jan Tomkowski, *Moja historia eseju*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo 2 kolory 2013; *Polski esej literacki. Antologia*, ed. Jan Tomkowski, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich 2018.

29 Ed. note: The slogan refers to the campaign to promote reading for and among children and youth, initiated by the foundation ABCXXI – Cała Polska czyta dzieciom in 1998.

century. SF genre is well symbolized by the names of Herbert George Wells and Stanisław Lem.

However, it was fantasy genre that managed to gain at the same time the greatest popularity among readers and ennoblement. Created for adults, adolescents, and children, it refers to the repertoire of fairy tale motifs – magic, witches and wizards, elves, dwarves or hobbits, dragons, and other creatures equipped with talismans and magic wands inhabit fantastic worlds filled with mythical stories, archetypes, and laws of magic. In horror genre dreadful elements penetrate into the real world, colliding with it, ominously disturbing the order of everyday life, introducing the threat – fantasy genre proposes separate, alternative worlds, like Middle-earth, Earthsea, or Narnia – governed by their own rules. The eternal conflict between good and evil gains a special setting and resolution. Universal character of both the negative and positive attributes of the protagonists and the values they embody allows modern readers comparisons and analogies with their own world. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, is unanimously considered to be the creator of this genre. Since 1955, this novel has been published in millions of copies around the world. Other acclaimed authors of this genre include Ursula K. Le Guin, the author of the Earthsea Cycle, and Clive Staples Lewis with his series *The Chronicles from Narnia*. Books by Andrzej Sapkowski, especially *The Witcher* series, are very popular in Poland. Successive volumes of the adventures of Harry Potter by Joanne Rowling enjoy incredible popularity among children and young people throughout the world<sup>30</sup>.

The triumph of fantasy is confirmed and strengthened by film versions of works by Tolkien, Lewis, Rowling, and Sapkowski. Thanks to computer effects, fantastic narratives gain an attractive audiovisual form. Undoubtedly, role-playing games – narrative role games, and especially popular computer games – have a great merit in establishing interest in fantastic plots<sup>31</sup>.

This amazing success of SF in the era of scientific and technical civilization, the development of the information society, respect for the principles of

30 Cf.: Antoni Smuszkiewicz, *Fantastyka*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej...*; Ryszard Handke, *Fantastyka naukowa*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej...*; Roger Caillois, *De la feerie a la science fiction*, in: *Images, images...*, Paris: J. Corti 1966; Andrzej Zgorzelski, *Fantastyka. Utopia. Science fiction. Ze studiów nad rozwojem gatunków*, Warsaw: PWN 1980; *Oblicza horroru. Szkice z pogranicza literatury fantasy i horroru*, ed. Anna Derlatka, "Anatomia fantastyki" 1999, cahier 8.

31 Cf.: Jerzy Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne — nowe zjawisko kultury współczesnej*, Krakow: Rabid 2004; Jan Stasienko, *Alien vs. Predator? Gry komputerowe a badania literackie*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005.

rationality, dissemination of secular models and values, as well as great popularity of documentary works among readers is very interesting. It seems to be a way of escaping from one's everyday life into a world free from the limits of reality: better, and more beautiful; it seems to be one of the answers to the ever-present need for transcendence, for company of fascinating heroes, seeking values and experiencing them at least in fantastic imaginary situations.

Certain literary genres do not have an unconditioned existence, they are composed of various semiotic materials, and the reading of the text is not the main method of their reception. Vocal verbal-musical forms belong to this category. They have been accompanying work, ceremonies, and celebrations for a long time. Then, professional varieties, including vocal-instrumental ones, were formed, related to the public performance of the work, with the division into creators, performers, and recipients-listeners. Song has become an extremely broad and diverse phenomenon: from chamber literary or cabaret song through stage performances to a youth or student song. Thanks to radio stations and music albums, songs became extremely popular. Domestic and world hit lists, concert tours of celebrated performers, and famous recordings create numerous attractive proposals. This popular genre is used by various groups of recipients, of various social position, various views and various musical and literary preferences, as well as with a various degree of abilities<sup>32</sup>.

Circles of creators and receivers of diverse subgenres of songs constantly expand and democratize. In the second half of the twentieth century, a singer became one of the most popular and respected social roles, sometimes – but only sometimes – related to professionalism. Singers reached the summit of modern Olympus. They are considered icons of contemporary times. Song has taken a prominent place among the genres of the so-called musical entertainment, and although it is difficult to define it from the point of view of music, it does not

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32 Cf.: Zbigniew Kloch, Adam Rysiewicz, *Piosenka*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej...*; Anna Barańczak, *Słowo w piosence. Poetyka współczesnej piosenki estradowej*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1983; Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski, *To tylko rock'n'roll*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ZAKR 1990; Mirosław Pęczak, *Tekst piosenki rockowej – stopnie zależności od kultury dominującej*, in: *Wybrane zagadnienia spontanicznej kultury młodzieżowej w Polsce*, eds. Zbigniew Rykowski, J. Wertenstein-Żuławski, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Kultury 1986; Wojciech Siwak, *Estetyka rocka*, Warsaw: Semper 1993; Tomasz Szmajter, *Po co rockowi tekst? Po co rockowi literatura? O intertekstualności rockowego przekazu*, in: *Między duszą a ciałem*, eds. Wojciech J. Burszta, Marcin Rychlewski, Warsaw: Twój Styl 2003; Mikołaj Lizut, *Punk rock later*, Warsaw: Sic! 2003.

avoid anti-conventional solutions, and it is open to new, surprising propositions, and also to a new poetic language<sup>33</sup>. Song becomes an important statement about contemporary people and times. What is certain, is the extraordinary social reach of its reception, the phenomenon of fans as well as diversity and richness of its varieties. With all the differences between poetry and song, I propose that the latter be considered a contemporary form of poetry, as a form of poetry in audiovisual culture.

We should also appreciate the role of technology in shaping this phenomenon – from a microphone on stage or in a recording studio – through further techniques of recording and transmission: a vinyl long-play, a cassette tape, a CD, a DVD, MP3 Internet files, increasing the real access to recordings and listening to them any time – to radio stations, TV programs with video clips, film, music TV channels, and Internet websites performing promotional functions.

For some time, some scripts, especially those intended for the film, have been treated as literature. They have been published in book editions, and their authors are acknowledged as writers. It is quite likely that a significant number of conceptually and artistically outstanding films created in the second half of the twentieth century, and the formation of a mature film culture have changed the uncertain position of the screen texts. At the same time, the screenwriting is still treated as a verbal draft of the future work, open enough for possible changes on the set, so that a film can be created in line with the director's intention. However, ennoblement of film in contemporary culture, the global relations between word and image, between literature and film, give the possibility for new kind of script to be written; the ones that, besides being proposals for cinema, can prove to be enough interesting for readers of literature. The concept of the script itself is also referred to the projects of radio and television programs, prepared adaptations and remakes, exhibitions, or events. For some time now, it has also included meeting plans for narrative role-playing games developed by the masters. There are also "behavioural script" and "scripts of events" when one thinks about ready-made schemes of human activity and about planned in advance, though not necessarily revealed, course of events. Besides, there is some similarity between

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33 Cf.: Edward Balcerzan, *Popularność literatury a «literatura popularna»*. (Na przykładzie poezji i piosenki), in: *Problemy socjologii literatury*, ed. Janusz Sławiński, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1971; A. Barańczak, *Konwencjonalność w piosence jako problem semantyczny*, in: *Formy literatury popularnej*, ed. Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1973.

script and the structure of some literary works. All this may be conducive to the reading function of the script and its acceptance as a literary form<sup>34</sup>.

## New participants

In Polish culture, literature was given a high, distinguished position. Reading literary works was appreciated and readers were ennobled. However, it required some skills which were not common, as it was shown in the well-known scene of writing a letter<sup>35</sup> in *Zemsta* (*Revenge*), a comedy by Aleksander Fredro. We know that the necessary, though insufficient, condition for participation in literary communication is the completion of a secondary school. Thus, the number of readers generally increases with education, but falls after the end of education<sup>36</sup>. The reading canon, which is introduced by compulsory education, is not only intended to foster reading skills, but also to develop the readers intellectually. Surprising proposals of changes in the canon, which were announced by those in power, and the reaction of people of culture to those proposals prove that this issue is important for culture of pupils and culture in general<sup>37</sup>.

However, when the reports stating that fewer and fewer fellow countrymen read anything nowadays appear in the public discourse, the impression is that in the past reading used to be widespread, and this useful custom has been suppressed only by contemporary culture. I am convinced that the reality was completely different.

According to all studies until the end of the 1980s, the most popular authors published in millions of copies were: Henryk Sienkiewicz, Maria Konopnicka, Bolesław Prus, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Adam Mickiewicz, Stefan Żeromski, and Eliza Orzeszkowa; after 1989 a certain change was noticed. Intensification of cultural life, development of the book market, and the constant increase in

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34 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Scenariusz*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej...*

35 Ed. note: The scene from the last act of this comedy shows how one of the characters is ineptly dictating a letter, which is to be posed on a letter from a woman, one of the protagonists of this play. Aleksander Fredro (1793–1876), a Polish writer, became famous for his comedy plays, of which *Zemsta* is one of the best-known and most appreciated. It was staged for the first time in Lviv in 1834.

36 Cf., e.g.: Stefan Żółkiewski, *Społeczne konteksty kultury literackiej na ziemiach polskich (1890–1939)*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1995; Stanisław Siekierski, *Książka literacka*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1992; idem, *Czytania Polaków w XX wieku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa UW 2000.

37 Ed. note: The author refers here to the changes introduced by the Polish government in the canon of school books in 2007.

the level of education of people caused growth of number of both potential and real readers of newer literature. This is facilitated by the easier access to information about books, including belles-lettres – in the press, on the radio, and on the Internet – and easier access to books: in bookstores, kiosks, supermarkets, at specially organized meetings, fairs, promotions, and, to some extent, in reading rooms and public libraries.

The transformations of literature itself have a significant impact on the composition of reading audience. The development of audio and digital literature along with literary works of long-established tradition and printed books is most likely to be a decisive factor for many new audiences. Participants of various popular literary practices – enthusiasts of personal documentaries and reportage; fans of popular fiction (horror, SF, and fantasy); wide circle of listeners of many varieties of pop-singing; and readers of various scripts – joined the reading audience.

Changes taking place in civilization, society and politics, as well as in literature immeasurably extend the framework of literary culture and democratize the literary audience. This audience is internally highly diverse, as are literary practices and literary communicates. Certainly, the circle of intelligence professionally associated with literature has expanded, just like the number of people who read professionally. There are also more recipients interested in new media and new areas of literature, recipients who had to acquire skills necessary to contact associate with segments of literature selected by themselves.

## **Literary culture today**

Literary tradition has familiarized us with various criteria for distinguishing and organizing works considered in a given time to be literary – based on genre, style, subject, type of readers, or functions. A peculiar perspective is introduced by such pairs of terms as: high literature vs. low literature, elite literature vs. mass literature, and literature for connoisseurs vs. popular literature. This perspective is connected with the conviction of coexistence of two cultures in contemporary times. According to it, a relatively narrow elite in contact with sophisticated high-quality artistic works collides with mass audience, reading low-quality works, written in an accessible way and requiring no special skills to digest it. I admit that such a position does not convince me. I agree with the view expressed long ago by Stefan Żołątkowski about the aristocratic nature of this diagnosis. I look at the contemporary culture differently than supporters of its fundamental division into elite culture and mass culture. I believe that with a huge diversity of culture, one can defend its comprehensive understanding. Thanks to civilizational



and social development, limiting illiteracy and universal education at an increasingly higher level, gradually growing prosperity and amount of leisure time, large numbers of people have become potential and often real participants of culture. Some of them gain proper preparation for participation in literary culture based mainly on autotelic patterns. The rest of the majority generally does not possess such need. They are not interested in literature for the sake of literature. If they read, they do it for other reasons: for entertainment, knowledge, ideology, or politics. The audiovisual type of culture provides a technical infrastructure that enables unusually broad access to cultural goods and thus creates opportunities for general public.

Assuming that there is one contemporary culture, the concept of social circuits of literature seems appropriate<sup>38</sup>. According to it, literary culture is co-created by many circuits, and each of them combines selected features of creators, senders, works recognized as literary, and their readers. However, particular circuits do not form closed spheres. Literary texts may travel on various circuits, subject to ennoblement or degradation. And the same writer and the same reader can change circuits or participate in several circuits at the same time. Finally, circuits themselves can be transformed and changed in dynamic contemporary times. I believe that this proposal captures accurately today's literary practices as well as tensions and flows within literary culture.

Diversity of literature can be interpreted today in yet another way: in terms of art and communication. I propose such a problematization of this diversity, which will allow to situate literature-as-art and literature-as-communication next to each other, not in a hierarchical or polar arrangement. Literature-as-communication is understood here not as inferior or lower than literature-as-art, but simply as a different kind of literature.

Literature as the art of word is, by definition, distinguished against the colloquial language and everyday life; it is characterized by a special organization of works oriented towards originality and innovation, consciously referring to the literary tradition. It is autotelic, created and developed by the power of talents of its creators. The classic goal of literature as the art of word is creation as such, and a unique work lies at its foundation. Literature strives to develop a new language. It experiments. It questions conventional habits of readers, and violates their stereotypical expectations. Special interests of readers, their high abilities, and unusual sensitivity are of decisive importance in reception of this kind of literature.

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38 Cf.: S. Żółkiewski, *Wiedza o kulturze literackiej*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna 1980.

Art of literature in the twentieth century was subject to experiences shared with other fields of art. It criticized its own matter in a comprehensive way. It opened structures of its works inviting readers' participation in constructing its senses. It violated the seemingly permanent division of roles of creators and recipients. It distanced itself from performing didactic social functions. It questioned the paradigm of art and today is looking for a place for itself on the crowded contemporary platform of communication.

Literary works, which I propose to include in literary communication, attach less importance to uniqueness. Their authors rely on well-known patterns, and conscious repetition is their strategy. They refer to features of genres, yet they also introduce some modifications. Innovation is also necessary in literature-as-communication; it is needed in the game with recipients in order to accustom an innovation, and then introduce the next dose of innovation. The purpose of this literature is to win a broad audience. Talent does not play a demiurgical role here; it is considered as a kind of skill, and success is based on skilful averaging between a scheme which is known and recognized and its appropriate modification; it is the game of repetition and change. Reception is determined by the knowledge of genre conventions, curiosity of their transformation, search for new experiences or patterns of behaviour, reading and general experiences, and cultural activity.

An important reference system for literature-as-communication is social communication. Social communication is egalitarian and mixed with commonness. The communicates are prepared by specialized staffs for the broad public. Social communication is established by exchange of information between people in the public forum, in front of the society, with interest or participation of a certain part of it. Social communication includes elements of both literature-as-art and literature-as-communication.

Both types of literary statements coexist not only side by side but also with each other; they penetrate each other and they are sometimes a source of mutual inspiration. Literature as a domain of culture, despite all the differences, establishes a certain unified entity, for which the audiovisual type of culture has become the context<sup>39</sup>. On this common plane, literature encounters parallel audiovisual statements: genre cinema and auteur cinema, television series and documentaries, narrative "face-to-face" games, and computer games. It happens that literary works create common segments with audiovisual ones. This is certainly the case with documentaries and popular fiction.

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39 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Literatura w kulturze audiowizualnej*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1992, nr 1.

When we observe literary practices related to new carriers of literature, when we recognize its new areas and talk about new readers, then the diagnosis of democratization of culture is immediately followed by another one: of its massification, coupled with degradation. The problem is difficult, especially if the democratization processes are not assessed negatively. We know well that only a talented minority is involved in creativity, and that talent is an unrecognized algorithm. Discussions on the direction of development of culture have lasted for about two hundred years. One side is associated with aristocratic attitude, a negative evaluation of abilities of social groups which used to be excluded in the past, accusation of imminent spoiling of culture; the other side expresses excessive optimism. The dynamics of changes in general are not in line with hopes and ideas of cultural elites. New participants of culture do not accept the choices shared by current leaders of culture. In other words, a literary salon does not multiply; culture moves in to shopping malls, and the location affects, as is known, the change of significance. Is it possible, then, to build a consensus between democratization of culture and talent-based creativity? Is it possible to defend the Author's position of authority?

An author's strategy collides with a recipient's strategy. At first glance, the changes include the sphere of reception and of a recipient. This sphere is growing and differentiating. Taking the recipients, their needs, and expectations into consideration is also more evident. However, the dynamics of changes also violate the previously acknowledged division of roles on authors and readers. Structures of works opened by the writers are no longer just a literary experiment. Moreover, many readers act as authors, which can be seen especially in the personal documents and in song lyrics. In addition, the Internet has become a place of free speech for everyone, with all its consequences. And it may be unnecessary to have competitions addressed to diarists, when blogs have become a popular form of expression on the Internet. Now, besides contests for short story writers, magazines encourage their readers to write collectively a novel or a memoir book – documenting, for example, the farewell to the Pope<sup>40</sup>. *Each of you can become a co-author...* All of this can be associated with low quality, banality, and profanity of language, as well as lack of professionalism. Or maybe

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40 The death of Pope John Paul II on the 2nd of April 2005, watched by Poles on television screens, has grown not only to the rank of a media event, but a collective spiritual experience. Numerous articles, books, and documentaries about this event have become testimonies of this experience.

the mechanism of shift of texts and practices from periphery to the centre of culture, known from the evolution of culture?

Despite changes and re-evaluations – or, perhaps, thanks to them – there is a future ahead of literature. Although reading literature in audiovisual times ceased to be the only indicator of participation in culture, today it still seems to be its indelible component. And just as language and linguistic abilities are necessary for participation in culture and in contemporary communication, literature has a fundamental role in relation to other cultural phenomena. Having the longest, and the richest tradition, it remains a “treasury”, a reference system, but also a partner of contemporary transformations.

## 2 The situation of media: A change of culture?

### Polish realities

For media in Poland, 1989 is definitely a caesura. The auspicious one. The transformation of the political system eliminated the existing limitations and allowed for the rapid expansion of the media. The technological infrastructure of the media expanded. Audiovisual communicates have become more and more common in the social space, and their offer is becoming richer. The transformation gave a new impetus to the audiovisual dimensions of culture and consolidated its audiovisual character. At the same time, it showed the significant foundations of the audiovisual type of culture, which was shaped as a result of civilization changes, despite the inhibitory political climate and the rules of monopoly.

### Audiovisual infrastructure before the political transformation

First of all, there was a radio that started operating immediately after the war and could partly relate to the experience of the interwar period. Until the early 1960s it was practically unbeatable. In 1960, only 43,000 TV sets were registered in Poland, while there were over 5,000,000 radio sets. Transistor radios gradually replaced ordinary speakers and tube apparatuses. In the early 1980s, according to the statistics, there were more than 8.5 million radio subscribers, and radio was still more accessible than television. There were four nationwide programs and 16 regional radio stations. They broadcasted news, commentary, and educational, music, and literary programs. Radio stations offered traditional radio forms, such as radio dramas, radio novels, and reports. Entertainment programs (for example, *Podwieczorek przy mikrofonie* [The Afternoon Tea at the Microphone], listened by 90% of recipients) enjoyed extreme popularity, as well as news (70%), radio dramas, and radio novels (*Matysiakowie* [The Matysiaks], *W Jezioranach* [In Jeziorany], about 65%). Radio popularized various types of music, including classical, and literature, including poetry. Programs were addressed to listeners of various age groups, of diverse interests and preferences. One of the permanent functions of radio was propaganda. It must be admitted, however, that – especially after 1956 – radio had some, smaller or larger, margin of freedom, in particular Channel Three, especially popular among young intelligentsia.

Radio was also a main and the most widely available link to the world. And despite the persistent jamming of Polish-language foreign broadcasters, it provided access to news and other programs beyond the reach of censorship<sup>41</sup>.

People were extremely interested in television, which started its regular broadcasting only after 1956. Thanks to the technical infrastructure, the number of owners of TV sets increased – in 1965 there were over 2 million TV sets, in 1970 over 4 million, and in 1980 almost 8 million. Two TV channels disseminated culture and propaganda, and quickly gained audience. Television had a varied offer, including information and entertainment, documentaries and feature films, and popular science programs and quizzes. Information and journalistic programs played a leading role in the monopolistic policy of the state authorities. However, the entire television program was supposed to indoctrinate actively its audience. Yet, despite the multistage control of all broadcasts, it happened that some programs broke those rules. Teleplays with ambitious repertoire and excellent staging became the leading theatre stage in the country with a multimillion audience. Music programs, *Kabaret Starszych Panów* (*Elderly Gentlemen's Cabaret*)<sup>42</sup>, or educational programs introduced important values and popularized them among many recipients. Television played initiatory function for viewers who were less prepared to participate in culture and, at the same time, it was able to attract more elitist audiences. It wanted to reach all and everyone. Its offer was diversified, but also – as in other countries – it performed an integrating function.

Television seeks its own ways of expression. Because it is audiovisual, it is the easiest for television to use the achievements and experiences of cinema. First of all, it turned out to be a new way of popularizing cinema films. When in the 1970s

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41 Ed. note: The main radio station broadcasting programs in Polish from abroad and beyond the reach of the communist censorship was Radio Wolna Europa (RWE) – Polish Section of Radio Free Europe (RFE) in Munich. Programs in Polish were also broadcast by BBC, Vatican Radio, Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle, Radio France International, Radio Canada International, and Radio Madrid. See: Marcin Hermanowski, *Radiofonia w Polsce. Zarys dziejów*, Poznań: Zysk i S-ka. Wydawnictwo 2018.

42 Ed. note: *Kabaret starszych Panów* was a satirical TV show (1958–1966) by Jerzy Wasowski and Jeremi Przybora. This cabaret program led by two gentlemen in cylinders was repeatedly broadcast by television in the following decades and became very popular to Polish audience. Old-fashioned gentlemen presented gentle humour and serene songs that had nothing to do with communist propaganda and were ostentatiously elegant in the old western style.

the number of television subscribers increased to nearly 8 million, over 1,000 cinemas were closed, and the number of cinemagoers drastically diminished. On the other hand, television for three or even four hours every day showed to its numerous viewers films made for the cinema. Movies could be watched outside the cinema, on television. Many well-known film directors collaborated with television, making TV series based on literary works. For example: Andrzej Wajda directed *Ziemia obiecana* (1975, *The Promised Land*), based on the novel by Reymont (four episodes); Jerzy Antczak – *Noce i dnie* (1975, *Nights and Days*), based on the novel by Maria Dąbrowska (twelve episodes); Jan Rybkowski – *Chłopi* (1972, *Peasants*), based on the novel by Reymont (thirteen episodes); and Ryszard Ber – *Lalka* (1977, *The Doll*), based on the novel by Prus (9 episodes). Krzysztof Zanussi, Janusz Morgenstern, Wojciech Solarz, Stanisław Bareja, Sylwester Chęciński, Jerzy Gruza, and Andrzej Titkow also worked on various television programs. More and more film directors debuted with short stories on TV: Antoni Krauze, Wojciech Marzewski, Feliks Falk, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Barbara Sass, and Filip Bajon. Thanks to the television, viewers could watch contemporary and old films. The film practice gained a new platform.

Television, considered primarily a medium of communication, seeks forms of expression specific to this medium. It draws from the tradition of entire culture, adapting selected patterns to its own needs. It also experiments, combines visual and audio elements in various ways, and develops a verbal-pictorial language. Although artistic works appear on the air, they are not its specialty. Television is not and cannot be only art. Television is social communication. It takes an increasing part in presenting current events, in formulating meanings, and in interpreting reality. It takes part in shaping social opinions and ideas – also in conditions of state monopoly.

In the years preceding the breakthrough events of 1989 – in contrary to the crisis of the whole economy – radio and television infrastructure was constantly expanding: the number of owners of radio sets reached 10 million, and TV sets – 9.5 million. Almost every Polish household had radio and television equipment. The cassette tapes – the first technology besides written and printed word that allowed recording and playing of communicates outside official institutions and beyond censorship – gained popularity. In social communication, especially the official one, audiovisual television broadcasting became dominant. The unofficial “second circuit” and “third circuit” forced the central broadcaster to diverse communication offers, expanding the real possibilities of choice by the audience.

However, it was not sufficient for such media development that was possible thanks to the changes in civilization. By the end of the decade, the circulation of audiovisual communicates was administratively and economically inhibited.

The video recorder or computer were almost inaccessible. Installing satellite TV required permission of the authorities. Even making Xerox copies could not be done anonymously. Censorship was in force until the end [of the communist rule]<sup>43</sup>.

### **Audiovisual media after 1989**

The collapse of the communist system opened up new perspectives for the media. First, development of material infrastructure was no longer artificially limited. Relatively quickly, almost everyone gained access to radio and television programs. In 1993, there were 11 million radio sets and 10 million TV sets. Installation of satellite or cable television was now solely dependent on citizen's decision. VCRs – first devices facilitating non-institutional audiovisual communication – were very popular. Video rentals were established (initially offering pirated tapes), and their sales increased. It was now possible to watch individually selected audiovisual communicates at any time and at own pace.

Secondly, market rules additionally favoured technologies known in other countries since the 1950s. Number of stereo radio sets increased, and nearly 80% of owners replaced black and white TV sets with colour ones. The titles of the coloured press multiplied, and numerous illustrations accompanied texts printed on good-quality paper; reproductions and albums, various forms of visual advertising, and colour photographs introduced a static, colourful picture on the platform of communication. It was to permanently settle there, besides printed word and to serve construction of meanings. Colour also became a standard of audiovisual communicates. After long, grey decades, the progression of colour was striking.

Thirdly, all these elements resulted in multiplication and diversification of repertoire of offers proposed to participants of culture. The central system of culture was a subject to erosion and decomposition. Participation in culture was increasingly dependent on uncontrolled, non-governmental initiatives and free, individual choices. In 1990, for the first time in post-war history [of Poland], the state's monopoly in the domain of film distribution in cinemas was broken. The newly established private distribution companies, counting losses and profits, took into account interests and needs of the audience. Private publishing houses thought of lovers of various types of literature. Journalists and magazines fought

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43 I write more on this issue in the article *Pluralizacja kultury i rozwój audiowizualności*, in: Maryla Hopfinger, *Kultura audiowizualna u progu XXI wieku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1997.



for readers, and the regional, local, and subregional press flourished. National and local radio stations of different profiles or formats strived for listeners. Since December 1992, they have been operating under the Radio and Television Act.

However, the state television maintained its central position on the national platform of communication, especially in the propaganda function. The conviction of its magical influence on society, inherited from the previous era, is shared by all participants of the political game. Therefore, treated primarily as a tool for “ruling people’s souls”, the state television allows competition with great resistance, and it cannot liberate itself from political dependencies. Two private television stations were granted the licence for country-wide broadcasting: Polsat in 1994 and TVN in 1997, and later the (declaratively non-commercial) Catholic TRWAM TV.

Fourthly, the fundamental reconstruction of the economy resulted in a drastic limitation of the state patronage in the field of culture. Its place has been taken by economic calculus and the market rules. Advertising became an important source of funds necessary for functioning and maintenance of cultural institutions – and a factor conducive to commercialization of culture. Advertising, present in all media, became also a popular element of social communication. It affected the scheme and timing of broadcasted programs, preferring the programs with the highest audience share. It not only promotes products, but also suggests certain ways and styles of life. The aesthetic properties play an important role there. Quite frequently, it becomes a field of experimentation, especially on television, and its experiences co-shape the language of audiovisual statements. Music videos that influenced the shape of contemporary audiovisuality originated from advertising<sup>44</sup>.

In the first decade after the breakthrough events of 1989, in democratic conditions, the audiovisual type of culture was established, favouring audiovisual communication practices. The participants became acquainted relatively quickly to the new possibilities and rules of functioning of social communication; they also noticed that much now depended on their choices.

The unhampered expansion of technology allowed for the universal circulation of pictorial, sonic, and audiovisual communicates, and for performing many functions. However, in the public discourse, they did not match the

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44 Cf.: Urszula Jarecka, *Świat wideoklipu*, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 1999; Andrzej Pitrus, *Zrozumieć reklamę*, Krakow: Rabid 2001; Ewa Szczęsna, *Poetyka reklamy*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2001; Andrzej Kisielewski, *Sztuka i reklama. Relacje między sztuką i kulturą*, Białystok: Trans Humana 2001.

written word and printed texts in the aspect of social significance and prestige. Admittedly, the audience remembered the Polish School films, produced in the times when the cinema – then the only audiovisual medium of expression – had effectively competed with the literary tradition, rivalling literature for the position in social consciousness and had captured social imagination. This very successful period in the history of the Polish cinema – clearly ennobling the audiovisual communicates – remained the memorable yet unique episode, as if the experience of the Polish School, which consisted of eminent artistic works, did not work in the television medium as a broad field of social communication – as if the specificity of television, unlike of cinema, lied in cyclical repetition rather than in originality and artistry; rather in establishing a stable contact with recipients on daily basis, than in presentation of individual view and encountering an exceptional work. Television dominating the platform of communication changed the character of audiovisual experiences<sup>45</sup>.

After the fall of the communist system, television opened the world to the Poles. They have gained access to the global media stage. There was no turning back: they had to witness, watch reports from various parts of the world, and participate in “big events”. The longed-for openness to the world made them aware of the permanent risk of contemporary times, and forced them to learn and comprehend new situations, problems, exacted compassion with others, and obliged to share responsibility<sup>46</sup>. Audiovisual media in democratic conditions coincided with their closer and further everyday life and brought the world closer to them.

For over two decades that passed since the breakthrough events of 1989, television has expanded its ways of expression, taking into account the tastes of the audience. The criterion of the audience share largely dominated the majority of broadcast programs, although it did not eliminate the use of public television for the pursuit of political interests and concessions. There is a continuous competition between the commercial TV stations and between them and the public

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45 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne: między latarnią czarnoksiężką a obrazem wydarzeń 11 września 2001*, in: *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie. Analizy kulturoznawcze*, eds. Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Ryszard Nycz, Barbara Giza, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo SWPS Academica 2008.

46 Cf.: Daniel Dayan, Elihu Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History*, Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press 1994; Jacek Amsterdamski, *Na oczach świata. Analiza społecznych wymiarów wybranych wydarzeń medialnych*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2004, nr 4.

television for the audience. Currently, various broadcasters strive for viewers liberated from the dictates of the monopoly system. Some even think that television has now become the domain of “rebellious masses”<sup>47</sup>. Others try to describe the presence of television in everyday life of its viewers as well as strategies used by television to win their favour<sup>48</sup>.

In the 1990s, digital media, still barely visible, began to compete with the existing media. Experiments with a new way of recording and reproducing sound on CDs only signalled a significant change, although CDs relatively quickly displaced vinyl records. Computers were still rare at that time. They were mainly used for calculations, text editing, and charts. It took years before the first Polish Internet connection in 1992 revealed profound consequences. Until the autumn of 1996, no more than 44,000 PCs in more than 10% of Polish households were connected to the Net. Gradually, more and more users, attracted by a new generation of computers – multimedia computers – “plugged in” to the Net services. There was no high-speed Internet at that time yet.

Developing mobile telephony was in the process of replacing the shortages of traditional stationary devices. Only later it was to reveal its ability to seriously participate in the fundamental transformations of the platform of communication<sup>49</sup>.

In the Polish realities of the late twentieth century, audiovisual culture seemed to be stabilized. Based on analogue media, it was rather slow to include digital ones. The level of information infrastructure, especially in comparison with developed countries, was still low<sup>50</sup>. Symptoms of a great change appeared soon after 2000. Therefore, situating the Polish reality in the perspective of the twentieth-century media changes, I will take into account the theoretical dimension of both analogue and digital audiovisual media.

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47 Cf.: Teresa Bogucka, *Triumfujące profanum. Telewizja po przełomie 1989*, Warsaw: Sic! 2002.

48 Cf.: Mateusz Halawa, *Życie codzienne z telewizorem. Z badań terenowych*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2006; Sylwia Galanciak, “Widz zaangażowany. Telewizyjne strategie budowania relacji medium–odbiorca w stacjach ogólnopolskich po 1989 roku”, doctoral dissertation under the supervision of M. Hopfinger, monograph.

49 Cf.: Paul Levinson, *Cellphone: The Story of the World's Most Mobile Medium and How It Has Transformed Everything!* New York: Palgrave/St. Martins 2004.

50 Cf.: Michał Goliński, Artur Kościański, *Wskaźniki poziomu rozwoju społeczeństwa informacyjnego w Polsce*, in: *W drodze do społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, ed. Józef Lubacz, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo PW 1999.

### **From the perspective of the twentieth-century media changes<sup>51</sup>**

Among the many new phenomena brought to people of the Euro-American civilization in the twentieth century, a separate place is occupied by new media: radio, vinyl LP, cassette tape, television, video, CD, computer, Internet, and mobile telephony. The twentieth century was also conducive to dynamic changes in the media that appeared in the previous century: photography, phonography, and film. The rapid development of media different from the previously known traditional verbal and pictorial communicates, their intense presence in the social space – all these elements caused the fundamental change in communication experiences of participants of culture. People had more and more contact not only with newspapers, magazines, or books, paintings or graphic works, but they also had new attractive forms of communication to choose from.

Over time, the type of culture dominated by words and prints gradually changed into the audiovisual type of culture, in which new media play an important role. They are not only widely, frequently, and willingly used by participants of culture, but they also affect their perception and understanding of the world; they cause the formation of an integral receiving mechanism that merges auditory and visual information into a meaningful entity. For people of the twentieth century audiovisuality became the dominant way of their orientation in culture<sup>52</sup>.

The platform of communication, filled with old, new, and the newest media, now has various recording and transmission techniques at its disposal; it sets new functions for the old media, and creates a new repertoire of statements. There have never been such favourable media and social conditions in the past for the emergence of a new area of culture that social communication has become.

The transformation of verbal culture into audiovisual culture in the twentieth century consisted, among other things, of significant ennoblement of images, and of cultural evaluation of non-verbal – i.e. visual and aural – dimensions of social communication, as well as of shaping of signs and audiovisual meanings. Therefore, the transformation consisted not of the transition from the dominance of words to the domination of images, but of the fact that audiovisuality replaced the central position of word. Contemporary culture has not become the culture of image, although the images are first and foremost noticed by

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51 The articles published in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. M. Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005 are a collective footnote to this fragment.

52 More on this issue in: M. Hopfinger, *Kultura współczesna — audiowizualność*, Warsaw: PIW 1985.

its critics. Contemporary culture integrates verbal and non-verbal, visual and auidial, and verbal and pictorial information into the audiovisual syndrome. And natural language is present in all phases of formation and transformation of audiovisuality.

Audiovisual culture not only does not give up natural language, but it is unthinkable without language as undoubtedly the main code of culture. Moreover, written language has never had such a favourable situation before – the repertoire of written and printed texts has never been so broad and rich, and the social range of impact of these texts has never been so vast. Writing and reading skills in the culture of our circle has become the obvious and almost universal equipment of a contemporary man, an important component of the civilization of the twentieth century, a necessary condition, although insufficient to participate in the audiovisual culture.

In order to consciously participate in audiovisual culture, one needs both knowledge on particular media and the communication practices that have arisen thanks to them and around them, as well as awareness of the huge consequences of the emergence of new media on the platform of communication and in the entire culture.

### **Features of contemporary media**

The main feature of the new media – which distinguishes them from the traditional word and image – is their immanent relationship with technology: the fact that they have been created in result of co-operation of a man with a “machine”. And this happens not only when it comes to duplicating or distributing a ready communicate, as it was already in the case of printing. Here, a machine is necessary first of all to create a communicate. The first machine of this kind was a camera (1839), recognized by the vast majority of early thinkers as an invention threatening the recognized tradition. From the beginning, it was hailed as a mechanism eliminating people from the creative process, imposing its own rules and subordinating them to itself. A machine dictates its conditions, enforces the behaviour it determines, and makes humans dependent. While a brush, a pen, or a flute were tools controlled by a man who was able to subordinate them to himself/herself, all mechanical or electronic technologies gain power over people.

This criticism was strengthened by further inventions at the end of the nineteenth century: phonography (1878–1888) and a film camera (1895). In the twentieth century, more and more complex technologies were supposed to intensify the threats associated with them and to increase the dependence of man on

machines. The belief about the devastating influence of technology on human life, born with the invention of a camera, has survived to the present day. At the same time, there were also (and still exist) enthusiasts of further inventions, who see in them, above all, the opportunity of development, of reaching the broadest audience, and the hope for overcoming various limitations.

The technological origin of the new media results in their specific properties – analogue semiotic matter of communicates, motivated character of signs, audio-visual form of expression, and indirectness of communication relations paired with a mass social range.

Photography and phonography, radio, as well as film and television are based on technical recording, on reproduction of images and sounds in the reality chosen by producers or staged by them. This process establishes a permanent relationship based on the similarity between what appears in front of the camera or microphone, and what has been recorded in a communicate. This so-called photographic relationship provides an analogue form of semiotic matter. At the same time, the signs of these media gain motivation because their meanings are rooted in mechanically fixed presentations. Thus, the new media communicates have a special relationship with reality: the analogue relationship, motivated, contrary to spoken, written, or printed language. The natural language in all its forms uses abstract and arbitrary signs. The relations of language and reality are of an abstract nature at all levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical. Also in speech, the general principles of language abstraction are implemented. The arbitrary of language signs consists of the lack of a natural connection between the sonic or graphic form of the sign and its content and meaning.

The analogous, motivated nature of the new media is closely linked to their audiovisual nature. These media record above all anthropological situations – human beings facing the most varied life circumstances – revealing the multidimensionality and dynamism of interaction, “perceptual reciprocity”, behavioural feedbacks, their complex syntax, and relationships of behaviour and context and combine it into one audiovisual entity. The audiovisual messages produced in this way repeat, quote, and actualize the established reality in a specific manner. Therefore, the communicative status of such messages is based on a constant oscillation between the power of illusion in evoking the real world and the consciousness of the internal organization of the communicate and the meaning-creating intentions of the performers. At the same time, audiovisuality, which is inherently phantasmic, appeals to our direct, everyday experience. Contact with recorded anthropological situations is clearly different from contact with printed texts or speech, even if the latter also speak about people in the most diverse

circumstances. Contrary to abstract and arbitrary language signs, new media communicates use the entire situational, analogue, and audiovisual blocks, and their meanings are motivated in reality; therefore, they have a completely different semiotic character than verbal texts.

All media based on analogue technical reproduction establish an indirect type of contact between senders and recipients<sup>53</sup>. Although, it is the same in the case of writing or printing, critics of the new media pay special attention to the collision of indirect communicative contact with the phantom nature of audiovisual communicates, which have gone far in simulation of reality, but actually are satisfied with simulation. Recipients of the new media are always spectators, they are outside of the events taking place, they are isolated from them, and deprived of the possibility of active action. Indirect contact implies substitute, imitative experiences, and enforces unambiguous passivity. This feature of the new media raises the critics' anxiety, the more so as media communicates are more and more related not only to the world of fiction – as it was in artistic works in general – but to reality. In defence of the new media, it can be noticed that the feature of intermediation enormously expands and enlarges our knowledge about events and human behaviours. A spectator, who is outside the situation and by definition cannot take part in it, is able yet to seek distance, careful observation and analysis, and emotional and intellectual activity. Perhaps the spontaneity of the actions of others may be supplemented with their reflections, and the authenticity of the experiences of the “actors” may be completed with an effort to read the meanings and to evaluate them.

Contemporary media create on a mass scale technical conditions of access to communicates for participants of culture. Mass access – often not only potential, but also real – causes standardization and schematization of transmitted content and forms. Mass quality associated with the very creation, as well as with the reception, undoubtedly contributes to the egalitarian shift in participation in culture, to the democratization of the entire culture. On the other hand, it launches powerful commercial mechanisms related to market, consumption, and fashions.

The newest digital media, computer and the Internet, accumulate previously known semantic repertoires and use both analogue and abstract signs. On the other hand, motivation of their signs disappears for all of them arise as a result of mathematical operations as information packs, and not by technical

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53 Cf. especially: John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1995.

registration. The relationship of digital communicates with reality can repeat the situation of language signs – not having natural connections with reality and referring to it abstractly. It can also be based on similarity, refer to common experiences, and be audiovisual. For the computer simulation can be very similar to photography or movie sequence. Thanks to subsequent data compression, digital media develop towards audiovisuality (CD-ROM, DVD, and Blue-ray), in a specific way repeating audiovisual experiments of the earlier media. Just like analogue media are based on indirect communication and enable mass social access.

At the same time, all signalled features, although common, are shared by particular media – film, television, and the Internet – in their own peculiar way.

However, the newest digital media has other specific features: they are virtual, multi-media-based, and interactive.

Virtuality defines the mode of existence of a communicate, which is not an independent physical being: it occurs only in the digital space, although it functions as if it was physical. The base of multimedia character is the digital denominator, to which a communicate of any kind – written text, speech, music, computer animation, and video – can be reduced. Interactivity assumes co-participation of a user in creation of meanings, mutual openness of a communication and its user to a specific dialogue, to feedback. Certain versions of those features occurred in the earlier media, and now – when digital media become attractive and popular – analogue media try to emphasize their ability to show similar properties, in particular by developing interactivity. At the same time, digital versions of analogue technologies and devices are created: CDs, cellular telephony, digital cameras, digital radio platforms, digital film, and television. This trend may be conducive to “equalization” of features typical to the new and the newest media.

### **Platform of communication**

Before the emergence of audiovisual media, the platform of communication was dominated by press, as well as literature, theatre, music, and paintings. As the new media arrived, the platform became more and more widespread and diverse. Communication practices that developed in relation to functioning of media in the social space created multitude of broadcasters, authors, experts, producers, and mass recipients; they became more and more popular, embracing more and more areas of culture. While the previous media – perhaps with an exception for the press – were quite elitist, and in any case specialized and limited to not very large, adequately prepared audience, the new media established practices based



on rules requiring certain skills, but directed to much wider audience. In the twentieth century, the platform of communication faced an extremely dynamic development of the press – in particular illustrated press – dense network of cinemas, radio, and television; mass circulation of bestsellers<sup>54</sup>, postcards and cartoons, book albums, and audio records; dissemination of professional and amateur photography; popularity of video recorders; and impact of telecommunications and multimedia computers, connecting millions of computers to the global Network (though not yet in Poland). Contemporary technologies, combined with appropriate economic, social, political, and educational conditions, broadened the scope of social communication, and over the time enabled its functioning on a global scale.

One of the basic problems of communication in the twentieth century is its mass aspect. Initially, the scale of dissemination of media seemed to meet the great expectations of society. The acceptance of the mass audience, which new media encountered, was universal, except for some elitist groups. The prevailing system was characterized by the fact that relatively few broadcasters directed their communicates to a large number of recipients. The anxiety of the elite was caused by the one-way flow of information, the concept of an average recipient, the “everything for everyone” principle, and therefore the threat of homogenization of transmitted content and unification of the reception, degradation of real values and of authentic creativity, and ease of manipulation, especially in the conditions of political monopoly and the pressure of influential groups’ interest. Then the media gradually pluralized, gave up the concept of an average recipient; they noticed that the recipients are very diverse, have different needs, interests, predilections, and that it is profitable for media to respond primarily to them, especially since the ability to actually influence specific views and behaviours of the audience turned out to be very limited. Hence the gradual diversity of offers – of particular stations, channels, and programs. Video recorders offered technical opportunity for the viewer to become independent from regular programs. This process was to find a strong support in the newest interactive media. The foundation of their functioning is the absence of a central broadcaster, the access of all users to all information, and the fact that – by the virtue of assumption – users are not only recipients, but also senders. At the same time, the exceptionally broad social address remains in force. The basic issue of the audience is the choice, the ability to choose adequately.

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54 Ed. note: see: John Sutherland, *Bestsellers. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2007.

Another important problem of contemporary communication is its relationship with art, for the latter ceased to be the main domain of the former. But the new media were usually emerging under the strong influence of art, they benefited from its models (for example, film from literature); they wanted to contribute to dissemination of art (for example, photography popularized visual arts); and they also wanted to continue the traditions and artistic achievements in their programs and on their websites. Moreover, the new media may themselves be art: it has been proved by artistic photography, auteur cinema, teleplays, and music recordings. In turn, contemporary art feeds on phenomena in the domain of communication, refers to them, and comments on them. Social communication, however, goes beyond the domain of art; it merges with everyday life, becoming a part of it; it is focused primarily on the exchange of information, on communication between people in the public sphere. It is organized by professionals, but anyone can become an initiator or an author of a significant message, and all interested parties can participate in the exchange of opinions. Communication is not a temporarily “lower” or “worse” art, but it is a complex combination of cultural phenomena different from art. Art and communication have different assumptions, goals, and tasks, although the zones of their activities overlap and they can compete with each other for popularity and recognition.

A separate place on the platform of communication is occupied by forms of art related to the newest media – in particular multimedia art. Its current form clearly differs from the previously known forms. It is caused by its virtual and digital character that allows combination and integration of verbal, pictorial, and sonic components<sup>55</sup>. However, this is not just because of different ontological status. Manifestations of such art are often difficult to distinguish from projects that do not define themselves as artistic. In this blurring of clear boundaries between art and non-art, multimedia coincides with the process of changes present in twentieth-century art.

As it was already mentioned, advertising became a popular means of contemporary communication – also in Polish realities. It appears in all media, new and old, as well as the newest ones. It conquered not only the market of production and consumption, but also the presumably non-commercial values. It promotes not only products and brands, but also lifestyles. It is certainly still a “propeller of trade” and, at the same time, it intensifies circulation of information. Although critics accuse advertising of manipulating emotions of potential customers, it

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55 Cf.: Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, *Sztuka multimedialna*, in: *Nowe media...*; idem, *Spoleczeństwo informacyjne. Cyberkultura. Sztuka multimedialna*, Krakow: Rabid 2001.

seems to be primarily a game of communication with specific rules, played by both sides of the advertising message. Recipients are usually able to decipher a multilevel construction of advertising message, in which a significant role is played by aesthetics, with references to ancient and modern art.

The main questions at the platform of communication address current and future coexistence of old and the new media. Is everything that we call the “Gutenberg Galaxy” doomed to disappear from this platform in the face of expansion of the newest media? Will books – a physical form of verbal and pictorial records – withstand competition with the newest media?<sup>56</sup> Perhaps the culture of printing will survive in social communication, because – as experience teaches – the character of the platform of communication is cumulative. Besides, books are objects that in some cases seem to be more functional than a monitor filled with electronic letters, and, above all, the Library understood as a symbol of a collection of books shows more common properties with hypertext than it could seem to an audience focused on emphasizing differences rather than similarities.

### **Disputes about culture**

Communication has always been an important aspect of culture within its various fields. But in the twentieth century, the impact of media on culture has become particularly noticeable. Changes in the basic components of the communication process in comparison with the nineteenth-century tradition were quickly noticed: the presence of machines and technology in the creative process and the related threat to the artist’s position; new, mass audience: living from own labour, having some free time, unlike the well-educated audience, accustomed with tradition. Also the new type of communication was different from the previous type, based mainly on analogue information, on a visual and sonic (later: audiovisual) language, containing not very high content, and circulating in various social circuits.

In parallel to the development of social communication throughout the twentieth century, there is a great discussion about the changes taking place. This discussion concentrates on the problems of cultural evolution, technological progress, and social transformations. It touches on the opposition between democratization and aristocratism, between mass and elite, between low and

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56 Ed. note: see: Jean-Claude Carrieré, Umberto Eco, *This Is not the End of the Book*, A conversation curated by Jean-Philippe de Tonnac, translated from French by Polly McLean, London: Harvill Secker 2011.

high values and circuits, as well as dilemmas related to the influence of factors of the evolution of culture on the situation of creativity and the type of personality. This discussion includes also the dispute about evaluation of current phenomena, basic values, and the shape of our culture.

Processes that democratize culture were already criticized throughout the entire nineteenth century. American culture in particular aroused both curiosity and fears of European observers. In the advanced industrial countries, such novelties as universal education with compulsory courses of reading and writing caused some people's anxiety as a harbinger of the advancement of lower classes, while other people saw it as a chance for shaping the consciousness of the masses. The twentieth-century disputes had several phases; I will try to discuss them in short.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, when the so-called first threshold of massification was reached – big circulation of press, dense network of cinemas, and popularization of radio were accompanied with intensification and sharpening of criticism of culture. There is an agreement as far as the very direction of the evolution of culture is concerned. This direction is considered not as a result of conscious choices of individuals or groups, but as a result of a combination of many factors and the effect of supra-individual mechanisms. It means a gradual, irreversible departure of the way of life from the nature and the irreversible process of socialization associated with the development of functional social bonds. The consent regarding the inevitability of changes results in fundamentally different assessments of this fact. For some, it is a disaster of culture, for others a source of its valuable development. For catastrophists, the emergence of new social classes is the rebellion of masses against traditional systems that guaranteed high culture and true values. According to pessimists, the antinomy of culture and social justice – due to the ethical necessity of solidarity with the excluded – finds a solution in the emancipation of the masses, but also in the degradation of art. In the opinion of optimists, the social advance of the oppressed classes is not an obstacle, but a condition for the actual massification and dissemination of culture. Besides, for them “the mass” is not a formless crowd, it consists of social groups aware of their interests. Not only in the eyes of optimists, the proletariat appears as an example of people disinherited from prosperity and culture, and solidarity with them – regardless of the evaluation of evolutionary processes – becomes a matter of ethical choice.

In the view of opponents of the observed process of the evolution of culture, technological progress forces the development of industry, urbanization, machine-based production, and mechanical division of labour; it mechanizes and reifies relationships between people and puts an individual into the routine

of finite repertoire of social roles and masks. According to its supporters, the expansion of technology allows not only machine-based production, but also an increase in prosperity and consumption; it also liberates time, previously intended for work only. There is no reason to fetishize a machine that turns out to be just a tool in the hands of people, yet one cannot ignore the anthropological impact of technology; a city is not only a place of negative phenomena, but also an environment closely related to culture of the new class, and also triggers a completely new aesthetic sensitivity (street, cinema, storefronts, advertising, and radio).

Changes caused by social and technical factors create a framework for the development of the new media, communication practices, and the entire social communication. The emerging new culture – the mass culture – in the eyes of its critics, is determined by fatalism of technical means and a broad quantitative range. Sentenced to simplification, homogenization, and mediocrity, it becomes a substitute for authentic and direct experiences. It degrades creativity and creators; even the most individual actions become the property of the crowd. Advertising neutralizes rebellious reactions. Democratization does not create good conditions for individual creativity, for it suggests a ready repertoire of patterns; individual values are doomed to be lost in the name of community interests.

Defenders of mass culture claim that it grows out of real needs and interests in everyday affairs, elementary forms of relations between people. It is important for satisfying psychosocial needs, socialization processes, and social integration. On the other hand, creativity is not an exceptional expression and, like all human cultural activity, it consists in building a significant order in opposition to the chaos of nature. Individualism, understood as the search for identity, as conscious self-creation, depends on selection from the repertoire of possibilities present in culture. Filmmaking is an example of proper approach of contemporary artist to technology and to the new culture.

In the discussions conducted after World War II, the categories, as well as the nodal points of polemics, clearly changed. The notions of “crowd”, “rebellion of the masses”, “proletariat”, and “class struggle” disappear, replaced by a new working class, a new middle class, and above all, an industrial society. Everyone emphasizes the progress of industrialization, reaching the second threshold of massification due to the rapid spread of television, emergence of the cultural industry, and internationalization of the market of cultural goods; the concept of a global village is formulated. Audience is discussed in terms of a mass and an average and universal recipient. After the successes of cinema, which attracted representatives of various traditional cultures, a corrective-integrative role of the

new media was noticed. In the standardization of media offers, an opportunity to equalize social differences and overcome cultural barriers was noticed.

Within the mass culture and the cultural industry, the basic contradiction was detected between the tendency to centralize, control, and standardize production and the tendency to consume constantly new products, expecting an individualized product: “a bit the same, and a bit different”. This contradiction was to provide creativity with relative autonomy. The dynamics of the developed mass culture was to be determined by the demand of mass consumers for creative audiovisual ideas. At the same time, the categories of high culture and low culture are still in use – some see a fundamental gap between them, while the others to a greater or lesser extent assume mutual flows between them.

However, considering technical progress as the highest value, the requirement of maximum production and maximum efficiency do not allow disputants to be too optimistic. The industrial society dehumanizes, reduces the aspirations of individuals to quantitative goals (more and more to own, more and more to use), and shapes one-dimensional man and the outside-controllable personality. Critics of mass culture do not see chances of self-realization for an individual – passive attitude, escaping the problem of one’s own freedom and responsibility, as well as permanent anxiety lead to conformism, which neither provides a sense of security nor meet human need of certainty. Among the allegations against the culture of industrial society, the disappearance of privacy is mentioned: once it was a privilege of the upper classes, and now seems to be a necessary condition for the effective development of each individual.

I think that the problems of developed culture of the industrial society and its negative impact primarily on the personality structure dominate in the second phase of the twentieth-century’s disputes over the culture. Mass culture, although it is rather considered low, is no longer evaluated only negatively – even by its critics. Changes in the class structure, further presence of art, although mainly in high circuits, the place for creativity also in low circuits – all these elements caused the critical impetus to turn towards industrial society and conditions funded by technology that negatively affect people and their personalities.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, cultural disputes entered a new phase. The newest media – video, computer, and the Internet – entered the platform of communication. Now the basic concepts include: information society; next to the mass audience – PC users; next to mass reception – interactivity; and next to central or plural senders – a decisive decentralization of sending-receiving processes. The de-massification processes are also referred to mass media – previously strongly criticized for the allegedly determining impact. Issues of social structure with relative prosperity and problems of cultural barriers with

the growing level of education are put on the back, while the consumerist, popular lifestyle is being criticized. The debate focuses on problems related to new technologies and new phenomena created by the information society.

The focus is on the new way of existence of digital information in opposition to analogue information and its impact on perception of people. There is a category of simulacra, simulative representations that, due to the lack of physical references to reality, may disturb our orientation in the world and the ability to distinguish the reality of direct experiences from being in cyberspace. In the opinion of critics of the newest technologies, an individual may become dependent on the drug-like effects of screens.

Computerization present in many dimensions of social and individual life is a source of concerns. Some discussants are particularly concerned about the effectiveness of computer methods of diagnosing, planning, and making decisions. However, the possibilities of forming new social ties, based both on direct relations and on functioning in cyberspace, reflect concepts of electronic villages and Internet communities.

The condition of creativity changes fundamentally. It turns out that in fact it is one of the forms of cultural activity and does not differ fundamentally from other behaviours. Some critics question the creative nature of interactivity; they see in it a dialogue with the machine and they think that it cannot be conducive to creativity for it is guided by the rules imposed by the machine. Thus, it is evident that the negative opinion about any creative relationships between man and machine has been in force for two centuries. Others, in turn, are inclined to interpret interactivity in terms of creativity and self-realization, and want to see it as a great opportunity for “post-mass” culture. According to the pessimists, the technology has now become an especially dangerous enemy of people. It gains power over human thoughts, emotions, and actions; in its extraordinary development, and the degree of complexity, there is a justification to subordinate all cultural activity to it.

Twentieth-century cultural disputes about culture constantly revolve around its alleged and real threats and opportunities, caused in large part by the technical nature of the media.

## **Reconfiguration of social communication**

In recent years, due to digitization, changes have been taking place rapidly. The accumulation of communication-related practices and experiences is accompanied by an extraordinary rhythm of change. Verbal culture, first based on speech and non-verbal behaviours, and then on the dominance of writing and printing,

has been taking shape for many centuries. Audiovisual culture has been developing for over a hundred years, and recently quite rapidly. We cannot wait with the recognition of this new situation of media until the results could be seen from the distance. Hence the attempt of a preliminary and perhaps risky diagnosis.

In order to become aware of the importance of transformations, to which we are witnesses and participants, the short-term perspective is not sufficient. Such an overview may distort the understanding of phenomena and processes, disturb the proportions between the old and the new, between continuity and change. The pace and rhythm of today's changes and our entanglement in these processes induce me to create a distance by referring to the distant and furthest past and to use Braudel's perspective of *longue durée*<sup>57</sup>.

Today, we can see consolidation of the conviction that people's communication is the foundation and the frame of every society and every culture. Its forms, conditioned by civilization, are coupled with the ways of thinking and perception of the world, imagination, and collective memory, with a type of social bonds. The fundamental transformation of social communication, which triggers and signals the transformation of the whole culture, I call **reconfiguration**.

Such reconfiguration has already happened once, so far – once in history: in ancient Greece. It was a transformation of a culture based on orality into a culture that uses script. Thanks to the amazing possibilities of the phonetic alphabet invented around seventh century BCE, this change would encompass the entire universe of culture. In the slow, gradual process of lasting centuries, the pre-written orality of the Homer's times has transformed into the epoch of Plato's writing.

As a result of the analysis of speech and its division into some twenty components – the smallest elements possible to be combined, separately meaningless, yet possibly meaning anything, if arranged properly – a phonetic alphabet was created. Sounds of speech supported by body language could be re-coded, translated into visually memorized communicates. Everything that has been expressed in direct communication so far has gained the possibility of formulation by means of a finite number of abstract characters in the form of written texts and allowed for the reception in another place and at other times by many readers. Collective experiencing and remembering of content in a direct encounter was replaced by individual act of writing and individual act of reading a text. The oral language, based on the flow of sounds and behaviours,

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57 Cf.: Fernand Braudel, *On History*, transl. Siân Reynolds, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980 [original French edition: *Ecrits sur l'histoire*, Paris: Flammarion 1969].



was effectively reproduced in script. The language of writing ceased to be part of the speaking “ego”; it separated itself from a person and became autonomous, and the conversion could encompass the entire universe of communication. It was a fundamental change.

The oral era, which under the influence of alphabet was to evolve, created a specific type of culture<sup>58</sup>. The oral language, subordinated to the easy memorizing of the content, was based on typical themes, known word formulas, fixed word order; frequent repetitions, rhythmic composition of speech combined with the dynamics of behaviourally shaped specific cognitive and mental structures, the world of pre-literary imagination and memory. The primary oral communication is constituted by memorizing and repeating.

From the middle of the twentieth century the transformation of orality into literacy was thoroughly studied and presented with great expertise by Walter Jackson Ong, Jack Goody, and Eric Alfred Havelock<sup>59</sup>. They determined that the volatility and dynamism of speech replaced the linearly fixed, static record; that the statements of priests, prophets, and singers in the presence and with the participation of the audience were turned into detached stages of writing a manuscript and reading it in an unchanging form. An oral spectacle with the range limited by the volume of the performer’s voice was to be replaced by silent reading of a text anywhere and at any time, separated from the act of its creation. At the same time, the reading enabled a specific encounter with the author who was present in the text, even though the partnership and the mutual interaction of participants of a direct meeting transformed into diverse roles of an author and recipients, as well as indirect forms of communication.

This reconfiguration of social communication as a result of the popularization of writing provided a new type of storing the content, now infinitely more effective: it established an “artificial memory”, open and unlimited, which enabled collecting and developing knowledge; it introduced abstract concepts and ideas, formal categories, linear order of thinking, cause-and-effect consciousness,

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58 Cf.: Stefan Żółkiewski, *Teksty kultury*, Warsaw: PWN 1988; cf. also M. Hopfinger, *Stefan Żółkiewski — teoretyk kultury*, in: *Sporne postaci polskiej literatury współczesnej. Krytycy*, eds. Alina Brodzka-Wald, Tomasz Żukowski, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 2003.

59 Cf.: Walter Jackson Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London–New York: Routledge 1982; Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986; Eric Alfred Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1986.

“logic of writing” (Goody), and “alphabetical mind” (Havelock). Preserving communicates, their detachment from a person and a situation of creation resulted in a specific autonomy of written texts, which gained the so-called objective status. Besides, writing required learning not only through imitation. And human experience could be captured and expressed by means of letters of alphabet.

Script allowed to record every event or situation, every feeling or thought. Thanks to it, our natural roots in speech gained a new, extremely important dimension: the possibility of distancing from internal sensations and impressions, experiences, and thoughts. We gained self-awareness. Written texts constructed history, traditions, and continuity. And at the same time they opened new horizons, allowed for addendums, comments, and interpretations. As Michael Heim put it, the script has become a means to “putting our thoughts before us, for opening mental contents to criticism and analysis”<sup>60</sup>. The changes took place gradually, including only selected spheres of life and few experts. But a written text became the main tool of social communication, especially in matters considered important. Author and reader, sender, recipient, and intermediary institutions became the basic components of the new situation for communication, and at the same time the source of the division into elites and masses, and the basis for the distinction between the high culture and the low culture.

The invention of alphabet, which allowed for so many quality changes, in fact functioned in a limited dimension – it included only a small part of the experience and a relatively small number of those who could use the signs of script. However, the power and impact of this communication practice caused that written texts addressed the fundamentally important issues for the culture, and people who formulated them created philosophy, science, and literature.

Only Gutenberg’s invention in the mid-fifteenth century completed the manuscript phase of reconfiguration of social communication based on the phonetic alphabet in Western culture. Thanks to technical possibilities, printing initiated the process of mechanical multiplication of a text. The epoch of print, known as the “Gutenberg galaxy”, perpetuated the great change caused by writing. It also introduced many new elements considered to be the cause of a deep media-related transformation.

Movable types, a wooden printing press, woodcut casts could effectively compete with the handwritten work of copyists and draftsmen. They paved the way

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60 Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, New York: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 31.

for changes noticeable relatively quickly, and contributed to long-term changes. First of all, it was possible to print more copies, faster and cheaper. Parchment was replaced by paper. Scroll was replaced by codex. A copyist's desk was replaced by a printing workshop. The repertoire of texts coming out from the printing press varied, including: brochures and books, press prototypes, then daily press and periodicals, calendars and posters, maps, and diagrams. Printing enabled multiplication of images. The manuscript books contained drawn or painted miniatures. Printed books were first illustrated with the woodcut technique, then copper engraving and lithography.

The printing technique not only greatly accelerated the flow of information. It stabilized the contents of books circulating in unequal copies, indirectly mobilizing [authors] to create new ones. It standardized patterns of printed texts. And the first printed book was the Bible, widely available to secular readers.

The new communication tool was at least conducive to the formation of national languages. Historians of language believe that printers contributed to the unification of the rules of spelling and grammar. In this new situation, the importance of authors, writers, literary professions, and the rank of authorship grew. Institutions of copyright law and censorship were established to regulate the dynamically expanding domain of culture.

This technical invention had a positive effect on the flourishing of modern science, revolutionized all its fields and enabled new methods of collection, transmission, and retrieval of data. Libraries allowed to use many books without the necessity to copy them; they became not only book storages, but centres of exchange of ideas between particular readers. An international elite of scholars emerged.

At the same time, the demand for the production of printing houses increased due to the spread of education, educational institutions, and universities. And the ability to read and write became increasingly necessary for developing economies and societies. Long-term transformations caused by the introduction of printing and their civilizational and cultural implications were revealingly described by Marshall McLuhan and Elisabeth Eisenstein<sup>61</sup>.

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61 Cf.: Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1966; Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2005. (Polish edition [transl. Henryk Hollender, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka 2004] contains an interesting afterword: H. Hollender, *Czy świat czeka przyszłość średniowiecza?*); Jan Pirożyński, *Wynalazek druku jako czynnik sprawczy wielkiej*

Printed books and the press met primarily with industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of literacy. Since the nineteenth century, the printing trade itself has undergone the process of mechanization and industrialization. It introduced metal types, monotype and linotype, heliogravure, and rotogravure. In 1903, printing industry applied offset, and in the mid-twentieth century, photo-composition gained popularity. The next novelty will be owed to the computer technology.

Gradually, the areas and domains covered by the transformation based on the phonetic alphabet grew. Great progress in the field of various publications, including methods of production and distribution of the book, enormous numbers of copies of various publications, increase of leisure time, democratization of skills, and the habit of reading caused the gain of number of real participants in the sphere of social communication connected with printing and become the domain of universal custom<sup>62</sup>. Written words published in print dominated the communication's consciousness. Not only philosophy, science, or art, but also everyday life could not do without script and print.

Only the reconfiguration of social communication caused by script and supplemented by print fully reveals the complex, multiphase, deep but centuries-long transformation of the entire culture. During the long period of complex changes, participants of culture simultaneously use the previously developed practices and forms based on manuscript and oral transmission. They demonstrate the ability to use the accumulated communication skills, and the platform of communication reveals its cumulative character: all known ways of communication can be found there, although they change their functions.

This was the result of the first fundamental reconfiguration of social communication which happened in two phases: script and print – a reconfiguration based on the phonetic alphabet, the “first digital medium” (Levinson)<sup>63</sup>.

Are we currently observing a new reconfiguration? That is my thesis. The reconnaissance carried out in the past makes it possible to see the premises of another great change in the nineteenth century – preserving an image on the photograph and setting it in motion by means of a cinematograph, recording voice, music, and specific sounds by phonographic techniques. The great media

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*rewolucji i zarazem długiej ewolucji medialnej*, in: idem, *Johannes Gutenberg i początki ery druku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2002.

62 Cf. e.g.: Robert Escarpit, *Book Revolution*, London–Toronto: Harrap 1966.

63 Paul Levinson, *The Soft Edge: A Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution*, London and New York: Routledge 1997.

change took place in the twentieth century thanks to radio and vinyl LP, by adding soundtrack to a moving image, and finally thanks to audiovisual television. These technologies allowed for visual, pictorial, auditory, and audiovisual recordings of situations and events that could previously be expressed primarily by words in written and printed texts. The period between the end of the 1830s (when the invention of a camera was announced) and approximately the mid-twentieth century (when television won large audiences) was the time of dissemination of communicates that transformed communication based on script and print into a distinctly different – analogue audiovisual – communication.

This transformation was based on the ennoblement of image, on empowerment of non-verbal – both visual and audial – dimensions of communication, in formation of completely new signs. These signs differ fundamentally from the abstract and arbitrary character of the writing – they are analogue and motivated, based on technical reproduction of staged or real situations; they provide an analogue form of semiotic matter of communicates; and they are characterized by relation of similarity. Their meanings rooted in mechanically fixed presentations gain motivation. With time, visual and audial elements integrate, and the audiovisuality of signs strengthens the impression of similarity, reveals the multidimensionality and dynamism of established situations, and their semantic relationship with the context.

This new articulation transforms our experience of the world and impacts audiovisual perception. Everything that had been pushed into the background by dominant written communication, now re-gained its position, and re-integrated verbal and non-verbal behaviours into perception. Thanks to these registering techniques, participants of contemporary world for the first time could see themselves and others in fixed frames and sequences. Only now they have gained a distance to their images, to their own behaviours, and to their relationships with others. They could develop a completely new quality of audiovisual self-awareness.

However, although analogue audiovisual codes allow audiovisual translation of various aspects of our experience, they do not transcode the entire universe of script and print. They incorporate verbal structures into their communicates and use their various functions. Moreover, they recognize the metacultural role of language as a system, as a code of codes of culture.

The phantom nature of audiovisual signs combined with their analogue and motivated character creates foundations of a communication status different from verbal texts. It is based on permanent oscillation between the power of illusion in recalling the real world and the awareness of the inner organization of a communicate and semantic intentions of its creators/implementers.

The content of ephemeral speech and body language in the oral era could only be stored by memory. Writing became the guarantor of stability of text. Printing ensured its multiplication with possible illustrations. The analogue phase of audiovisual communication allows for multitude of copies of transmitted communicates, and it makes its texts available differently – through their transmission from the broadcasting centres to numerous individual radio listeners and TV viewers. It established the so-called mass audience and strengthened the division of communication roles into senders/authors and recipients. Besides individual authors, there were numerous co-authors of particular fragments of texts implemented in hierarchically organized institutions and centres. Multistage intermediary institutions developed between authors and recipients. Recipients, educated to participate in culture of writing and printing, are not institutionally prepared to participate in audiovisual communication, in which they willingly participate in large numbers, and after over a century's presence of cinema, eight decades of radio, and over six decades of television negative views of critics about media and their recipients that differ from writing still prevail.

This entirely new type of communicates broadened the repertoire of forms of indirect communication and significantly increased its role in the experiences of participants of culture. It certainly changed our perception, greatly increased the range and type of experienced impressions and discoveries of meanings. It transformed our understanding of the world<sup>64</sup>.

Moreover, audiovisuality is conducive to positioning of social communication in the centre of culture. Especially television shapes and equips the social horizon in binary mode: to be or not to be. What appears beyond its screen seems to be absent or it has difficulty to break into the collective consciousness<sup>65</sup>.

I think that the analogue phase of audiovisuality is the “missing link” in the ongoing process of transcoding and strengthening multidimensional anthropological situation and human experience – from rock paintings through alphabetical writing to digitalization. That is why I interpret these transformations as a preliminary and analogue phase of the second reconfiguration of social communication in the history of culture.

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64 I wrote about it in a more detailed way in: *Kultura współczesna...; W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993; *Kultura audiowizualna...; Doświadczenia audiowizualne. O mediach i kulturze współczesnej*, Warsaw: Sic! 2003.

65 Cf.: Manuel Castells, *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar 2004.

The next phase of the great change, the reconfiguration that we are currently observing, I call the digital phase.

Digital techniques based on a zero-one system form the foundation for the transcoding of all known ways and forms of communication<sup>66</sup>. Electronic script on a computer screen repeats the possibilities of language signs. Computer also becomes a processor of audio files, graphic files, and audiovisual files. Digital common denominator allows to write texts of any kind in the new system. It covers the entire repertoire of social communication, the full range of our experiences. This is the revolutionary nature of this innovation, which triggers far-reaching consequences and is of fundamental importance to the reconfiguration that takes place currently.

Every communicate, regardless of its semiotic matter, can obtain a digital form. This situation redefines relationship between signs, facilitates direct proximity of different signs in the same communicate, and various texts next to each other. So far, the induced changes are called “hybridization”. The difference of semiotic matter, which until now was the basis for distinguishing of phenomena and domains of culture, loses its validity.

The so-called hybridization, on many levels, is fostered by the Network – the next basic discriminant of the digital phase. “Network” means here not only the Internet, but also mobile phone networks. They form a common virtual communication space and shape the components of the communication in a new way. Besides its multimedia character, other constitutive features of the Internet constellation are the built-in mechanisms of interactivity.

Hypertext, consisting of files and links, opens the communicate for multiple transformations, for building mutable sequences and contexts, for information flows, for a constant change of the Network’s resources. The autonomy of text is no longer clear, and distinctiveness of the genre loses its distinguishing power. Convergence becomes an important descriptive category<sup>67</sup>.

The author is still “alive”, although his/her current role is subject to reformulation, and the author of the software – who sets out the prerequisites necessary to use the program – appears indispensably next to him/her. Collective authorship also becomes more popular. Recipients turn into users, which emphasizes their

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66 Cf.: Umberto Eco, *From Internet to Gutenberg*, “Blesok” 2000, nr 16; Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1999.

67 Cf.: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: New York University Press 2006.

activity necessary to participate in communication. They can not only construct hypertext for themselves, but also, at any time, formulate their own statements that enter the resources of the entire Network, as well as collaborate in collective projects.

Institutional intermediation is strongly reduced here, and the one-way communication, characteristic of the phase of analogue media, gives way to a multidirectional one: everyone can not only receive or use the WWW, but also [everybody can] place their own texts. The next step in removing institutional intermediaries is the prospect of communication between particular users and their self-organization to participate in joint ventures.

Various aspects of digital phenomena were discussed in numerous works<sup>68</sup>.

The digital phase of audiovisual reconfiguration – which itself has gone through the path of audiovisualization – quickly overcomes space and time in a manner which has never been reached before. The digital communication can be immediate and global. It strengthens the essentially indirect nature of communication forms, at the same time intensifying it. It has been considered that participation in it, in contrast to the analogue phase, requires special preparation.

The zero-one script allows you to recode the entire communication universe. This possibility appears in history for the second time. In view of the cumulative nature of the platform of communication, digital texts remain parallel to written and printed forms as well as analogue audiovisual forms. Convergence plays an important role in mutual relations on the entire platform. The effects of the digital phase of the reconfiguration are experienced in more and more areas of our lives.

The perspective of *longue durée* allows, firstly, to perceive the beginning of today's changes in the time of formation and development of the audiovisual type of culture (analogue phase); secondly – to note and appreciate the importance of the contemporary transformations we are witnessing (digital phase);

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68 Cf. e.g.: J. D. Bolter, *Turing's Man: Western Culture in the Computer Age*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 1984; Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2001; M. Castells, *The Network Society...*; Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, *Spółczesność informacyjna. Cyberkultura. Sztuka multimedialna*, Krakow: Rabid 2001; Piotr Sitarski, *Rozmowa z cyfrowym cieniem. Model komunikacyjny rzeczywistości wirtualnej*, Krakow: Rabid 2002; Język @ multimedia, eds. Agnieszka Dytman-Stasieńko, Jan Stasieńko, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005; Michał Ostrowicki, *Wirtualne realia. Estetyka w epoce elektroniki*, Krakow: Universitas 2006; E. Szczęśna, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemietyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warsaw: Wydział Polonistyki UW 2007.



thirdly, to connect both phases, the analogue and the digital, and to see them together as one great process of change: the second reconfiguration of social communication and the entire culture in history; and fourthly, in my opinion, the significance of digitalization – which included script and print, as well as analogue audiovisual media – for the current change is equal to the significance of phonetic alphabet for transformation of orality into the culture of writing and printing.



### 3 A common language

#### Metacultural function of natural language

I assume that there is a variety of literature carriers nowadays. However, when literature is connected with any of its carriers – print, audio, or digital recording – it is immersed in linguistic matter, and language is its basic building material. Language is also present in electronic media, yet differently, either as the main element (a digital record of a literary work) or as a component of the material in audio and audiovisual communicates. Regardless of whether we associate with verbal statements or those based on verbal signs in combination with other signs, language is necessary to read them. Even if a communicate contains no verbal elements at all, language is still necessary to fully understand it.

Language is in fact the main code of culture and performs basic functions related to the understanding and interpretation of components of social communication; it also serves for translation operations between various messages, between various systems within culture. Moreover, everyone is equipped with language regardless of ones' origin, education, or place in social structure. Language creates a specific communication infrastructure for participants of every culture, including the contemporary one, and the language domain is common for literature and for media – for their creation and reception, for their functioning in social space. Language enables inter-semiotic translation and enables the participants of the culture to navigate on various domains and phenomena<sup>69</sup>.

When it is said that invasion of images takes away the meaning of words, supersedes and denies them, that it eliminates language from culture, and in result one can do without language today – these opinions do not have much in common with the real cultural situation. A human cannot reject language if he/she wants to communicate with other people. So what is the source of constantly repeated voices about the increasingly minor role of language in today's culture?

One of the reasons for this is the unprecedented presence of images<sup>70</sup>. This "invasion of images" is associated with a long process of transforming the type of culture from verbal to audiovisual and with a significant role played by images

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69 Cf.: Maryla Hopfinger, *Adaptacje filmowe utworów literackich. Problemy teorii i interpretacji*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974.

70 Cf.: Mieczysław Porębski, *Ikonosfera*, Warsaw: PIW 1972; Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, London: Macat 2018; Piotr Zawojński, *Elektroniczne obrazowości. Między sztuką a technologią*, Kielce: Wydawnictwo Szumacher 2000; *Formy estetyzacji*

in a new type of culture. The first sign of the enrichment of the traditional repertoire of images – drawings, paintings, and graphics – was the invention of photography patented in 1839<sup>71</sup>. It took a long time for photography, closely related to technical parameters, to win artists' favours and to gain autonomy. Graphic techniques, and especially photographic techniques, allowed for the multiplication of images. This provided a chance for a much more frequent presence of images in social space than in case of individual, original works. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, many new image-based forms of communication appeared: posters, postcards, picture stories, portfolios and albums with reproductions of paintings, portrait photographs, family photographs, commemorative photographs, and finally mobile photography. Illustrations became more frequent in books and journals. Such image-based communicates have become more common and more easily accessible than artistic creativity. They appeared in various social circuits and at the same time indicated ways that images would be more frequently and numerous reaching their recipients. The saturation of social communication with images increased their participation in building and transferring meanings. Image in the twentieth century began to fulfil the complex functions accompanying words; besides representation, it also plays independent semantic functions. The process of increasing the semantic role of images is done not so much at the cost of word as through the advancement of images<sup>72</sup>. This is accompanied by inner complication of image-based communicates, the meaning of which cannot be yet determined only by its similarity to realities or by intuition. The reception of image requires preparation and skills. Viewing became harder, more intricate and complex than before. There is no hope that simple osmosis is enough here, instead of learning. Watching, although not based on alphabet – or perhaps because of it – is just as difficult as reading, although this difficulty is expressed differently, like semantics without semiotics.

Significant advancement of image is strengthened by the development of audiovisual structures, which have become widely available in the sound cinema and television. Thanks to photography, and supported by word, they captivate the audience with a great similarity to real situations and (in effect) with

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*przestrzeni publicznej*, eds. Jan Stanisław Wojciechowski, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Warsaw: Instytut Kultury 1998.

71 Ed. note: In 1839 Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre invented and introduced worldwide the photographic process named after him daguerreotype.

72 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993.

apparent ease of interpreting them. However, contrary to common beliefs, their alleged semantic transparency and apparent simplicity based on the impression of similarity are the source of many misunderstandings and usually they are not sufficient to understand audiovisual communicates. At the same time, the analogue character of audiovisual films and television has no competition in the field of resembling the reality. From this point of view, every audiovisual communicate wins with a verbal text, but it does not mean that it deprives words of their meanings. The twentieth century opened new communication possibilities, striving for various new ways of recording and transmitting images, for their moving sequence, and for combining images with words. Verbal-pictorial, audiovisual, static, and mobile constructions are as important participants in social communication as verbal texts.

Today, the platform of communication besides word and image encompasses audiovisual signs. This undoubtedly changes the condition of word, yet neither invalidates it nor excludes it, which anyway would not be possible if we consider language to be an inalienable equipment of a human. The change of the word's situation depends, among other things, on the appearance of a new, audiovisual, semiotic matter, thanks to which new signs are added to the existing ones. They become, in a sense, competitive to the word. Now, when the repertoire of signs has become richer and diverse, words can be used more consciously, selectively, and adequately, because they are exempt from certain functions by a new image as well as verbal-pictorial and audiovisual constructions. The very presence of audiovisual communicates in culture abolished the clear domination of independent verbal texts. However, language as a special semiotic system remains indispensable in articulation of culture; it participates in perception and cognition, thinking, and memory; in individual development; and in evolution of culture. At the same time, the transformed audiovisual type of culture also affects our perception, cognition, thinking, and mechanisms of memory. Our way of being in the world based on language now realizes itself in the context and under the influence of audiovisual culture.

The reception of audiovisual communicates also requires, among others, language abilities. They are prerequisites – although not sufficient – for audiovisual comprehension. The fundamental change brought by audiovisual culture is based on the pattern-establishing character of audiovisual communicates. Now they form a reference system for texts of culture built with other signs, and they are intensely present in the social space. The important communication functions are associated with them.

Although in contemporary times the natural language has not ceased to perform its functions, in the second half of the twentieth century its position has

changed noticeably<sup>73</sup>. This is a paradoxical change though. It seems that the situation of written language has never been so favourable: literacy has never been so common, and its necessity in everyday life has never been so obvious. Also, the repertoire of written and printed texts has never been so rich and broad, and the social range of the impact of these texts has never been so vast. The universal ability to use alphabet – writing and reading – has become a constituent of the twentieth-century civilization and the obvious equipment of a contemporary participant of culture<sup>74</sup>.

A written word, based on a specific arbitrary, abstract and non-representative notation, has for centuries specialized in transmission of meanings, in visual expression of verballity, different from photographic or painting-based visuality. Moreover, print standardizes and objectifies the notation. Written word, besides its traditional form and its traditional roles, becomes a component of new media, appears on screens and monitors, testing its presenting possibilities, especially in concrete poetry.

Thanks to technologies of audio recording, spoken language triumphs today – which is often referred to as secondary orality. Speech was usually taking place in direct contacts between people – from casual conversation to official speeches. Radio and other ways of recording and transmitting speech radically changed this situation. They created “intermediate” sonorous word that, when appearing in indirect communication, enabled the formulation of a communicate similar to written forms, though indirect audible word is closely related to vocal behaviours of particular people and other features of their personalities<sup>75</sup>. Indirect spoken word is used by cinema and television, in which it is an element of fixed anthropological situations and is coupled with other, non-verbal behaviours of participants of communication. Such intermediate word I call “behavioural word”. Recorded spoken word – in contrast to script – has a distinctive personal dimension; it anthropologizes again, bears the mark of a speaking

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73 Cf. e.g.: *Encyklopedia kultury XX wieku*, v. 2: *Współczesny język polski*, ed. Jerzy Bartmiński, Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze 1993; *Słowo w kulturze mediów*, ed. Zbigniew Suszczyński, Białystok: Wydawnictwo UwB 1999; *Przyszłość języka*, eds. Sław Krzemień-Ojak, Bogusław Nowowiejski, Białystok: Wydawnictwo UwB 2001.

74 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Przemiany intersemiotyczne: język naturalny*, in: eadem, *Kultura współczesna — audiowizualność*, Warsaw: PIW 1985; eadem, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne*, Warsaw: Sic! 2003.

75 That was noted in the 1920s by Edward Sapir (*Speech as a Personality Trait*, in: idem, *Culture, Language and Personality: Selected Essays*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press 1949).

man. Recording reveals the impact of situational context on the meaning of spoken word<sup>76</sup>.

Negative opinions about reading and readership are constantly being repeated. It is said that people read less and less, that they do not buy books, that if they read, they do not reach for ambitious books, and even that they do not understand meaning of particular words, or even entire sentences<sup>77</sup>. This phenomenon, called functional illiteracy, is most often stated in the mode of belief, rather than a hypothesis supported by some research. Sometimes these are interpretations of simple statistical data, for example: only 50% of Poles in the last year bought a book. Personally, I would say: “as much as 50%”. But such interpretations do not say much about reading as such.

As for reading, certainly more people read today than ever and probably they read more than before. However, they read other texts than before; besides daily newspapers they read illustrated magazines, besides literature they read various practical texts – textbooks, manuals and tutorials, recipes, tourist guides in printed form, in electronic language on computer screen; and they type and receive countless text messages, e-mails or they read words in the most diverse verbal-pictorial and audiovisual compounds, in urban scenery, etc. Perhaps today reading literature occupies a different place in the repertoire of communication behaviours than in the epoch when literature was the leader at Parnassus and did not have audiovisual competitors. This is a separate issue, which, however, seems to have an impact on opinions concerning the use of languages by contemporary people. For the record, let me add that reading literature, even in a culture based on word and print, was the matter of a small minority among those, who could read – themselves being a minority.

Today's views on language are different than they were at the beginning and the first half of the twentieth century. Then, language consciousness of the experts, following the sensational interpretation of the phenomenon of language by Ferdinand de Saussure, relied primarily on perceiving and acknowledging the

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76 Cf. e.g.: Opinions on cohesion of oral texts co-depending on non-verbal codes in a given communicational situation (Franciszek Nieckula, *Język ustny a język pisany*, in: *Współczesny język polski...*).

77 Ed. note: see: Janusz Kostecki, Izabella Anuszczyńska, Monika Ligęza, Michał Wysocki, Grzegorz Boguta, Paweł Kuczyński, *Książki w codziennym życiu Polaków. Raport z badania Polskiej Izby Książki „Kierunki i formy transformacji czytelnictwa w Polsce”*, Warszawa: Polska Izba Książki 2015, <http://pik.org.pl/upload/files/Ksiazki%20w%20codziennym%20zyciu%20Polakow%20-%20PIK%202015.pdf> [date of access: 20.05.2019].

autonomy of language as an independent semiotic system, in conceptual separation of linguistic units and constructing the system of oppositions, in the analysis of isolated, closed linguistic texts and in considering the use of language as a separate, specialized skill. A linguistic point of view prevailed.

Today, language researchers are more interested in the ways of using language in social communication. Language is interpreted as an integral element of human genetic equipment, and not as a separate, autonomous efficiency. The role of social and situational context in the comprehending of all verbal – spoken and written – texts is emphasized, and linguistic forms are examined as components of human behaviours. The emphasis is on the art of communication in the social space, on the question of how people communicate with each other by means of verbal texts<sup>78</sup>. Even much earlier, anthropologists, sociologists and psycholinguists had proposed communication-based perspective on the language.

I treat this communication point of view as a manifestation of the stabilization of the audiovisual type of culture, and the participation of audiovisual culture in this transformation seems to me significant. In my book *Kultura współczesna – audiowizualność*, I analysed pragmatic transformations in speech in everyday communication and I put forward the thesis about shaping the communication practice of colloquial behaviour under the influence of audiovisual culture type<sup>79</sup>.

I am deeply convinced that these two ways of seeing the language – linguistic one and communicative one – are complementary. Moreover, they are both involved in rooting language in culture. When we recognize that our perception and cognition of reality are made through language, in linguistic terms, language plays the role of a filter through which we perceive the world, and it becomes our guide through culture. When we place language expressions in situational, psychological, social and communication contexts, we take a slightly different route to reach the couplings of language and culture, and to its cultural entanglements.

At the same time, it seems that this fundamental role of language is overlooked, underestimated and poorly perceived by the contemporary. To a certain extent it is similar to behaviour of the first and the next viewers of silent cinema – educated spectators, and men of letters. In their accounts of the films they watched, language is not mentioned; they wrote only about the visual aspect, which

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78 Cf. e.g.: Stanisław Grabias, *Język w zachowaniach społecznych*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 1997; Anna Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1998.

79 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Przemiany pragmatyczne: mowa w potocznym komunikowaniu*, in: eadem, *Kultura współczesna...*; eadem, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne...*



drew their attention, aroused admiration or condemnation. However, verbal insertions explaining the sense of the depicted scenes, of what happened outside the frame, suggesting the way of interpretation of images, and giving them some meaning, were not noticed or appreciated, and did not encourage reflection. And in any case, they were not recorded in the aforementioned relations. Does it mean that internalization of language by contemporary participants of culture was so far advanced? Or perhaps it was a power of the new visual expression that overshadowed what was well and long known?

## Formation of general language

Natural language as a binary opposition system is a ready, finite symbolic system. "Each language is a different equation of statements and silences"<sup>80</sup>. It is the result of particular socially formed choices, it combines the past with the present, it is constantly formed and constantly falls apart. It lives in individual expressions, diversifies in innumerable applications, it changes and transforms.

In the process of developing the language of the national community, besides regional varieties, the general language is shaped, known otherwise as literary language. The notion of literary language, besides the language of belles-lettres, covers other varieties of language. Such a variation of the national language is used by most or all people in the country. The process of creating such a variety is long. At the same time, "a language can be described as fully functional and satisfying all social needs only if it has managed to create a literary language"<sup>81</sup>. In case of the Polish language, such a general language arose from the combination of two dialects: of Greater Poland and of Lesser Poland; later, it was enriched by dialect of Masovia and of Kresy [Eastern Borderlands]. However, the Polish-language linguistic norm was formed only in written texts and the unification of the written language was preceded by the unification of the spoken language of educated people. First – script, then – printing technology in particular became a catalyst for the general language. Historians of language emphasize a special role of printers and proof-readers, especially the Krakow-based, in this process<sup>82</sup>.

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80 José Ortega y Gasset, *The Misery and the Splendor of Translation*, translated by Elizabeth Gamble Miller, in: Schulte, R., Biguenet, J., *Theories of Translation: an Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 104.

81 Anna Dąbrowska, *Język polski*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie 1998, p. 166.

82 Cf. Stanisław Dubisz, *Język — Historia — Kultura. (Wykłady, studia, analizy)*, Warsaw: Wydział Polonistyki UW 2002 (the author discusses, among others, ideas of Zdzisław Stieber and Bogdan Walczak).

Thus, formation of the literary Polish language was based on the civilizational and technical factors, not the political ones, as it was often taking place with languages of neighbouring countries. Polish language had to compete with the Latin (which was considered to be a perfect language in those days), yet it was gradually (though not always fully) taking over religion, science, and literature. Mikołaj Rej<sup>83</sup> and Jan Kochanowski<sup>84</sup> were explaining to their fellow countrymen why they decided to write in Polish. Until the eighteenth century, the Polish language transformed and stabilized. The development of the literary Polish language was restrained by country partitions<sup>85</sup>. The lack of statehood, the lack of state institutions, and limitations in the free use of the mother tongue resulted in the situation where literature became the mainstay of the Polish language.

In the twentieth century, after regaining independence, the conditions were established for compensating inequalities between the country partitions, but that situation lasted for only twenty years. During that period, in the 1930s, only small part of inhabitants of Poland was able to use the general version of Polish language. There were 8–10% of population well prepared for that and only that relatively small part of the entire society was a carrier of literary Polish language. Another 10–12% was a group of people who were “averagely able” to use the literary language. In contrast, 78–82% of the population within the state borders were unable to use the general language<sup>86</sup>.

During World War II, the Polish language had the status of an unofficial language, it functioned mainly as colloquial, private, and besides, it “went underground”. After the war, the general language was experiencing new shocks. The great migration of the Kresy-based population to the territories

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83 Ed. note: Mikołaj Rej (1505–1569), great Polish protestant writer of Renaissance era when Poland was named ‘a land without stakes’. “Mikołaj Rej reminded his countrymen that ‘they were not geese, but had a tongue of their own’, and the advice was heeded.” Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 1986, p. 328.

84 Ed. note: “Jan Kochanowski (1473–1543), an exquisite poet in the mould of Petrarce or du Bellay, was the leader if not the founder of the vernacular tradition in Poland, and hence of the senior branch of Slavonic literature. Kochanowski’s Psalter did for Polish what Luther’s Bible did for German.” Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 1986, p. 294–295.

85 Ed. note: The three Partitions of Poland in 1773, 1793, and 1795 made by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, put an end to the Republic of Poland-Lithuania. Poland regained its independence as late as in 1918.

86 Cf. Władysław Lubaś, *Wariantywność w kodyfikacji językowej*, in: *Kultura języka dziś*, eds. Walery Pisarek, Halina Zgólkowa, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Kurpisz 1995, p. 32.

situated in the West and the North of the post-war Poland was taking place<sup>87</sup>. And as a result of economic and social transformations, the masses of people were migrating from rural areas to cities and towns. Non-linguistic phenomena, and above all political situation, decided about massification and democratization of the general literary language. More and more people, including the new intelligentsia, became involved in social communication. A significant part of the population changed their social status relatively quickly; as a consequence of the education they acquired higher social position, their professional and cultural aspirations increased. By the end of 1980 – as a result of the changes after 1945 – the pre-war proportions of people capable of using the general language changed fundamentally. About 20–25% of the population could use the literary language, 50–60% had average capability of using it, while 20–25% were unable to use it<sup>88</sup>.

The sudden increase in the number of users of the general language changed the former language culture strikingly. In the opinion of Anna Dąbrowska, “dialectal forms began to enter the general language on a mass scale destroying the earlier balance of the literary language. It takes time, even maybe a few generations, for the dialectal elements to be assimilated (or rejected) by the general language, as it happened many times in the history of the literary Polish language resulting in establishing a new quality in the history of language”<sup>89</sup>. However, according to Andrzej Markowski, the process of language integration of a significant part of Polish society is a fact. Since World War II, structures and functions, as well as the extent of the folk dialects evolved relatively quickly. The middle-age and young descendants of the population that arrived from the East already uses a variation of Polish similar to the general language. Linguistic adaptation of newcomers who moved from villages to cities has also taken place, and its depth is directly proportional to the size of urban agglomerations they settled in<sup>90</sup>.

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87 Ed. note: After the war, the borders of Poland were changed and the Eastern territories of the country (called Kresy) became part of the Soviet Union. As the British historian writes: “[...] Poland was awarded far more German territory in the West than she could possibly have wanted, whilst receiving nothing, not an acre, of their historic lands in the East. Whatever might have happened, the territorial settlement was bound to have been painful.” Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 1986, p. 105.

88 Cf.: *ibidem*, p. 33.

89 A. Dąbrowska, *Język polski...*, p. 203.

90 Cf.: Andrzej Markowski, *Polszczyzna XX wieku*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna 1992, pp. 64nn.

In addition, in the post-war period, Polish language encountered special restrictions related to the “newspeak”. The state monopoly also included language, mainly the official one. Subjected to the pressure of ideology and restrictions of censorship, it began to differ significantly from the unofficial language, especially colloquial one used by people in private conversations in everyday contacts. The “newspeak” appropriated public discourse, influenced the way of thinking of many groups, and petrified some forms of expression. Properties of the “newspeak”, as it turned out in democratic conditions, can serve various purposes<sup>91</sup>.

Two factors, education and media, played an important role in democratization of literary language and linguistic integration of society. Schools, with all reservations as to their quality, systematically and universally were teaching or trying to teach literary language everywhere in the country. And the words spoken first on Polish Radio, then also in Polish Television became a model of speech and pattern of behaviours, not only linguistic, for many people. Film and press played a similar role on a smaller scale<sup>92</sup>.

Today, the vast majority of Poles possesses the ability to read, write, and speak the general language. As Irena Bajerowa wrote, in the second half of the twentieth century, “this language became truly general and mass, not elitist and literary”<sup>93</sup>. Of course, in the Polish language community, as in any language community, there are more and less skilled representatives, especially that the society experiences further changes, caused in the first place by the breakthrough events of 1989. The transformation of the political system has created a sense of freedom, informality, which refers, among other things, to language. Market mechanisms and advertisement play important roles in social life, in economy, and also in culture. Today, social communication uses the mass media to the greater extent and increasingly more of the Internet. New political and economic elites have come to the fore. Linguistic awareness of a large part of the society is practical. Users appreciate language mainly as an instrument to achieve specific goals – to gain respect, position, well-being, advantage over others, and someone’s favours. They demand a similarly efficient, and resourceful treatment of language from others. Today, people are less interested in correct use of grammatical structures than in communication behaviours and strategies, technologies of texts; they want to

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91 Cf.: Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo PEN 1990; idem, *Nowomowa*, in: *Współczesny język polski...*; idem, *Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze. Szkice dawne i nowe*, Krakow: Universitas 2009.

92 Cf.: Irena Bajerowa, *Język ogólnopolski XX wieku*, in: *Współczesny język polski...*

93 Ibidem, p. 41.

know how to communicate in more precise and more effective ways. Hence the category of “communication standard”, which is understood pragmatically, and includes both language and behaviour. Such an instrumental, communication standard, in which a text meets the criteria of practical correctness, is called by Anna Cegieła “acting through speaking”. On the other hand, a model communication standard, in which a text ensures the need for contact and acceptance, and builds a community-based union, is called by Cegieła “acting in a language”<sup>94</sup>.

The accelerated development of the language in the post-war period, and especially after 1989, caused the cease of uniform entity of the pattern of general Polish language. In the normative settings, the variants of the Polish language are being accepted as features of every living language. The two-level character of the norm – model and standard (colloquial) – are most often postulated. The model norm should be applied into public life, especially in the official language; it would be required from people performing public functions (for example, in office or in science), in texts written and spoken in solemn circumstances. With regard to that, a prescriptive rule would apply, and the language would gain an autotelic value. The standard norm would be applied in more informal public contacts (for example, in school didactics) and in private contacts. The standard level of norm is a reality and the descriptive principle would apply to it. Both norms should be taught at school: the standard (colloquial) norm would be actively mastered while the model norm – passively. According to the authors, acceptance of a two-level norm “will allow to reduce the distance between codification and the usage and to overcome the view of mass error and failure to comply with the requirements of accurate Polish language”<sup>95</sup>.

However, in practice of public discourse, the share of the colloquial Polish in the official variations increases. “This process inevitably leads to neutralization of expressive elements in the colloquial language which are replaced – for the sake of balance – by profanities”<sup>96</sup>.

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94 Cf.: Anna Cegieła, *Polska norma w epoce przemian — o społecznym uwarunkowaniu działalności normatywnej*, in: *Kultura języka dziś...*; eadem, *Norma wzorcowa i norma użytkowa komunikacji we współczesnej polszczyźnie*, in: *O zagrożeniach i bogactwie polszczyzny*, ed. Jan Miodek, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej 1996.

95 A. Markowski, Halina Satkiewicz, *Kultura języka w powojennej Polsce*, in: *O zagrożeniach...*, p. 24; cf. also: *Polszczyzna w komunikowaniu publicznym*, eds. Włodzimierz Gruszczyński, Jerzy Bralczyk, Grażyna Majkowska, Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA 1999.

96 H. Satkiewicz, *Norma współczesnego języka polskiego w odbiorze społecznym*, in: *Kultura języka dziś...*, p. 40.

*Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego*, the encyclopaedia of general linguistics published in 1993, defines profanity as an expression or phrase not accepted by the general community of language users for its vulgarity and obscenity. Nevertheless, a large part of the society often uses profanity, even when being aware of breaking the norm, infringing upon the language taboo. “Everyone knows that vulgarisms are among the most popular and most often used words today. They are used by both adults, adolescents and, unfortunately, also by children (even in kindergarten)”<sup>97</sup>. And if so, we can probably say that this norm is seriously endangered by practice. Profanities become more and more common, although they are classified as the lowest variety of colloquial language. Why are they so popular today? Most often they perform an expressive function, they allow to reduce emotional tension; we use them when we are stressed, to release emotions, we can express our extremely negative attitude to someone at the same time restraining ourselves from physical violence. They perform also another function of so-called interludes which is considered as novelty. In this case, it is not about the original meaning of the vulgarity used, but about the identification with the partner of the meeting, about the effectiveness of the mutual agreement. Vulgar phrases are used by schoolboys/schoolgirls to distinguish themselves from the adult world. They are a component of the so-called youth language, users of which struggle for generational identity, rebel against institutional constraints (such as school, army). They also appear in subcultures<sup>98</sup>.

I would also like to add that it is not difficult to find profanity in printed literary texts, both in prose and in poetry. Thus – perhaps the norm has already been broken?

The linguistic awareness of contemporary Poles, including the assessment of today’s Polish language, is diverse and depends to a large extent on the place

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97 Ilona Biernacka-Ligęza, *Wulgaryzmy a łamanie normy kulturowej*, in: *Mowa rozświetlona myślą. Świadomość normatywno-stylistyczna współczesnych Polaków*, eds. J. Miodek, Monika Zaśko-Zielińska, Igor Borkowski, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UW 1999, p. 167.

98 Cf.: Katarzyna Czarnecka, *Postawy młodzieży szkolnej wobec wulgaryzacji języka uczniowskiego*, in: *Mowa rozświetlona myślą...*; H. Zgólkowa, *Język subkultur młodzieżowych*, in: *O zagrożeniach...*; eadem, *Agresja jako narzędzie kształtujące tożsamość pokoleniową*, in: *Zmiany w publicznych zwyczajach językowych*, eds. J. Bralczyk, Katarzyna Mosiołek-Kłosińska, Warsaw: Rada Języka Polskiego 2001; eadem, *Wulgaryzmy i eufemizmy w języku dzieci przedszkolnych*, in: *Zagadnienia komunikacji językowej dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. Józef Porayski-Pomsta, Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy “Elipsa” 1991.

occupied in the social structure<sup>99</sup>. Representatives of intelligentsia – according to researchers – appreciate linguistic correctness and consider it an autonomous value. They list, among the features of correct Polish language, pronunciation accuracy, adherence to grammatical rules, rich vocabulary, avoidance of dialectal forms, and profanity. They assess critically the language culture of today, especially in comparison with the forms used among the pre-war intelligentsia and the language of literary works of writers of the past. Members of the working class, according to the aforementioned research, are aware of the distinctiveness of their way of speaking in relation to the intelligentsia. They appreciate above all legibility and simplicity, avoiding foreign and difficult words. Peasants are also aware of the distinctiveness of their dialects; some of them assess their own dialects as inferior to the general language, although in the regions where the folk tradition is still rich, such dialects are assessed as a valuable variant of language.

The linguistic model for intelligentsia is the language of the old intelligentsia and the humanist intelligentsia; for the workers – the language of the press, radio, and television; while peasants show “a sense of certain helplessness, resulting from disintegration of traditional language models and an impression of foreignness of models proposed by mass media”<sup>100</sup>. According to Andrzej Markowski, in practice the most widely implemented model is the language of media, although it is critically assessed by representatives of intelligentsia; their declarations and postulates relate to the language of the pre-war professors and the old-time writers.

### **The general literary language and the language of belles-lettres**

A literary language – contrary to its literal name – is a term referring not only to the language used in belles-lettres. Hence some misunderstandings. However, its origins are quite old. The concept of literary language was established long before the emergence of linguistics as an independent scientific discipline. Knowledge about literature and the literary point of view once dominated in philological sciences. In humanistic practice, literary language was identified with the language of belles-lettres. Also, the sphere of social influence of literature seemed more extensive until the mid-twentieth century than it is today. Writers, including poets, were the authorities for the educated parts of society.

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99 Cf.: A. Markowski, *Polszczyzna...*; cf. also: W. Lubaś, *Polszczyzna wobec najnowszych przemian społecznych*, in: *O zagrożeniach...*; *Współczesny język polski...*; Marian Bugajski, *Język w komunikowaniu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2006.

100 A. Markowski, *Polszczyzna...*, p. 214.

The impact of belles-lettres slowed down as a result of the development of other, competitive forms of communication, including film and television, but also because of receding of poetic language from the colloquial language. In the twentieth century, artists experimented with the art of word to the large extend, and their experiments showed, above all, the possibilities and limitations inherent in the language system understood as a literary matter. On the one hand, some literary genres, such as diaries or memoirs, are more willing to use colloquial language.

On the other hand, the reduction of influence of the language of belles-lettres in no way reduces the general language, for the ranges of language use change with transformations of civilization. That is why there is a huge extension of domains in which the literary language, understood as general language, is used. Contemporary structure of literary language covers many areas: colloquial, artistic, administrative, journalistic, and scientific one. "Nowadays we are not able to imagine a literary language limited to poetry and belles lettres"<sup>101</sup>.

Certainly, the language of poetry and prose currently does not constitute the main core of Polish language. Authors of books on Polish language of the late twentieth century do not discuss literary works at all and narrow their field of interest to applied varieties – official and unofficial ones. Opinions of Poles – especially the educated ones – on language seem more traditional, for they appreciate mainly the autotelic function of language. "In Poland, the *sacrum* of language culture still dominates the *profanum* of language as a good tool, which is to facilitate smooth, clear communication, or: to achieve optimal social goals"<sup>102</sup>.

At the same time, the experts of the subject note changes that are located in the sphere of linguistic *profanum*. According to Jerzy Bartmiński, the colloquial style is not limited to the oral variety of language, but it also occurs in many written utterances, including, for example, diaries, journals, or reportages, articles, and press comments, which today are considered to be literary works. Irena Bajerowa also emphasizes the increasingly frequent presence of colloquial language, far from accurateness, in literary works<sup>103</sup>.

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101 Antoni Furdal, *Język naukowy jako składnik języka literackiego*, in: *Język literacki i jego warianty*, ed. Stanisław Urbańczyk, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1982, p. 44; cf. also: Stanisław Gajda, *Współczesna polska rzeczywistość językowa i jej badanie*, in: *Mowa rozświetlona myślą...*, p. 12.

102 A. Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs...*, p. 66.

103 Cf.: J. Bartmiński, *Styl potoczny*, in: *Współczesny język polski...*; I. Bajerowa, *Język ogólnopolski XX wieku*, in: *Współczesny język polski...*



The broadly used colloquial language – itself internally diverse – is the main language variant and the foundation for other language styles. It refers to the sphere of everyday life, expresses the basic experiences of people and the common image of the world. It is characterized by ordinariness, standardization, and common-sense horizon. Researchers argue about its limits and cultural importance<sup>104</sup>.

This most democratic form of language is – as it seems – closely connected with the current state of the entire culture.

## Language in the new and the newest media

Linguists are increasingly interested in language used in the new and the new media for they see there an important source of new language patterns.

In the beginning radio seemed to be just a sonic version of the earlier written texts. Then the evolution of radio programs into spoken forms – referring to oral statements, and not just read or played by actors – took place. All works on audio literature – on radio dramas, reportages, or radio novels – by necessity regarded verbal matter<sup>105</sup>.

As far as language in television is concerned, both producers and researchers paid attention in the first place to the issues of correctness, adopting as a norm the rules of written and official speech. As the television itself developed, it was noticed that verbal statements on TV differ from the general language. It was recognized that the specific use of language on television stems from the presence of image and situational context. This point of view is included in the studies undertaken in 1976 by the team of linguists from Krakow under the guidance of Professor Zofia Kurzowa. The volume of collective works formulated and developed the thesis on a specific variation of the Polish language spoken on television, as well as on the specific character and functions of the television-based written language<sup>106</sup>.

From the beginning, the language on the Internet attracted great interest due to its striking difference. The emoticons accompanying the written texts play a special role in there. Among various online statements, special attention is paid

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104 Cf.: J. Bartmiński, *Styl potoczny...*; W. Lubaś, *Polskie gadanie. Podstawowe cechy i funkcje potocznej odmiany polszczyzny*, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2003.

105 Also other programs were analysed from this perspective (cf., e.g.: Józef Mayen, *O komunikatywności dziennika radiowego*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1981).

106 Cf.: *Badania nad językiem telewizji polskiej*, ed. Zofia Kurzowa, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Radia i Telewizji; cf. also Marek Hendrykowski, *Słowo w telewizji*, in: *Nowe media...*

to those originally Internet-based, i.e. those that appear only in the new communication environment, such as e-mail, blogs, discussion forums, and hypertext novels<sup>107</sup>.

Language on the Internet, especially when it comes to primary Internet texts, is to the large extent a reflection of language of everyday communication, although at the same time specific Internet-based forms of speech (and specifically a separate “electronic language”) do crystallize. Two of its features seem to be the most noticeable: the colloquial character and location between written language and spoken language, various combinations and properties of both these basic varieties of language. In this matter, opinions of linguists are similar<sup>108</sup>. However, the main differences are paired with the assessment of the phenomenon itself and its impact on general language.

The negative assessment is generated in particular by the conviction about the dangerous direction of evolution of culture associated with the “spread of non-linguistic forms of communication”, which reduces the area of “the use of natural language, which is the main tool of thinking and the most important carrier of culture”<sup>109</sup>. In result, the influential Internet threatens the

- 107 Cf. among others: Agata Sikora, *E-mail — między listem a rozmową*, in: *Tekst w sieci*, ed. Danuta Ulicka, v. 1: *Tekst, język, gatunki*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2009; Marcin Lewiński, *Mowa pisana? Próba analizy etykiety językowej prywatnych e-maili*, in: *Język @ multimedia*, eds. Agnieszka Dytman-Stasieńko, Jan Stasieńko, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005; Roman Wróblewski, *Słownictwo czatów na podstawie listy frekwencyjnej*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Marzanna Uździcka, *Pogawędka internetowa — między językiem mówionym a pisanym*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Aneta Firlej-Buzon, *Język wirtualnych wspólnot na przykładzie Jagron File*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Dominika Urbańska-Galanciak, *Elementy socjolektu graczy komputerowych*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Małgorzata Joanna Adamczyk, *Język sieciowych dyskusji w opiniach samych dyskutantów*, in: *Tekst w sieci*, v. 1...; Elżbieta Dura, *Kwantytatywne oblicze bloga*, in: *Tekst w sieci*, v. 1...; cf. also chapter “Electronic Literature” (pp.???) and Małgorzata Kaczmarek, *Specyfika językowa i graficzna krótkich wiadomości tekstowych (SMS-ów)*, in: *Tekst w mediach*, ed. Kazimierz Michalewski, Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ 2002.
- 108 Cf.: Jan Grzenia, *Komunikacja językowa w Internecie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2006; M. Bugajski, *Niektóre problemy komunikacji językowej w Internecie*, in: idem, *Język w komunikowaniu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2006; Rafał Dzioba, *Netspeak — nową hybrydą językową*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Krystyna Data, *Wpływ komunikacji sieciowej na współczesną polszczyznę*, in: *Tekst w sieci...*, v. 1.
- 109 M. Bugajski, *Język a przestrzenie wizualne i akustyczne*, in: *Przestrzenie wizualne i akustyczne. Antropologia audiowizualna jako przedmiot i metoda badań*, eds. Agnieszka

language itself, trivializes it, and reduces it to one variety, very limited in its potential<sup>110</sup>.

Another assessment is presented in the work by Jan Grzenia, who studies the properties of language communication on the Internet<sup>111</sup>. He has noted various forms of online statements, in particular the language of everyday communication in a free, careful, and official version; artistic and scientific functional languages; as well as a variety of sociolects. In his opinion, users of the Internet use the language of the general public according to their own needs and according to their own abilities. As a result, specific functions of language develop and the users' communication skills increase. Internet language gains new properties, unknown to written and spoken language. The basic Internet sub-variants – conversational, correspondence-related, and hypertext – gradually emerge. In the author's opinion, it is too early to claim the emergence of the third variation of the general language, apart from speech and writing, although such a possibility should be anticipated.

When the Polish Internet language is perceived, understandably, in the perspective of well-known and recognized language forms, it appears as a hybrid. Recognition of its specific features requires an unbiased attitude, as far as possible. I am convinced that the cyberspace environment creates completely new conditions for language use and causes its changes. These transformations seem to be a continuation of the current developmental tendencies of the language – they deepen and develop colloquiality, situating a new phenomenon between writing and speech, mixing in various ways the features of the language varieties which have been considered basic.

I tried, especially in this chapter, to emphasize the necessary and indispensable role of language in people's lives and in functioning of culture. In this interpretation, language is a common denominator for the entire area of culture, for literature and media, regardless of its own transformations and transformations of the whole culture. Transformations of a type of culture favouring other than strictly verbal texts should not limit the metacultural function of language.

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Janiak, Wanda Krzemińska, Anna Wojtasik-Tokarz, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2007, p. 305.

110 Cf.: M. Bugajski, *Niektóre problemy komunikacji...*

111 Cf.: J. Grzenia, *Komunikacja językowa...*



## Part two. Forms of literature. A literary book today

The tradition of “books” associated with script and print has been built for centuries. Combined with lasting values, expressing the intellectual achievements of cultures, it has become a treasury and evidence of human achievements. “The centuries-old relation between people and books has shaped the belief of books as valuable items, occupying one of the highest ranks in the hierarchy of things created by man”<sup>112</sup>. The Library, understood as the universe of all the books written and published – manuscripts<sup>113</sup> and printed volumes from antiquity to this day – is a great heritage and source of knowledge about past generations and history, about past and contemporary cultures, about changing times, and about repeated questions that people ask themselves and the world. From parchment manuscripts through copies of the Bible, first printed book, to countless volumes published later – all these books, published in various ways and with use of various technologies, saved from destruction, create public and private collections, enabling the exchange of information, fostering at the same time continuity and transformation of societies. And despite the huge changes in all areas of life, the authority of books continues.

There are books that have survived the test of time; they became accepted as valuable pieces and masterpieces, subject to change of their understanding and interpretations. We think about them first of all by recalling the Library understood as the universe of texts and the symbol of authors’ achievements.

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112 Radosław Cybulski, *Książka współczesna. Wydawcy — Rynek — Odbiorcy*, Warsaw: PWN 1986, p. 80; cf. also Barbara Bieńkowska and Elżbieta Maruszak, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów*, Warsaw: CEBID 2005.

113 Cf.: Maria Nowicka, *Antyczna książka ilustrowana*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1979; Aleksander Gieysztor, *Zarys dziejów pisma łacińskiego*, Warsaw: PWN 1973; Aleksander Birkenmajer, *Książka rękopiśmienna*, in: idem, *Studia bibliologiczne*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1975; Edward Potkowski, *Książka rękopiśmienna w kulturze Polski średniowiecznej*, Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 1984; *Staropolska kultura rękopisu*, ed. Hanna Dziechcińska, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1990.



**Fig. 1:** The Nike Literary Award, conferred since 1997, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 September 2009

The civilizational, economic, and social changes that took place over centuries transformed books from an item which is rare and precious (in intellectual and in material sense alike) into a widely available offer; limited and expensive copies for the privileged were replaced by cheap books in mass editions, and besides valuable publications we can observe a flood of printed trash. Accessibility of the offer is not always accompanied by mass readership, and social appreciation of books is not necessarily followed by actual contact with them. Book, which together with paper magazines was the most typical type of communicate in the culture of words and prints, has never been a food for all and everyone. Although the compulsory schooling forced all schoolchildren to read textbooks and obligatory “school canon”, yet intense contact with books – for various reasons – has been and still is a minority practice.

What is book for today? Experts on this issues most often mention three areas: dissemination and exchange of information (primarily scientific and professional books); didactics (textbooks, manuals/tutorials); and leisure time activity (belles-lettres, literature for children and youth, popular science books, and guidebooks). This division can easily be questioned: literature addressed for children and young people often belongs to obligatory school canon, therefore to the domain of didactics, while scientific books sometimes can be classified as belles-lettres, the

domains of professional literature and textbooks can overlap, and guidebooks can help in practising professions.

Similarly, it is difficult to situate literary book in the life of contemporary participants of culture. First, the term “literary book” sounds ambiguous, just like understanding of literature itself, as well as invariably conventional. Literary books are generally considered a container for the art of word, prose, poetry, and drama, but sometimes literary books may include non-artistic texts in the domain of so-called humanities or social sciences. For example, this is the case of

nominations for the Nike literary award<sup>114</sup>: authors of the nominated books, [not necessarily belles-lettres] are engaged in the existential and moral issues related to the present and the past that are important for contemporary people, and for social awareness<sup>115</sup> (Fig. 1).

Secondly, although literary audiences are distinguished from the entire society by the knowledge of the canon of works and their authors, it is impossible to name a common repertoire of works or themes and forms, apart from a few titles. Undoubtedly, the canon performs integrative functions, though readers' activities remain diverse.

Thirdly, the list of answers to the question of what people do with literature is long and uncertain. It includes the term "literary consumption", contrasted with books obligatory to readers who are at the same time unselfish and knowledgeable and who deeply penetrate the meaning and form of author's message. The high rank on the list is usually occupied by "entertainment" – the term assessed negatively by critics of contemporary times; what is interesting, "entertainment" replaced the well-known term "play". The recipients of literary books are expected to read without prospects of gratification, to choose books not too light, yet at the same time pleasing, and also giving a sense of well-fulfilled reading duty.

Fourthly, the huge diversity of reading needs and of their implementations in literary practice seems to be the answer that is accurate, but not very specific. At the same time, it seems certain that literary book does not have and cannot have a central position either among books or on the entire contemporary platform of communication. It does not dominate – as it did in the era of culture of word – but it still finds a distinguished place on this platform; it has its admirers and is recognized by other participants of culture.

For centuries, printing was the basic, obvious way of producing books, and a printed book was its only form of transmission. There was no reflection on how publication in the form of a book influences its content and form. Book was treated as an indispensable yet neutral container of a text, including a literary

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114 Ed. note: Nike Nagroda Literacka has been granted by daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* since 1997. It is one of the most important literary awards in Poland.

115 Cf. among others: Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, London: Penguin Books 2002; Bronisław Baczko, *Hiob, mój przyjaciel. Obietnice szczęścia i nieuchronność zła*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2001; Joanna Olczak--Ronikier, *W ogrodzie pamięci*, Krakow: Znak 2001; Mieczysław Porębski, *Nowosielski*, Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2003; Andrzej Szczeklik, *Kore. O chorych, chorobach i poszukiwaniu duszy medycyny*, Krakow: Znak 2007.

work. Paradoxically, only the new type of culture has made it easier to focus attention on the role of this “container”, in other words, on the connections between the factual and semantic functions of a literary printed book.

The audiovisual type of culture that took shape in the twentieth century was also conducive to transformations of literary books. First of all, words were increasingly accompanied by images: illustrations, then reproductions of paintings and photographs, both on covers and inside of books<sup>116</sup>. Good quality of paper and higher standards of printing became obligatory for ordinary publications. Typography changed<sup>117</sup> and colour began to appear more often. Literary printed books are trying to adapt to the transformation of communication – through their “container”, and through their content<sup>118</sup>.

Finally, literature remains in its previous form; however, new audio and digital media begin to appear next to it. These new media, just like printing, are not transparent, but they co-create audio and digital literatures that are different from the printed one.

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116 Cf.: Janina Wiercińska, *Sztuka i książka*, Warsaw: PWN 1986.

117 Cf.: Jan Tschichold, *Die neue Typographie*, Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, Berlin 1928; Władysław Strzemiński, *Druk funkcjonalny*, “Grafika” 1933, cahier 2, quoted after: idem, *Pisma*, selected, edited, and commented by Zofia Baranowicz, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1975.

118 See, e.g.: Maryla Hopfinger, *Stare-nowe media: literatura*, in: eadem, *Kultura audiowizualna u progu XXI wieku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1997.



## 4 Printed literature

A printed book is not only a container of literary work and a method of handing it over from author, with the help of publisher and other intermediaries, to recipient. Although the tradition of printed literature has accustomed us to the repertoire of book-based means of expression, so that we considered them “natural”, yet today – when a printed book is not the only way of recording and disseminating a literary work – a reader has the opportunity to clearly realize the specificity and the importance of those means<sup>119</sup>.

Even the very external features of a book – its size and volume, the sort of paper, its cover and a jacket – are signals suggesting recipients the nature of the published item. The title page informs about the author, the title, and other basic data; and the editorial page includes information on co-authors of the publication. The cover or the jacket offers a few sentences about the author and the printed text, sometimes a photograph. A book consists of a main text – a literary work – which can be supported by accompanying texts: the author’s preface; comments; explanations; bibliographic, factual, or dictionary footnotes; editorial note; critical introduction or afterword by an expert or authority; bibliography; personal or factual index; and word from the publisher, translator, or editor. The main text is usually divided into parts and chapters with titles and subtitles; the table of contents includes page numbers. On pages, formatted columns composed by a selected printing technique, type and typeface, and extractions, a typographic preparation of the entire text – are to highlight the writer’s intentions. Graphic layout and various visual materials serve to make these intentions even more articulated. All these elements are to raise the readability and comprehensibility of the literary communicate<sup>120</sup>.

Publishing structure of a book is assumed to be functional both towards the author’s intention and to the audience. The author and certainly the publisher takes into consideration potential recipients – readers and buyers. Hence the efforts for high quality of a publication combined with affordable price for a copy. Authors, even the independent ones, (write for particular readers) formulate text both in linguistic and in substantial layers (context, historical experience, knowledge of realities), taking into account the public to whom they address

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119 Ed. note: See: Alberto Manuel, *A History of Reading*, London-New York: Penguin Books 1997.

120 See, among others: Teodor Zbierski, *Semiotyka książki*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1978.

their communicates. The ideal situation would be to write a book of high literary qualities, honest, carefully edited, beautifully published, and in a solid form.

The questions remain: How will the printed form of books – together with the conditions of their creation – affect the thought content and artistic shape of the literary text? To what extent do printed words shape their author's message? I will try to answer these questions later in the text. I am now signalling the external conditions that shape the situation of a literary book.

### **The situation of a book after the breakthrough events of 1989**

The political conditions are of fundamental importance for creation and functioning of literary books. In post-war Poland, they were defined by two complementary tools used by the authorities – institutional censorship and state patronage. An author, of course, was the first censor. With the help of official censorship, everything that was at that time considered undesirable was eliminated from books. In turn, the patronage promoted writers accepted by the authorities and works coinciding with the line of the communist party. And the party interfered in all dimensions of literary life – both directly and by the appointed institutions – controlling all its participants and their activities, eliminating some elements, and forcing others. At the same time, the authorities fought illiteracy, established public education system, subsidized public libraries, claimed that literature is an important good, and that writers deserve respect and care. Printed literary book functioned in an ideologic, compressed, and monolithic system. With time, the dissident movements intensified, resulting in the sharp division between the official “stage” and oppositional “backstage”. These tendencies found their expression in the rise and then the blossoming of the so-called second circuit. Literary books by national and émigré writers found their place there. The second circuit – as far as its repertoire of meanings and values was concerned – was announcing and preparing a great change.

The breakthrough events of 1989, while transforming the country, fundamentally changed the situation of books: both the conditions for the creation of literary works and relations between writers and publishers, the quality of book as items, the way they were published, the offer of genres and titles on the market, circulation of books in the social space, and their availability. At the same time, the rules for collecting and sharing library collections and the financial basis of the libraries have changed; finally, the situation of recipients as readers and buyers have changed as well. In short, the material dimension of books' functioning has changed, as well as the related problems of values and meanings. All

participants of literary practice and book market – from writers to publishers and their collaborators, printers and bookbinders, wholesalers, booksellers, and other sellers to librarians and the reading audience – have learned from the beginning how to perform their roles. That was accompanied by the bloom of advertising and various forms of book promotion. Changes in the material dimension of the book related to market and technological processes were part of the transformations of the type of culture. The new conditions of literary communication corresponded with the change in the style of culture.

For forty-five years in the People's Republic of Poland, it was impossible to print a single word without the consent of the Central Office for the Control of Publications, Press and Performances. On 6 June 1990, the censorship restrictions were lifted. The abolition of the institution of censorship meant the collapse of the state monopoly and brought a great hope for the freedom of speech and the importance of free speech. The opening of the country's borders has changed the universe of literary book since that time officially including also foreign publications, especially those issued by Polish emigrants.

### **Offers of the book market**

Social communication found itself in a new position. Conditions for overt pluralization of culture were established. The book market freed itself from ideological standards and political control, from the limit of paper and restrictions of the printing industry. However, together with elimination of central management, state funds became substantially reduced. Cultural policy ceased to be the centre of interest of the authorities, and cultural life largely followed its own rhythm. The entire culture experienced a shock caused by the refusal of interest and support from the government.

The state also reduced its publishing policy: it stopped interfering with plans of publishing houses, trying to influence the content and form of literature or deciding on the official hierarchy of writers. In literary life, there was more and more space available for public and private initiatives: organizations, associations, and foundations. Most of existing publishing houses privatized sooner or later. And under the new regulations, passed a few months before the breakthrough events of 1989, new private publishing houses could be established. Similar processes took place in all fields related to production and distribution of books. Market mechanisms were launched: books which were published were expected by recipients, advertised by publishers, and announced and reviewed by critics. After difficult and lean years, especially for contemporary literature, promising perspectives opened for books.

Between 1989 and 1991, books became one of the best and fastest growing businesses in Poland. Publishers gained freedom for their initiatives, and readers gained the rights of their own choices. The literature previously banned for political reasons enjoyed great interest, along with fantasy books, horrors, and thrillers. The needs of the recipients were the most important reference point, the offer of publishers was abundant, and book from a status of hardly found good became simply available.

Soon the rivals appeared. Introduction of a market economy was conducive to the appearance of many attractive goods, common and luxurious – previously absent – attracting customers. At the same time, cultural offers multiplied. Numerous press titles – daily newspapers, illustrated magazines addressed for women, youth, hobbyists, and specialists in various fields, including literary journals – rivalled for readers. Also cinemas, as well as radio and TV stations broadened and varied their offer. This multiplication of opportunities to participate in various goods, including goods of culture, took place in an atmosphere of universal euphoria. The possibility of consuming printed words was evaluated as a significant social value.

The new situation turned out to be particularly difficult for authors. Although literary communication still retained the traditionally recognized model, assuming the dominant position of authors enjoying respect of readers, yet transformation of the political system outdated one of the most important of authors' roles: of engaged artists. Before, they used to express emotions and opinions of large groups of society, over the heads of censors they used to speak on behalf of people and to them: about the tragic past and the enslaved present times, about loyalty and solidarity. In the new circumstances, the public discourse could explicitly address those issues, while artists tried to redefine the meaning of their writings, seeking other issues and questions, speaking only in their own name – or staying silent.

In the second half of the 1990s, after the periods of euphoria and disappointment, helplessness, and disillusion, the book market had stabilized. The best, most professional publishing houses survived. Besides typical entertainment literature, besides translations, and the so-called classics, publishers tried to obtain more ambitious contemporary literature. Despite ruthless free market rules, many publishers remembered their mission and wanted to publish important books.

Dictionaries, encyclopaedias, books belonging to the school canon, and specialist literature are published in large quantities. An important place is taken by popular science books. All kinds of manuals and tutorials are very popular – among them cookbooks with recipes from different parts of the world, the healthiest diets and tips, what to eat to lose weight, how to take care of health

and how to live efficiently, as well as books about toxic families and male-female problems. Tutorials for women who want to be attractive, for parents who want to raise their kids wisely, for cactus lovers who want to cultivate them, and for everyone – manuals of speed reading. Many titles are being translated from foreign – especially American – literature, but there are also works by Polish authors. These various publications combine the poetics of communicate, assuming the professionalism of advice often supported by authors' own experience. Another common feature is expectations of their readers that they will find help in solving their big and small problems.

An important role in expanding the reader market was played by popular romances introduced in the early 1990s by the Harlequin concern. Each published book consisted of 160,000 words used to construct a rather simple plot, written and translated in simple language, with a happy ending. The readers' most favourite background of events described in the series were the realities of Western civilization, which did not prevent them from being regarded as an attractive source of lifestyle. In the opinion of researchers of readership, the dubious literary value of those works was not a drawback. On the contrary, simple and understandable texts have made it easier for many women to master reading techniques. Between 1992 and 1993, the most popular titles were sold in nearly 200,000 copies. They were read by every fourth woman in the country from the 25–40 age group; most of them lived in small towns, had secondary technical education, with an average national salary.

In the second half of the 1990s the popularity of “harlequins” dropped, probably in favour of numerous colour magazines. Ten years after those successes, the works of Helen Fielding (*Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* [published by Zysk i S-ka]) gained great popularity, and Katarzyna Grochola was recognized for her Polish equivalent (*Ja wam pokażę, Serce na temblaku*, or *Nigdy w życiu!* – the books issued by W.A.B. and followed by film adaptations).

After the decline of interest in the so-called *bibuła* [literally: 'blotting-paper' – Polish equivalent of samizdat], readers were primarily seeking psychological issues and found them in many translations of fiction, mainly from English and Spanish. Those works, with well-constructed plots, written skilfully, yet without formal experiments, were discussing such issues as love, friendship, hatred, difficult relationships, and inner struggles of protagonists with themselves and with the world. They were telling about problems that everyone could find interesting, regardless of Polish specificity and entanglements in the difficult history of the nation and the stigma of the tragic past of their compatriots. William Wharton (Rebis), Jonathan Carroll (Rebis), Danielle Steel, Jane Austen (Proszynski and

S-ka), David Lodge, and Paul Auster have been the authors enjoying unflagging interest.

Contemporary prose of Polish writers – Wiesław Myśliwski, Hanna Krall, Olga Tokarczuk, Magdalena Tulli, Stefan Chwin, Jerzy Pilch, and Andrzej Stasiuk – have earned recognition of readers. Among the recent debutants, the most noticeable are: Wojciech Kuczok (short stories *Opowieści słychane*, 1999, and *Widmokrąg*, 2004, and the novel *Gnój*, 2005); Daniel Odija (*Antybiografia*, 2003, and *Tartak*, 2003); Dorota Masłowska (*Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białoczerwoną* [*White and Red/Snow White and Russian Red*], 2002, *Paw krolowej*, 2005); and Mariusz Maślanka (*Bidul*, 2003).

Books belonging to two quite different genres – non-fiction and fantasy literature – are very popular among Polish readers. Non-fiction books – biographies and autobiographies – are treated like contemporary novels based on implemented life scenarios, for example: Joanna Olczak-Ronikier *W ogrodzie pamięci*, Wojciech Bonowicz *Tischner*, Józef Hen *Mój przyjaciel król*, autobiography of Jerzy Gedroyc written together with Krzysztof Pomian, or biographies of Gombrowicz, Witkacy, Herbert, and Kosinski. Diaries written by Gombrowicz, Herling-Grudziński, Stefan Kisielewski, and Zygmunt Mycielski; memoirs – such as *The Pianist* by Władysław Szpilman; as well as reportages by Ryszard Kapuściński; and historical work by Norman Davis – all of them have groups of avid readers.

Fantasy literature has been published in very large quantities. The most popular authors are J. R. R. Tolkien, Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series of novels, Joanne K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Andrzej Sapkowski, and Jacek Dukaj. Many of those works were to become the basis of film adaptations.

A special place in the field of poetry has been taken by the Polish Nobel Prize winners – Czesław Miłosz and Wisława Szymborska. The poetry of Tadeusz Rożewicz, Julia Hartwig, Zbigniew Herbert, Jerzy Ficowski, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Ewa Lipska, Adam Zagajewski, Stanisław Barańczak, and Ryszard Krynicki are continuing to be published and widely read.

Radical pluralization of social communication and public discourse in the domain of literature evades the ballast of political engagement; it manifests itself above all in a variety of genres from prose to poetry and essay, from literary canon to ludic literature, and from fictional belles-lettres to documentary literature. Literary works written in the People's Republic of Poland are rarely reprinted, while emigre authors are “well-presented” and gladly published. Certainly, in the social circulation, literary novelties should be distinguished from literary classics. The latter are published in big quantities, which may result not only from the fact that subsequent young generations are obliged to read the canon

of national literature, but also from the constant need for classical books among adult readers completing home libraries.

### Methods of promotion

The publishing offer has become extremely rich. Those who are particularly interested in literary books can easily access professional information. The role of information for the wide public is played by advertisements, published mainly in daily and weekly press, sometimes also on the radio and TV, and displayed on billboards. Some newspapers and magazines are undoubtedly an important platform for shaping opinions about books; they not only publish information, reviews, and lists of bestsellers, but also fund or co-fund literary prizes, setting preferences and hierarchies. Special radio and television programs also promote authors and books; when certain titles are repeated by various media, the chances of reaching the recipients are multiplied.

Many books are published, yet only a small part of them can be very popular. The selection of books for promotion is determined by various market and non-market considerations. It turns out that not only classicists and entertainment literature can count on popularity. Pieces by Polish Nobel Prize winners, Miłosz and Szymborska, were sold in several dozen thousand copies. The books of writers nominated for literary prizes are usually very popular among readers.

Cinema has a great impact on the book market. A successful box office of an adaptation is conducive to publishing successes, as is evidenced by many examples: Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (1999, dir. Andrzej Wajda); Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Ogniem i mieczem* (*With Fire and Sword*, 1999, dir. Jerzy Hoffman) and *Quo vadis* (2001, dir. Jerzy Kawalerowicz); novels by Tolkien and Rowling; *The Pianist* by Władysław Szpilman (2001, dir. Roman Polański); or *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Fielding<sup>121</sup>. *Nigdy w życiu!* [a novel by Grochola] was adapted into a screenplay and the movie gained a large audience (2004, *Never in My Life!* dir. Ryszard Zatorski). *Pregi* (*The Welts*, 2004), a film directed by Magdalena Piekorz, was based on the screenplay by Wojciech Kuczok who adapted his own novel *Gnój* (the main prize at the film festival in Gdynia<sup>122</sup>, 2004) (Fig. 2).

National book fairs in Warsaw and Krakow are an excellent promotion of books. Visitors of the fair can learn about new publications and purchase them at the publisher price; they also have opportunities to meet authors. The festivals

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121 See: Magdalena Michalska, *Papierowy film*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 June 2002.

122 Ed. note: Polish Film Festival in Gdynia is the most important national competition of feature films made in Poland.

**PREZYDENT MIASTA GDYNI**  
ogłasza V edycję ogólnopolskiego konkursu

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Kandydatury do nagrody mogą zgłaszać wydawnictwa oraz inne podmioty/osoby zainteresowane konkursem do 31.01.2010 r., za pośrednictwem sekretarza Kapituły:

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n a g r o d a  
l i t e r a c k a  
g d y n i a

**Fig. 2:** The GDYNIA Literary Award established in 2006, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4 January 2010

organized in various regions of the country are real literary feasts. Port Literacki Legnica, which has been taking place since 1996, has been focused on poetry; meetings with poets attended by crowds are organized by Biuro Literackie. The Ninth Port took place in Wrocław. The Polish Guild of Gutenberg's Knights (a French initiative, in Poland since 1996) has been organizing spring book festivals in Warsaw since 2000. "Bibliomanias" offer a rich program of cultural events for book enthusiasts of all ages. Izabelińskie Spotkania z Książką has been held in June since 1999.

There are conflicting opinions about the role of television. [Some claim:] "Certainly, as everywhere in the world, television is the enemy of readership"<sup>123</sup>.

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123 Marcin Baczyński, *Nieczytelnictwo polskie*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13 November 1995.



But [the others observe that] “television was an ally of readership at one of the housing communities in Lodz. The day after the broadcast of the program about religious sects, there was a waiting list made on the only available book on this subject at the local library. Also TV series [...] provoke a ‘boom’ for specific titles, just like the recent most-sought-after new edition of *The X-files*”<sup>124</sup>.

The Internet users are relatively frequent buyers and readers of books.

One thing is certain: the titles generating resonance in media have greater chances of being noticed by potential readers<sup>125</sup>.

In 1996, one could buy books [in Poland] in nearly 3,000 bookstores. Especially in cities, they are still the main places where readers can view recent publications and possibly buy them. Those who are determined, ask about the particular titles. The others just browse. Open access to shelves became the norm. Some bookstores also offer music and audiovisual recordings, including computer games. They organize meetings with authors, musicians, and performers. Renowned bookstores try to acquire regular customers by offering discount cards and other privileges. In 2004, Polska Izba Książki [Polish Chamber of Books, a commercial self-government institution associating publishers, bookshops, and printing houses] organized a nationwide campaign called “Apetyt na czytanie” [Appetite for reading], which was to stimulate bookstores to actively participate in promotion of readership, especially in local communities.

Another way to gain readers are mail order book clubs that win customers through the press and through random mailing. They offer their customers a variety of attractive titles, often unattainable in open sales, at relatively low prices. In 2000, over two million Poles regularly used such offers. The biggest clubs are Bertelsmann’s World Book (about one million members), Readers Digest (800,000 members) and Klub Książki Księgarni Krajowej established by the Prószyński and S-ka publishing house (250,000). The mail-order sale of books is primarily used by people who have difficult access to bookstores and those who are eager to use the publisher’s hints or price discounts (Fig. 3).

A great promotion of literary readings was a collection of the twentieth-century novels prepared by *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Agora publishing house) and sold at PLN 15 together with a daily newspaper. The first book from the collection, *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, was a gift for the buyers of this newspaper. Since October 2004, pieces of contemporary popular literature have been

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124 Cezary Polak, *Polacy, do bryków*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 September 1998.

125 Cf.: Opinion of Piotr Bratkowski, *Magazyn z książkami*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 February 2001.

sold with *Olivia* monthly magazine (Axel Springer Polska publishing house). The first release of the title was the already-famous *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding. This custom was adopted by other newspapers and magazines. Over the past few years, various collections of literary works, guides, dictionaries, and other books have appeared (including films and music albums).

Books are too expensive for many people, thus book discounts, which usually sell last copies of editions obtained by sellers directly from publishing houses, are very popular. Another occasion [to buy them cheaply] became periodical sales of books per weight (PLN 4.99 per kg) or for less than PLN 1 for a copy in such supermarkets as Hit and Auchan. Some people consider this phenomenon as deprecating authors and publishers. Yet others definitely accept the possibility of buying books at low price. And – what is most important – customers of hypermarkets often had not visited bookshops before. They are the newly acquired book readers (Fig. 4).

The readers also find used books – not only in second-hand bookshops and stalls. Giełda Książek Przeczytanych [The Used Books Exchange] was organized

**już jutro  
nowa książka  
do kolekcji**  
tylko 15 zł + cena „Gazety Wyborczej”

KURT VONNEGUT  
Kocia kotyńska

K O L K C J A

Wielkie powieści XX wieku poleca **gazeta**

Książka do kupienia z „Gazetą Wyborczą” przez cały tydzień.  
Kolejny tom z kolekcji „Gra w klasy” Julio Cortáзара już 7 września.  
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Zadzwoń do nas 0 801 130 000 lub napisz [kolekcja@agora.pl](mailto:kolekcja@agora.pl)

**Fig. 3:** The collection published by *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 2004, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 August 2004

in 2002 by the Education and Culture Center “Łowicka”; 50,000 volumes were collected there. In exchange for an admission ticket (PLN 20), one could take as many copies as they could. Such initiatives have been repeated.

Bookcrossing, the release of books, is a new form of popularizing readership, the idea of mass sharing of books, that are left in public places for next readers. The author of the idea of turning the world into a big library is Ron Hornbaker, an American computer programmer; his website is visited by about 25 million people every month. This idea has been implemented in Poland since April 2004.

On the other hand, luxury, prestigious, solid yet expensive editions are relatively popular, while cheap editions (pocketbooks) did not catch on.

Libraries, the most important book-related cultural institutions, enabling everyone to access the book collections, require large financial support. A library network was built and developed in the times of the People’s Republic of Poland. Although the book collections were dependent on ideological directives, they had a guaranteed budget. After the breakthrough events of 1989, the directives were annulled and financing was reduced. Gaps in the purchases of books and magazines are impossible to repair.



**Fig. 4:** The collection published by *Polityka* weekly magazine in 2008, skleppolityki.pl, 6 January 2010

Egalitarian access to libraries remained a very important and indispensable component of democratic society. Large libraries, despite the radically changed situation, did not complain about the lack of readers. For several years, more and more people have been borrowing books, also in small libraries. They borrow belles-lettres, but also professional literature, educational books, the more so because many newly established private universities do not have adequate [library] facilities and only begin their own collections. Photocopying of texts became partial, temporary, and imperfect solution. Publishers consider copying books as piracy and breaking the law. Users consider it as a necessity, for without the help of xerographs, many publications would simply be unavailable. And this applies not only to exhausted editions from the past, but also to new books that are too expensive for recipients or still difficult to access due to problems with distribution.

Development of technologies of multiplication of written texts leads to the questions related not only to immediate situation but also to the future of the library as a cultural institution of word preservation<sup>126</sup>. It seems very topical to ask whether book collections were to remain only relics of their era, just like manuscripts' sections in contemporary renowned libraries.

On the other hand, libraries have, as it seems, a guaranteed future, provided they are modernized to become local information centres using the development of multimedia techniques, and finally, sites of cultural life.

## Questions about readership

Studies of readership are very complicated, difficult, and their results are based on conventional assumptions. For example, in the surveys of The Book and Readership Institute of the National Library, readers are divided into "sporadic" (1 to 6 books read annually) and "regular" (7 and more books read annually). This division seems quite dubious. The obtained data does not say much. For example, some people declare that they have not read any books recently (44% in 1994 and in 2002). But some of them could, for example, read an opinion-making or specialist press. Some people declare that they did not buy any books.

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126 See: Marcin Czerwiński, *System książki*, Warsaw: WAiF 1976; Umberto Eco, *Nowe środki masowego przekazu a przyszłość książki*, transl. Adam Szymanowski, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. Maryla Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005; Zbigniew Suszczyński, *Hipertekst a «galaktyka Gutenberga»*, in: *Nowe media...*; Adam Grzeszak, *Kruszenie kopii*, *Polityka*, 16 November 2002.

Yet instead of buying they could read them in libraries, or borrow from friends, or use their own collections. Studies of readership are not subject to clear, transparent interpretations.

Moreover, negative declarations do not mean that those people do not read at all. Reading and writing are now essential in any professional work and necessary in everyday life. There is a large statistical convergence between illiteracy and unemployment and social pathologies. People excluded by functional illiteracy cannot co-create a civil society or use democratic procedures. It is impossible to participate in contemporary culture without the ability to use written language.

It is very interesting that it is only now that studies of readership emphasize differences between functional illiteracy, mechanical reading, and reading with comprehension.

The ability to read applied texts is of course not sufficient to be a recipient of literature. Literary reading requires special skills. That is why reading literature was and remains the custom of a minority. Certainly, new publications should be promoted, yet the very phenomenon of reading books also requires promotion – perhaps above all. New enthusiasts of reading have to be won – their interest must be gained.

Family and school are the key to forming reading habits and skills. Averagely low level of education of Poles is not conducive to contacts with books. Secondary general education is a necessary yet insufficient condition for participation in literary culture. Currently, after a jump in the level of education – 9.1% of population have higher education diplomas, 10.4% – incomplete higher education, 6.2% – secondary general education, 18.8% – secondary vocational education, 30.2% – basic vocational education, and 25.3% – basic education. Therefore, this preliminary condition is met by a quarter of population. Fossilized school programs and archaic teaching methods do not foster the need to read anything – especially with comprehension. Complaints by local critics were usually ignored; however, conclusions from international comparative studies, revealing a low level of understanding of simple applied texts and unacquaintance with many words by children and adults alike, are impressive.

New curricula introduced – though slowly and not consistently – in the entire system of education should work for the change of this situation. Also dissemination of computers in schools additionally motivates children, youth, and teachers to acquire new skills, among which fluent reading with comprehension is the basis for success. Poland's accession to the European Union makes the binding standards become an important reference system for assessing the actual state.

It turns out that – according to the Eurobarometer – the European average of non-readers is 42%, in Poland in 2002 – 44%. For comparison: Spaniards – 52%, Greeks – 54%, Belgians – 58%, and Portuguese – 67%<sup>127</sup>.

The Book and Readership Institute of the National Library<sup>128</sup> has been conducting systematic research for years. According to statistical data, in Poland 56% of population in 1994 and 2002 “read some books” – yet what does it mean? We cannot say much about it. Readings other than those included in the school canon, and especially the way of using them, remain an undisclosed secret. We know the titles mentioned by respondents, but we do not know how and why they read; in other words: we do not know what people do with literature. The answers to those questions are only hypothetical.

The ways of reading are discussed notably in the works of Stanisław Siekierski<sup>129</sup>.

## Print and the meaning of literary work

According to estimates, only a few percent of active participants of literary culture are interested in avant-garde literature. However, they provide the necessary background for experimenting authors, seekers of new artistic solutions who, together set the direction of changes that may happen in distant future.

I return to the previously formulated questions: Do words printed in books give shape to the original communicate of the author, and, if so – to what extent? How were semantic functions recognized in printed works, or how were they granted to printed works within a long process of transformation?

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127 See: Konrad Godlewski, *Czytamy! (czasami)*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 October 2003.

128 Cf.: Grażyna Straus, Katarzyna Wolff, *Polacy i książki. Społeczna sytuacja książki w Polsce 1992*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 1996; eadem, *Czytanie i kupowanie książek w Polsce w 1994 r.*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 1996; eadem, *Zainteresowanie książką w społeczeństwie polskim w 1996 r.*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 1998; G. Straus, K. Wolff, Sebastian Wierny, *Książka na początku wieku. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2002 roku*, Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa 2004; cf. also regular analyses of the book market in Poland by Łukasz Gołębiowski, published since 1998 in the series “Biblioteka Analiz” (12th edition was published in 2009 [v.1–5], co-authors: Kuba Frołow, Paweł Waszczyk).

129 See: Stanisław Siekierski, *Książka literacka. Potrzeby społeczne i ich realizacja w latach 1944–1986*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1992; idem, *Czytania Polaków w XX wieku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa UW 2000; idem, *Książka we współczesnej kulturze polskiej*, Pułtusk: WSH im. Aleksandra Gieysztor 2006.

Since the times of Gutenberg, books – both poetry and prose – had been printed, as I have already mentioned, in accordance with the convention, which was to ensure neutrality of this medium – neutrality towards a thought-out or a written text – in the eyes of publishers and readers. Prosaic works were printed in uniform font in regular lines, one after the other, page after page, divided into paragraphs – and the entire book was composed of individual parts, substantively motivated and graphically separated. Likewise, poems, regularly constructed, based on fixed schemas, were printed very often. Visual poems were rare.

Such a monotony of expressive forms was in force not only in book publications; it was also used in press, which became popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Press was heavily criticized by artists for putting contents which were trivial – in comparison with acknowledged literature – in a conventionalized typographic form. It was believed that press had a negative impact on the quality of literary works and that it was because of newspapers that “the ease of reading [became] the rule in literature [...]. Everyone seems inclined to read only what one would be capable to write”<sup>130</sup>. Perhaps also because of the accelerating rhythm of life, and also because of an “inexplicable need of individuality”, the form of literary works was soon to change.

### **Typographic “spacing” – from Mallarme to visual concretists**

Although irregular and free poems were already written by the great romantics<sup>131</sup>, yet the beginnings of a distinct change are dated about the 1880s. Besides the previously dominant poems with clear rhythmic, strict rules of versification and uniformly printed, poets were creating irregular works based on different principles, such as, *vers libre* by French symbolists. They approached the poetic form in a new way, emphasizing sound and musical qualities of language and using the synesthetic metaphors. Irregular verses of varying lengths encountered great difficulties to overcome readers’ reception habits shaped by the poetic tradition and fixed by typographic convention of press. Reading those poems was quite different from norms and habits of literary practice as well as from mediocrity of newspapers. Nevertheless, the so-called free verse was to occupy the

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130 Paul Valéry, *I Would Sometimes Say to Stéphane Mallarmé...*, in: idem, *Collected Works*, v. 8, trans. Malcolm Cowley and James R. Lawler, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2015, p. 273.

131 Cf.: Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, *Wiersz nieregularny i wolny Mickiewicza, Słowackiego i Norwida*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1964.



leading position in European avant-garde poetry in the twentieth century<sup>132</sup>. The unquestionable precursor of modern visual literature was Stéphane Mallarmé, and his poem *Un Coup de Dés* was far ahead of its time as far as originality and artistic skills were concerned. The poem was printed for the first time in 1897 in the *Cosmopolis* magazine in the compromise version; the version consistent with the author's instructions was published by Éditions Gallimard only in 1914<sup>133</sup> (Fig. 5).

The poem, printed without a conventional division into *recto* and *verso* pages, is spatially arranged. The constellations of words, arranged in uneven verses composed with fonts of different size and thickness, emerge from white pages. Broken syntax of the language of this poetic expression found its equivalent in the spatial dimension. Diverse relations between words obtained a visual expression thanks to modern typography. Bold words included those printed in caps and garamonds. Differences between fonts emphasized the hierarchy of motifs. Exposed spacing moved apart words surprisingly connected, unexpectedly collided, creating an open field of artistic creation.

The deeply thought-out structure of the text imbedded in the new concept of poetry, destroying syntax of sentences and breaking linear order of lyrical expression. The very construction of the poem creates opportunities not only for a variety of interpretations, but, moreover, for various possible ways of reading it. The basic problem, as Mallarmé wrote in "Preface", is introduced by the poem's title. The game of chance and necessity is parallel in two orders: the construction of the text and its reading. A human being and the universe, chance and possibility, possibility and necessity, time and space, space-time and metaphysics of probability, language games and poetics based on the idea of conscious, purposeful construction, intellectualism, and aesthetics of words.

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132 Cf.: A. Okopień-Sławińska, *Pomysły do teorii wiersza współczesnego*, in: *Styl i kompozycja*, ed. Jan Trzynałowski, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1965; Lucylla Pszczołowska, *Wiersz nieregularny*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1987; Dorota Urbańska, *Wiersz wolny. Próba charakterystyki systemowej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1995; Witold Sadowski, *Wiersz wolny jako tekst graficzny*, Krakow: Universitas 2004.

133 See an excellent publication of the Korporacja Ha!art: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Rzut kośćmi nigdy nie znieśie przypadku. Poemat*, transl. Tomasz Różycki, introduction by Michał Paweł Markowski, eds. Katarzyna Bazarnik, Zenon Fajfer, Krakow: Korporacja Ha!art 2005. The publication includes facsimiles of the poem in the version published in "Cosmopolis" in 1897 and the Gallimarda edition of 1914 and translations of both versions by T. Różycki; as well as the editorial note about Polish translations by Maciej Żurowski, Adam Ważyk, and Jacek Trznadel; "Kilka słów po przekładzie" by T. Różycki and "Dwa «Rzuty kośćmi» czyli szczególna i ogólna teoria liberatury" by K. Bazarnik and Z. Fajfer.



(a) *gorzki książę rąfy*

*stroi sobie nią włosy jak heroiczną  
nieodpartą a jednak treścią  
swego małego męskiego rozumu  
niby piorun  
zatroskany  
pokutny i dojrzały  
niemy*

*śmiech*

*że*

## *Jeśli*

*(Jaśniejąca pańska kitka z piór oszołomienia  
na niewidzialnym czole  
błyszczą  
potem ukrywa*

*postawę wdzięczną mroczną na stojąco  
w swym syrenim skrećcie  
czas  
uderzyć  
tymi niecierpliwymi ostatecznymi łuskami rozdwojonymi  
tajemnicę*

*falszową skate znikającą we mgle*

*która narzuciła*

*kres nieskończoności)*

**Fig. 5:** Stephane Mallarme, *Rzut kośćmi...*, 1897, (a fragment), translated by Tomasz Rożycki, Krakow: Korporacja Ha!art 2005

(b)

***to była***

wychodząca z gwiazd

***liczba***

CZY ISTNIAŁOBY TO  
inaczej niż rozproszona halucynacja agonii

CZY ZACZYNAŁOBY SIĘ WTĘDY I USTAWAŁOBY  
wyłaniając się zaprzeczone i zamknięte w momencie ukazania  
wreszcie  
przez jakąś rozrzutność rozsiane niby rzadki okaz  
CZY SZYFROWAŁOBY SIĘ WÓWCZAS

oczywistość sumy choćby tylko jednej  
CZY NIE OBJAWIAŁOBY

***to byłoby dzieło***

gorsze

nie

bardziej ni mniej

lecz podobnie obojętnie jak w

**PRZYPADKU**

(Upada

*pióro*)

The concept of the poem enforces a change in the way of communication with its reader. It causes a breakthrough in traditional typography. What has so far been associated with writing and poetic creativity as an element which is indispensable, yet “transparent”, unnoticed by conventionalism, the most far-reaching and tamed centuries of traditions – has now become a factor that contributes to establishing the meaning of the utterance. Thanks to Stephane Mallarme, printed pages of books changed their function from an underrated, service-oriented technology of transmission to the medium of expression, a carrier of meaning – a carrier, whose significance were to grow along with transformations of the type of culture.

The new role of the recipient is part of this change – “typographic spacing” creates a new place for readers, offering them more activity (but also more difficult one) than before, and even forcing them to it. Readers were not prepared for this challenge. A change to read against the custom is initiated by an Author. Other participants of literary practice were supposed to accustom to it.

Another artist who played an invaluable role in breaking the conventional rules of printing, and using the methods of writing down to construct the meanings of poetic expression was Guillaume Apollinaire. In 1918, he published a volume of poetry under the significant title: *Caligrammes*. The very title of the volume (from Greek: *kallos* – beauty, *gramma* – letter, script, book) directed attention of the recipients to the shape of written works. The limits of literary material were extended by the graphic and visual form of poems. In various editions, Apollinaire published 160 pictographic pieces (ideograms); some of them resembled ancient figural poetry, and many of them resembled shapes of particular objects (among them: a necktie, a watch, a bottle, a heart, a crown, a mirror). Ideogram, according to the poet, reflects the essential principle of script. Let me add: letters, in contrary to the phonetic alphabet, based on similarity to the image of things<sup>134</sup>. One of the Apollinaire’s most famous calligrammes was titled *Il pleut* [It rains]; its vertical, diagonal verses of letters fall like raindrops (Fig. 6).

*Lettre-Océan* [Ocean-Letter] from 1914 was a particularly innovative piece. It contains at the same time verbal and visual equivalents of both epistolary communication and sonic media – radio and phonograph. It has conventional components of a postcard: addressee, address, post stamps, postmarks, and correspondence. The centre of two circular calligrammes is occupied by the Eiffel Tower, from which the radio station broadcasts its programs, with radiating letters imitating acoustic waves. One of these calligrammes is a graphic representation of the artist’s nearest sonic environment with the help of inscriptions in the

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134 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Zimnym okiem*, in: *Maski współczesności. O literaturze i kulturze XX wieku*, eds. Lidia Burska, Marek Zaleski, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 2001.

**IL PLEUT**

l l  
 pleut  
 des  
 voix  
 de  
 femmes  
 comme  
 si  
 elles  
 étaient  
 mortes  
 même  
 dans  
 le  
 souvenir

c'est  
 vous  
 aus  
 si  
 qui  
 pleut  
 me  
 rev  
 elle  
 s'es  
 taient  
 morte  
 même  
 dans  
 le  
 souvenir

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 pleut  
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 morte  
 même  
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Fig. 6: Guillaume Apollinaire, *Pada deszcz* [original French title: *Il pleut*/English title: *It rains*], 1916, idem, *Wybór poezji*, ed. Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1975

shape of a circumference of the black disc and grooves etched on a disc. These are sets of letters imitating sounds of sirens, engine and bells of a bus, scraps of a song played on a gramophone, and squeaky new shoes of the poet. The second circular calligramme conveys the simultaneity of emitted radio waves, which carry the most diverse communicates, sent in the air to potential listeners – the poem is also addressed to its recipients: fragments of messages, scraps of conversations, statements in various languages cut in mid-word, deprived of context and intelligibility. A receiver immersed in the audio-sphere catches various sounds; a listener changing radio bands gets fractions of programs. They are chaotic and cannot be put into a coherent message. Spatial arrangement of the piece reflects both simultaneity of its sound matter and freedom of the succession of its elements, written down radially, without beginning, without end, and without direction. This breaking of the linear structure of the work – motivated by the course of the sonic events – contrasts with another component of the entire poem: the epistolary text printed traditionally, in accordance with the cause-and-effect rule. This particular calligramme represents a literary form of modern coexistence of various materials implemented by the Cubists. Apollinaire said that the twentieth-century culture provided various communication techniques. He had an unusual “inter-medial sense of hearing”. He was able to include a complex perceptual and communication situation of a contemporary participant of culture into verbal, sonic, and visual structure of a poetic work<sup>135</sup> (Fig. 7).

The renewal of written language, exploited by conventional use – liberation of poetic expression from traditional schemes – was claimed by representatives of various currents of the European artistic avant-garde of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Futurists were especially radical. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in manifestos of futurist literature from 1912 and 1913 postulated a departure from syntax, limitations of inflection, and semantic binding which he found anachronistic in the new times. The idea of “liberated words” was to find its reflection in spatial typographic arrangements: different sizes and colours of font arranged in horizontal and vertical verses were to express the dynamism

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135 Cf.: Jerzy Kwiatkowski, “Wstęp”, in: Guillaume Apollinaire, *Wybór poezji*, ed. Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1975; Grzegorz Gazda, *Kaligram*, “Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” 1974, cahier. 2; Jerzy Falicki, *Kod słowny a kod rysunkowy. Próba typologii utworów piktograficznych na przykładzie «Kaligramów» Apollinaire’a*, in: *Studia z literatury polskiej i obcej*, ed. Lech Ludorowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 1988; see also: M. Hopfinger, *W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993.

(a)

**LIST OCEANICZNY**

---

Byłem nad brzegiem Renu gdy wyjechałeś do Meksyku  
Głos twój dobiega mnie mimo olbrzymiej odległości  
Ludzie o złych spojrzaniach w porcie Vera Cruz

---

Podróźni z „L'Espagne” przed odjazdem do  
Coatzacoalcos aby wejść na pokład wysyłam ci  
tę kartkę dzisiaj zamiast

**Juan Aldama**

Correos  
Mexico  
4 centavos

U. S. Postage  
2 cents 2

**REPUBLICA MEXICANA**

**TARJETA POSTAL**

skorzystać z usług poczty w Vera Cruz na której  
nie można polegać Wszystko jest tu ciszą i  
właśnie oczekujemy wydarzeń

11 45  
29--5  
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Rue des Batignolles

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HOLA Gburze

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Klucze widziałem ich tysiące

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twoja gęba mój stary pad

F

DZIEŃ DOBRY

ANOMO

ANDRA

NIE POZNASZ NIGDY DOBRZE

MAJÓW

Fig. 7: Guillaume Apollinaire, *List oceaniczny* [original French title: *Lettre-Océan*/English title: *Ocean-Letter*], 1914, translated by Marek Baterowicz, idem, *Wybor poezji...*

(b)

Czy panu Łasz trzęsienie ziemi w 1885 czy 1890  
spaliłmy ponad miesiąc pod namiotami

**DZIEŃ DOBRY MÓJ BRACIE ALBERCIE w Meksyku**

Dziewczęta z Chapultepec

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*Wiem podróży do Chatou*

**NOWE BUTY POETY**

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na 300 metrów

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**Ruszaćcie proszę Moje**

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**PEWNOSCIA**

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of modern times and the mechanism of reading perception. Experimental works by Marinetti, such as *Zang Tumb Tumb* and *Dune*, were supposed to be implementations of those postulates<sup>136</sup>.

Playing with text spacing in printed book became a new discovery, visual impressions were to support the conceptual content of literary pieces and the work of imagination. The experience of the great avant-garde, which included the way of printing in the meaningful structure of literary pieces, has found an extension in the literary works of the following decades.

In Poland, visual poems inspired by Apollinaire were written by Tytus Czyżewski, one of the first Polish translators of his works. Czyżewski was a bilingual artist, both a painter and a poet, particularly sensitive to visual values of poetry. He expressed his attitude in several works: *Poznanie* (1920), *Mechaniczny ogród, Płomień i studnia, Hymn do maszyny mojego ciała* (1922), and *hamlet w piwnicy* (1936). Apart from few drawn motifs, he varied the shape, typeface, and size of fonts, words, and verses, using them to compose dynamic spatial arrangements.

He also appreciated the visual dimension of a printed book in the Paris edition of *Pastorałki* in 1925 – the effect of his collaboration with Tadeusz Makowski (issued in 520 copies). Makowski's woodcuts belonged to his art statement about childhood experiences – parallel to the literary one. The poet and the painter, both inspired by forms and imagination of the folklore of Podhale region, created a stylistically coherent book.

Władysław Strzemiński was an outstanding theoretician and practitioner of modern printing. He considered printing an important domain of culture in the process of modernization and a primary means of a more effective impact on the recipients. According to Strzemiński, printing compositions should be synchronized with the construction of a literary work, and the intensity of the graphic form – the appropriate layout of elements of print on the surface of book pages – as conducive to understanding the meaning of the text. Readability of the entire communicate was the main goal of cooperation between poets and typographers<sup>137</sup>.

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136 Cf.: Piotr Rypson, *Obraz słowa. Historia poezji wizualnej*, Warsaw: Akademia Ruchu 1989; Seweryna Wyślouch, *Literatura a sztuki wizualne*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1994.

137 Cf.: Władysław Strzemiński, *Druk funkcjonalny...*; Janusz Zagrodzki, *Drukarstwo nowoczesne w kręgu Władysława Strzemińskiego*, in: *Władysław Strzemiński — in memoriam*, ed. idem, Lodz: Sztuka Polska 1988; Piotr Rudziński, *Konstruktywistyczna typografia wobec poezji. Dwa przykłady*, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki" 1984, nr 1.



One of the most original achievements of functional printing was the graphic design by Strzemiński of a poetic volume *Z ponad* (*Sponad*) by Julian Przyboś. The book was published in Cieszyn in 1930. It contained 26 poems organized visually with the reader in mind. The graphic visualization of poetry was based on their interpretation by the visual artist and resulted in an interference in the verse structure of the works. Strzemiński's proposals gained acceptance of Przyboś. However, a few years after the publication, the poet changed his mind: "My only close cooperation with a visual artist took place in the volume *Sponad* – and it turned out to be unsuccessful. Strzemiński's graphic layout rather hurt the poems, obscuring them often and irritated the readers"<sup>138</sup>. It did not fulfil his hopes. Almost 40 years later, Jerzy Kwiatkowski wrote: "*Sponad* is a masterpiece of typography, a virtuoso concert played with fonts and a black thick horizontal and vertical lines. The task of graphic artist was subordinated to the internal shape of poetry; somehow it was extracted and emphasized. Unfortunately, the question is: what for?"<sup>139</sup> According to him, the suggestive typographic layout distracts readers' attention, and petrifies the reading process, which should remain the individual matter of each recipient. The impact of neutral patterns of printing did not reduce the experiments of European "modern" ones.

However, the proposals of avant-garde artists found a specific continuation in the so-called concrete poetry<sup>140</sup>. Since the mid-twentieth century, concrete poetry in Europe and America has deepened the awareness of visual aspect of script and print, focusing on the components of linguistic matter, such as letters, graphemes, punctuation marks, individual words, and their iconic and indexical dimensions. Representatives of this poetic movement are not interested in narratives or plots, they do not talk about life or experiences, they focus their attention on individual elements of literary utterance. They abandon conventional syntax and "chains of text"; their poetry is static, and means as much as it shows. The constitutive feature of "images-poems" is spatial arrangement, syntax of plane, visual values, and linguistic signs arranged in an unusual way on a two-dimensional page. The meaning of an utterance depends not only on the elements of linguistic repertoire, but also on their shape – the visual-spatial image of a word presents its content. Not the words themselves in their verbal

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138 From the letter of Julian Przyboś to Karol W. Zawodziński dated 26 December 1933 (quoted after reprint of the first edition "Od wydawcy", in: J. Przyboś, *Z ponad*, Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1988).

139 J. Kwiatkowski, *Świat poetycki Juliana Przybosia*, Warsaw: PIW 1972, p. 107.

140 More on this issue see: M. Hopfinger, *Poezja konkretna na tle literatury wizualnej*, in: eadem, *W laboratorium...*

specificity, or verbal abstraction, become the source of meaning, but deliberately constructed words-images, concepts-shapes. Concrete poetry strives to merge linguistic and visual meanings into a new communicative quality. It does not focus on the autonomy of words and images, but on the search for intermedia qualities; it exceeds the specific features of the substance of the art of words and the art of images. Intermedia, according to Dick Higgins, are situated within the means of expression accepted by tradition, and their components enter their integral relationships<sup>141</sup>. Intermedia tendencies and phenomena were to become an important domain of contemporary art and communication (Fig. 8).

Summing up, just like many other researchers of this issue, I see Mallarme as the precursor in the significant questioning of hitherto patterns of typography. He broke the recognized form to implement his conceptual project, to transcend the “flat empire” of everyday experience, to go beyond the accidental nature of events into the “book of words” – into the construction of poems – to negate the accepted way of writing poetry and reading habits by distinguishing presentation of the text; to question not so much the “neutrality” of print, but its ossification, and frozen conventions.

I think that Apollinaire is among those who not only forebode the change, but who was simply feeling it, because the change was clear, and avant-garde artists took a significant part in it. All avant-garde art intentionally rejected traditional ways of expression. “The modern ones” challenged linearity of poetry by breaking linguistic rules – syntax, inflection, and semantics – and by extracting new visual possibilities of written words. Poets were also supposed to be typographers and bookbinders of their books. They were also supposed to use popular means of communication – newspapers, cinema, gramophone, and radio.

Authors representing the movement of concrete poetry intentionally disregard the established poetic criteria and media divisions. They question the writing and printing system. They create new qualities of artistic expression. Their works have been treated as anti-poetry and associated with the domain of the so-called applied poetry – posters, leaflets, and brochures. Concrete poetry heralds profound changes in culture that are to reveal the development of the Internet and the progressive digitalization of the platform of communication.

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141 Cf.: Dick Higgins, *Horizons. The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale 1984; *Modernism since Postmodernism. Essays on Intermedia*, San Diego State University, San Diego, California 1997.

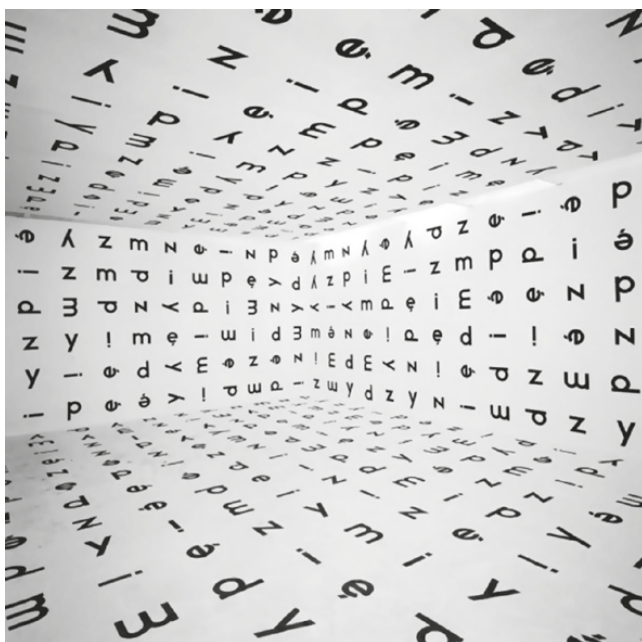


Fig. 8: Stanisław Drożdź, *Między*, 1977, news.o.pl, 5 January 2010

### The violation of graphemic practices in prose

The attempts to undermine traditional patterns appeared also in the domain of literary prose. But to make it happen, script- and print-based ways of writing and reading had to take their roots first. Only the patterns that have been well absorbed by tradition can be questioned.

The works of prose, just like poetry, had been imitating speech and oral narrations for a long time. Hence their narrative had been developing in one direction, and their recording had been conducive to linearity, rooting novels' text in linear order. Interweaving of "voice and script" in novels was excellently analysed by Ewa Szary-Matywiecka<sup>142</sup>. In *Malvina, or the Heart's Intuition* by Maria Wirtemberska [published in 1816 and considered Poland's first psychological novel], forms that imitated oral utterances of the protagonists were

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142 Cf.: Ewa Szary-Matywiecka, «*Malwina*», czyli głos i pismo w powieści, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1994.

addressed to listeners, while accompanying letters, as a form of a written communicate, were intended for quiet reading. Further development of novels' narrative primarily generated a repertoire of overtly written forms based on the graphemic status of linguistic signs, fixed in two-dimensional space of a page and in a three-dimensional book. The process of moving from literature imitating "voice" to graphemic practices established and fixed such genres as a novel, diary, memoir, essay, and dissertation. Patterns of writing and reception, closely related to print and silent reading, triggered non-oral rules of communication and dominated literary practice.

Seeking an adequate form by linking a literary text with the space of books' pages, awareness of the materiality of the "content's" carrier, its physical form, and consequently, the fact that the structure of the communicate and its appearance have a semantic dimension – were eventually to lead to the questioning of the linear order funded by print in books.

Various ways of violating the grapheme practices were expressed in many outstanding novel works, such as: *Tristram Shandy* by Sterne or *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, *Pałuba* by Karol Irzykowski, *Jedynе wyjście* by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, or *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce (especially chapter 2 of the Book 2), as well as the works of representatives of *nouveau roman* current (Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Nathalie Sarraute). In the past, such works appeared sporadically, yet since the mid-twentieth century they have become more frequent; they have been noticed by critics and they have gained readers' interest. However, they are still perceived as deviations, or violation of the norm.

In critical reflection, this phenomenon is interpreted from various points of view – as self-referential novels, as liberature, as proto-hypertexts. A self-referential novel – according to Ewa Szary-Matywiecka – is a novel-within-a-novel, the author of which also excessively problematizes the effect of writing given to readers in the form of a printed book. In the twentieth-century manifestations of this phenomenon, it is easy to see the convergence with the problems formulated by the European poetic avant-garde. It is also associated with the gradual dissemination of books and literary reading, with their progressing democratization<sup>143</sup>.

Zenon Fajfer has proposed the name "liberature" for the fourth literary genre, besides lyric, epic, and drama. A literary piece can be labelled as liberature if its

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143 E. Szary-Matywiecka, *Książka — Powieść — Autotematyzm. (Od «Pałuby» do «Jedynego wyjścia»)*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1979; eadem, *Autotematyzm*, in: *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku*, eds. Alina Brodzka et al., Wrocław: Ossolineum 1992.

author, within the creative process, treats equally the text and the physical appearance of the book. "Physical construction of a book should not be the result of accepted conventions; it should be caused by the author's autonomous decision, just like the adventures of the protagonists or the choice of vocabulary used by them. The material and spiritual aspects of a literary work, i.e. the book and the text printed in it, should complement each other, and create harmony"<sup>144</sup>. According to the proponents of this concept, ignoring the material aspect of a literary work comes from the inertia and the power of habit of participants in literary practice. This situation must necessarily be changed in order to maintain the high position of a "book" in contemporary multimedia culture. Such a change will save a "paper book" from the flood of electronics.

Novels in which authors experiment with material dimension of a printed book are often named "proto-hypertexts" by literary scholars<sup>145</sup>. Violations of cause-and-effect relations, questioning the accepted role models, fragmentation of a plot, explicitly non-linear type of narration combined with the semantization of a material carrier – all of these are characteristic features of novels foreboding Internet hyper-fictions. I do not share this perspective. Technological differentiation generates fundamental differences of semiotic matter and communication context. Non-linear novels grew out of questioning conventions of writing and printing, and that is their fundamental feature. Their meaning results from meta-literary reflection possible after assimilation of print by culture, after its deep internalization, which make it an obvious way of record and communication. Internet hyper-fiction is in a different situation. Any possible similarities are therefore purely external.

Although Joanna Frużyńska classifies both printed novels and those placed on the Net as "hypertexts" – particularly in the context of their poetics – yet, at the same time she claims that "neither electronic novels originate from paper

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144 Z. Fajfer, *Liberatura. Aneks do słownika terminów literackich*, in: *Tekst-tura. Wokół nowych form tekstu literackiego i tekstu jako dzieła sztuki*, ed. Małgorzata Dawidek-Gryglicka, Krakow: Korporacja Ha!art 2005, p. 14 (first published in "Dekada Literacka" 1999, nr 5/6); cf. also: K. Bazarnik, *Liberatura: ikoniczne okaleczenie literatury*, in: *Tekst--tura...*; Z. Fajfer, *Liryka, epika, dramat, liberatura*, in: *Od Joyce'a do liberatury. Szkice o architekturze słowa*, ed. K. Bazarnik, Krakow: Universitas 2002; K. Bazarnik, *Dlaczego od Joyce'a do liberatury (zamiast wstępu)*, in: *Od Joyce'a...*

145 Cf.: Joanna Frużyńska, "Hipertekstowe opowieści w prozie XX wieku", doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Bogdan Owczarek, monograph, Warsaw: 2007; Łukasz Jeżyk, *O hipertekście na horyzoncie. Z perspektywy zamglonej. Protohipertekstualność na przykładzie «Jeśli zimą porą podróżny» Italo Calvina*, in: *Tekst-tura...*

hypertextual novels, nor other way round: both of them have the common ancestor (which is linear narrative) and each of them have developed their features in different ways and in different conditions”<sup>146</sup>. She presents an interesting proposal for the interpretation of the twentieth-century non-linear prose. Such novels contain an “additional structure”: a metaphorical map that must be discovered to take into account all possible paths of reading. This additional structure is both a property of text and a reading instruction for the reader. Frużyńska finds and reconstructs mimetic or conceptual maps in selected literary works. The first type, mimetic, has two subclasses: maps imitating textual patterns (for example, *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov, *Dictionary of the Khazars* by Milorad Pavic) and based on spatial patterns (for example, *Life: A User's Manual* by Georges Perec). An example of a novel with a conceptual map is *Hopscotch* by Julio Cortázar. There are also “border cases” (*Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino or *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau). In many cases, a map is of a fractal nature – it is self-similar; detection of the rule of a part of the map allows reconstruction of the entire map. This self-similarity in relation to literature is another metaphor and it means self-presentation – a text refers to itself, to its own organization. “Coherence of the novel with the map is decided by similarity of a part and the whole, as well as the mutual similarity of the particular parts, which have no linear relationship of contiguity”<sup>147</sup>. A novel with a map focuses writer’s attention on the way the text is communicated, in order to change it, to reorient its semantic possibilities, and to incline the recipient to active cooperation.

### **Traditional printing and the vision of the world**

Correspondence between the method of recording a communicate and its meaning, between the material function of a literary text and its semantic function – lies, in my opinion, at the basis of practices of writers challenging “traditional print” as well as those who use “traditional print” without any doubt.

Many people – including me – thought wrongly that “traditional print” is associated with underimplementation of visual and spatial dimensions of printed pages. In fact, it is the proper form for beliefs, imaginations, intentions, etc. deeply rooted in verbal type of culture. However, this form of communication is challenged not only when authors find accepted ways of telling and writing insufficient, but also when the images behind such ways are impaired,

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146 J. Frużyńska, “Hipertekstowe opowieści...”, pp. 25–26.

147 Ibidem, p. 192.

broken, or even crumbled; when there are difficulties in articulating stories according to accepted patterns; and when people doubt about whether they are able to tell their tales using the means used so far. Narratives are the effect of the development of an understanding of the internal and the external world, a way of giving coherence and meaning to experiences<sup>148</sup>.

As it was put by Ortega y Gasset, communication between people is founded on a strong need to reveal and declare “awkward” feelings, experiences, and thoughts of the inner world. And this need is prior to speaking and deeper than speaking<sup>149</sup>.

If “speaking” is an inalienable property of humans, and “storytelling” is a cultural compulsion, then – as the evolution of culture shows – it can be implemented in different ways, depending on the “spirit of time”. And new practices and new forms of social communication establish new horizons of our culture. A few fundamental redefinitions happened in culture in the past: through [inventions of] speech, script, and print; through analogue audiovisuality; and now, I think, [we are undergoing another one,] through digitalization. However, despite all the cumulative nature of our communication experiences, each process results in powerful transformations.

Script based on the phonetic alphabet was translating verbal behaviours and non-verbal features of speakers and the situational context of encounters into mute lines of letters, and into pages filled with written words and sentences in which the immediacy of sensations disappeared. It converted ordinary speech into speech according to its own principles, inevitably abstract, and to its own signs. Written text gives a report of reality differently than in direct perception, repeating or constructing it with available means, inevitably mediating experiences, and at the same time materializing the idea of a different-than-physical presence of people and events. In a symbolic way, both the past and the future are specifically made present in the text<sup>150</sup>. Writing and reading were first

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148 See, e.g.: *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*, ed. Jerzy Trzebiński, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne 2002; *Praktyki opowiadania*, eds. Bogdan Owczarek, Zofia Mitosek, Wincenty Grajewski, Krakow: Universitas 2001; *Narracja i tożsamość (1). Narracje w kulturze*, eds. Włodzimierz Bolecki, Ryszard Nycz, Warsaw: Fundacja “Centrum Międzynarodowych Badań Polonistycznych” – Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 2004.

149 Cf.: José Ortega y Gasset, *What People Say: Language. Towards a New Linguistics*, in: *Man and People*, New York: Norton, 1957.

150 Cf. e.g.: Juliusz Domański, *Tekst jako uobecnienie. Szkic z dziejów myśli o piśmie i książce*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN 1992.

undervalued, then available to few; it took several millennia to make these skills common in the Euro-American culture.

Transcript – recording – creates and enhances the distance, but at the same time this distance increases the chances of cognition, and reflection; it allows to work out one's own, separate view, and fosters self-reflection. "Paper is patient" – as the proverb says; it enables working on a text, drawing, correcting, and adding [new elements]. "Author was born at the moment of the birth of written texts"<sup>151</sup>. Script is re-mediation of speech. And speech after the dissemination of script forms changes itself and changes its functions. Orality before the invention of scripture and after its rooting is not the same<sup>152</sup>.

Print as the next stage of communication's transformations strengthens and deepens re-mediation of speech through script. It is not only conducive to linearity, it is linear itself<sup>153</sup>. It institutionalizes the forms of written communication, and stimulates social communication. Over time, it stabilizes communication rules and customs – it becomes a "traditional print", an accepted way of a "neutral" communicate which is "adequate" towards intentions of those who write and "transparent" for those who read.

For several centuries, printed literature – written, edited, and typographically developed in books – was an appropriate and obvious way of introducing cultural texts – diverse in content and functions, yet [preserved] on unified carriers – into social circulation. And the vast majority of people in the culture of script and print considered it as fully functional. "Traditional print" grew out of a vision of the world based on rational assumptions: the world that can be recognized, described, and communicated – with all dilemmas, doubts, and unanswered questions – in a text printed in a uniform font and regular verses, filling up standardized pages of books.

151 E. Szary-Matywiecka, *Książka...*, p. 78.

152 Cf.: Walter Jackson Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London & New York: Routledge 1982; Jan Kordys, *Kategorie antropologiczne i tożsamość narracyjna. Szkice z pogranicza neurosemiotyki i historii kultury*, Krakow: Universitas 2006, especially pp. 138–139.

153 Cf.: Mariusz Pisarski, *Powieść jako zwierciadło umysłu. Szkic do poetyki hipertekstu na podstawie klasyki gatunku: «afternoon. a story», «Patchwork Girl», «A Further Xanadu»*, in: *Liternet. Literatura i Internet*, ed. Piotr Marecki, Krakow: Rabid 2002.



## 5 Audio literature

### It began in the radio

Oral features of the original way of human communication had appeared in written forms of stories long time ago. Although phonetic alphabet perfectly allowed to translate speech into graphic signs, it took a very long time and many experiments to develop the graphemic features of written communicates. Handwriting, which made it possible to record pieces as they were created, as well as to rewrite them, was first a matter to be recognized. In turn, after the invention of print manuscript notes were published in the form of books, assumed in many identical copies, intended to be read in a different time and place than the original manuscript. Therefore, communicates were separated from their authors – firstly, as oral statements translated into a manuscript, and secondly as printed utterances. However, traces of spoken forms were still present in works published in print. Despite various modifications of literary matter, co-presence of oral and written forms in literary texts is still a practical issue. It also remains a theoretical problem<sup>154</sup>.

Tradition lasting for several centuries accustomed us to literary works published in books and magazines. Print enabled dissemination of texts available as manuscripts – and since the end of the nineteenth century as typescripts – among literary audience. Such audience had to possess not only linguistic abilities, but also special interests and appropriate preparation to contact with literary works, therefore it was relatively small.

This situation, lasting several centuries, has unexpectedly changed by invention of a new medium, in many ways different from print: the radio. In the 1920s, the radio created completely new opportunities to disseminate literature in the audio form<sup>155</sup>. Radio stations, using a rich repertoire of sounds, among which

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154 Cf.: Maria Renata Mayenowa, *Struktura tekstu*, in: eadem, *Poetyka teoretyczna. Zagadnienia języka*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974; Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, *Semantyka wypowiedzi poetyckiej (Preliminaria)*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1985; Michał Głowiński, *Mimesis językowa w wypowiedzi literackiej*, in: idem, *Poetyka i okolice*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1992; Ewa Szary-Matywiecka, *Pismo i głos (Przyczynek do teorii powieści)*, in: *O współczesnej kulturze literackiej*, v. 1, eds. Stefan Żołątkowski, Maryla Hopfinger, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1973; eadem, «*Malwina*», czyli *głos i pismo w powieści*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1994.

155 Cf.: Józef Mayen, *Radio a literatura*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna 1965; Adam Budzyński, *Literatura i mikrofon, czyli 70 lat udanego związku*, in: *70 lat Polskiego Radia*

spoken word played an important role next to music, created technical conditions for a new form of literature: the literature for listening. Many already-existing literary works were suitable for that – it was enough to select them and read them in front of a microphone. Since then, poetry and dramatic works, short stories and novels, and pieces by ancient and contemporary authors, foreigners, and Poles – have become an almost inexhaustible source for literary radio programs.

The radio was the first mass medium reaching private space of listeners. However, it required constructing and launching large technical infrastructure and equipping the recipients with radio sets. Newly emerging radio stations addressed their programs to all kinds of listeners, representing various levels of preparation to participate in culture. They broadcasted music performed in studios, news and talks, and literary and educational programs; they wanted to make everybody interested in their offer and to win everyone. The radio – an institutional mass medium and means of receiving various programs in households – was the first to propose broadcast blocks from which listeners could choose specific part. Verbal communicates would meet transmitted music, literary fiction would meet current information, recitations of poetic works would meet vocal performances, and “radio academy” would meet radio entertainment. Recipients had to learn how to listen to and how to distinguish one broadcast from another. This task was not easy, as it was evidenced by panic caused in 1938 among the listeners of Orson Welles’ radio drama about the invasion of the Martians in New York – based on the novel by Herbert G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* – which was mistaken for the current news report.

However, the radio primarily enforced only aural perception. Radio listeners had to learn such a reception of transitory sound communicates which consisted of the ability to focus on listening, and only on listening<sup>156</sup>. It was a new perceptual situation. The earlier invention of phonograph was mainly used for recordings of musical pieces. Telephones, on the other hand, enabled real distant – though relatively short – conversations, while motion pictures, a very popular medium, at the beginning were silent, then at the turn of the 1920s, first sound films appeared and cinematography developed towards audiovisuality. In Poland, the radio appeared a few years after the American premiere in 1920 in Pittsburgh. With the relatively fast-growing technical infrastructure, the

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1925–1995, eds. Barbara Gorak-Czerska, Stanisław Jędrzejewski, Warsaw: Polskie Radio S.A.–Wydawnictwo Tenten 1995.

156 Cf.: Leopold Blaustein, *Wybor pism estetycznych*, selected by Zofia Rosińska, Krakow: Universitas 2005; J. Mayen, *Radio a literatura...*

necessary production of radio sets, the new technical invention became more and more popular, and soon it was an important cultural phenomenon. From the beginning of functioning of the Polish Radio, the literary tradition and particular literary works were a direct source of broadcasts. Reading of poetry and prose known from publications was an important part of radio programs. Works of prominent writers of Polish Romanticism, as well as Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Aleksander Fredro, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Bolesław Prus, Eliza Orzeszkowa and Maria Konopnicka, Stefan Żeromski, and Władysław Reymont, were broadcasted both to enthusiastic admirers of literature and to entirely new audience, not too familiar with the literary tradition. One of the first radio dramas was created in 1925 on the basis of *Warszawianka* [Varsovian Anthem], a drama by Stanisław Wyspiański, even before the launch of the first Polish radio station in April 1926. Loud reading of literary texts to the microphone was to attract and keep the listeners' attention. However, it was relatively quickly realized that literary pieces – even works of the best writers, including dramas – had been intended for individual silent reading, thus reading them aloud on the radio, do not always attract attention of listeners. Soon, writers began to be persuaded to collaborate with radio stations and to write texts intended solely for broadcasting. The idea was for the authors to pay particular attention to the requirements of the new medium, but also to the unique possibilities it created. Sounds and only sounds became a new matter for radio. Audial dimension of events and experiences had to be recognized and taken into account, its importance in our lives had to be appreciated, understood, and used in radio literary practice. Speech and oral forms proved to be a better matter for radio than written texts: it was easier to adopt them as radio dramas. They were more dynamic, more adequate to situations that the radio could present. Therefore, the writers working for radio tried to expose vocal values of actors, to notice and develop expressive functions of natural and specific sounds, to attribute significant role to audial values. Radio producers learned the range of possibilities of radiophonic technologies, they studied “acoustic cuisine”, and gained experience in creating space-time of continuum of situations and events only with the use of audio media<sup>157</sup>. New, audial

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157 Cf.: Elżbieta Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, *Słuchowiska Polskiego Radia w okresie piętnastolecia 1925–1939*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Biblioteka 2000, v. 1: *Fakty, wnioski, przypuszczenia* and v. 2: *Rejestr słuchowisk piętnastolecia 1925–1939*. Both volumes contain a lot of information in radio programs on literature in the interwar period. On the basis of press articles, the author reconstructs discussions on broadcasted radio dramas and using all remaining materials brings these pieces of audio literature back to our cultural awareness and tradition. See also: eadem, *Słowa, głosy, dźwięki*

communication developed, thanks to technology based on indirect contact between the broadcaster and the listeners, and covering the ever-wider acoustic and musical spectrum.

Among literary programs of the Polish Radio, the most important and attractive were radio dramas. They were produced as adaptations of Polish or foreign dramatic works and prose, or on the basis of texts written specifically for the radio. The master of the original radio drama was Jerzy Szaniawski, the author of, among others, the radio drama *Zegarek* [*The Watch*]<sup>158</sup>. Another radio talent turned out to be Joanna Morawska, author of the radio drama *Miasto Santa Cruz*, which gained recognition in Poland and a prestigious international award. The premieres of radio Teatr Wyobraźni (Theatre of the Imagination) were extremely popular, enjoyed great interest of listeners, evoked vivid reactions of public opinion, and were often the subject of fierce press discussions. It is sufficient to say that in the fifteen-year period (between 1925 and 1939), the broadcasters of the Polish Radio produced and emitted over 2,500 of such performances<sup>159</sup>. Numerous productions of radio dramas were accompanied by theoretical reflections<sup>160</sup>. The International Broadcasting Union (IBU) founded in Lausanne in 1925 played an important role in development of the radio and in the exchange of broadcasts – including radio dramas – between countries.

w *sluchowiskach radiowych*, in: *Język w komunikacji (2)*, ed. Grażyna Habrajska, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej 2001; and *O funkcjonowaniu tekstu literackiego w radiu (na przykładzie polskiego radia w latach 1925–1939)*, in: *Tekst w mediach*, ed. Kazimierz Michalewski, Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ 2002.

158 Directed by Stanisława Perzanowska, cast: Stefan Jaracz, Juliusz Osterwa, Mieczysława Ćwiklińska, Aleksander Boguciński; Teatr Wyobraźni, Warsaw 1935.

159 Cf.: E. Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, *Sluchowiska Polskiego Radia...*, v. 2. Unfortunately, almost nothing of this huge output survived the war. See: eadem, «*Janina Morawska [...] większą artystką niż Zofia Nałkowska*», czyli niespodzianki literackie w Polskim Radiu w okresie piętnastolecia 1925–1939, “Prace Polonistyczne” 2001, series 56; and *Literatura w Polskim Radiu w okresie międzywojennym*, “Prace Polonistyczne” 1989, series 45.

160 Cf. especially: Zenon Kosidowski, *Artystyczne widowiska radiowe*, T. Ułasiński, Poznań 1928; Witold Hulewicz, *Teatr wyobraźni. Głosy dyskusyjne*, Warsaw 1935; L. Blaustein, *O percepcji sluchowiska radiowego*, Warsaw 1938; Tadeusz Szulc, *Artystyczne idee radiowe i ich geneza*, Warsaw: Drukarnia Polska 1938. See also: Krystyna Laskowicz, *Świat za drzwiami. Początki polskiej myśli radiozawczej i praktyki sluchowiskowej*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 1983.

In the pioneer years of the radio, also other forms of audio literature, besides radio dramas, were created. Novels presented in episodes belonged to the specific radio genres. In Poland, writing such a multi-episode piece was proposed to [a writer and novelist] Maria Kuncewiczowa<sup>161</sup>. At the foundations of the entire enterprise there were socio-educational intentions – it was about providing patterns of culture of everyday life to young middle-class families. Previously, such didactic tips had been given in radio talks. Now they were to be combined with a common plot, suggestive characters, and vivid dialogues. Between 1936 and 1938, the Polish Radio broadcasted *Dni powszednie państwa Kowalskich* [*Everyday life of Mr and Mrs Kowalski*]. It was a pioneer undertaking. The very form of a sectional novel was obviously known earlier, even from the works of Henryk Sienkiewicz and Bolesław Prus printed in the press. However, specific social or political goals were commissioned to authors, who were supposed to write texts on specific topics appeared for the first time in relation to the radio, which – due to its wide range of impact – could become a multifunctional and modern means of communication. In the subsequent episodes of the “spoken novel”, Kuncewiczowa dismissed the intrusive didacticism in favour of a suggestive, weekly account of the protagonists’ lives. At the same time, the weekly intervals between the broadcast limited the rhythm and tempo of the presented events and imposed a strong connection with current realities. This genre experiment undertaken by Maria Kuncewiczowa – quite unique in the entire European radio – revealed the foundations of all serial ventures.

The reportage on the radio during the interwar period appeared as a transposition of press forms and most often consisted of reading written texts. Attempts were made to adapt existing forms of journalism to the needs of the new medium. Reportage, presumably based on documentary material and closely related to realities, encountered technical barriers which were difficult to overcome. The so-called factomontage was a rarity due to the need of the broadcast vehicle and an original sound recording on a steel tape or acetate disc. Such factomontages were relatively the most similar to contemporary reportage. Janusz Meissner and Tadeusz Strzelecki were among the most acclaimed authors of that genre. The series of reportages from East Prussia by Melchior Wańkowicz were highly

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161 Printed edition: Maria Kuncewiczowa, *Dni powszednie państwa Kowalskich. Powieść radiowa*, Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Rój” 1938, introduction: Emilia Grocholska, *Jak powstała powieść radiowa*. See also: E. Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, *Literatura w Polskim Radiu...*

rated<sup>162</sup>. Radio reportage was to develop in Poland much later, thanks to, among other, better technical facilities.

In the early period of the history of the radio – before the outbreak of World War II – according to estimates, there were about a million listeners in Poland. In the more developed United States, radio was much more popular and present in social space. However, radio attracted great audience everywhere, and in the abovementioned period, it became an influential and mass medium of communication. From my point of view, the crucial issues include literature on the radio and “radio literature”, but it is obvious that the radio also had other important social functions: it democratized participation in culture, disseminated music culture, and served political aims and the propaganda<sup>163</sup>. It showed the ways to distinguish between broadcasts of different genre features. Within the radio environment, literary programs were broadcasted along with other communicates, and their listeners had to learn to recognize and discern them. Various radio functions performed already in the first fifteen years [of its presence in Poland] – between 1925 and 1939 – clearly signalling the changes in situation of literature, though probably they were not fully recognized. Opinions in the Polish press that radio drama was a new literary genre often collided with claims that radio was a menace to books and readership.

For many decades, the radio was not just the sole distributor of audio literature, but also its only producer<sup>164</sup>. Initially printed literary works were the main source of radio broadcasts, and radio was a new form of their dissemination; then experiments followed and helped radio broadcasters, producers, and listeners to realize the specificity of semiotic matter possessed by the radio. This led to efforts to obtain original scripts, to gain autonomy of literary radio programs, for rich and diverse sonic matter. Perceptual and semantic dimension of diverse repertoire of sounds began to be taken into account. In result of emergence of the radio, besides popularization of written and printed literary works, a new form

162 Cf.: E. Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, *O reportażu radiowym*, in: *Reportaż w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym*, eds. Krzysztof Stępnik, Magdalena Piechota, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 2004.

163 Cf.: Marshall McLuhan, *Radio: The tribal drum*, in: idem, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw Hill 1994; Paul Levinson, *The Soft Edge: A Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution*, London & New York: Routledge 1997.

164 Cf.: Klaus Schöning, *Literatura foniczna jako potencjalny przedmiot badań literackich*, transl. Halina Żebrowska, in: *Nowe media...*

of literature began to appear: audio literature<sup>165</sup>. Radio of the 1920s and 1930s of the twentieth century – by changing and expanding the “human aural circle”, as Tadeusz Peiper put it – created the first stage of these transformations<sup>166</sup>.

Radio, so popular in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, lost its momentum in result of the invasion of television after World War II. Television – a small sound cinema at home – turned out to be much more attractive to people than the radio which was limited to sound only, and it was enthusiastically welcomed by Americans, fascinated with the new medium. Radio management, talented producers, famous performers, and advertisers also moved to television; the radio market was becoming a desert<sup>167</sup>. This breakdown forced radio to radical changes. American radio stations had been saved even before by sound recordings technology, allowing them to broadcast music from discs instead of costly venture of inviting orchestras to studios. Similarly, at the end of the 1940s, another rescue came with invention of magnetic tape. Thanks to that, the sound recording ceased to be the only mechanical copying. It became possible to edit recorded fragments, along with multitrack recordings, and voice overlays. All this novelties contributed to achieving great effects in recording studios. Moreover, the quality of broadcasts improved. Radio began to promote recordings of the new, increasingly popular genre of music – rock and roll – and became even more available and widespread thanks to transistors. As Paul Levinson put it, radio responded to the (sometimes) natural tendency of people to listen without watching – also in times conducive to the development of audiovisuality. Thus Americans returned to listening to the radio in the 1950s, when it changed its technology and politics of its repertoire and began to format the broadcasted program, and when television was already accustomed to.

In Poland after the war, radio remained the most popular and the most available medium – besides press – and this situation lingered until the 1970s, when a serious rival appeared: television. After 1945, radio broadcasting became, just like any other components of social life, an element of the state monopoly, and it contributed to the state policy. Two nationwide programs and numerous regional broadcasts implemented the new program formula of socialist realism.

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165 Cf.: Janusz Lalewicz, *Literatura w epoce masowej komunikacji*, in: idem, *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej. Problemy rozpowszechniania i odbioru literatury*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1985.

166 See: Tadeusz Peiper, *Radiofon*, in: *Nowe media...*

167 Cf.: Paul Levinson, *The Soft Edge...*; Bud Stiker, *Radio kwitnie dzięki desperatom*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 November 2001.

Despite subordination of the idea of state monopoly<sup>168</sup>, despite effects of the Iron Curtain, and despite efficient ideological and political censorship – there was some space for literary programs, including poetic broadcasts, promotion of classical literature, and radio theatre, Teatr Uniwersalny “Eterek” by Jeremi Przybora and Jerzy Wasowski.

After 1956, the central broadcaster began to notice – and to some extent respond to – interests of the listeners, taking into consideration at least some of their diverse needs. The third all-Polish radio program, launched in 1958, was addressed mainly to the young people. It gained acceptance of listeners and soon became a “cult” program. In December 1956, the Polish Radio One began broadcasting the radio novel *Matysiakowie* [*The Matysiaks*] – still popular today. While the plot tells about current events and problems of the Warsaw-based working-class family, the household of the protagonists is visited by representatives of various social groups<sup>169</sup>. In 1960 another radio novel, *W Jezioranach*, was launched about moral and social transformations taking place in the village which became very popular especially among the inhabitants of rural areas<sup>170</sup>.

Radio reportage benefited from greater freedom of speech. Thanks to its technical capabilities, it gained a new quality, adequate to the radio as a sonic universe. Tape recorders made it easier to record conversations in the natural environments of the events. The editing of recorded material became easier

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168 Ed. note: The state monopoly of radio was bypassed by foreign radio stations broadcasting programmes in Polish with the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe out front. See: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, *Wojna w eterze. Wspomnienia 1948–1956*, London: Odnova 1986; Kazimierz Zamorski, *Pod anteną Radia Wolna Europa*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wers 1995; Krzysztof Pszeniczki, *Tu mówi Londyn. Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC*, Warszawa: Rosner & Wspólnicy 2009; Magdalena Bogdan, *Radio Madryt 1949–1955. Powstanie, organizacja oraz funkcjonowanie Polskiej Sekcji Radio Nacional de Espada w pierwszym okresie działalności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo LTW 2011.

169 Authors of famous radio saga *Matysiakowie*: Stanisław Stampfl, Władysław Źesławski, Jerzy Janicki, Dżennet Połtorzycka. Cf. Anna Sadowska, «*Matysiakowie*», czyli o powieści radiowej, “Dialog” 1972, nr 7; eadem, *Powieść radiowa jako forma społecznego kontaktu*, in: *Szkice o sztukach masowych w Polsce*, eds. Alicja Helman, M. Hopfinger, Maria Raczewa, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974.

170 Authors of the radio play *W Jezioranach*: Zofia Posmysz-Piasecka, Władysław Milczarek, Andrzej Mularczyk, then Andrzej Bartosz and Teresa Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz. Published in episodes with the authors’ commentary in *Dziennik Ludowy* daily newspaper. *Dziennik Ludowy* four days a week published the column “Klub przyjaciół Jezioran” [Club of Jezioran friends].



thanks to commonly used montage devices. Producers of reportages were able to shape not only the content of the constructed messages, but also their dramaturgy. Radio reportages became a very attractive and popular form of communication. They were made by, among others: Jerzy Janicki, Andrzej Mularczyk, Zofia Posmysz, Bronisław Wiernik, Witold Zadrowski, Krystyna Melion, Krzysztof Kąkolewski, and Jacek Stwora. Their works gained the recognition of listeners and were prized with international awards. Reportages, though based on records of reality, in formal terms often approached the fiction-based radio dramas and could be classified as “docudramas”<sup>171</sup>.

The Literary Department of the Polish Radio intensively developed its activities in conditions of a limited freedom. There was a great interest in the literature writing for the radio. Over 900 works were sent for the first post-war radio competition for the best radio drama organized in 1957. There were editing boards of original radio dramas and adaptations of literary works. Among the authors of the most popular radio dramas were Zbigniew Herbert, Stanisław Grochowiak, Jerzy Janicki, Ireneusz Ireduński, Henryk Bardijewski, Zofia Posmysz, Janusz Krasiński, Jarosław Abramow-Newerly, Władysław Terlecki, Andrzej Mularczyk, and Jerzy Krzysztoń. Radio dramas produced on the basis of their texts, accurately took into account the audial matter of radio, and gained a mature form; they undertook issues locally alive, strongly associated with contemporary times and at the same time universally important. The Theatre of Polish Radio enjoyed artistic successes in Polish and foreign programs. The golden era of the Polish radio drama was co-created by directors of radio plays and by sound engineers, including Aleksander Bardini, Michał Melina, Zbigniew Kopalko, Zdzisław Nardelli, Juliusz Owidzki, Natalia Szydłowska, and Jerzy Wasowski<sup>172</sup>.

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171 Cf.: J. Mayen, *Reportaż*, in: idem, *Radio a literatura...*; cf. also: Jerzy Tuszewski, *Artystyczne przedstawianie faktów albo reportaż w ofensywie*, in: idem, *Paradoks o słowie i dźwięku. Rozważania o sztuce radiowej*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2002; Janina Jankowska, *Sztuka reportażu radiowego*, in: *70 lat Polskiego Radia...*

172 Cf.: Sława Bardijewska, *Muza bez legendy. Szkice o dramaturgii radiowej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Radia i Telewizji 1978; eadem, *Nagie słowo. Rzecz o słuchowisku*, Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa 2001; Michał Kaziów, *Tematy i problemy słuchowisk radiowych*, in: *Szkice o sztukach masowych...*; idem, *O dziele radiowym. Z zagadnień estetyki oryginalnego słuchowiska*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1973; “Pamiętnik Teatralny” 1973, cahier. 3–4 dedicated to radio dramas; A. Budzyński, *Literatura i mikrofon, czyli 70 lat udanego związku*, in: *70 lat Polskiego Radia...*; cf. also: Joanna Bachura, *Język adaptacji radiowych*, in: *Język, wartości a zachowania społeczne*, ed. Jolanta Bujak-Lechowicz, Piotrków Trybunalski: Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie 2009; Aleksandra Mucha, *Słuchowisko oryginalne jako rodzaj adaptacji — o «Drugim*

Radio also had enormous merits in everyday popularization of songs – both Polish<sup>173</sup> and foreign. In 1963, Radiowe Studio Piosenki [Radio Song Studio] was established, hosted by Agnieszka Osiecka and Jan Borkowski. The National Festival of Polish Song Festivals in Opole, co-organized by the Polish Radio and continued after 1989, was particularly impressive.

However, by the end of the 1980s it was the radio which was the domain of audio literature in Poland, and the state Polish Radio was a patron of literary initiatives. Radio literary forms, though limited by the state censorship, achieved an excellent level, suggestiveness, originality, and artistic autonomy. This was especially true in two cases: radio reportage and radio drama, gaining large faithful audiences. Programs presenting these forms were much popular and enjoyed faithful audience. They also won the recognition of foreign professionals and were prized with international awards. *Matysiakowie* and *W Jezioranach* [In Jeziorany] – the radio novels continued to this day – gained the largest groups of listeners. The audio literature which was created, produced, and broadcasted by the Polish Radio was listened by the relatively huge audience and played a significant role in shaping the entire contemporary literary culture.

## Audio-sphere

Audio-sphere, understood as sonic environment of people<sup>174</sup>, changes with civilizational transformations, development of technology of recording, processing, and creating sound – and adapts to modifications of culture. Deep in the past, the so-called original orality and related oral literature were based on spoken language. This basic, and undoubtedly universal ability of all people not affected by pathological disorders<sup>175</sup> was enough to create oral narratives, which were called “oral literature”. The case of audio literature is entirely different. Audio literature, as I interpret it, arises with complicity of technology, in the sonic

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*pokoju»* Zbigniewa Herberta, in: *Rodzina w języku i kulturze*, ed. Joanna Bujak-Lechowicz, Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie (forthcoming).

173 Cf.: Waclaw Panek, Lech Terpiłowski, *Piosenka polska*, Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza 1978.

174 Communicational processes in the acoustic environment are discussed by Ewa Kofin (*Komunikacja audytywna*, “Przekazy i Opinie” 1982, nr 1).

175 Cf.: Roman Jakobson, *On the Relation Between Visual and Auditory Signs*, in: idem, *Language and Literature*. Eds. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1987, pp. 466–473.

environment shaped by sounds which are recorded, reproduced, amplified, and processed – thanks to new sources and new carriers of sounds.

Contemporary audio-sphere is created both by the sounds coming from direct surroundings and the recorded sounds; the role of the latter becomes increasingly important. Among all kinds of sounds – those direct and those recorded – we can distinguish the so-called natural sounds, such as humming wind, thunders of storm, or a barking dog, and concrete sounds like, among others, scratch of a key in a lock, squeak of tires, or ticking of a clock. An important place in the sonic universe is occupied by music: folk and composed by professionals, old and contemporary, classical and popular, solemn and entertaining, instrumental and vocal, and concrete and electronic<sup>176</sup>.

Spoken language plays the basic role in the audio-sphere<sup>177</sup>. Besides it, contemporary sonic environment consists of various sonic repertoires present at home and in the streets, in big cities and small towns, in the countryside, in nature, during working hours, and in leisure time. All these [repertoires] can be recorded – either by means of audio media, recording only sounds, or by means of audiovisual media, where sound is only a part of communicate. Today we can observe advancement of recorded audiality, its location in the centre of culture, its semantic function becoming more realized. The contemporary audio-sphere is a conglomeration of various sounds, which we have learned to recognize in result of a training, and which we are able to record thanks to technology. We are still learning about the perception of new sonic signals and their configurations (Fig. 9).

During the two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989, technology played an increasingly important role in creation of sonic universe. Recording studios equipped with multitrack recording technology, assembly and mixing tables, and other devices for electroacoustic and electronic sound processing became the standard places for creation and production of audio communicates. Soon they were accompanied by the effects of the digital revolution. Development of synthesizers controlling analogue synthesis of sound, sampling of sounds, and processing them as well as other computer technologies of simulation of audio reality significantly expanded the existing acoustic and musical spectrum. Innovative solutions for the social functioning of the audio-sphere were brought

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176 Cf. e.g.: Ludwik Erhardt, *Sztuka dźwięku*, Warsaw: WAiF 1980.

177 On language and perception of various genres of “spoken pieces”: parliamentary speeches, court orations, church sermons, and radio programs, see. J. Mayen, *O stylistyce utworów mówionych*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1972.



**Fig. 9:** Marek Raczkowski [A metaphor of audio-sphere], *Polityka*, 14 December 1996

about by the Internet, which gave rise to the new era in audio technology. Besides tape recorders and compact players, a new standard of audio recording was popularized: MP3. It reduced the sizes of audio files by over ten times, without degrading the quality of recordings. Thanks to the real audio system, it was possible to create websites offering various audio broadcasts, while the Internet radio stations enabled the development of independent sound productions. The earlier forms of experiencing music – such as concerts, radio recordings, analogue discs, and music films – were supplemented by CDs, music TV, music videos, MP3 files played on PCs and iPods, as well as by music listened on mobile telephony<sup>178</sup>.

Although the entire contemporary audio-sphere may be a semiotic material for creating communicates of audio literature, its foundation is certainly a sounding word, a spoken language with all elements and segmental and

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178 Cf.: Wiesław Godzic, *Music Television — konteksty i teksty*, in: *Mitologie popularne. Szkice z antropologii współczesności*, ed. Dariusz Czaja, Krakow: Universitas 1994; idem, *Music Television, czyli przyjemność dla oczu i uszu*, in: idem, *Oglądanie i inne przyjemności kultury popularnej*, Krakow: Universitas 1996; Wojciech Siwak, *Audiosfera na przełomie stuleci*, in: *Nowe media...*; Mieczysław Kominek, *Fonografia artystyczna*, in: *Nowe media...*; Urszula Jarecka, *Od teledysku do wideoklipu. Ewolucja idiomu klipowego*, in: *Nowe media...*; eadem, *Świat wideoklipu*, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 1999.

supra-segmental features. Technologies of audio recording allow for taking into account all dimensions of the spoken words: informational, semantic, communicative, vocal, and sonic. They allow to pay attention not only to segmental, systemic aspects of language, but also to supra-segmental properties that have a non-systemic dimension. The latter, if not recorded, are difficult to study in our type of language. This difficulty is created by the very construction of phonetic alphabets. Language and script based on a phonetic alphabet assume a close correspondence between a phone and a letter, between a sound and a graphic sign. Such a construction of language is perfectly effective in building meanings composed of separate sounds, which correspond to a sequence of consonances and vowels, yet at the same time it reflects – by definition – only a part of values of oral utterances, omitting rich variety of qualities of voice itself and its auditory and sonic shades. This domain, which has no distinctive features, is difficult to reflect on even now, especially in Western culture. Focusing attention on segmental features of the structure of phonetic languages was highlighted and emphasized by structuralism, a theory which was very influential in the twentieth century in linguistic and cultural studies.

Therefore, in linguistic studies the meaning of the word was mainly associated with conventions that – on the basis of arbitrary relationships – it gave meanings to various combinations of vocal sounds. Such meanings, built from distinctive units, supported by the systemic character of language, are relatively easy to analyse. On the other hand, the meanings resulting from direct or symbolic properties of a vocal sound itself, complex issues of vocal symbolism of speech, as well as expressive and emotive aspects of voice were outside the centre of interests of linguists and were noticed by the few outstanding scholars<sup>179</sup>.

What hardly succumbed to the research of scientists, in the twentieth century became the subject of a keen interest of [the representatives of] avant-garde artistic trends, who combined their interests with questioning of the semantic functions of words. For example, Futurists and Dadaists – who rejected cause-and-effect logic and syntactic rules, and preferred intuition and coincidence over rational cognition – appreciated the sonic side of poetry speech where they found

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179 See: Edward Sapir, *Sound Patterns in Language*, 1925 or *Speech as Personality Trait*, 1927 (cf. idem, *Speech as a Personality Trait*, in: idem, *Culture, Language and Personality: Selected Essays*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press 1949); R. Jakobson, Linda Waugh, *The Spell of Speech Sounds*, in: R. Jakobson, *The Sound Shape of Language*, Bloomington, London 1979, pp. 177–231; cf. also on non-European languages: Junzo Kawada, *La Voix. Etude d'ethno-linguistique comparative*, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris 1998.

deep, unrecognized contents. On the other hand, they negated conventional dimensions of trivialized and routinized words, exhausted “under the tyranny of thoughts”. The most radical criticism of conventionalized language as a repressive component of culture was expressed by the authors of happenings. They believed that language in its cognitive and communicative functions stereotypes our thinking, creates fossils, petrifies the sphere of emotions, and obscures the truth of our existence. That is why in their happenings they emphasized audial qualities of linguistic utterances, vocal qualities of the ways of speaking, and sensual features of speech, co-creating, in the first place, “transcripts of emotions”. In accordance with this belief, they used in happenings separate expressions, exclamations, and scraps of monologues; they exhibited vocal qualities and vocalizations: whispering, shouting, crying, laughing, munching, or groaning. They understood them as the ways to reach the essence of inner experiences, secrets of body and soul, which were hidden not in conventional relationships but in causal ones<sup>180</sup>. The precursory attention paid on supra-segmental properties of language was the strong point of a happening as an artistic phenomenon of the twentieth-century culture, while far-reaching radicalism in criticizing the metacultural role of language turned out to be its weakness.

Emphasizing sonic value of language, discovering expressive and semiotic richness of this sphere through avant-garde artistic experiments was even more remarkable because culture based on the dominance of script and print primarily combined words with concepts. Certainly, speech as the basic means of communication between people in direct contacts has always had an auditory dimension. Associated with non-verbal behaviours, it characterized its users, revealed their personality features, as well as social parameters and roles. It pointed to situational context of communication. Its use, however, was limited only to face-to-face contacts, to the space determined by the power of voice of people taking part in a particular meeting. Now, thanks to technologies of recording and transmission, spoken words also became tools of indirect communication. It has become possible to formulate, record, and reproduce spoken messages just like communicates of written language. The establishment of the radio stations in the 1920s and development of sound cinema, which began in the 1920s and the 1930s, were of fundamental importance for sonorizing recorded words. The twentieth century disseminated sounding words through radio, cinema, television, and other analogue and digital recordings. Experiences of participants of

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180 M. Hopfinger, *Poszukiwania intermedialne: happening*, in: eadem, *W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993.

direct communication registered, thanks to technical capabilities, have become a widespread phenomenon of the contemporary platform of communication.

Technical recording reveals and exposes personal and anthropological roots of spoken words, their associations with particular people who utter them, their voice properties, personality traits, social position, and cultural background. “Indirect” audial words are also present in audial communicates, and they form a part of a diverse sonic sphere, as well as of audiovisual communicates, in which it is a component of various verbal and non-verbal behaviours and communicational situations<sup>181</sup>.

The fleeting nature of interpersonal communication, and emotional engagement of the participants resulting from their direct involvement, did not favour gaining the distance necessary for cool observation and reflection. On the other hand, recording of sonic aspect of speech is conducive to analytical approach, it allows to distinguish many attributes, not easy for insubstantial, neutral reception. These include, first and foremost, power and pitch of voice, tone and timbre, articulation and accent, and tempo and rhythm of spoken words. The leading researcher of the set of voice features was George L. Trager, a linguist and phonetician. In the programming article “*Paralanguage: A First Approximation*”<sup>182</sup>, he distinguished the main features of speech: multi-aspect voice quality, vocalizations, as well as physiological and physical attributes of voices of individuals as persons of specific gender, age, health condition, character or mood, as members of specific social groups having a certain status, properties most often associated with cultural identifications<sup>183</sup>.

It is also symptomatic that this supra-segmental set of vocal features, which was usually at the margin of culture, is always present in the European tradition of musical performance practice. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, in the 1960s and 1970s, such vocal symptoms became independent in music and gained an aesthetic function. Michał Bristiger believes that those quasi-verbal-musical relationships, as he calls them, constitute many

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181 Cf. M. Hopfinger, *Słowo, obraz*, in: eadem, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne...*

182 George L. Trager, *Paralanguage: A First Approximation*, “*Studies in Linguistics*” 1958, v. 13.

183 Cf.: John Laver, *Voice Quality and Indexical Information*, *British Journal of Disorders of Communication* 1968, v. 3; David Abercrombie, *Paralanguage*, *British Journal of Disorders of Communication* 1968, v. 3; David Crystal, *Prosodic and Paralinguistic Correlates of Social Categories*, in: *Social Anthropology and Language*, ed. E. Ardener, London: Tavistock 1971, pp. 185–206; Dale G. Leathers, *The Vocalic Communication System*, in: idem, *Nonverbal Communication Systems*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon 1976.



non-classical music works and are the source of great expressive power. At the same time, they make people realize how indistinct is the boundary between musical and verbal phenomena<sup>184</sup>.

Regardless of the growing number of conducted studies and their findings, each participant of direct face-to-face communication – as well as each participant of indirect communication – has his/her own empirical experience, on the basis of which he/she recognizes and intuitively evaluates various voice signals. This applies in particular to communicative emotional function, to directing of impressions, and regulatory function. Vocal signals play a major role in forming interpersonal impressions. Edward Sapir was the first who drew attention to relationships between speech and personality traits of an individual. His observations and opinions were confirmed by the classic studies of Allport and Cantril in the 1930s, followed by many later studies<sup>185</sup>. The sound of voice and the manner of speech remain a vivid source of rich practical knowledge and various stereotypes, and their accurate recognition requires a long training. Our knowledge develops from insights into the sensuality of speech and its magic to acquire the ability to encode and decode vocal communicates.

The abovementioned components of the contemporary audio-sphere are the matter of aural communicates and the context of aural practices, including sound-directed literature.

## The radio after 1989

After the pioneer era of the interwar period, after years of reconstruction and expansion of the infrastructure in the new political system, after over thirty-year period of stabilization of radio forms – including literary programs – in the conditions of state monopoly, the situation of the radio changed radically. Primarily, new commercial broadcasters broke the state monopoly. They were operating without institutional censorship, in conditions of competition, which enabled a fundamental change in the approach to listeners. The radio stations began to try to satisfy the listeners' needs and expectations, and to strive for their attention. At the same time, private broadcasters had to take money into account; they wanted to make profits, so they had to attract advertisers. They offered mainly

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184 See: Michał Bristiger, *Związki muzyki ze słowem. Z zagadnień analizy muzycznej*, Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne 1986, especially chapter "Zagadnienia dźwiękowości i słowa".

185 Cf.: D. G. Leathers, *The Vocalic Communication System...*



music and news, and also formatted their programs<sup>186</sup>. The formatted radio stations are not really interested in literature – with few exceptions. On the other hand, public radio still exists, though in limited form, and it is supposed to serve its culture-enhancing mission. The literary programs are part of this mission.

After 1989, the position of the audio literature has changed significantly. Before, public radio, with its few stations, had enjoyed exclusiveness. Then, other radio stations began to gain more and more shares in the radio market. Moreover, the entire cultural offer, not only radio-based, became much richer and diverse. Participants of culture could freely choose from many possibilities and new, attractive proposals. Development and strengthening of the audiovisual type of culture was more conducive to the media other than to the radio. The Internet began to spread, creating new circumstances and introducing new factors of change<sup>187</sup>. The entire audio-sphere has entered the process of transformation.

For two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989, public radio remained almost a monopolist in the field of creation and distribution of audio literature, though not for political reasons. The original audio literature needs a solid, generous patron. Its main genres – reportages, radio dramas, and radio novels – can be created thanks to the work of many various, well-prepared, and skilful specialists. The preparatory works require large financial support, they are expensive and time-consuming; they must have appropriate organizational and technical background, and stable working conditions. Although this time the new, unstable situation – the change of the hitherto rules of the game, numerous reorganizations, and opaque decisions – limited the previously developed forms and creative possibilities, the Polish Radio saved literary genres that were unquestionably unprofitable and anachronistic – according to some reformers. It was possible thanks to the great tradition, impressive achievements, and the fact that the Polish Radio has been employing many outstanding creative people: authors of texts, directors, sound engineers, composers, technicians, actors who valued studio work, and other experienced collaborators. And although in two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989 literary programs were occupying much less airtime than before, and patronage was much more modest, nevertheless it provided the necessary conditions for survival and continuation of recognized forms of audio literature.

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186 Cf.: Grażyna Stachyra, *Gatunki audycji w radiu sformatowanym*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 2008.

187 Cf.: Katarzyna Bernat, *Radio w eterze i w Internecie. Sposoby kontaktu ze słuchaczami*, in: *Internetowe gatunki dziennikarskie*, eds. Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński, Wojciech Furman, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2010.

The organizational and substantive framework for making reportages was created by the established Studio Reportażu i Dokumentu PR S.A. [Reportage and Documentary Studio of Polish Radio], managed by Janina Jankowska, and then (since 2004) by Irena Piłatowska. Reportages are broadcasted in all three stations of the Polish Radio. They are also still produced in regional branches. Their quality is fostered by new technical possibilities related to digitalization and computer editing. An important integrative and professional role is played by meetings and workshops, including, in particular, continuing seminars in Kazimierz Dolny, combined with the Ogolnopolski Przegląd Tworczości Radiowej w Dziedzinie Reportażu i Dokumentu [The All-Polish Festival of Radio Art in the Field of Reportage and Documentary]. The Jacek Stwora contest for scholarship for young reporters/documentalists has been funded. Among the national awards, the so-called Melchior – awards in the Ogolnopolski Konkurs Reportażystów im. Melchiora Wańkowicza [The Melchior Wańkowicz All-Polish Reporters Competition], organized since 2004 – are considered the most important. They are granted for press or television reportage in the following categories: Radio Reporter of the Year, Premiere of the Year, and Inspiration of the Year. These initiatives popularize the form of reportage as a genre of audio literature. The history of the genre is also deliberately built, as evidenced, among others, by the broadcasting of the series “Perły reportażu Polskiego Radia” [Pearl of the Polish Radio Reportage] hosted by Irena Piłatowska, or the award named after the outstanding authors of reportages, such as Witold Zadrowski (the first Polish laureate of Prix Italia from 1966), or the aforementioned Jacek Stwora. Among the award-winning programs in Poland and abroad are works by Anna Sekudewicz, Katarzyna Michalak, Jan Smyk, Cezary Galek, and Maciej Drygas<sup>188</sup>.

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188 Cf.: J. Jankowska, *Sztuka reportażu radiowego...*; J. Tuszewski, *Artystyczne przedstawianie faktów albo reportaże w ofensywie*, in: idem, *Paradoks o słowie i dźwięku. Rozważania o sztuce radiowej*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2002; E. Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, «*Reportaż to gra uczuć i emocji*». *O reportażach radiowych wybitnych współczesnych tworców Polskiego Radia*, in: *Media Studies. Refleksja nad stanem obecnym*, eds. K. Stępnik, Maciej Rajewski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 2008; Kinga Klimczak, *O estetyce i etyce w reportażach Janiny Jankowskiej*, in: *Media Studies...*; eadem, *Reportaż radiowy*, in: *Wypowiedź dziennikarska. Teoria i praktyka*, eds. Barbara Bogolebska, Andrzej Kudry, Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ 2008; Monika Białek, “*Tematyka polskiego reportażu radiowego w pierwszym dziesięcioleciu wolnych mediów*”, paper presented at the conference “XX lat wolnych mediów w Polsce, 1989–2009”, Jagiellonian University, Krakow 26th–27th May 2009; Ogolnopolski Konkurs Reportażystów “Melchior”, Katalog 2006.

Some reports can be considered docudramas, because – although they talk about real events – their style is close to the dramaturgy of fiction. Today, theatre – not only radio theatre – successfully uses documentary materials. The matter of real life receives an artistic setting. Various genres merge and complement each other. On the other hand, “The Theatre of Polish Radio” after 1989 remained a separate editorial unit, which between 1992 and 2006 was managed by Janusz Kukuła, and then by Krzysztof Zaleski. Within this framework, many productions – both original plays and adaptations of literary classic and contemporary works – have been created. Many years of working with microphone, mastering the secrets of sound engineering and musical setting, rich library of “special sonic effects”, increasing technical capabilities, and experience and talent of radiomen enabled production of literary programs on an excellent level. They were broadcasted mainly in the Polish Radio Two station. But also the Polish Radio Three has its own theatrical “stage”. In January 2005, in the Witold Lutosławski Concert Hall Studio with the participation of the audience there was the inauguration of the Radio Theatre Stage in the Polish Radio One, presenting adaptation of *Kwiaty Polskie* [*Flowers from Poland*] by Julian Tuwim, directed by Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, with the music of Włodzimierz Nahorny, performed by Olga Sawicka and Zapasiewicz (Figs. 10 and 11).

Besides the previously known authors of radio dramas, new artists appeared, for example, Paweł Mossakowski, Jerzy Niemczuk, Marek Ławrynowicz, and

Po raz pierwszy z udziałem publiczności!  
Inauguracja Radiowej Sceny Teatralnej w Jedynce

**"Kwiaty Polskie" Juliana Tuwima**

W wykonaniu Olgi Sawickiej i Zbigniewa Zapasiewicza, przy fortepianie Włodzimierz Nahorny  
reżyseria: Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, muzyka: Włodzimierz Nahorny

18 stycznia 2005 roku o godzinie 19.05  
Studio Koncertowe Polskiego Radia im. Witolda Lutosławskiego w Warszawie przy ul. J.P. Woronicza 17.

Transmisja na antenie Radiowej Jedynki o godzinie 19.05

Bilety do nabycia w kasach ZASP, i na godzinę przed koncertem  
w kasie Studia Koncertowego Polskiego Radia im. W. Lutosławskiego.

Zapraszamy

**Fig. 10:** Inauguration of the Radiowa Scena Teatralna [Theatre Radio Stage] in Polish Radio One, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 January 2005

**Teatr Polskiego Radia**  
zaprasza

na słuchowisko zrealizowane w nowoczesnej technologii dźwięku przestrzennego DOLBY PRO LOGIC II\*

**„Panna Julia” August Strindberg**

Waldemar Modestowicz - reżyseria i adaptacja,  
Andrzej Brzoska - realizacja akustyczna, Renata Baszun - opracowanie muzyczne.  
Z udziałem między innymi:  
Julii Kijowskiej, Marcina Przybylskiego, Ewy Konstancji Bułhak, Mariusza Bonaszewskiego.

**Program 1 Polskiego Radia, 29 listopada 2009, godz. 21.05**

Słuchaj nas w Programie 1, w każdą niedzielę po 21.00 oraz w każdą środę po 20.00

**najlepsze brzmienie klasyki**

 **Jedynka**  
POLSKIE RADIO

● [polskieradio.pl/teatr](http://polskieradio.pl/teatr)

\* Dostępny dla słuchaczy dysponujących zestawem kina domowego z włączonym dekoderm odbioru DOLBY PRO LOGIC II na falach UKF FM lub na platformie Cyfra+. Pozostali słuchacze mogą odbierać słuchowisko w dotychczasowej jakości dźwięku.

**Fig. 11:** Teatr Polskiego Radia [Polish Radio Theatre] – announcement of the radioplay *Panna Julia* [original Swedish title: *Fröken Julie*/English title: *Miss Julie*] by August Strindberg, dir. Waldemar Modestowicz, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 November 2009

Tomasz Maciej Trojanowski; many pieces' works were directed by Janusz Kukuła, Henryk Rozen, and Waldemar Modestowicz<sup>189</sup> (Figs. 12 and 13).

The audio literature has been created now in the new media context. Multimedia productions initiated or co-initiated by the Polish Radio are more frequent, and this phenomenon well illustrates the increasing convergence of media. For example, the Marathon with *Pan Tadeusz*, presented 1998, on the occasion of the bicentenary anniversary of the birth of Adam Mickiewicz, directed by Janusz Kukuła, with the introductory word of Czesław Miłosz – had such a setting. And following are the examples of publicity: “The Polish Radio would like to invite you to the Witold Lutosławski Concert Hall Studio for the radio opera *Balladyna*, after Juliusz Słowacki, directed by Anna Seniuk to the music composed by Maciej Małecki. Performers: Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska, Krzysztof Gosztyła and others. The radio premiere took place in October 1999. The Sunday performance will be accompanied by the promotion of a double CD

189 Cf.: S. Bardijewska, *Słuchowisko lat 90*, in: eadem, *Nagie słowo...*; E. Pleszkun-Olejniczakowa, «*Dwa Teatry*» — czyli o *Teatrze Wyobraźni i Teatrze Polskiego Radia*, in: *Wypowiedź dziennikarska...*; J. Bachura, “Współczesne słuchowiska na tle kultury konwergencji — Prolegomena do przyszłej syntezy”, paper presented at the conference “XX lat wolnych mediów...”; A. Mucha, „Współczesne tendencje rozwojowe teatru radiowego”, paper presented at the conference “XX lat wolnych mediów...”



**Fig. 12:** Ninth edition of the “Dwa Teatry” Festival of the Polish Radio Theatre and the Polish Television Theatre, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 June 2009

album with the record of the performance<sup>190</sup> and “*Przygody Koziołka Matołka* [Adventures of Matołek the Billy-Goat] – a musical performance based on the

190 BET, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18th–19th March 2000.

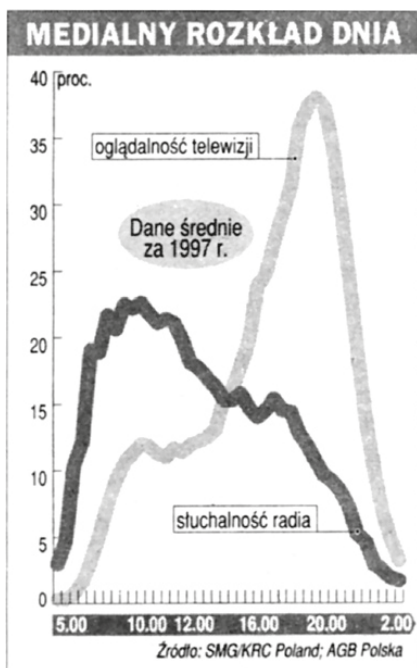


Fig. 13: Radio and television – daily media schedule, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 January 1998

text by Kornel Makuszyński, directed by Andrzej Strzelecki to the music composed by Marcin Błażewicz will take place in the Witold Lutosławski Concert Hall Studio of the Polish Radio at 12.00 on June 6th, 2004. Live broadcast of the show on the Polish Radio Bis. Performers: Maciej Stuhr, Monika Dryl, Piotr Gąsowski, Wiktor Zborowski. The performance also includes a projection of Marian Walentynowicz's drawings for the first edition of the book on the adventures of Matołek<sup>191</sup>.

Festivals of the exclusively radio dramas in Bolimów and Rzeszów since 2001 have been replaced with the festival of the “Dwa Teatry” Festival of the Polish Radio Theatre and the Polish Television Theatre. Until 2008, eight editions of the festival were held in Sopot.

In the autumn of 2008 in the TOK FM Radio – for the first time in the Polish private radio station – the theatre “stage” was established, on the initiative of

191 ASD, *Co jest grane?*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4th–10th June 2004.



Mikołaj Lizut. The first presented production was a piece by Marek Modzelewski, directed by Anna Smolar, with the participation of Zdzisław Wardejn, Andrzej Seweryn, and Jan Frycz. In the first season, ten productions were implemented, which are to appear on an audio carrier. The phenomenon of the TOK FM Radio Theatre was discussed by Joanna Bachura<sup>192</sup> (Fig. 14).

Another genre of the audio literature – a radio novel – survived various adversaries thanks to its faithful audience as well as new listeners. Two family sagas: *Matysiakowie* (broadcasted since 1956) and *W Jezioranach* (broadcasted since 1960) are still present in the Polish Radio One<sup>193</sup>.

But this genre has also been used again to teach-through-playing new, desirable behavioural patterns – not so much in everyday life, as in economy. Under the patronage of the National Bank of Poland, two editions of the series *Motel w pół drogi* [*The Halfway Motel*] were made. The script was written by Małgorzata Sobieszkańska and Janusz Kukuła. Almost 60 episodes were presented between 2006 and 2008. The play was directed by Janusz Kukuła, the co-author of the



**Fig. 14:** The TOK FM Radio Theatre – Marek Modzelewski, *Jak pięknie było rzucić piętami chodnikowymi*, “Gazeta Wyborcza – Duży Format”, 24 November 2008

192 J. Bachura, *Współczesne słuchowiska...*; see also the web page [www.tok.fm](http://www.tok.fm).

193 See footnotes 169 and 170, p.138. Till the beginning of 2009, over 2,700 and over 2,400 episodes respectively have been broadcasted.

script, and Andrzej Brzoska was the sound engineer of the entire series. The cast included: Marcin Przybylski, Eliza Borowska, Elżbieta Kępińska, Edyta Jungowska, Krzysztof Gosztyła, Henryk Talar, and others. The series told about people who were connected by business: running a motel in the suburbs of a small town. The Saturday's performances were preceded on Fridays in the program "Sygnały Dnia" [Information of the Day], with five-minute programs explaining economic issues related to running a business, discussed in subsequent episodes. The newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* co-operated with authors of the series: the supplement "Moje finance" [*My Finances*] published the columns by Michał Zielinski on topics which were addressed in particular episodes. The series also had an official website: [www.motel.wp.pl](http://www.motel.wp.pl)<sup>194</sup>. It fundamentally changed the conditions for the use of the radio programs by their listeners. The Wirtualna Polska web portal had an archive of episodes aired before, so they were still available – such option had been unthinkable before. The photo gallery and video files showed the recording studio and performing actors. The forum allowed for the exchange of views and opinions, for discussions between listeners. The "how-to" subpages about finances, health, culinary, as well as blogs of the protagonists of the program were to expand relationship between all the participants of the series.

The example of *Motel w pół drogi* shows well the current situation of the audio literature and the media – the cumulative nature of the platform of communication, including genres which were already known yet they were subject to updates, and fundamental innovations resulting from the reconfiguration of communication and of the entire culture.

## Audiobooks

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Polish press reported the rapid development of a new segment of the market: audiobooks; it grew much faster than the market of literature published in the traditional way. Audio literature finds many recipients in Great Britain, France, or Germany. At the book fairs in Leipzig and Frankfurt, audiobooks occupy a prominent place at the stands of German publishers, and the candidates to the title of the Audiobook of the Year 2004, included, among others, such well-known novels as *Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann and *Steppenwolf* by Heinrich Hesse. Also in the United States, audio literature is gaining more and more interest. For a long time, it used to be

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194 Cf.: J. Bachura, [www.motel.wp.pl](http://www.motel.wp.pl) jako przykład konwergencji różnych form komunikacji, in: *Internetowe gatunki...*



addressed only to selected groups: blind people and children. Only when in the 1980s the car radio cassette players became popular, the [audial] interpretations of literary works began to gain new supporters. The number of recipients of audio literature was growing along with the CD market, and the audiobooks' offer from American publishers. The recorded titles included, in the first place, current bestsellers from the market of printed books. Within a few years, over 70,000 titles were available<sup>195</sup>. In 2008, the share of this segment in the book market reached about 4%.

Also in Poland, literature published on audio carriers outside the radio was intended mainly for children. The limited number of works recorded on vinyl LP or audio cassettes were available in bookstores. The largest collections of audiobooks were in the Central Library of the Polish Association of the Blind in Warsaw. Nearly 6,000 titles were available only to blind people, dyslexics, and people over 75 years old. For a long time, literature in the audio version outside the radio has not been considered an obvious alternative form of literary communicates, as it is treated now, in the era of the new carriers. Over the past few years, this situation has changed rapidly.

In Poland, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the number of publications of audiobooks of literary works has grown rapidly. They have been recorded on CDs in audio or MP3 formats. First, audiobooks were available only from a few publishing houses – RTW offered especially masterpieces of world literature and market hits, detective stories, and sensation; Audio Liber has specialized in literature for children; the Szczecin-based 3kropek Audio Publishing published contemporary prose read by their authors themselves, and the Gdańsk-based publishing house Tower Press proposed, among others, short stories by Andrzej Sapkowski; contemporary poetry in the interpretation of the authors themselves was published by the Biuro Literackie, as well as by Mikołaj Trzaska. Audiobooks were also issued sporadically by non-specialized companies. For example, the Znak publishing house, along with the publication of the dissertation of the Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, announced its audio version in the interpretation of Jerzy Trela and Tadeusz Zięba; *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly magazine, the Znak publishing house, and RMF Radio Station simultaneously published as a print and recording on CD the book documenting reactions of people and media to the Pope's passing in memorable April 2005,

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195 Cf.: Agnieszka Wolny-Hamkało, *Książki mają głos*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5th July 2005; Konrad Godlewski, *Czy rozrośnie się rynek książek na ucho?*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1st February 2006; Anna Rubinowicz-Grundler, *Mały wielki język*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 March 2004; CES, PAP, *Książki do słuchania*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 March 2004.

titled *Czuwanie* [*Vigil*]; Piotr Marecki (Ha! Art) after the publication of *Lubiewo*, a novel by Michał Witkowski, issued its second edition in the form of the audio-book read by the author; the Book Media published a series of books belonging to the school canon, and the publishing house Media Rodzina – besides releasing subsequent volumes of the adventures of Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling and the series *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Clive S. Lewis in enormous number of copies – proposed audio versions of selected titles.

The niche character of audio publishing activities was broken by the initiative of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a daily newspaper. Its collection “Mistrzowie Słowa” [Masters of Words] emphasized the importance of actors’ interpretations in audio editions of literary works. The CDs were sold as bonuses with newspapers; the illustrated CD boxes included, among others, images of the actors [who read the text]. Of twenty-seven books published in the collection of audiobooks, twenty-one were adaptations made by the Polish Radio, while six were the audio versions of full printed texts (Fig. 15).

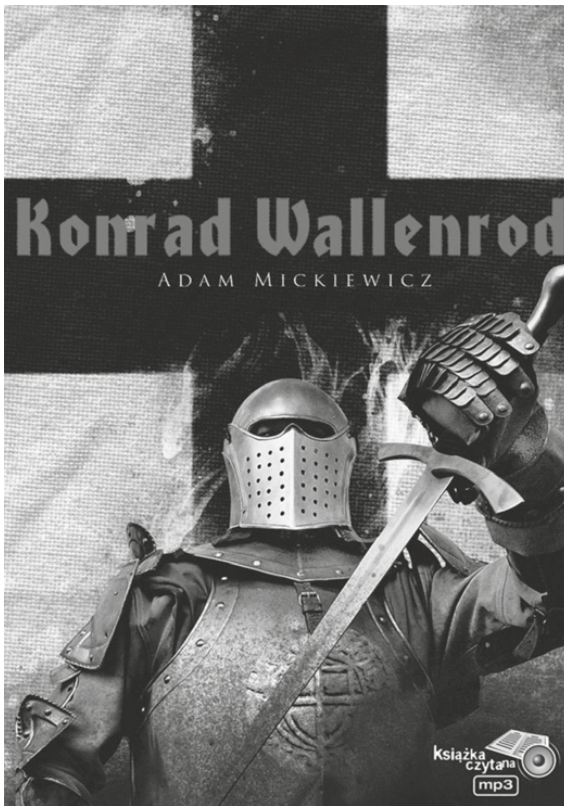
In the middle of 2008, about one hundred publishers were involved in permanent or casual edition of audio literature. The next quantitative step was to take place with the launch of Internet services, offering audiobooks in the form of MP3 files online, thus without a carrier, for direct downloading to computers, MP3 players, or mobile phones. *Audioteka.pl* – the first website service of that kind – was launched in November 2008<sup>196</sup>. In 2008, the first edition of the all-Poland contest for the [Audio]



**Fig. 15:** Mistrzowie słowa [Masters of word] – Anna Polony reads *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 February 2007

196 Cf.: Aneta Kyzioł, *Czytanie uchem*, *Polityka*, 16 August 2008; Zbigniew Domaszewicz, *MP3 zamiast papierowej książki*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2nd–3rd August 2008; note without author, *Audioteka.pl*, *Gazeta Wyborcza — Stołeczna*, 14 November 2008.

Book of the Year was also announced. The best Polish audiobooks published by the end of 2008 were appointed by a group of recognized experts. The verdict was announced in May 2009 on the official website of the contest [www.ksiazkaaudioroku.pl](http://www.ksiazkaaudioroku.pl). In the category “Belles-Lettres”, the winner was *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, read by Tadeusz Sznuć (publisher: Muza S.A., format: MP3 – 3 hours 27 minutes). In the category “Non-fiction and reportage”, the winner was *Astor Piazzolla: A Memoir* by Natalio Gorina, read by Waldemar Malicki (publisher: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne S.A., format: audio CD – 1 hour 14 minutes). In the category “Crime and Sensation”, the winner was *Bad* by Leopold Tyrmand, read by Marek Kondrat (publisher: Agora S.A., format: MP3 – 5 hours 46 minutes) (Fig. 16).



**Fig. 16:** Audiobooks: *Konrad Wallenrod* by Adam Mickiewicz, read by Antoni Rot, published by Promatek 2009, audiobook.pl, 26 January 2010

According to the Polish Theatre Portal [e-teatr.pl](http://e-teatr.pl), in the studio of the Polish Radio Theatre in December 2009, the largest production in the history of that stage was completed. Almost 200 actors participated in the recording of *Narrenturm*, the first part of *The Hussite Trilogy* by Andrzej Sapkowski. The adaptation was directed by Janusz Kukuła and the full version was going to last 25 hours. It was announced to be broadcasted in mid-2010. The Polish Radio One is to broadcast five-minute episodes every day. It is also planned to be released in CD format. The audiobook in MP3 format will be available to download from [audioteka.pl](http://audioteka.pl).



**Fig. 17:** Audiobooks: *Ashes and Diamonds* by Jerzy Andrzejewski, read by Piotr Krukowski, published by Mozaika 2009, audiobook.pl, 26 January 2010

not exclusively, sound recordings outside the radio have been relying on individual actors' or readers' interpretations of literary texts, previously published in print. MP3 files stored on the Web certainly expand access to such audio literature, which is an interpretation of the printed texts. They foster its popularization. Will there be new genres? (Fig. 17)

Walter Jackson Ong argued in the 1970s about the distinctness of books, which – although printed – are based on editing of oral statements recorded on magnetic tapes. Such books are constructed in a particular way, and their structure differs from books written by authors themselves. For different forms of words – speech, script, print, and audio recording – have influenced each other

Klaus Schöning was right when he said that the radio was the producer and distributor of audio literature. The radio was the place of origins of radio drama, reportage, and radio novel, today called “the series”. The radio had a monopoly on literary genres until the appearance of other information-capable audio carriers. Literary communicates recorded on vinyl LPs were intended mainly for children, as well as for listeners who could not read it themselves. Cassette tapes were first to open new possibilities; however, it was only the digital technology that began to support audio literature outside the radio.

So far, most often, if

in the process of cultural evolution<sup>197</sup>. Will the new digital technologies generate a new quality?

## A song

From the literary point of view, a song is a short poetic piece with a distinctive chorus – it can be a regular poem, a free poem, or a prose poem, of variety of subjects – performed by a soloist or a band with musical accompaniment<sup>198</sup>. Lyrics in some variations of contemporary songs became as important as their musical compositions. Vocal-instrumental interpretations – at a concert or in a recording studio – arranged by director of sound, co-creates a phenomenon that became an important and universally present component of the contemporary audio-sphere. Songs owe much to technology: when recorded, they can be repeatedly listened to, and thanks to technical devices they can be performed for huge audiences.

The unusual popularity of songs was supported by various forms of youth culture emerging since the 1960s<sup>199</sup>. Songs, their authors, and performers became exponents of beliefs and emotions of a wide audience, which resulted in their enthusiastic reception. Fans of famous vocalists and music bands collect recordings and take part in concerts, confirming in this way common values and preferences. The core of this movement was formed by proliferation of bands led by the most well-known: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Animals. Very quickly rock music became a widespread and diverse phenomenon, and gained

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197 Zob. Walter Jackson Ong, *Media Transformation: The Talked Book*, in: idem, *Interfaces of the Word*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1977. Cf. e.g. the printed version of the book *Świat według Mellera. Życie i polityka: ku przyszłości. Ze Stefanem Mellerem rozmawia Michał Komar*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rosner & Wspólnicy (in audio version nominated to the Audiobook of the Year 2008 in category Non-fiction and reportage, read by Jan Englert and Michał Komar, Biblioteka Akustyczna, MP3, 9 h. 42 min.).

198 Cf.: Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, entry “Piosenka”, in: M. Głowiński et al., *Słownik terminów literackich*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1976.

199 Cf. e.g.: Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski, *Rock, młodzież, społeczeństwo. Między nadzieją a rozpaczą*, Warsaw: Instytut Kultury 1993; *Między duszą a ciałem*, eds. Wojciech Józef Burszta, Marcin Rychlewski, Warsaw: Twój Styl 2003; Mikołaj Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, Warsaw: Sic! 2003; Marian Filipiak, *Od subkultury do kultury alternatywnej. Wprowadzenie do subkultur młodzieżowych*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 1999; John Storey, *Popular Music*, in: idem, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Cultures: Theories and Methods*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 1996, pp. 93–112.

enormous popularity; rock albums were selling in huge amounts. Rock songs, recognized as an expression of generational rebellion disappointed with official culture, were using the language of their audience (street slang, youth jargon) discussing public and private issues, pains and loneliness, ordinary matters and dreams. They made a breakthrough in previous conventions and ideas about song as a genre. In the mid-1970s, punk rock songs, directly contesting the reality, gained recognition [among young audience]. Polish punk rock spoke on behalf of the young generation, acted outside censorship, and outside the opposition's "second circuit", against the norms and institutions in force, against all oppressiveness<sup>200</sup>. Then rap and hip-hop came, with rhythmic words playing a fundamental role, and using the idiolect of young people who consider themselves excluded from the benefits of the political transformation.

Songs as a means of expression serves various issues and various social groups. They became an important component of the entire contemporary culture.

Yet the first major change in the situation of songs was caused by the radio, that allowed for overcoming the limitations of the space in which the concert was taking place: be it on stage or in a studio. Thanks to that, songs could be listened to by many receivers within the range of a given station. This change was accompanied by the new, indirect type of communication. The listeners would not see the musicians, they were in a completely different place, yet they could hear them very well. A song on the radio became a communicate based solely on the sonic aspect. Besides, it was a communicate very well suited for the radio: it combined words and music, it used a short form, and usually had an intimate character. With development of technology, sounds transmitted by the radio have improved qualitatively. Thanks to the radio broadcasts, songs are finding their new admirers and gain more and more popularity.

In Poland, popular stage music with its hits and stunners was ruling more or less until the mid-1950s<sup>201</sup>. Literary, poetic, and satirical songs were also present all the time, often performed in direct situations, for keen audience<sup>202</sup>. There

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200 Cf. among others: J. Wertenstein-Żuławski, *To tylko rock'n'roll*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ZAKR 1990; Mirosław Pęczak, *Tekst piosenki rockowej — stopnie zależności od kultury dominującej*, in: *Wybrane zagadnienia spontanicznej kultury młodzieżowej w Polsce*, eds. Zbigniew Rykowski, J. Wertenstein-Żuławski, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Kultury 1986; W. Siwak, *Estetyka rocka*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper 1993; M. Lizut, *Punk Rock Later...*

201 Cf.: Anna Barańczak, *Słowo w piosence. Poetyka współczesnej piosenki estradowej*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1983.

202 In theatres and cabarets, just to mention a few: Bim Bom, Stodoła, STS, Piwnica pod Baranami, Kabaret Dudek. Cf. e.g.: *Bardowie*, eds. Jadwiga Sawicka, Ewa Paczoska,



was a sharp division between popular stage music (including music for young audience) and more elitist music; they actually functioned in separate circuits, though crossing also existed. An unusual and unique example of this crossing was *Kabaret Starszych Panów* (*Elderly Gentlemen's Cabaret*) created by Jeremy Przybora and Jerzy Wasowski, broadcasted on Polish Television. Songs with lyrics written by Agnieszka Osiecka, Wojciech Młynarski, Jacek Kaczmarski, and Czesław Niemen were very popular. Interpretations [of Polish poetry in a form of songs] by Ewa Demarczyk were widely acclaimed. Thanks to those artists, song as a genre gained cultural ennoblement.

Another change in the way of reception of songs was provided by new carriers. At the end of the 1960s, vinyl records were the standard; their volume allowed to present on a single disc a dozen or so pieces by the same author or a band, which enabled listeners to learn different aspects and dimensions of the work of a given artists. LP recordings allowed listeners to become independent of the radio program schedule; they could listen to songs at any time, and replay them many times. Tape recorders and cassettes introduced further modifications, including listening to songs in any place, not necessarily at home. This direction of changes was confirmed by the invention of a Walkman.

The beginning of the 1980s brought about a fundamental quality change: analogue recordings were replaced by digital ones. CDs were even more voluminous than previous carriers, and recordings did not lose their quality. CD players allowed to select any of the songs recorded on disc. Another invention, MP3 files, revolutionized the access of recipients to favourite songs: for some time the Internet users could download interesting works from the Web for free; later – after introduction of legal prohibition of those practices – access to particular songs was not only easy, but also not expensive. Now the MP3 players can have a very large memory and are convenient for users. MP3 files can also be played on cell phones. Further development of mobile interactive applications is predicted.

Does the technology affect the shape of songs? It seems so. In the past, singing depended solely on quality of voice and vocal skills of a performer, yet now technical inventions are used to amplify those qualities. First of all, they gradually create better conditions for listeners, who increase in numbers – both as participants of concerts and as users of audio carriers. As Wojciech Siwak writes, mobile microphones changed the way of singing and were conducive to the

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Lodz: Wydawnictwo Ibidem 2001; Krzysztof Gajda, *Poza państwowym monopolem* – Jan Krzysztof Kelus, Poznań: Wydawnictwo WiS 1998; K. Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski w świecie tekstów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie 2003; Tadeusz Nyczek, *Salon Niezależnych. Dzieje pewnego kabaretu*, Krakow: Znak 2008.

new kind of songs. A similar role was played by sound equipment and all electrical devices used to intensify the sound: they allowed for a thorough change of performed pieces<sup>203</sup>.

The very diverse genres and circuits of contemporary songs have been, among others, the basis for the process of formatting radio stations – in the United States for many years already, and in Poland after the breakthrough events of 1989. Digital technology is conducive to various tastes of music.

All variations of songs to a lesser or greater extent use several complementary ways of reaching the audience – the radio and other audio carriers: cassettes, CDs, MP3 files, the return of a vinyl records, and film soundtracks, as well as, thanks to the audiovisual carriers, music TV, video clips in general TV stations and in the Internet, DVDs, but also thanks to the feature and documentary films dedicated to musicians, singers and bands; and, of course, live concerts. Those various ways of circulating of songs among listeners, often avid fans, make them widely present in the social space and become one of the most popular ways of contemporary expression.

### **A case of Bob Dylan**

Songs became not only an extremely popular phenomenon during the twentieth century. In some manifestations they also became an artistic phenomenon, and some of songwriters and song-performers have been considered the poets of modernity – not necessarily a niche. Bob Dylan is not a niche artist. His concerts have been gathering crowds since the 1960s, and his albums have sold in millions of copies. His early works used the old American folk tradition, and then they were inspired by rock and roll. Bob Dylan sang about the need for freedom – his songs were a voice against violence, poverty, and all kinds of injustice; they also had political overtones. Especially his protest-songs won masses of youth audience; they proved to be hymns of the young generation. Before Dylan, lyrics had a limited stylistic framework; it was considered an easy, schematic, and simply secondary form. His ballad *Like a Rolling Stone* was considered a breakthrough, ennobling a song as a literary form, which has become a “vehicle for messages much more serious and more complex than those which in the cultural tradition were attributed to popular songs”<sup>204</sup>. This concerned not only their content, but also suggestive, extensive poetic images. Until then, short performance of the song was the standard. *Like a Rolling Stone*, considered “the most important song

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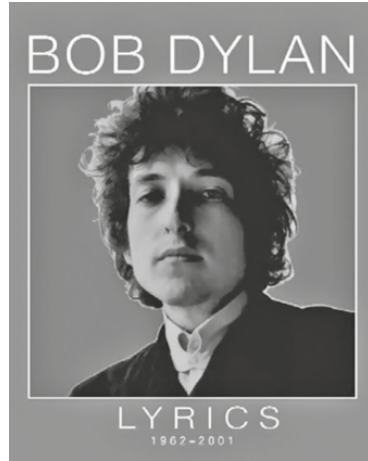
203 Cf.: W. Siwak, *Estetyka rocka...*

204 Piotr Bratkowski, *Bob Dylan — od tańca do rewolucji*, in: *Bardowie...*, p. 19.





**Fig. 18:** *The Best of Bob Dylan*, Sony Music, 1997, feryalim.blogcu.com, 27 January 2010



**Fig. 19:** Bob Dylan, *Lyrics 1962-2001*, Simon & Schuster: New York 2004, ex. images-amazon.com, 26 January 2010

of the last century”, lasted 6 minutes and no radio wanted to broadcast such a long song (Figs. 18 and 19).

Bob Dylan relatively quickly abandoned “singing socio-political journalism”. He did not lose his numerous fans, though their composition was certainly changing. He created hundreds of songs that were a testimony to his poetic imagination free from schematic ideas of a song as a genre. The acceptance of his works by a wide audience bridged the gap between an elite literary “bard” songs and songs intended for mass audience. It should be also noticed that – perhaps due to maturation of the genre – mass audience has also changed. Its representatives turned out to be better educated, more sensitive, and more interested in valuable messages; they often identified themselves with the issues raised by contemporary artists and the ways in which they were expressed.

A song – a kind of poetry in contemporary culture – gained a new mental and formal dimension because it turned out that besides entertainment, important to contemporary audience, it could express anxieties of its time, talk about important public issues, ask people important questions and discuss the most intimate experiences of an individual, and stimulate imagination; it could have a sophisticated form and express contents attributed to the so-called high culture. The artistic and cultural ennoblement of the genre took place. The artistic output of Bob Dylan was very good, yet not the only example of this phenomenon.

At the same time, there was a parallel interpretation of the phenomenon of contemporary popular song – since the extremely critical essay *On Popular Music* from 1941 by Adorno to the discerning of various ways of reception of songs in the article by David Riesman from 1950 or in the work of Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel from 1964<sup>205</sup>. In turn, Simon Frith (1983) saw in the phenomenon of popular song the intensity of experiences, emotions, and sensations. Lyrics of pop music, according to John Storey, were not the language of poetry. They were a new way of expressing everyday discourse by means of sounding words. Pop music uses everyday language – clichés, templates, and platitudes – and uses them in a moving game of voice and expression<sup>206</sup>. Frith thought that sounds surrounding words dramatize authentic feelings, sublimate the colloquial language – the language of everyday experience – above banal verbal clichés and ordinary mediocrity. In the phenomenon of song, people found a matter to build individual and group identities – subcultural and generational (Fig. 20).



**Fig. 20:** *Poeci*, Warner Music Poland, 2009, pl.spinner.com, 17 January 2010

Each of the interpretational clues quoted above attempts to decipher the varied phenomenon of contemporary song.

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205 Quoted after: J. Storey, *Popular Music...*  
 206 Ibidem.

## 6 Electronic literature

### Electronic script. Secondary literacy

When in the 1980s the audiovisual culture was doing very well, and television reached almost all and everyone, taking a dominant position on the platform of communication – PCs began to be visible on the horizon. They were using letters, numbers, and lines, initiating a kind of renaissance of script and establishing the phenomenon of the so-called secondary literacy. Apparently, it disturbed audiovisual nature of contemporary culture. The hitherto direction of communication changes maintaining the cumulative nature of the platform of communication was from orality through literacy to audiovisuality. Attractiveness and popularity of the new device was to grow and bring far-reaching changes. What would the new technology bring and how would it develop?

PC, considered by many as primarily a processor and text editor, seemed at first to be a greatly improved typewriter. After the era of the manuscript and the century of typing, it created new possibilities for individual authors. It facilitated composing and editing of texts. Soon, however, it turned out that it was not an innocent technical novelty and that it has been causing profound changes.

Michael Heim in *Electric Language: A Philosophical Inquiry of Word Processing* from 1987, recognized script on a computer screen as an expression of “ontological transformation”, a transformation founded on digital technology. In his opinion, the zero-one principle, on the basis of which computers work, was foreign to the natural language, which was able to describe relations with reality, express nuanced views, richness and ambiguity of “unkempt” thoughts, allowed intuition, and inspired imagination. Cybernetic record, on the other hand, strictly adhered to unequivocal “yes-no” choices, enforced clear, one-dimensional decisions, simplifying, reducing, and formalizing them. Everything we write, it is recorded in the digital binary code. Binary oppositions bring it closer to the rules of artificial languages, using symbols detached from reality, and aimed at relations within abstracted systems. As a result, computer as a word processor negatively changes our language, our way of thinking, and our knowledge<sup>207</sup> (Fig. 21).

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207 See: Michael Heim, *Electric Language: A Philosophical Inquiry of Word Processing*, New Haven–London: Yale University Press 1987.

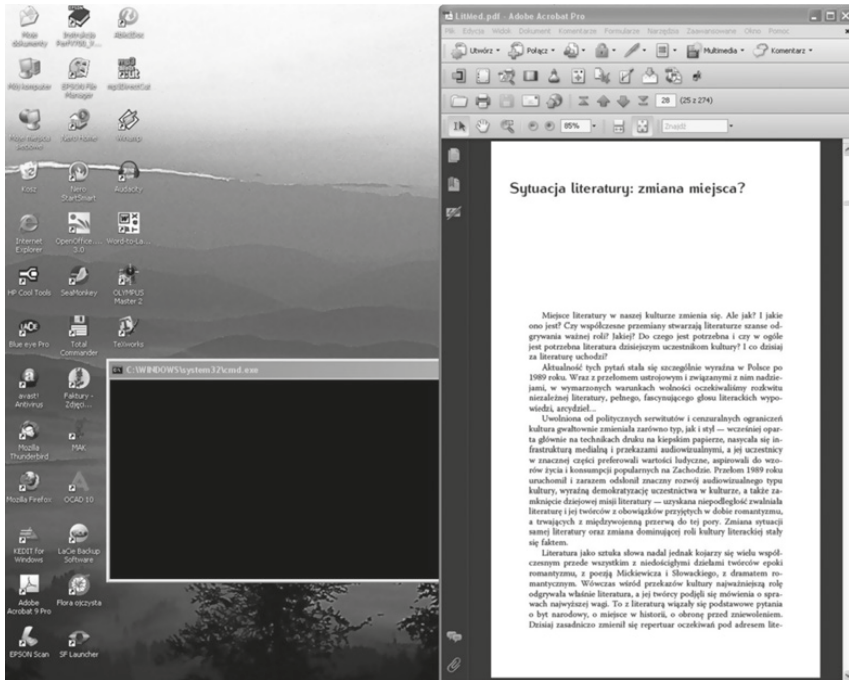


Fig. 21: A computer screen with original Polish edition of the present book

This diagnosis of Michael Heim does not seem accurate, because electronic script based on digital technology does not stand comparison to artificial languages and refers above all to the first digital medium, which is the phonetic alphabet<sup>208</sup>. Thanks to the phonetic alphabet, the transition from orality to literacy turned out to be a fundamental change that revolutionized the communication process in the ancient world. Alphabet was created as a result of analysis of speech and its division into twenty-two of the smallest possible components: each of them separately means nothing, but they can mean anything if properly arranged<sup>209</sup>. Thanks to the invention of alphabetical script, our

208 Paul Levinson, *The Soft Edge: A Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution*, London–New York: Routledge 1997.

209 Cf.: Walter Jackson Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London & New York: Routledge 1982; Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation*

natural rooting in speech had gained a new, important dimension: distancing from inner sensations and impressions, experiences, and thoughts. We gained self-consciousness. Script became a means to put our thoughts in front of us, to open up the content of mind to criticism and analysis<sup>210</sup>. It has become a powerful impulse for development of entire culture.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ferdinand de Saussure interpreted language as a system of binary oppositions. Structural linguistics, initiated by him, was the apogee of consciousness that lasted through the ages of verbal culture. Of course, abstracted language signs as distinctive units of speech, called phonemes, as well as their permanent visual and graphical equivalents, i.e. letters of alphabet, are arbitrary. Bound on the basis of rules of choice and combination, they do not show a natural connection between their sonic or visual forms and the transmitted content, the meaning. This fundamental level of language is characterized by unchanging digital dependencies. Yet with this finite, closed semiotic system one can express every experience, formulate every thought, and say everything. De Saussure's discovery showed language as a shaped system of signs, consisting of solid components, yet simultaneously possessing unlimited symbolic possibilities and performing fundamental functions related to perception, cognition, thinking, and communication<sup>211</sup>. It assumes a community of signs and at the same time it serves all individual expressions. Its abstract and arbitrary properties are the foundation of verbal-semantic abilities. This is the unique system, a code of codes of culture.

The text editing computer programs translate distinctive units of a natural language into zero-one equivalents. Due to its digital foundations, as I guess, electronic script precisely repeats all the possibilities of linguistic signs. It uses distinctive units to allow for formulation and adequate translation of any expression from natural language. In my opinion, digitalization of script – transferring it to computer screen – is an invention comparable with the invention of alphabet: changing the conditions of functioning of script, opening new perspectives, and heralding a profound change. The most important similarity

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*of Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986; Eric Alfred Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1986.

210 M. Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, New York: Oxford University Press 1993.

211 See: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. W. Baskin, Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977 [original French edition: *Cours de linguistique générale*, Lausanne and Paris: Payot 1916].

between phonetic alphabet and electronic is founded, I think, in their fundamental meaning for communication and culture.

In turn, the first sharp difference [between them] is the mere typing of texts on computer. In handwritten notes (let alone typewriting), we write word by word, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, and page by page. Text is constructed linearly and is static in form. Violation of order of succession requires deletions, additions, insertions, and rewriting. The more premeditated are expressions, the more effective the process of writing/typing the text and its shape. Texts prepared by authors – before publication in printed form – are subject to professional editing, and then corrected. On the other hand, computers allow for non-linear formation of texts, for any writing/typing order, for technically easy reformulations, for cutting out certain fragments, and for pasting others, for moving words, sentences, and paragraphs, for starting with a well premeditated issue and expanding it in any direction. This breaking of continuity in the way of constructing texts serves the same purpose as before: formulation of a clear, coherent communicate for readers. After writing/typing, there is time for evaluation and self-corrections, if they are required for the text's purpose. At the same time, however, the electronic way of creating texts seems to be a foretaste of their possible decomposition made from outside – technically easy interference in their structure, and their integrity. It is a prefiguration of the hypertext mechanism allowing to combine files saved on the hard disk or on carriers connected to computers.

At the same time, it corresponds with the poststructuralist and deconstructivist reflection on ontological status of verbal communicates. According to the thinkers representing those currents, the process of semiosis of a text disperses into different contexts, into the sense nebula of meanings, into blurring boundaries between interior and exterior<sup>212</sup>. First generations of computers made it possible, for now, to digitize script and to translate previously prepared texts – articles, textbooks, and literary works – into digital forms. One electronic carrier can contain a textbook for learning a foreign language, the content of an encyclopaedia, and the entire oeuvre of Shakespeare. This new form of traditional publications maintains a linear layout of text, division into pages, and is relatively close to printed communicates. It is easier to analyse and edit electronically saved texts; studying them can be more efficient than it was possible in printed

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212 Cf.: Interpretation of vast studies on the status of texts by Marek Kaźmierczak ("Wprowadzenie", in: idem, *Literatura w sieci tekstów*, Gniezno: Collegium Europaeum Gnesense 2008).

form<sup>213</sup>. Digitally saved texts can be easily stored, and quickly transmitted and distributed via the Internet. As the Internet becomes more widespread, availability of digitized texts becomes extremely easy, not limited by number of paper copies, possibility of purchasing a book at the nearest bookstore, or necessity of visiting libraries.

Reading from a computer screen is also different from reading printed texts. First of all, screens are interactive. Moreover, besides verbal texts, other texts of culture can be found in the same virtual space. All of this can be interpreted as a break from tradition, or as a symptom of today's situation. One can claim that despite all the differences there is no break [from tradition], that we only need to accustom to other reading conditions offered by computers, and that the new ways of perception and related reading patterns will be shaped with time<sup>214</sup>.

The one common Network was established in 1986. Its dynamic development in the 1990s – when Tim Berners-Lee made the invention of the World Wide Web accessible to all Internet users – fully demonstrated how a mechanism of hypertext works. It showed that the Internet is a new communication environment in which information circulates instantly, and it revealed various ways of functioning of texts on the Web. The next element of the diagnosis of change was formulated by Michael Heim<sup>215</sup>.

According to him, handwriting and later printing (that made it possible to multiply texts) allowed for reflection, for thought-out and orderly recording of expertise, for gradual gathering of knowledge, and for [establishing] the Library. Using books means contacting with finite, closed works of authors, with original statements gradually opening to readers' multiform domains, surprising meanings, and unplanned conclusions – page by page. A manuscript or a printed book launches a certain fixed perceptual pattern, regardless of what type of text it contains and what meanings its recipient reads. A book launches and symbolizes a specific way of communication, impossible to be repeated with another material carrier and in a different reading context<sup>216</sup>. A script on a computer screen – according to Michael Heim – especially when the computer is connected to

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213 Cf.: Peter L. Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006.

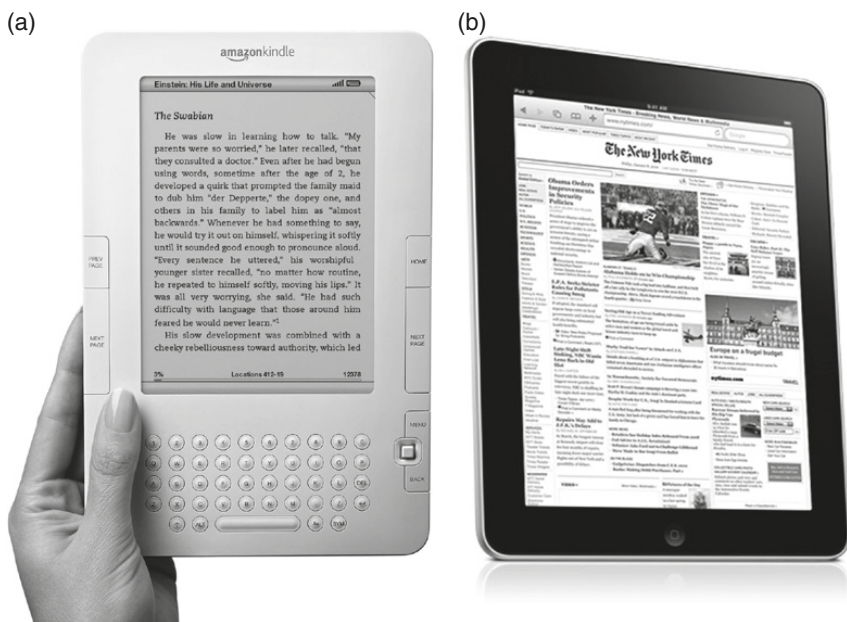
214 Cf.: Roman Chymkowski, *Czytanie z ekranu — wstępna próba konceptualizacji zjawiska*, "Przegląd Humanistyczny" 2002, nr 1.

215 See: M. Heim, *The Metaphysics*.

216 Cf.: Małgorzata Górska, *Język w książce i język książki*, in: *Język @ multimedia*, eds. Agnieszka Dytman-Stasińko, Jan Stasińko, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005.

the Internet, suspends contemplation, yet facilitates pursuit of information in a rapid, electronic flow. Reading-browsing is subordinated to external, preconceived assumptions. A text is transformed into a database. The information flow through the database is unnaturally fast. It challenges the features of script which allowed the externalization and verification of thinking, and enabled the distance necessary to learn. Hypertext as a network of infinite connections and referrals makes the jumps of computer algorithms appear as an excess in relation to traditional functioning of mind. Electronic connections seem to be faster than neural ones; they are ahead of traditional ways of reasoning and break the limits of the hitherto way of gathering knowledge. The culture of reading is replaced by the culture of browsing<sup>217</sup> (Fig. 22).

That is how the experience of the Internet was perceived in the 1990s by some users – especially those who were strongly connected to the tradition of verbal



**Fig. 22:** e-readers: Amazon Kindle 2 and Apple's iPad tablet, gazeta.pl, 15 March 2010

217 Cf.: Zbigniew Bauer, *Bazy danych — nowy gatunek pisarstwa?*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*



practices. Technical barriers hindered. The instability of communicate was visible, while possible dynamics of changes and easiness of going through the links from one file to another dominated the static record.

The culture of script and print accustomed us to contact with a single, autonomous, and coherent text. Database, by definition, is not a well-thought-out entity. It only allows those who use it to construct their own entity. Yet did Heim was right when he suggested that hypertext derails the traditional logic of the min? It rather creates new opportunities that are first and foremost noticeable. It enables a quick communication, yet first the communicate must be created from elements provided by someone – first it must be pre-arranged. And – at least in this sense – nothing can replace the work of the author-initiator. Without him/her, it is not possible for the user to co-create the text. Moreover: there is no user without the author.

Secondary literacy, which dominated computer- and Web-based communication, proved to be a permanent phenomenon, though not the only one in cyberspace. With development of new technologies, compression of data, increase in capacity of computers, and bandwidth (transfer efficiency) of connections to the main Network, digitalization also included sounds and images. Digitized script as such was the “first abstract medium”, whereas digital record of (first) audio communicates, and (then) visual and audiovisual ones, decoded analogue matter, which was much more difficult to submit to digital technology.

Digital revolution in the field of audio-sphere included voice, music, and specific sounds by phonographic technologies in the radio, on vinyl LPs, as soundtracks to motion pictures, and on television. It passed through various stages – from compact recordings (CD) through the generation of synthesizers based on digital synthesis, audio recordings in the computer memory, to the use of digital audio sampling in MP3 standard, which allowed a huge compression of audio data (a typical CD may contain not 76 minutes but about 15 hours of music)<sup>218</sup>. Digitalization of visual milieu was even more difficult. First, computer animation was coping with continuity of image signs. Gradually, static images – drawings, paintings, and photographs – as well as moving images – film and TV – became digitalized. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, audiovisuality of Internet video files became the standard. Computers and the Internet have gone through the path of audiovisualization. Besides a natural

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218 Cf.: Wojciech Siwak, *Audiosfera na przełomie stuleci*, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. Maryla Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005.

language, also hearing and sight – the senses co-creating our image of the world and our orientation in it – found themselves in the zone of digitalization. And the contemporary type of culture consolidated and strengthened its own audiovisual character.

The analogue media – from photography to film and television – by recording audiovisual experiences allowed us to distance ourselves from our behaviour and from the outside world, just like in the past script had made possible for us to externalize our thoughts and sensations. Thanks to analogue media, however, we gain self-consciousness of a different kind, perhaps complementary to language [consciousness], which we can integrate with in self-knowledge.

The analogue phase of audiovisuality is, as I think, the “missing link” in the process of re-coding the multidimensional human situation taking place since the antiquity – from cave paintings through alphabetical script to digitalization.

Computer, apart from being a text-processing device, became a processor of audio, visual, and audiovisual files. Digitalization covered the entire repertoire of ways and means of social communication, the full spectrum of our experiences, and therefore it is essential for reconfiguration of the entire social communication and culture<sup>219</sup>.

Thus, on a computer screen, thanks to a common digital denominator, different cultural texts can appear, regardless of their semiotic matter. Distinctness of the semiotic matter, which until now was the basis for distinguishing phenomena and domains of culture, is losing its validity. The zero-one record enables re-coding the entire universe of communication. This common virtual space – based on multimedia, interactive, composed of files and links, connected in various ways with mobile telephony networks – shapes the elements of communication in a specific way: not only of communicates and their contexts, but also of understanding the role of author, recipient, and the mutual relations between them. Their understanding and assessment are diverse, they change as the computer and the Internet offer an ever wider repertoire of possibilities, and subsequent domains gain their place in cyberspace, as the popularity of new technologies increases, and as they become an important part of contemporaneity (Fig. 23).

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219 Cf. chapter “The Situation of Media: a change of culture?”, pp.???



**Fig. 23:** A book in a mobile phone – according to the Mobipocket reader programme, [forumsm.pl](http://forumsm.pl), 27 January 2010

## Hyper-fiction. Literary hypertext

We see the Internet, above all, as a powerful tool of communication for people in private and public spheres – via e-mail and instant messaging, on fora, discussion groups and social networks, on portals, and on websites – the latter are obligatory to public institutions in Poland under the act passed in 2002. At the same time, from the very beginning literature has been seeking its place on the Internet as the art of word, finding it by means of electronic versions of printed editions of literary works and many other ways, which will be discussed later. Links and inspirations between literature and the Internet deserve a separate reflection and research – especially that literature (although today we are still inclined to associate it with a quill pen rather than with digital environment) has a unique position in culture, because it is a reference system for changes, as one of many functions it performs, and because it implants new phenomena in tradition. It is true that in this way literature shadows “the new” to some extent, and limits articulation of novelty and its radicalism. However, at least it facilitates understanding, interpretation of mechanisms of change and continuity. The uniqueness of literature lies in the fact that it has been a source of patterns for other domains of life and art, for stages and for easels, that thanks to it photographic images and cinema has become rooted in tradition, and repertoire of radio and television has been enriched. Literature seems to be an inexhaustible treasury of ideas and scenarios for all media.

Literary texts, due to their long presence in culture and their prestigious role, were distinguished as objects of reflection and study. Concepts and categories developed by literary studies has been helpful in explaining and analysing other phenomena of culture. This vast heritage, unquestionable attainment, is an inexhaustible source of inspiration, also in the times of digital transformation. With all the innovation of the Internet, literature acts as a reference system, and certain comparisons, analogies, and references, accustom the most recent phenomena, facilitate their understanding, and allow them to be incorporated into our consciousness<sup>220</sup>.

A specific prefiguration of contemporary civilizational changes – their vague intuition and image – were literary fantasies about the future of mankind, about exploration of the universe, about intelligent machines and artificial intelligence. SF and fantasy – twentieth-century literary genres – were bringing to life other possible worlds, created by the fusion of neural and numerical networks.

Famous visions of an unlimited information system: the Memex project by Vannevar Bush and the idea of Xanadu by Ted Nelson are located on the border between SF and scientific fantasies.

The idea of Bush, dated in the 1940s, was to be a response to the rapidly growing resources of information in a highly developed contemporary civilization. “The desk of the future” was to be a device registering all information needed by the owner; it was to act as a private, individual archive and library. The machine was supposed to work like a human mind – on the principle of association. This is how the indexed information was to be automatically searched and found on demand. The basic condition for implementation of the Memex was the invention of a technology of associative indexing<sup>221</sup>. The idea of Xanadu, conceived in the 1960s by Ted Nelson, was a vision of a global electronic system that was to embrace, store, and deliver all publications – books, magazines, photographs, films, and recordings. This unlimited system of interrelated information was to be a fulfilment of countercultural dreams of universal access to information and communication between people freed of any obstacles. “I think about all people sitting in front of screens: millions screens all over the planet”<sup>222</sup>. Technology of

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220 Cf. Ewa Szczęśna, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemiotyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warsaw: Wydział Polonistyki UW 2007.

221 See: Vannevar Bush, *As We May Think*, “The Atlantic” July 1945.

222 Theodor Holm Nelson, *Opening Hypertext: A Memoir*, in: *Literacy Online. The Promise (and Peril) of Reading and Writing with Computers*, ed. M.C. Tuman, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh 1992.

the future covering the entire globe was anticipated and predicted by Stanisław Witkiewicz at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>223</sup>.

The concept of “cyberspace” was launched by William Gibson. In the novel *Neuromancer* from 1983, he developed a vision of artificially generated reality, a global virtual reality that would gather and store all forms of human thought<sup>224</sup>.

The so-called proto-hypertextual literary works are the subject of lively interest of scholars fascinated with the possible presence of literary creativity in the electronic environment<sup>225</sup>.

The avant-garde novels – *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov, *Hopscotch* by Julio Cortázar, *Life: A User's Manual* by Georges Perec, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* or *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino – as well as works by Borges, Queneau, Pavić, and Czycz – question the script and print conventions, experiment with material dimension of printed literary books, and give them semantic functions. They break the patterns of plot construction and the linear way of telling stories fixed by tradition. They are founded on ostentatiously non-linear order. Multidimensional structure built of short narratives creates a network that allows designation of variants of the course [of the plot] and draw out [of it] multiple conclusions. These works reveal new possibilities of literature. They are expressions of meta-literary reflection.

Scholars who studied these works unanimously emphasize their spatial character and they repeat metaphors of a maze, a forest, a garden of forking paths,

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223 See: Stanisław Witkiewicz, *Dziwny człowiek*, Lvov: Nakładem Towarzystwa Wydawniczego Księgarni S. Sadowskiego w Warszawie 1903; see esp. a fragment titled *Technika przyszłości* reprinted in: *Nowe media...*

224 See: William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, New York: Ace Books 1984; cf. also: Agnieszka Kamrowska, *Literackie korzenie Internetu, czyli cyberpunkowa wizja sieci*, in: *Liternet. Literatura i Internet*, ed. Piotr Marecki, Krakow: Rabid 2002.

225 Cf.: Joanna Frużyńska, “Hipertekstowe opowieści w prozie XX wieku”, doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Bogdan Owczarek, monograph, Warsaw: 2007; eadem, *Fraktal jako model spójności w narracjach hipertekstualnych na przykładzie «Słownika chazarzkiego» Milorada Pavića*, in: *Tekst w sieci 2*, ed. Anna Gumkowska, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2009; Łukasz Jeżyk, *O hipertekście na horyzoncie. Protohipertekstualność na przykładzie «Jeśli zimową nocą podróżny» Italo Calvino*, in: *Tekst-tura. Wokół nowych form tekstu literackiego i tekstu jako dzieła sztuki*, ed. Małgorzata Dawidek-Gryglicka, Krakow: Korporacja Ha!art 2005; Lech Miodyński, *Milorad Pavić, spirala semantyczna i ukryta tożsamość Chazarów*, in: *Intermedialność w kulturze końca XX wieku*, eds. Andrzej Gwóźdź, Sław Krzemień-Ojak, Białystok: Trans Humana 1998; P. Marecki, *Tekstowa partytura. O uwerturze do «Arwa» Stanisława Czycza*, in: *Tekst-tura...*

and rootstalks. Joanna Frużyńska, who analysed hypertext prose in her extensive study, used the metaphor of a map. In her interpretation, a map was a property of a text, as well as an instruction on how to read it. It was supposed to be a tool for description and interpretation. The world presented in a non-linear novel is organized according to the rules of a map, and these rules are derived from non-textual reality, from mental representations of experience. A novel with a map destroys the hierarchy of narrative levels and replaces it with mechanisms of recurrence. This metaphor of fractal-like self-similarity serves to state coherence of a novel with a map. “Coherence of a novel and a map is decided on the basis of similarity of a part and the whole, as well as the mutual similarity of particular parts, which are not in a linear relationship of contiguity”<sup>226</sup>. A novel with a map is understood as a fractal structure. On the basis of the analysed works, Frużyńska distinguishes novels with a mimetic map (imitating textual patterns and spatial patterns) and novels with a conceptual map (highly diverse).

This kind of novel, according to some scholars, anticipates hypertext structure and is a bridge between a traditional literary book and its electronic variant<sup>227</sup>. Although Frużyńska notices many analogies in the non-linear organization of printed and electronic texts and the striking similarity of their poetics, she repudiates the thesis about the prototypical relationship between these phenomena.

When we ask about literature in the digital world, it is worth remembering the hypertextual-like type of prose in the twentieth century. First and foremost, we must take into account the basic features of the Internet, such as hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimedia, and see the functioning of literary practice on the Internet within its context.

We already know that text in the digital environment becomes hypertext<sup>228</sup>. It loses its previous stability and coherence of a traditional work. Its unchanging, static structure transforms into a multi-element, multi-level structure. By the author’s decision, it consists of the indivisible fragments of text of different volumes – from individual words to a standard printed page. Such basic hypertext units of the novel are called lexias or textons. They must be “cohesive and

226 Joanna Frużyńska, “Hipertekstowe opowieści...”, p. 192.

227 Cf.: Łukasz Jeżyk, *O hipertekście...*

228 See especially two volumes edited by P. Marecki: *Liternet. Literatura...* and *Liternet. pl*, Krakow: Rabid 2003; cf. also: Piotr Celiński, *Wyzwania hipertekstu — granice nieograniczonego*, in: *Estetyka wirtualności*, ed. Michał Ostrowicki, Krakow: Universitas 2005; Katarzyna Prajzner, *Cybertekst. Nowa perspektywa postrzegania tekstualności*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*

autonomous”<sup>229</sup>. The units of text are connected in many ways with cross-references, which the author proposes to be read in any order, within the limits of the offered entity. “An external and visible reference mark is an anchor: an active fragment of text or image that leads readers to the place with which it is linked”<sup>230</sup>. A non-linear, non-sequential organization means that instead of a traditional way of reading, readers face the possibility of choosing a route through segments of the communicate and they select their own way using a “map”. Qualified recipients of literary meanings turn into co-authors of the text version established by them. The degree of complexity of structure of communicate – conditioned by the program used – determines the possible variants of shaping of the text. The recipient of hyper-fiction is subjected to experimentations, which are reflected in the metaphor of navigation<sup>231</sup>.

Interactivity is a category that captures other basic properties of virtual space. This term applies to the relationship between computers and their users, as well as to the relationship between the communicates and their recipients – and to the text as such. In practice, the aspects of interactivity distinguished here are intertwined and mutually conditioned. The interaction with computer forces communication activity from its user. Active computer screen, if connected to the Net, extends and reinforces the repertoire of interactive relationships and behaviours of co-creators of literary hypertexts, which is allowed – or, perhaps, even forced – by a special organization of a hypertext novel. It can probably be said that all elements of the process of this new literary communication and their mutual relations are active and dynamic in their character<sup>232</sup>.

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229 Mariusz Pisarski, *Hipertekst i hiperfikcja*, in: *Liternet.pl...*, p. 288.

230 Ibidem, p. 286.

231 Ibidem, pp. 285–291.

232 Cf.: Robert Cathart and Gary Gumpert, “The Person-Computer Interaction: A Unique Source”, in: *Information and Behavior*, vol. 1, ed. Brent D. Ruben, New Brunswick: NJ: Transaction Books 1985, p. 114; Marcin Składanek, *Perspektywa społeczno-kulturowa w badaniach interakcji człowieka z komputerem*, in: *Perspektywy badań nad kulturą*, eds. Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Lodz: Wydawnictwo UŁ 2008; R. W. Kluszczyński, *Interaktywność — właściwość odbioru czy nowa jakość sztuki/kultury?*, in: *Estetyczne przestrzenie współczesności*, ed. A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Warsaw: Instytut Kultury 1996; idem, *Komunikowanie w sztuce interaktywnej*, in: *Kultura i sztuka u progu XXI wieku*, ed. S. Krzemień-Ojak, Białystok: Trans Humana 1997; Piotr Sitarski, *Rozmowa z cyfrowym cieniem*, Krakow: Rabid 2002; K. Prajzner, *Interaktywność. Kilka uwag o definiowaniu pojęcia*, in: *Między słowem a obrazem*, eds. Małgorzata Jakubowska, Tomasz Kłys, Bronisława Stolarska, Krakow: Rabid 2005.

The multimediality is a fundamental feature of the Internet – just like the aspects mentioned before: the Internet as a whole, yet not each and every of its communicates. It has, as I think, very far-reaching consequences not only for the presence of literature in virtual space, but also for its future. I will return to this issue at the end of the discussion about electronic literature.

For now, I assume that literary texts are formulated in natural language, that they are secondary modelling systems (as it was formulated by scholars from Tartu), and their various forms and genres are associated with various carriers – script, print, audio record, and electronic script.

What is considered to be literature on the Internet? Internet services and web pages devoted to poetry certainly occupy a separate place<sup>233</sup>. The most characteristic genres, however, are the hypertext novels and blogs.

Hypertext novels<sup>234</sup>, being a part of the electronic textuality, refer to certain properties present on the margins of the mainstream of printed literature, and sometimes highlight those properties. Their plots are fragmented, narratives carried out on various tracks, breaking off, turning back, making

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233 Cf.: Among others: Włodzimierz Karol Pessel, *Stygmat szuflady a poetyka liternetowego banalizmu*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*; Małgorzata Bogaczyk, “Ars poetica, ars electronica. O literackich i poetyckich serwisach internetowych”, final paper on the seminar of M. Hopfinger “Nowe media w kulturze audiowizualnej” in the School of Social Sciences at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

234 On hypertext novels see, among others: M. Pisarski, *Powieść jako zwierciadło...*; Agnieszka Nowak, *Koncepcja Hipertekstowego autora, czytelnika i dzieła na podstawie powieści «Patchwork Girl»*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; M. Pisarski, *Kartografowie i kompilatorzy. Poł żartem poł serio o praktyce i teorii hiperfukcji w Polsce*, in: *Liternet. pl...*; *Rashomon do potęgi entej. O Hipertekstowej i hazarapańskiej opowieści «Koniec świata według Emeryka» z Radosławem Nowakowskim rozmawia Piotr Marecki*, in: *Liternet.pl...*; Anna Nasiłowska, *Hipertekstualna estetyka i literatura w dobie Internetu*, “Teksty Drugie” 2006, nr 4; M. Bogaczyk-Vormayr, *Wszystko jest tekstem? Hipertekstualność jako nowe doświadczenie literatury*, “Teksty Drugie” 2008, nr 1–2; Agnieszka Przybyszewska, *Niszczyc, aby budować. O nowych jakościach liberatury i hipertekstu*, in: *Tekst-tura...*; J. Frużyńska, “Hipertekstowe opowieści...”; Anna Łebkowska, *Doświadczenie interakcji i identyfikacji (hipertekstowa powieść interaktywna)*, in: *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie. Analizy kulturoznawcze*, eds. A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Ryszard Nycz, Barbara Giza, warsaw: Wydawnictwo SWPS “Academica” 2008; Xymena Borowiak, *Interpretacja bez granic? W hipertekstowym labiryncie «Końca świata według Emeryka» Radosława Nowakowskiego*, in: *Tekst w sieci 2...*



loops. Non-linear narration is not only a consequence of a decision deliberated by the author, yet it is an immanent property of an electronic carrier. Spatial character of the text is technologically conditioned. Connections between text particles form a network of concretized relations. Many paths of reading, possibility of selecting them on the basis of associations are also provided by the new medium. According to some people, this way of choosing is close to the natural way we perceive the world – it illustrates multidimensionality of memory: the work of mind<sup>235</sup>. It is the electronic carrier that creates differences in the attitudes of participants of novel practice. In the tradition of printed literature, the proto-hypertext narration was an avant-garde proposition, an intriguing departure from accepted schemes, a departure from the canon of literariness, and it was supported by self-reflexion, consideration of the limits of writing in times after full interiorizing of print. In the Internet environment, the features of hypertext are obligatory, and they became necessary and obvious. Though certain features of the poetics are common, they have different functions. Authors of novels in the new medium do not turn against its possibilities, have not used them yet, they are just recognizing them, and trying to functionalize them. The dispute with limiting conditions of creation usually appears when well-tested methods of expression are already exhausted (Fig. 24).

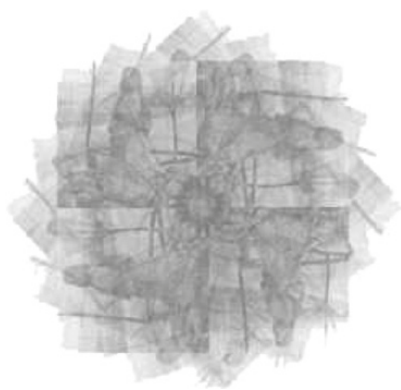
After the appearance of the first, the most famous hypertext novel by Michael Joyce, *afternoon. a story* (1987), some critics seemed to think that this type of cybertext would be the implementation of the postmodern ideas of Foucault and Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari<sup>236</sup>. The following reflection was seeking other solutions. Jay David Bolter called electronic writing a remediation of print. Espen J. Aarseth wrote about ergodic literature, Lev Manovich – about artistic database and the predominance of the database paradigm over the syntagma of narrative. According to Mary Laure Ryan, a new literary genre, thanks to technology, introduces a double virtualization of the presented world<sup>237</sup>.

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235 Cf.: M. Pisarski, *Powieść jako zwierciadło umysłu. Szkic do poetyki hipertekstu na podstawie klasyki gatunku: «afternoon. a story», «Patchwork Girl», «A Further Xanadu», in: Liternet. Literatura...*

236 Cf.: George P. Landow, *Hypertext. The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, Baltimore–London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1992.

237 Cf.: Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space. Computers, Hypertext and Remediation of Print*, New Jersey–London: Mahwah 2001; Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1997; Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press 2001; Mary Laure Ryan, *Cyberspace, Virtuality and the Text*, in: *Cyberspace Textuality. Computer Technology and Literary Theory*, ed. eadem, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.



### KONIEC ŚWIATA WG EMERYKA

hasarapasańska opowieść hipertekstowa  
w czterech odsłonach i jednej zasłonie o  
tym co wydarzy się pewnego gorącego  
czerwcowego dnia 70 a może 71 lat po  
spisaniu pewnego tajemniczego zaklęcia  
które sprawiło że p-papier został w  
końcu wyparty przez e-papier

Warto przeczytać

**Fig. 24:** Radosław Nowakowski, *Koniec świata według Emeryka* – a hypertext novel, liberatorium.com, 25 February 2010

According to the experts, the list of Polish hyper-fictions starts with a unique edition on a floppy disc of a “treatise on language”, without an author, recommended by Piotr Rypson as a “self-creative computer publication”.

The floppy disc was available only in a few bookstores in 1996. Robert Szczerbakowski turned out to be the author of the hypertext consisting of 100 lexias. The first [Polish] hypertext novels included: *Blok* [*The Block*] by Sławomir Shuty, *Stokłosy* [*Brome Grass*] by Michał Kaczyński, *Tramwaje w przestrzeniach zespolonych* [*Tramways in Combined Spaces*] by Doktor Muto, *Koniec świata według Emeryka* [*End of the World According to Emeryk*] by Radosław Nowakowski.

All participants of the new literary practice must acquire new skills. Until now, the basis for moving about in the world of literature has been the ability to

read and write, to know the tradition, canon, conventions, rules of genres, and erudition. Now, all the above-mentioned elements are a necessary yet insufficient prerequisite. The ability to use a computer, the knowledge of programs and applications, of rules of moving in virtual space, of familiarity with liternet – all of them play a huge role.

Authors and readers have to find themselves in a new situation of communication<sup>238</sup>. When in the late 1960s Roland Barthes – then a leading representative of structuralism and semiotics – reflected on the future of literature, he suggested the necessity of “birth of a reader” at the expense of “death of an author”. An author – who, as a person, was fascinating for literary criticism professing expressive, autobiographical approach – turns into a scriptor. This proposal to dethrone authors, and their special, causative power in favour of the text resulted, I think, first of all from assigning the main role to language itself, that is, to the huge dictionary from which the text would be created. The text is intended for recipients, readers. In the act of reading they collect “all the paths of which the text is constituted”<sup>239</sup>. Is it the enthronization of a reader – or of a text? The provocative proposition of Barthes, who rightly demanded attention for recipients of literature, with time became treated seriously. Sometimes it is ideologically justified in the context of egalitarian slogans and democratization of participation in culture<sup>240</sup>.

I think, however, that there is no need to bury an author in order to appreciate the importance of the reading audience. This point of view is being adopted by communicative concepts of culture, however, not at the expense of the author-sender. Social communication has three essential pillars: the sender, the communicatee, and the recipient; various relations can take place between them. In any case, in the electronic environment the author is alive, or maybe better – he/she has revived. I am convinced of that. It is impossible not to notice that it is the author who delimits and fills in the novel’s “field of events”, on which readers

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238 Cf. among others: M. Kaźmierczak, *Różnicowanie relacji nadawczo-odbiorczych*, in: idem, *Literatura w sieci...*; E. Szczęsna, *Uczestnicy wirtualnej komunikacji*, in: eadem, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemiotyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warsaw: Wydział Polonistyki UW 2007; Piotr Rypson, *Hipertekst i hipermedia – problem autorstwa*, in: *Od fotografii do rzeczywistości wirtualnej*, ed. M. Hopfinger, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1997.

239 Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, transl. Richard Howard, in: idem, *Rustle of Language*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986, p. 55.

240 Cf.: Mirosław Filiciak, *Druk kontra piksele. Hipertekst w literaturze*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*

cruise and follow tracks. The readers' freedom is predefined by the author. "Any good hyper-fiction needs a strong conceptual spine"<sup>241</sup>. The author must propose it, so readers would have the opportunity to choose their own way in the space of a hypertext novel. Is the division between the author and the recipients disappearing, though undoubtedly both of those roles in the electronic environment require more creativity? Is the text – though constructed in a different way than a traditional one – not the property of the author? After all he/she provides all components and establishes a network of connections. The novel by Michael Joyce consists of 539 lexias and 951 connections between them.

In order to freely use the new genre of literature, users must develop new receiving habits, other than the hitherto rules of reading. A literary work includes a model of a recipient, a presupposed, designed way of reading. Robert Escarpit's "creative betrayal", one or another interpretation of a closed text, and even Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding, must be replaced by an independent wandering through an extensive, multitrack story. It is open to the real, actual cooperation of a reader with an author. A reader, if one can say so, becomes another author, because he/she combines "small narratives" of his/her choice and consolidates them in the process of his/her own reading, necessarily linear. So not only the number of interpretations equals the number of readers; here, the number of read texts equals the number of readers who co-create them<sup>242</sup>. The circulation of printed literary works in the social space consist primarily of the exchange of meanings. Traditional literary communication is focused on the text, on its meaning and interpretation. The pragmatic dimension of reading behaviours is outside the work, and is included in the question: what people do with literature<sup>243</sup>. In the interactive Internet, the pragmatic factor belongs to the space of a communicate, in the very structure of hypertext, and its exploration is based on activities that co-establish the meaning of hypertextual reading<sup>244</sup>. The recipients have enormous possibilities of co-creation that they can use according to their abilities and available tools. However, it is the author who creates such chances for the recipients.

The new situation of the media is undoubtedly conducive to creative attitudes. The open source movement for acquiring alternative software can disseminate

241 M. Pisarski, *Kartografowie i kompilatorzy...*, p. 31.

242 Cf.: R. Chymkowski, *Literatura na morzu i w sieci, czyli kim chce być czytelnik e-książek*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*

243 Cf.: Stefan Żółkiewski, *Teksty kultury. Studia*, Warsaw: PWN 1988.

244 Cf.: M. Składanek, *Od tekstu do przestrzeni informacyjnej. Sytuacja komunikacyjna w mediach interaktywnych*, in: *Między słowem a obrazem...*

access to tools, and redefine relations between community and creativity. The IT revolution, and especially the Internet of the second generation, Web 2.0, facilitates the implementation of a joint responsibility of the Internet users for the content of the Web as well as the sharing of knowledge and joint creation of new values<sup>245</sup>.

The multimodality as a feature of the Internet “obscures the differences existing outside the reality of digital data, i.e. differences between the nature of image, sound, language – in the structure of hypertext, all bits and knots are equal. The most important here are digital similarities that do not have to correspond to analogue hierarchies and dependencies”<sup>246</sup>. However, it is the digitization that establishes a common denominator allowing transfer of differences of semantic matter from the analogue world to the virtual one. That is why virtual environment enables the neighbourhood of words, sounds, static, and moving images; two- and three-dimensional animations; and films. Literary stories sometimes make use of this extraordinary possibility. At the same time, the neighbourhood of various semantic matters creates a new phenomenon occurring in the sphere of signs, at the level of genres, having many forms and variations, for the lack of adequate terms called “hybridization”<sup>247</sup>. This change violates or even invalidates the previously recognized autonomy of individual domains of culture. What will the direction of change be for literature?

## Blogosphere

Blogs are a phenomenon of the last dozen or so years<sup>248</sup>. Published in the electronic environment, they are often compared to journals and diaries. Especially in the first period, due to dated entries, they were associated with the well-known forms. In a relatively short period of time, they have gained popularity. On one hand, there have been more and more bloggers. On the other hand, the entries have significantly diversified due to the subject and form. They would not

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245 Cf.: Alek Tarkowski, «Open source»: *twórczość ludowa*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2004, nr 4.

246 P. Celiński, *Wyzwania hipertekstu — granice nieograniczonego*, in: *Estetyka wirtualności...*, p. 389.

247 Cf.: E. Szczęsna, *Uczestnicy wirtualnej komunikacji...*

248 Cf.: Ignacy S. Fiut, Marcin Matuzik, *Blogi — literatura interaktywna w sieci*, “Estetyka i Krytyka” 2002, nr 3; Maria Cywińska-Milonas, *Blogi (ujęcie psychologiczne)*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*; Jakub Momro, *Henri-Frederic Amiel i Maria Baszkircew w Internecie. O blogach okiem literaturoznawczym (i nie tylko)*, in: *Liternet. Literatura...*;

necessarily resemble diaries. Although diverse in their subject and form, they have kept the structure of dated entries.

Today, blogs seem to be primarily a characteristic element of the current stage of the Internet's development – Web 2.0 – in which Internet users actively participate in the creation of the content of the Net, speak on matters they are interested in, communicate with each other, and cooperate. The technical development provided tools that now allow for easy exchange of opinions, and for fast communication. Blogs are published by various people – famous and unknown, very young and adults, private and public, under the name and anonymously; on platforms and on individual websites, more or less regularly. Blogs are described from various points of view, examined by quantitative and qualitative methods<sup>249</sup>. There are many abandoned blogging attempts. They require a certain perseverance, repeatability, and periodicity. They require time, attention, openness to opinions of others, and readiness to confront different views and judgements (Fig. 25).

The blogs placed against the diarist tradition make use of electronic communication to attract not only readers, but also commentators. Thanks to the possibility of commenting on entries by readers, the sequences consisting of the blogger entry and the commentators' entries are created. At the base of blogging there is a need and willingness to share one's own issues, thoughts, and emotions,

Marta Olcoń, *Blog jako dokument osobisty — Specyfika dziennika prowadzonego w Internecie*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2003, nr 2; Karina Koziej, "Blogi. Nowa forma komunikacji", final paper on the seminary by M. Hopfinger "Nowe media w kulturze audiowizualnej" in the School of Social Sciences at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences; Anna M. Szczepan-Wojnarska, *Sylwiczny i intymistyczny charakter blogów*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Magdalena Antonina Szura, *Czy blog może być literaturą?*, in: *Liternet.pl...*; *Archipelag blogów. Z Ashem o blogach i komunikowaniu w sieci rozmawia Jan Sowa*, in: *Liternet.pl...*

- 249 Cf.: Anna Michalak, *Społeczne uwarunkowania zjawiska blogów*, in: *Przestrzenie wizualne i akustyczne człowieka. Antropologia audiowizualna jako przedmiot i metoda badań*, eds. Agnieszka Janiak, Wanda Krzemińska, Anna Wojtasik-Tokarz, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2007; Maria Więckiewicz, *Blogowanie jako nowa forma aktywności. Różne oblicza polskiej blogosfery*, in: *Homo creator czy homo ludens? Twórcy — internauci — podróżnicy*, eds. Wojciech Muszyński, Marek Sokołowski, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2008; A. Gumkowska, Maciej Maryl, and Piotr Toczyński, *Blog to... blog. Blogi oczyma blogerów. Raport z badania jakościowego zrealizowanego przez Instytut Badań Literackich PAN i «Gazeta.pl»*, in: *Tekst w sieci*, ed. Danuta Ulicka, v. 1: *Tekst. Język. Gatunki*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2009, and other articles from the section "Gatunki" in this volume.



**Fig. 25:** A theatre performance *Blogi.pl* the Helena Modjeska National Stary Theatre in Krakow [one-act play *Niebieska sukienka*, script by Jacek Poniedziałek based on an internet diary [www.barbarella.blog.pl](http://www.barbarella.blog.pl), directed by Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, premiere 26 September 2008]

and to receive quick feedback in the form of opinions of others. The eternal need for communication is fulfilled by millions of bloggers in the electronic environment. The interactivity of the Net is conducive to this. At the same time, it helps the authors to shape their images, construct or confirm their identities.

The culture of print has enabled publishing to selected individuals who – in their own opinion and in the opinion of others – had something especially important, interesting, and unique to say. Blogging is accessible to any Internet user. Blogs are egalitarian, fully democratic, and widely available. And one of the surprising factors that determine popularity of particular blogs are daily adventures of so-called ordinary people, personal experiences, and private observations. This applies to a significant number of blogs, which are part of the current trend of interest in everyday life, so characteristic to contemporary culture. This is also evident especially in numerous TV series, “The Big Brother” and similar programs, as well as in certain stream of printed publications.

Once novel used to be an unappreciated form of literature; today writing novels is associated with professional skills, and novel is a recognized literary genre. Currently, blogs are considered the occupation of many unprofessional hobbyists.

## The literary life on the Net

The Internet not only creates new conditions for novels, still very few, and blogs, extremely popular, especially in the Web 2.0 phase, but it has also become, and perhaps above all, a favourable place for literary communication. It acts as a literary database, bringing together literary communicators and various institutions responsible for the presence of literature in cultural life. The previous literary culture and the traditional circuit of literature in two decades after the breakthrough events of 1989 has been enriched by the virtual circuit. Polish Internet has been operating since 1991. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the presence of literature in the virtual space besides literature in the hitherto circuit has been noticed, including co-existence and penetration of the cyberspace by forms transferred from the culture of script and print and forms characteristic of the electronic environment. This is evidenced mainly by two publications: *Liternet. Literatura i Internet* from 2001 and *Liternet.pl* from 2003 – both edited by Piotr Marecki<sup>250</sup>. As the easy access to the Internet becomes popular in Poland, the access to literature and literary life on the Web is more democratized and decentralized. Liternet opens undoubtedly to the new audience, and literary books, also those published traditionally, are advertised, promoted, and popularized there. Online bookstores, virtual libraries, publishing houses – inform, advertise, sell, and share<sup>251</sup> (Fig. 26).

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250 Cf. also: I. S. Fiut, *Twórczość literacka w Sieci (wybrane zagadnienia)*, in: *Estetyka wirtualności...*; Marek Adamiec, *Dzieło literackie w Sieci. Pomysły, hipotezy i interpretacje z pogranicza wiedzy o literaturze, kultury masowej i współczesnej technologii*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo UG 2004.

251 Cf.: M. Kaźmierczak, *Literatura w sieci...*; Damian Źmuda, *Strony autorskie*, in: *Liternet.pl...*; Jola Grosz, Darek Pado, *Spółeczności liternetowe*, in: *Liternet.pl...*; Ilona Niebał-Buba, *Bezpłatne magazyny kulturalne a Internet*, in: *Język @ multimedia...*; Jerzy Reizes-Dzieduszycki, *Literatura wirtualna — biblioteka wirtualna*, in: *Intermedialność w kulturze...*; Reinhard Kaiser, *Literarische Spaziergänge im Internet*, Verlag KG, Frankfurt am Main 1996; M. Bogaczyk, "Ars poetica, ars electronica..."; Maciej Maryl, *Reprint i hipermedialność — dwa kierunki rozwoju literatury cyfrowionej*, in: *Tekst w sieci 2...*



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OFICJALNA STRONA INTERNETOWA  
**Czesława Miłosza**  
 30.06 1911 - 14.08 2004

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**Fig. 26:** Czesław Miłosz's official web page, www.znak.com.pl, 21 January 2010

The “database” has become an important category describing the Internet itself, which – according to Lev Manovich – because of accumulation of a huge amount of information it is closer to the model of encyclopaedia than tales/novels, and it is easier to be described than told about. In natural language, syntagmatic relations are overt, while paradigmatic repertoire is hidden in a dictionary. In the interactive media the opposite is true: paradigm is visible (its role is played by database), while syntagma is hidden, and constructed primarily by users. Manovich considers database as the basic, non-specific form of the Internet, whereas the narrative is the form in which it is specific<sup>252</sup>.

More and more often, the concepts describing virtual space are referred to the diagnosis of contemporaneity – computer as a defining technology in

252 See: L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media...*

Western culture, wired life in the age of digital communication, silicon remedy in a competitive clash with real life in the neighbourhood community. Before the metaphors of the various networks became established in the language of description, Zygmunt Bauman evoked geometry as the prototype of the modern



Fig. 27: A biweekly *Strona Kultury* 2009, nr 1, [www.dwutygodnik.com](http://www.dwutygodnik.com), 27 January 2010

mind and the “net” as its metaphor. This thought was developed by Andrzej Kisielewski in relation to contemporary culture and advertising<sup>253</sup> (Fig. 27).

The term “network” supersedes the basic category of the system so far from concepts that embrace social structure and social relations. The contemporary developed societies are called the network societies, for the Internet, which is the global network, plays an increasingly important role in shaping social organization and interpersonal communication. The technological structure of the Internet not only favours network relations, but also the growing number of areas of life find their place in the Web and the growing number of people conduct their professional activities in the Internet or use it for other purposes<sup>254</sup> (Fig. 28).

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253 See: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1991; Andrzej Kisielewski, *Siatka jako metafora kultury. Przypadek reklamy*, in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją. Seryjność w kulturze*, ed. Alicja Kisielewska, Krakow: Rabid 2004; Albert Hupa, *Grupy, sieci, roje*, “Societas/Communitas” 2006, nr 2.

254 Cf. Manuel Castells, *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar 2004.; cf. also, e.g.: Wiesław Godzic, *Na marginesie metafor Sieci*, in: *Intermedialność w kulturze...*

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- HISTORIA (24)
- POLITOLOGIA (8)
- PRAWO (35)
- PSYCHOLOGIA (1)
- SOCJOLOGIA (60)
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Fig. 28: Web page of the online bookstore of the Oficyna Naukowa publishing house [the publisher of Polish edition of the present book]

## Part three. Audiovisual parallels

Parallels can mean a juxtaposition, comparison of similar features of otherwise different phenomena or objects; they can mean synchronism, equivalence, or even equality. However, I prefer this term from analogy, which could suggest not only similarity, but also correspondence, and even compatibility<sup>255</sup>. For the audiovisual parallels I choose: auteur cinema, TV series, and computer games as relatively the most comparable with literature and at the same time distinctive in their media environment.

Literature treated as the art of word is associated with creative work. A literary piece – especially if printed – is then a finite, separate, and unique text, characterized by originality of its communicate, a “signature” of its author, who proposes it to the readers to be perceived, experienced, reflected on, interpreted, and evaluated. The author takes responsibility for his/her text regardless of how much “open work” – in terms of Umberto Eco – he/she has proposed. The main function of such work is autotelic.

Among various audiovisual communicates, film is the closest to this understanding of the author’s statement. A film work, like literary works, is a finite text, closed to any transformations by the viewers. A film of the auteur cinema is, by definition, a work that is distinctive both by its message and its form. Its director, considered the main author, is the guarantor of its artistic integrity and cultural function.

In our tradition, literature has long been considered an art. Cinema, which wanted to become the Tenth Muse, underwent the process of cultural ennoblement, and some film works are considered works of art. Thus, art seems to be the area where outstanding literary and film works can meet.

For a long time, “art” was the dominant category in reflection on culture, because it played a significant role as a special domain of culture. It occupied a distinguished place in culture and performed exemplary functions. Its impact was paradigmatic in nature. New phenomena were shaped under the influence

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255 Cf.: Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, 17th extended ed., Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna 1989, p. 379, 32.

of its standards. As the changes progressed, the category of art overgrew with such epithets as: high, low, real, mass, and popular; besides the art of word – film as technical art; besides “art with capital A” – mass art<sup>256</sup>. With time, this category ceased to suffice; in other words, the paradigm associated with this concept has been exhausted. Civilizational changes, development of mass media, and expansion of social circles of participants of culture caused the emergence of a new phenomenon: social communication<sup>257</sup>.

Besides, art flirts with reality itself. It gradually resigns from determinants of its artistic character – challenging the work as the final effect of the creative process, rejecting both talent and professionalism, managing just with a concept, a project of action in social, cultural, and political sphere. Now art moves into the area of social communication. And what remains “art with capital A” in old terms, turns out to be only a segment of culture.

Television, dominating the platform of communication, does not have many contacts with art. Above all, it is a great syntagma of various communicates and programs. It broadcasts for many hours every day, actually “all the time”. Its characteristic features are cyclicity, repeatability, and formatting. It has been shaping beyond the paradigmatic influence of art. Television has not aspired to be an art, although it often works to popularize artistic traditions, and also produces communicates that may be considered art – some productions of the TV Theatre, music concerts, *Kabaret Starszych Panów* (*Elderly Gentlemen's Cabaret*), and for some time a special channel promoting various fields of art.

Yet the main element of television turned out to be TV series – feature films, documentaries, various types of them, more or less interesting, considered better or worse. However, television as an institution of social communication, although watched by many, does not enjoy prestige; it has never passed through the process of cultural ennoblement. Perhaps the reason for the low ratings of television is its widespread presence, as well as close contact with everyday life and current events. This also applies to TV series; current issues are often reflected in their plots, and cyclical issues are parallel to the real life of society. A series is possible in various media (newspapers, radio, digital environment), yet in my opinion it is a genre characteristic for television. That is why I try to

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256 Cf.: *Sztuka — technika — film*, eds. Aleksander Kumor, Danuta Palczewska, Warsaw: WAiF 1970; *Z zagadnień semiotyki sztuk masowych*, eds. Alicja Helman, Maryla Hopfinger, Hanna Książek-Konicka, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1977.

257 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Sztuka i komunikacja: sygnały zmian całej kultury*, in: eadem, *Kultura audiowizualna u progu XXI wieku*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1997.

present it as an audiovisual parallel to literature and understand its popularity among participants of culture, although it has not passed through the process of cultural ennoblement.

I consider computer games and Internet-based games as the examples of forms specific to digital environment. Their popularity grows. For many reasons related to the direction of cultural evolution and the rapid development of the culture of participation, their future seems promising. Although today there is a sharp polarization of the ratings of the Internet itself, characteristic for the newest medium, it may change relatively quickly into social acceptance, just as the situation on the platform of communication is rapidly changing. The attractiveness of these forms will lead, I think, to the brilliant advancement of the games themselves, and to the ennobling of participation in this new cultural practice.

Democratization of culture – when it turns from a dream into reality – imposes transformations and re-evaluations. The modern Parnassus does exist and it still occupies a distinguished place. To see and appreciate its role today, a new interpretation and redefinition is needed. And maybe some fictional television plots, including even TV series, are located in this segment of culture. However, it would be absurd to expect that masterpieces will be created in a television medium on a daily basis, in the rhythm of TV schedule, at regular times around the clock and in accordance with the “please stay tuned” rule. In turn, the accelerated development of digital infrastructure, the growing role of the Internet and mobile telephony in communication and in the entire culture, and increasing abilities of participants of culture may awake some hopes.

Today, a reflection on contemporary changes – in which audiovisual forms parallel to literature are becoming more and more present – is also a subject of democratization<sup>258</sup>.

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258 I can mention here, by way of a parallel, a course of thinking of Jerzy Ziomek on relations between literature and plot (see: J. Ziomek, *Powinowactwa przez fabułę*, in: idem, *Powinowactwa literatury*, Warsaw: PWN 1980).





## 7 Auteur cinema

By giving such title for this part of the book, I refer to the readers' intuition, while I omit extensive literature of the subject, however important it is for reflection on film<sup>259</sup>. The discussion on the subject of the author of a film has been taking place for a long time, including various opinions and views. In fact, this discussion is continuous. Here I refer to the postulate and intention – present in the history of cinema almost from the very beginning – of creating films as statements of their times, and recognized as outstanding for both the message and the form; I also refer to examples of ambitious attempts to implement this postulate. The “auteur cinema” understood in this way has been closely related to the program of advancement of cinema in culture and to the process of ennobling film on the platform of communication. At the same time, such a film is sometimes considered art and in that sense it is the closest to literature.

### A new medium: Cinema

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a mobile photography appeared – a new medium that initiated a huge change in the type of culture. This medium had relatively quickly transformed itself and at the same time had caused the transformation of the entire culture. The rise and development of film practice has opened new experiences in the field of social communication and creative work, introducing new ways of participation in the twentieth-century culture. The foundation of those changes was a film medium – unlike anything before. In the first period of history of cinema films were silent, and music accompanied them only during screenings [performed live], yet soon – at the turn of the 1920s – sound was added; and over time the integral audiovisual cinema became an aesthetic fact. From today's (over one-hundred-year) perspective, it is clearly visible

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259 See, e.g. works of Polish authors: Marek Hendrykowski, *Autor*, in: *Słownik pojęć filmowych*, v. 3, ed. Alicja Helman, Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze 1992; idem, *Autor jako problem poetyki filmu*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 1988; *Autor — Film — Odbiorca*, ed. A. Helman, Wiedza o Kulturze 1991; *Autor w filmie. Z dziejów ewolucji filmowych form artystycznych*, ed. M. Hendrykowski, Poznań: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Sztuk Plastycznych-UAM 1991; Tadeusz Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie w polskim filmie fabularnym lat 1945–1961*, Kraków: Rabid 2000; *Autor w filmie*, part 1, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2007, nr 59; *Autor w filmie*, part 2, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2007, nr 60.

how film has spread its roots in culture, how it has adopted innovations, and how it has used the achievements of the existing culture.

The main novelty was the very nature of the cinematic medium, its mobile – first, visual, then audiovisual – semiotic matter. However, the way of constructing film statements, and aspirations of cinema to become the Tenth Muse, placed the film near literature – the most important art of word.

In the nineteenth century, besides direct communication on the platform of communication, the main place was occupied by written and printed words, performing important social and artistic functions. However, as early as in 1839, the invention of photography was patented; and in the second half of the nineteenth century, the visual milieu began expanding: new technologies of reproducing illustration and photographs, picture stories, posters, press advertising, madness of buying, sending and collecting postcards, spectacular panoramas, etc. Besides the well-established verbal culture, another one – pictorial culture – was rapidly developing. Technical inventions – telegraph, telephone, typewriter and gradually more efficient printing machines, phonograph and gramophone – were conducive to proliferation of information – both verbal and pictorial; railroads were soon followed by first electric trams and cars. “Living images”, “mobile photographs” were located in the very centre of the collective imagination of the epoch<sup>260</sup> (Fig. 29).

The beginnings of the new medium and its subsequent changes, closely related to the development of technology, have aroused both great interest and considerable anxiety. However, the technological possibilities were no less and no more necessary conditions for this process. Adding motion to already known photography created a completely new quality; it allowed to record the course of all events taking place in front of camera lenses and to replay the recorded material again on a cinema screen. The recorded photographs would “come alive” in front of the audience, repeating and presenting the reality of the given world. They were surprising [the audience] with their extraordinary similarity to phenomena and things already known from the reality order, becoming their synonyms. When “mobile photographs” were supplemented with speech, music, and specific sounds, a long process of semantic and aesthetic merging of those

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260 Cf.: Małgorzata Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni. Film w kulturze polskiej przełomu stuleci 1895–1914*, Poznań: Oficyna Wydawnicza Book Service 1993; eadem, *Technika — ruch — informacja. Wiek XIX: komunikacja społeczna na progu audiowizualności*, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. M. Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005.

**TEATR MIEJSKI w KRAKOWIE.**

**W Sobotę dnia 14 Listopada 1896 roku  
i dni następnych**

**ZYWE FOTOGRAFIE**

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**„KINEMATOGRAFU”**

w wynalazku

**pp. Augusta i Ludwika LUMIERE z Lyonu.**

**Obrazy ze wszystkich stron świata.**

Program każdego przedstawienia oamienny.

Panowie LUMIERE z Lyonu są wyłącznymi wynalazcami  
prawdziwego „KINEMATOGRAFU”,  
który sobie zdobył wszechświatowe uznanie powag naukowych i najwyższe  
zaciekawienie szerokiego ogółu.

**Zywe Fotografie przedstawione będą tylko przez cztery  
wieczory z rzędu.**

Fig. 29: Living photographs – a poster of the first show, Krakow 1896, Tadeusz Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego*, Katowice: Videograf II 2009, p. 21

different components of film expression began. A new language would emerge, which was to settle down for good in the culture of the twentieth century.

The gradual integration of the visual and audio elements of the film was evocatively described by Marek Hendrykowski<sup>261</sup>. Cinema has played a fundamental role in shaping of audiovisual signs. The coexistence of visual and audio-spheres

261 See. M. Hendrykowski, *Film kinowy w perspektywie audiowizualności*, in: *Nowe media...*

was conducive to formation of higher-order semantic structures and audiovisual language of cinema. Thanks to analogue technologies of image and sound recording, this process was reaching its maturity in many film works. The auteur cinema has become especially visible at the turn of the 1950s, although first authors of film art had gained fame already in the silent movies period, to recall the works of Charlie Chaplin and Sergey Eisenstein.

The language of film has opened a new field of communication, which was fundamentally different from literature in its semiotic matter, yet which was to have much in common with patterns of literary culture.

The auteur cinema was created in spite of all unprecedented circumstances and features of shaping of the film practice. Film production required an appropriate technical base, financial resources, and organizational background. Direct participation of technology in filmmaking was a necessary condition, inevitably imposing practical consequences associated with such a production. The industrial character of filmmaking influenced the work of film crew, and set its market-oriented goals. A producer financing production of a film was formulating commercial requirements. The entire project had to attract the viewers, because it had to pay off. For the first time the process of creation – previously reserved primarily for artists – was so clearly interfered by factors from other orders. And initially, film crews consisted of people active also in other domains, mainly in the field of theatre (acting, set design, directing); of amateurs; and mostly of craftsmen. It was only with time that specialization of film professions was taking place on one side, and artistic aspirations of filmmakers on the other side.

The producer's function of interfering in the creative process in terms of a scope and a method did not resemble a [function of] patron of art of the past. The growing and more diverse production, as well as the rapidly growing popularity of film communicates, was drawing attention from various interest groups as well as state institutions. All those institutions and pressure groups were trying to gain influence on the meaning and significance of presented works, imposed propaganda contents, and introduced censorship restrictions.

But in spite of those difficult, limiting conditions for production of films, there were exceptional works, created by people who were able to overcome growing traps and difficulties and convey their own, original vision.

At the same time, such a vision had to satisfy tastes of at least some cinemagoers so that the condition of profitability of production was fulfilled. Although the cinema had met the expectations of a broad audience and had been received enthusiastically, the mechanisms of circulation of films in the social space were still new. The screenings were held in the specially designed halls, just like theatrical performances, yet there were much more cinemas, especially in the cities;

together with frequent changes of their programs, their impact was of an unprecedented range. Films produced in various countries circulated in the international space, relatively easily overcoming cultural barriers and national borders.

The cinema audience was very diverse in many respects; it consisted of representatives of various social strata and groups of all ages, both educated and illiterate, people of various professions and social roles, of various levels of preparation for participation in culture – including vast majority of those who did not have such preparation at all. This heterogeneous audience shared one feature: all of them – along with filmmakers – were only beginning to learn the language of the new medium, and to recognize the rules of constructing film works.

The actual context of film development was a verbal culture, hence an understandable frame of reference for film practice and for the accompanying reflection became the literary culture and its values<sup>262</sup>. Film was taking roots in culture using all of its previous achievements. It was owing a lot to painting and music. Yet above all it was the literary culture that became the main source of standards, for ambitious filmmakers. And there were the patterns of literary culture that prompted cinema with a program of cultural and artistic advancement. This program was part of the then-dominant paradigm of art, it was combined with artistic aspirations, and its goal was to raise the film onto Parnassus. For the time being, traditionalists who were comparing cinema to the established art genres were shocked by the roughness of the former. Others, including avant-garde artists, were seeing in the new phenomenon a sign of fascinating changes.

Change in culture is usually based to some degree on existing patterns; it makes use of widespread experience to apply them to new needs, and then to overcome them. Literary tradition – especially in Poland – gave cinema a

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262 From this point of view, the position of Alina Madej, who basically challenges my thesis about “«apprenticeship» of filmmakers with writers”, I consider to be pointless. See an interesting book by A. Madej, *Mitologie i konwencje. O polskim kinie fabularnym dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Krakow: Universitas 1994, pp. 119–120. It is in the light of opinions formulated “before the war” – for example, by Karol Irzykowski. I maintain my views presented since the 1970s. See also: Aleksander Jackiewicz, *Film jako powieść XX wieku*, Warsaw: WAiF 1968; *Film polski wobec innych sztuk*, eds. A. Helman, A. Madej, Krakow: Wydawnictwo UŚ 1979; *Polskie kino lat 1918–1939*, ed. Zbigniew Wyszynski, Warsaw – Krakow: PWN-UJ 1980; A. Jackiewicz, *Niebezpieczne związki literatury i filmu*, Warsaw: WAiF 1971; M. Hopfinger, *Komunikacja filmowa a wzory kultury literackiej*, in: *Z badań porównawczych nad filmem*, eds. A. Helman, Andrzej Gwóźdź, Warsaw – Katowice – Krakow: PWN-UŚ 1980; Jadwiga Bocheńska, *Polska myśl filmowa do roku 1939*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974; *Polska myśl filmowa. Antologia tekstów z lat 1898–1939*, selected and ed. eadam, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1975.

program of advancement, which consisted of a model of the auteur attitude to filmmaking, giving special consideration to verbal and literary aspect of films, forming cinema message similar to literary works, as well as an individual choice for cinema audiences. Thus, the vision of the auteur cinema from the very beginning was located close to literature, on the base of cultural continuity.

From the perspective of the abovementioned program, the screenwriter and the director were distinguished as key co-authors among many members of film crews co-creating cinematic message. Their roles were distinct. The screenwriter was considered the main conceiver of the future piece, while the director's task was to consolidate the efforts of the entire team to adopt the screenplay to screen.

[Writing a] screenplay became a separate, autonomous stage in the process of filmmaking. The organization of production began with its initial acceptance. The production demands, institutional requirements, and producers' interests undoubtedly contributed to giving screenplays the priority<sup>263</sup>. The producer, when accepting screenplays for implementation, was certain of what the finished piece would be like. The tendency to identify a written film project with its screen version was quite common. The trust in words, plot-worshipping, attaching great importance to "a story" – all of them rooted in tradition – could explain a crucial function of screenplay. The prestige enjoyed by the men of letters was significant. It was the screenwriter who would imagine the subject, the course of events, the time and place; the characters, the entire scheme of action<sup>264</sup>. Only then the scheme would be transferred to the screen by the director, who was considered a technical executioner of someone else's idea. The director's task was to be limited to technical decisions and executive services. The transformation of words into a film work appeared as an auxiliary, secondary, and transparent operation. It seems that the belief in distinct identities of "written" and "screen" forms of a film was a result of a conviction that the so-called content, plot, and anecdote is of decisive importance – at least for feature films: a conviction that what can be told and summarized is crucial for a film work. It is as if people were not aware that film signs not only transmitted a plot, but also (or, maybe, primarily) created it. However, on a film set, the so-called iron script was generally in force until the 1950s. Today, the screenplay plays an important role in the production of films,

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263 Cf.: Bolesław Michałek, *Scenariusz — dokument produkcyjny*, in: idem, *Kino naszych czasów*, WAIiF, Warszawa 1972.

264 Cf.: Bolesław W. Lewicki, *Scenariusz — literacki program struktury filmowej*, Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe 1970.

mostly for organizational reasons, but the obsolete images from the verbal era no longer stand behind it.

It could also be assumed that a certain role in the overestimation of screenplay in filmmaking was played by the model transferred from theatre, where the text of a dramatic work was the base of the stage performance. The more so because film, especially in its first period, was compared to theatre and treated as a flawed form of theatrical performance. This error resulted mainly from misapprehension of the new character of film signs, and from underestimation of their dissimilarity. Besides, the texts of stage dramas were considered independent works, autonomous from their theatre adaptations; they were present in social circuits – regardless of the stage-oriented intentions of playwrights – as the texts suitable for reading. The film screenplays for a long time were not intended to be seen as a new literary genre. The situation of cinema, especially in the first half of the twentieth century – its low cultural and artistic status – were sufficient obstacles in that case.

The position of the film screenplay, both in the field of cinema and in literature, has changed with the development of audiovisual culture. The emergence of a significant number of intellectually and artistically outstanding films, the formation of a mature film culture with competent audience that quickly learned the rules of film language, and gradual cultural advancement of film practice have changed the status of screenplay both in the process of film production and in relation to literature. On the one hand, a screenplay was becoming gradually the effect of director's own work, depending on his/her skills, and the roles of a screenwriter and director merge. A verbal draft of the future film work is sufficiently open to changes, and it can be corrected on the set<sup>265</sup>. The director is regarded as the author of a film, and it is his/her prerogative to turn a proposed screenplay into a good or bad movie.

On the other hand, the ennoblement of film in contemporary culture – the change of global relations between word and image<sup>266</sup>, and between literature and film<sup>267</sup> – makes it possible to write screenplays that, although created as potential propositions for filmmakers, at the same time can be interesting enough for literary readers. In Poland, for example, screenplays are printed by monthly

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265 Cf.: Władysław Orłowski, *Scenariusz — gatunek niedookreślonej poetyki*, "Dialog" 1971, nr 1.

266 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993.

267 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Kultura współczesna — audiowizualność*, Warsaw: PIW 1985, especially part 3: "Kontekst audiowizualny a komunikacja werbalna".

magazines *Dialog* (since 1956) and *Kino* (since 1966). In the 1960s and 1970s, collections of screenplays by Tadeusz Konwicki, Kazimierz Brandys, Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski, Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, Krzysztof Zanussi, and Edward Żebrowski were published as books. The translations of the screenplays by prominent film authors: Antonioni, Bergman, and Fellini were also published. When film art has gained autonomy and obtained a solid position among other domains of culture, screenplays have confirmed their reading function. They have got an opportunity to play a pragmatically double role and to be treated as a form of literature. The film adaptations have been produced since the very beginning of the history of cinema, when it was searching for adequate forms of expression. Literature as art, already well established, solidly settled in tradition, and at the same time rich in diverse artistic experiences and solutions, became a source of aspirations, teachings, and examples for cinema. David Wark Griffith was searching for storytelling, parallel montage, close-up techniques, and episodic constructions in Dickens' novels. Sergei M. Eisenstein recognized the work of Pushkin and entire literature as art from which cinema had to take lessons on principles of composition, ways of narration, and general artistic culture. Cinema absorbed canons of literature, especially the nineteenth-century ones, it adopted its plot and narrative patterns, as well as the very idea of imitating life. Referring to experiences of literature was a phenomenon, so to speak, natural – both because of the high rank of literature as the art of word in contemporary culture and for purely practical reasons. The cinema, despite its technical origin, could learn a lot from literature. For film, the authority of literary works was to be a kind of pass into [the domain of] recognized, valued, and high culture. At the same time, adaptations were an attempt to merge patterns of the existing culture with requirements of the newly emerging communication practice within a film.

With time, thanks to the patterns of literary tradition, film works began to perform various social functions. Documentary and entertainment functions were soon followed by autotelic, social and educational, political, and persuasive functions. The cinema shows became an important instrument in the game for various issues and different values. A long, arduous process of semiotic ennoblement of the cinema began. Film communication was expected to become artistic communication with all elements attributed to art.

## Screen and literature

In Poland, where literature played a special role, the attempts to transfer literary works to screen occurred relatively early and with various results have lasted almost continuously until today. In the first two decades of the twentieth



century, until 1918, over a dozen adaptations were made. Already in 1911, the first attempt was made with a film based on *Dzieje grzechu* [*The Wages of Sin*] by Stefan Żeromski (the second attempt was made in 1933) and on *Meir Ezołowicz* by Eliza Orzeszkowa. A year later, *Szkice węglem* [*Charcoal Sketches*] and *The Deluge* by Henryk Sienkiewicz were filmed. Films based on *Karpaccy górale* [*Highlanders From the Carpathian Mountains*] by Józef Korzeniowski (1913) and on the libretto to *Halka* by Stanisław Moniuszko (1913, then again in 1930 and 1937) were made. Also Gabriela Zapolska's novels – *Sezonowa miłość* [*Seasonal Love Affair*] (1916, then again in 1938) and *Carewicz* [*The Tsarevich*] (1918), *Sędziowie* [*Judges*] by Stanisław Wyspiański (1912), *Zaczarowane koło* [*The Enchanted Circle*] by Lucjan Rydel (1914), *Topiel* [*Deep Water*] by Stanisław Przybyszewski (1917), *Pani Walewska* [*Mrs. Walewska*] by Waław Gąsiorowski (1914), *Słodycz grzechu* [*The Sweetness of Sin*] by Stefan Kiedrzyński (1911), and *Aszantka* [*Ashanti Girl*] by Włodzimierz Perzyński (1915) were filmed. The directors were adapting old and contemporary works, representing various thematic and genres: novellas, novels, and dramatic works. However, the film could not rise to its own challenges.

In the next decade (1919–1929), further adaptations of thirty literary works were made, which constituted one fifth of all films produced in that period. Among the authors whose works film producers found interesting were the writers mentioned earlier as well as Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Igancy Kraszewski, Władysław Reymont, and Andrzej Strug. The popular literary pieces by Leo Belmont, Aleksander Błazejowski, and Juliusz German, were quite frequently adapted. Those projects, however, consolidated views on film as a “parasite” of literature. The possibilities of film expression were still not rated very high in comparison to literature. The film versions were treated as better or worse illustrations for literary works.

The first Polish adaptation attempts considered successful by cinema historians were works by Leon Trystan, who in 1927 made two medium-length films. *Kochanka Szamoty* [*Szamota's Mistress*] was an adaptation of novella *Niesamowita opowieść* [*Incredible Story*] by Stefan Grabinski, while the other film, *Bunt krwi i żelaza* [*The Mutiny of Blood and Iron*] was based on the two novellas by Gustaw Daniłowski, *Ostatnie dzieło* [*The Last Composition*] and *Pociąg* [*Train*].

On the other hand, avant-garde artists were fascinated by cinema as an entirely new phenomenon. They saw great opportunities of film development in its connection with technology, in free presentation of space and time, in unlimited changes in viewpoints, in increasing human visual and acoustic horizon, as Tadeusz Peiper wrote in “Zwrotnica” in 1922, or “in contact of human being

with matter”, as Karol Irzykowski emphasized. His book titled *Dziesiąta muza* [*The Tenth Muse*] was – besides *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* by Hugo Munsterberg and *The Visible Person* by Bela Balazs – one of the first serious works dedicated to reflection on cinema<sup>268</sup>. The autonomy of the film was discussed by Jalu Kurek and Jan Brzękowski, Anatol Stern and Juliusz Kleiner, who were able to see cinema as a source of the new aesthetics<sup>269</sup> (Fig. 30).



**Fig. 30:** The first edition cover of *X Muza* by Karol Irzykowski (1924), T. Lubelski, *Historia kina...*, p. 43

268 Cf.: Tadeusz Peiper, *Radiofon*, in: idem, *Tędy*, Warsaw: Księgarnia Hoesicka 1930; Karol Irzykowski, *Dziesiąta Muza. Zagadnienia estetyczne kina*, Krakow: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1924; Aleksander Kumor, *Karol Irzykowski. Teoretyk filmu*, Warsaw: WAiF 1965; Maria Gołębowska, *Irzykowski. Rzeczywistość i przedstawienie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN 2006; Hugo Munsterberg, *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study*, D. Appleton and Company, New York–London 1916; Bela Balazs, *Visible Man*, in: *Early Film Theory – Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, New York 2001.

269 See., e.g.: Władysław Banaszekiewicz, Witold Witczak, *Historia filmu polskiego*, v. 1: 1895–1929, chapter “Polska myśl filmowa w latach 1923–1929”, Warsaw: WAiF 1966.

In the 1930s, Polish avant-garde filmmakers were undertaking their activities in the name of propagating ambitious cinema – grouped in the Warsaw-based START [Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego/Foundation of the Society for the Promotion of Film Art], gathered around the Krakow-based *Linia* literary journal, and attending the film club “Awangarda” in Lvov. The cinema enthusiasts were organizing film screenings and initiating discussions and disputes devoted to theoretical issues and practical achievements. They were also making their own short films, and – in spite of commercial obstacles – feature films (among them: Aleksander Ford, Eugeniusz Cękański, and Wanda Jakubowska)<sup>270</sup>.

The second generation of the cinema people were still trying to use the attainment of literature in order to produce valuable films, and to bring the artistic rank of cinema and its social recognition closer to the original literary works. At that time, about fifty adaptations of literary works were made – one third of all domestic production. Again, filmmakers used acclaimed works by Prus and Sienkiewicz, Orzeszkowa, and Zapolska. The first sound film produced in Poland was based on *The Morality of Mrs. Dulka* [a play by Zapolska]; the dialogues were recorded on gramophone discs.

Most of the filmed works were based on contemporary popular and entertainment literature. The most popular authors included: Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz, Antoni Marczyński, Stefan Kiedrzyński, Helena Mniszkówna, Maria Rodziewiczówna, and Irena Zarzycka.

The most popular writer in the Polish cinema until the end of the 1930s turned out to be Stefan Żeromski, who, by the way, was trying to contribute to the development of that new domain of culture<sup>271</sup>. His novel *Dzieje grzechu* was adapted twice: first as a silent film (1911) and then as a sound film (1933). Also *Uroda życia* [*The Beauty of Life*] was filmed twice, in 1921 and 1930, as well as *Wierna rzeka* [*Faithful River*] (1922 under the title *Rok 1863* [*The Year 1863*] and again in 1936). Other film adaptations of Żeromski's novels included: *Przedwiośnie* [*Early Spring*] (1928), *Ponad śnieg bielszym się stanę* [*I Shall Be Whiter Than Snow*] (1929), *Wiatr od morza* [*Wind from the Sea*] (1930), and *Róża* [*The Rose*]

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270 Cf.: Wiesław Stradomski, *U źródeł polskiej kultury filmowej*, in: Barbara Armatys, Leszek Armatys, Wiesław Stradomski, *Historia filmu polskiego*, v. 2: 1930–1939, Warsaw: WAiF 1988.

271 Cf.: Stefan Żeromski, *Wieczna fala. Sztuka kinematograficzna w sześciu częściach*, eds. Zbigniew Goliński and Justyna Golińska, “Dialog” 1996, nr 5–6; Z. Goliński, J. Golińska, *Żeromski raz jeszcze*, ibidem; *Żeromski na ekranie*, ed. Jan Paćlowski, Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe 1997.

(1936). Of all those ventures, *Róża*, directed by Józef Lejtes, cinematography by Seweryn Steinwurz, music by Roman Palester and Marian Neuteich, based on script/screenplay by Józef Lejtes and Anatol Stern, was considered the most successful. “*Róża* was the unique phenomenon of contemporary cinematography, and its appearance on screens was one of the first acts ennobling Polish cinema which was vegetating on the fringe of culture [...] The film became a cultural event [...] it received rather harsh reaction of censors”<sup>272</sup>. The next two films directed by Józef Lejtes were also among the top achievements of Polish cinematography. Both were based on contemporary literary works. In 1937, the film *Dziewczęta z Nowolipiek* [*The Girls from Nowolipki*], based on the novel by Pola Gojawiczyńska, premiered in Polish cinemas. The screenplay was written by Stanisław Urbanowicz and the director, with cinematography by Seweryn Steinwurz and Stanisław Lipiński, and music by Roman Palester and Marian Neuteich. In 1938, the premiere of *Granica* [*Boundary*] took place. The film, with cinematography by Seweryn Steinwurz, and music by Marian Neuteich, was based on the novel of the same title by Zofia Nałkowska, who – what is worth emphasizing – was a co-author of the screenplay.

The year 1938 was abounding in successful film productions. *Wisła* [*The Vistula*], a literary work by Helena Boguszevska and Jerzy Kornacki, was adapted for a very popular film *Ludzie Wisły* [*The People of the Vistula*], directed by Aleksander Ford and Jerzy Zarzycki, with cinematography by Stanisław Lipiński and music by Roman Palester and Marian Neuteich. The screenplay of the adaptation was written by the authors of the novel themselves (Fig. 31).

The film *Strachy* [*Spooks*] based on novel under the same name by Maria Ukniewska, directed by Eugeniusz Cękałski and Karol Szołowski, with cinematography by Stanisław Wohl and Adolf Forbert, and music by Andrzej Panufnik, was highly rated. The contemporary critics wrote that the adaptation was more dramatic and vivid than the novel itself<sup>273</sup>. And after years they claimed that serious social drama as the most important work of the START [Stowarzyszenia Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego/Foundation of the Society for the Promotion of Film Art]<sup>274</sup> and perhaps the most outstanding Polish film of the 1930s<sup>275</sup>. The

272 B. Armatys, L. Armatys, *Film fabularny w latach 1935–1939*, in: B. Armatys, L. Armatys, W. Stradomski, *Historia filmu polskiego*, v. 2..., p. 297.

273 See: Stefania Zahorska, film review, “Wiadomości Literackie” 1938, nr 47.

274 Ed. note: See: Łukasz Biskupski, *Kinofilia Zaangażowana. Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego “start” i upowszechnianie kultury filmowej w latach 30. XX w.*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Przystop, 2017.

275 See: T. Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie...*, p. 42, 69.



**Fig. 31:** *Ludzie Wisły* (1938), *Współczesna kinematografia polska*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo „Polonia” 1962, insert, position 8

long struggle of film with literature was crowned with a distinctive artistic success. The interpretation of the meanings of the literary basis in the film language, met not only with interest of the audience, but also with critical acclaim.

Although, cinema benefited from attainments of literature almost from the very beginning of its way to Parnassus, it was able to do it successfully and on a broader scale only since it developed its own language, which at that time consisted in accurate connection between visual and audio-spheres. That allowed to annex the elements of literary works that were really useful in film statement, while at the same time facilitating the distance to the common patterns. In the interwar period, the auteur cinema gained a significant position due to successful adaptations. As it was put metaphorically by Aleksander Jackiewicz, it became “a novel of the twentieth century”<sup>276</sup>.

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276 A. Jackiewicz, *Film jako powieść...*

World War II dramatically interrupted formation of film culture. It caused enormous losses among cinema people, immobilized film productions, destroyed infrastructure, and prevented debuts in feature films (including Wanda Jakubowska and Antoni Bohdziewicz). It has shaken up human experience and mentality. It fundamentally changed political and social contexts, including the situation of cinema and film.

## The ennoblement of the cinema

The post-war period until the mid-1950s did not create conditions for new endeavours to make auteur cinema. The very first actions of the new authorities announced radical restrictions on public discourse and subordinating it to political utility. The peculiar unity and uniformity of culture of that period found, among others, a distinct expression in the nature of film productions at the time. I described them in terms of semantic and cultural code of “political pragmatics” and “paramilitary poetics”. It was based on schematic solutions, and carefully de-individualized; in result, it blocked the filmmakers’ chances of successful film productions<sup>277</sup>.

Nevertheless, in the second half of the 1950s, a breakthrough in filmmaking took place, thanks to which the rank of film in Polish culture and the prestige of the Polish film on the international stage grew immeasurably. After October 1956, along with political changes, the situation of cinema changed dramatically. Many restrictions were lifted, and film production studios were established; a dozen or so films were made annually, and the film productions were developing in the atmosphere of growth of freedom and hope. The best foreign repertoire of current years was shown in cinemas. The cinemagoers, numerous as never before, could watch attractive and significant Polish films. The authors of those films were speaking in their own voices meeting the expectations of the audience. The second half of the 1950s was a particularly beneficial period in the history of Polish cinematography – and “perhaps the richest – in terms of value and versatility”<sup>278</sup>. *Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Innocent Sorcerers*, and *Samson* by

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277 See: M. Hopfinger, *Poetyki i kody znaczeniowo-kulturowe*, in: eadem, *Adaptacje filmowe utworów literackich. Problemy teorii i interpretacji*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974, pp. 120–140; cf. also: A. Madej, *Kino, władza, publiczność. Kinematografia polska w latach 1944–1949*, Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Prasa Beskidzka 2002; Anna Misiak, *PRL 1944–1954: Kinematografia i partia*, in: eadem, *Kinematograf kontrolowany. Cenzura filmowa w kraju socjalistycznym i demokratycznym (PRL i USA). Analiza socjologiczna*, Krakow: Universitas 2006.

278 T. Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie...*, p. 188.

Andrzej Wajda; *Man on the Tracks*, *Eroica*, and *Bad Luck* by Andrzej Munk; *The Last Day of Summer* and *All Souls' Day* by Tadeusz Konwicki; *Night Train* and *Mother Joan of the Angels* by Jerzy Kawalerowicz; *Nobody Is Calling* and *People From the Train* by Kazimierz Kutz; *Noose* and *Farewells* by Wojciech J. Has; *First Year* by Witold Lesiewicz; *Knife in the Water* by Roman Polanski – to name just the most famous films made in those years.

The adaptations made over half of film productions of that period. The filmmakers were finding their own problems in literary works and they were interpreting them in their own ways. Literature performed a crucial role in development of cinematography of that period. Film learned from it “subtleties of language”<sup>279</sup>. The direct contribution of writers to the shape of many films cannot be overestimated. However, attempts to liberate cinema from influences of literature were also visible. Film absorbed from literature only what was needed for its substantive and artistic reasons. At the same time, it was the period when some writers were trying to tell their own stories by means of a camera. The spectacular success of Tadeusz Konwicki was an exemplary result of those efforts; for many years he remained a “bilingual” artist<sup>280</sup>.

The success of films made in the period between 1956 and 1961 consisted, among other things, in the fact that their authors took up issues that were important, pressing, and concerning fundamental issues of humans and their existential situation, as well as human entanglement in History. The films of that period – regardless of their specific themes, narrative forms, and stylistic concepts – were dominated by moral perspective. Their concern was to restore the meaning of elementary concepts and values in relations between people and in the functioning of social and political institutions. Those films manifested subjectivity of their characters, inalienability of their freedom and autonomy, their right to own search and individual choices, to rebellion and responsibility, and individuality and community. The auteur cinema by Andrzej Munk and Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Kawalerowicz and Wojciech J. Has, and Kazimierz Kutz and Witold Lesiewicz I describe in terms of overarching, a common semantic, and cultural code of “human condition”. I am trying to show that this code lies at the base of artistic

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279 Cf.: B. Michałek, *Film się zmienia*, Warsaw: WAIIF 1967.

280 Cf.: Jan Walc, “Tadeusza Konwickiego przedstawianie świata”, typed manuscript of doctoral dissertation in the Library of The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw: 1975; T. Lubelski, *Poetyka powieści i filmów Tadeusza Konwickiego (na podstawie analiz utworów z lat 1947–1965)*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1984; Barbara Giza, *Między literaturą a filmem. O scenariuszach filmowych Tadeusza Konwickiego*, Warsaw: Trio 2007.



interpretations of our tradition and historical experiences: the fate of individual Poles and the entire Polish nation, their attitudes and behaviours during the [Nazi] occupation, and after the war in the new political situation. The code of “human condition” also determines the ways of presenting relationship between an individual and history, between an individual and the society. Difficult individual choices taken up by one’s own responsibility, complex relationships with other human beings and the intense need for understanding, inevitable clashes with History, protests against the world without values – such issues were disturbing the great majority of Polish filmmakers.

The language of the cinema has developed and has become more complicated. It has overcome the anachronistic primacy of words over image in cinema, enriched the visual sphere, and integrated audio and visual components. All the sign-related matter has transformed and has increased its capacity and semantic range. Propaganda slogans have been rejected. The cinema has become important and artistic.

During that period the full ennoblement of meanings transmitted by film works have taken place in Poland. The authors of films began to address ambitious issues, previously belonging to the domain of literature. They used favourable political conditions (that did not last long) to argue against our literary tradition. The cinema began discussing subjects that used to belong solely to literature, and took over the social functions attributed only to literature so far. The Cinema has moved to the forefront of our culture<sup>281</sup>.

The cultural and artistic advancement of Polish cinema that took place in the second half of the 1950s, provided a stable position for the auteur cinema in the repertoire of films expected and sometimes also produced. While giving up systematic and chronological discussion on the success of the Polish cinema, I will use a completely subjective illustration of my thesis. For I took part in an initiative aimed at establishing the “classics of the Polish cinema” by selecting “The Top Ten’ of the Polish cinema for the year of 2000”<sup>282</sup>.

The selection of only ten Polish films was extremely difficult, because many artistically and intellectually excellent works were created. My choice was completely subjective and arbitrary, for I would like to signal – though in such a defective way – a maturity of the Polish cinematography.

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281 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Poetyki i kody...*, pp. 140–165.

282 The questionnaire directed to film critics, theorists, and historians was answered by 68 persons. The editors compiled a ranking of 141 mentioned films (cf. «*Złota Dziesiątka*» *polskiego kina. Na rok 2000*, Tarnów: Oficyna Wydawnicza Oratorium 2001).



Here are my “top ten” films [of the Polish cinema], in chronological order (a number in brackets refers to the ranking of a given film based on the joint opinion of the other critics)<sup>283</sup>: *The Last Day of Summer*, screenplay and direction by Tadeusz Konwicki, cinematography by Jan Laskowski, music by Adam Pawlikowski, cast: Irena Laskowska, Jan Machulski, Kadr 1957 (the second ten).

The film touches the audience with complexity of the addressed problems and the remarkable simplicity of means of artistic expression. A meeting between a man and a woman on a deserted seaside beach on the last day of summer: two lonely people with different burdens, in different moments of their lives. The situational context built from a maritime landscape, a sky crossed by clouds and exhaust plumes of jets, from roars of those jets, and from sounds of ocarina. The gravity of creating the meanings is placed on careful observation of behaviours, mainly non-verbal, of the two protagonists, who met by accident. The understanding established between them turns out to be unstable. Difficult experiences from the past confronted with uncertain present, bitter taste of maturity [confronted] with too spontaneous youth. This encounter cannot succeed.

The debut of Tadeusz Konwicki shocked the audience with its precision of the composition of both the whole film and particular frames. It proved that cinema discourse can cope with important issues, and use discreet suggestions and intended understatements. Konwicki turned the film language into the language of art. As an already experienced writer and screenwriter he argued that a film work could be a competitive mean of expression to literature. In the history of cinema, *The Last Day of Summer* is a testimony to the artistic ennoblement of film. *Ashes and Diamonds*, screenplay by Jerzy Andrzejewski (based on his own novel), directed by Andrzej Wajda, cinematography by Jerzy Wojcik, music by Filip Nowak and Jan Krenz, cast: Zbigniew Cybulski, Ewa Krzyżewska, Waclaw Zastrzeżyński, Adam Pawlikowski, and others, Kadr Film Studio, 1958 (number one) (Fig. 32).

Political divisions – although important in this film – are considered minor for Wajda and driven to the background. The expressive poetics of the film perfectly echoed the moral conflict, deeply experienced by Maciek Chełmicki (protagonist). A moving, penetrating interpretation of the immediate conflicts is carried out from the perspective of Maciek. The great acting of Zbyszek Cybulski, who became a symbol of protagonist in the Polish cinema, emphasized moral dimension of the situation. Choices made in the past determine his current condition.

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283 Ibidem, pp. 74–82.



**Fig. 32:** Zbyszek Cybulski as Maciek Chełmicki in *Ashes and Diamonds*, Alicja Iskierko et al., *Historia filmu polskiego*, Warsaw: WAiF 1980, insert 1, position 15

But the values in the name of which he made his choice are no longer carried out by acts that used to be obvious during the [Nazi] occupation. If he wants to be faithful to those values, he must give up his commitments. If he wants to seek other values, also elemental ones – such as security and love – he must also reject previous obligations. However, the sense of community with those whose deaths obliged him to be faithful to the Cause (the unforgettable scene of igniting “death lanterns”) prompts Maciek to accept the task. The execution of this task is to be an actual and moral closure of the past. At the same time, this act is sentencing him to a loss as a man of values. His deeply experienced effort to save his values turned into its opposite. From a moral perspective, there is no way out.

The critics considered Maciek’s death as accidental and absurd. But Andrzej Wajda was right: only death could bring Maciek back to the world of values.

*Bad Luck*, screenplay by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński (based on his own short story *Sześć wcieleń Jana Piszczyka*), directed by Andrzej Munk, cinematography by Jerzy Lipman, music by Jan Krenz, cast: Bogumił Kobiela and others, Kamera Film Studio, 1960 (number seven on the list, ex aequo with *The Illumination* by Krzysztof Zanussi and *The Cruise* by Marek Piwowski) (Fig. 33).



**Fig. 33:** Bogumił Kobiela as Jan Piszczek in *Bad Luck*, A. Iskierko et al., *Historia filmu...*, insert 2, position 72

A penetrating grotesque about Piszczek, but also about those whose expectations he is trying to meet. Piszczek – in a brilliant interpretation by Bogumił Kobiela – a lovable loser, a clumsy conformist, repulsive, and at the same time a lost fugitive from one role-situation to the next. His subsequent incarnations tell critically about social and political contexts that generate a highly desirable and accepted repertoire of roles. The episodic structure of the film directs the viewers' attention to the problem itself rather than the plot. Piszczek tells ex post how unfortunate coincidences of events thwarted his efforts. The narrative reveals his motives of proceeding, quite against the narrator's intentions. It is guided by the will to adapt to expectations of others, to the requirements of new situations. He accomplished subsequent incarnations honestly, with enthusiasm, in the hope of acceptance. His eponymous bad luck thwarts his efforts – however, what would have happened if he were more lucky? After all, Piszczek “only” resonates with the so-called social expectations. He is controlled from the outside – there is no doubt about it; however, is he the only one?

The film was to persuade the audience to reflect on the way of being in the social and political realities of the time, on the chance of their own autonomy, on the attitude towards external conditions.

Today, when we can consider ourselves fortunate from historical perspective, the problem of individual freedom turns out to be highly current, and the threat of conformism and the temptation of conformism – are acutely visible. Is the distance between adaptation and opportunism so great? Where is the border between them? How does it meander when faced with fundamental changes? And can it be different?

The film by Andrzej Munk is a sophisticated, wise, and still meaningful text of culture.

*Mother Joan of the Angels*, screenplay by Tadeusz Konwicki (based on a short story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz), directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, cinematography by Jerzy Wójcik, music by Adam Walaciński, cast: Lucyna Winnicka, Mieczysław Voit, and others, Kadr Film Studio, 1961 (the third place ex aequo with *The Saragossa Manuscript* by Wojciech J. Has).

The film by Kawalerowicz is a generalizing interpretation of a literary work. It regards human fate. Mother Joan, a nun, rebels against the one-dimensionality of her existence. Her suppressed need for autonomy, for communication with another human being, and for experiencing her feelings manifests itself. A desire to express her own voice, to confirm her individuality by obtaining approval or condemnation in the eyes of others – comes to the fore. When Fr. Suryn contacts Joan, he realizes his increasing opposition to his own situation. It creates a powerful inner conflict between the goals and requirements of the system (which he had served so far without any doubt), and the new thoughts, emotions, and needs that were suppressed so far and now they manifest themselves. A world full of secrets and anxieties, that he had not known, opens before him. Fr. Suryn discovers the opportunity to seek and experience other values, and he finds a new meaning of existence. All those factors will make him ready to save Joan from “evil” – at all costs. In the name of her good and holiness, he will consciously commit a terrible act and put himself to damnation (Fig. 34).

Each frame of this film story was suggestively constructed and integrated into the superior message. Black and white palette of images, the sophisticated sound are simply unforgettable. The riot of Mother Joan expressed by demoniac possession; the meaningful dialogue between Fr. Suryn and the rabbi performed by the same actor in a double role; Joan and Suryn, kneeling and turned to each other, yet separated by a grating – those images are remembered after many years. The artistic mastery of this film is timeless.

*How to Be Loved*, screenplay by Kazimierz Brandys (based on his own short story), directed by Wojciech J. Has, cinematography by Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz, music by Lucjan M. Kaszycki, cast: Barbara Krafftówna, Zbigniew Cybulski,



**Fig. 34:** Lucyna Winnicka as Mother Joan, A. Iskierko et al., *Historia filmu...*, insert 3, position 94

Więczyśław Gliński, and others, Kamera Film Studio, 1963 (the second place in the second ten).

What to do with life when dreams do not come true, when effort and sacrifice do not bring results, when the need for love remains unsatisfied – in short: when fortune is not kind. The film by Has is about it.

The wartime confronts people with experiences that are difficult to cope with. Perhaps things could have been done differently, better solutions could have been found, limitations could have been transformed into inner freedom. Felicja – excellently performed by Barbara Krafftówna – once again tries to look at her life in retrospect, to evaluate her choices, to analyse her behaviours, in the hope of a positive balance: to find some meaning, to reconcile with fate. She put everything on one card to save Wiktor and get him for herself. She did not succeed. Wiktor did not fall in love with her. He could not cope with his saved life; he wanted applause and heroic halo, for him time stopped at the beginning of the war, when he was a recognized actor and could – in accordance with heroic patterns – become a hero. He failed. He does not esteem Felicja's efforts. He blames her for his unfulfilled heroism. He is not able – or does not want – to ask himself what to do with his life. This question is such a burden for him that

he commits suicide. Felicja is different than him; she does things differently, and she seeks solutions in this world. She asks about her participation in the construction of a scenario authored mainly by someone else. Failures stimulate her to new activities, and she does not give up. She gains distance and some kind of self-acceptance, maybe a hint of hope that life has some meaning.

To Kazimierz Brandys, we owe one of the most interesting and richest female characters in Polish cinema. Wojciech Has used this chance masterfully. Barbara Krafftówna managed to fill this opportunity with great acting skills.

*The Structure of Crystals*, screenplay by Krzysztof Zanussi (with literary collaboration of Edward Żebrowski), directed by Krzysztof Zanussi, cinematography by Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz, music by Wojciech Kilar, cast: Andrzej Źarnecki, Jan Mysłowicz, Barbara Wrzesińska, and others, Tor Film Studio, 1969 (in the second ten).

What choices to make, how to live? – these are the questions asked by the filmmakers. The film appeared after March 1968; it concerned the Polish intelligentsia, yet formulated the problem in a universal way. The film's director is focused not on an individual internally torn apart, but on the conflict of people representing different attitudes and personalities, different values and styles of life. Zanussi is an artist aware of its goals and means. His manner of narration is concise and precise. Meanings are based not so much on events as on careful observation of human behaviours, motives, and comments. We learn their reasons in favourable conditions: far away from modern hustle and bustle, from obliging arrangements, and from unwanted entanglements. They present their views without hypocrisy, justifying their choices, and observing their results. They try to convince each other, not to overcome. They are independent from each other. They are tied with bonds of old friendship, which, however, does not help them find a common scale of values.

The above description is just for readers' consideration who are to draw conclusions by themselves. Though, in fact, the premises on the basis of which our choice and evaluation are to be made, are not presented completely neutrally. The meeting place allows one participant for richer argumentation. Marek, visiting Jan, is experienced in a worldly sense, and he seems to be attracted not so much by science but as by interesting journeys and gratifications; perhaps what motivates him is not a cognitive passion but an opportunity of living an exciting life. Jan, who is more mature in result of a near-to-death situation (an accident in the mountains, not discussed in detail), prefers life based on contemplation, contact with nature, deepened relations with people, far from the rules of the great world and its criteria of success. He has a charming wife, enjoys eating preserves, and is willing to ponder the issue of infinity without seeking profits.



After all, the film is not a discourse in its pure form. Especially from today's perspective, I assess the film statement of Krzysztof Zanussi as outstanding.

*The Wedding*, screenplay by Andrzej Kijowski (based on a drama by Stanisław Wyspiański), directed by Andrzej Wajda, cinematography by Witold Sobociński, music by Stanisław Radwan (with collaboration of Eugeniusz Rudnik – Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio), cast: Daniel Olbrychski, Ewa Ziętek, Andrzej Łapicki, Wojciech Pszoniak, Małgorzata Lorentowicz, Maja Komorowska, Marek Perepeczko, Franciszek Pieczka, Marek Walczewski, and others, X Film Studio, 1973 (number ten).

A great film work. Andrzej Wajda created an audiovisual interpretation of the drama by Wyspiański. He challenged the metaphor of the Polish fate. Since that adaptation, it has been difficult to think about Wyspiański's drama without Wajda's film. However, the film can be understood without knowing its literary basis. Its real-fantastic form combines tragic elements with hope, a historical diagnosis with a symbolic interpretation, and the past with the future.

*The Wedding* captivates with its audiovisual completeness of expression. Rich images are accompanied by wedding music; sounds fade when visions become real. Acting is admirable. The cottage bustling with songs and silent final scenes – a common rhythm.

It was a great success of Andrzej Wajda and the entire crew.

*Top Dog*, screenplay by Feliks Falk (dialogues in collaboration with Jerzy Stuhr), directed by Feliks Falk, cinematography by Edward Kłosiński, music by Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz, cast: Jerzy Stuhr, Michał Tarkowski, and others, X Film Studio, 1977 (in the second ten).

An excellent study of a man who is unaware of values other than material ones. The only moral criterion of Lutek Danielak – performed with bravado by Jerzy Stuhr – turns out to be efficiency in struggling for a career. All his choices and actions are subordinated to this aim. Life gives him an opportunity and it cannot be wasted. Friendship, love, loyalty, and common decency are not valuable by themselves. They can be invalidated, or negated without any scruples. The protagonist acts as if he did not know that what he does is terrible. He has no elementary moral sense. He thinks of earnings and success, he wants to stand out, to get the higher rank, he has no doubts as far as his behaviour is concerned. Some people are not able to see all the colours. Danielak does not have any value system to follow.

What are the special circumstances that allow such a person to operate without obstacles? Feliks Falk clearly shows that it has nothing to do with special conditions. There is no war, no guerrilla warfare, no radical breakthroughs. On the contrary, we can see ordinary mundanity; realities of everyday life do not

hide great dramas, average audience finds time for entertainment, and industrious mobility of the anti-hero is perfectly in tune with the spirit of the times.

The visual and audial means of expression chosen by the film's author perfectly bring us into the world of ordinary people.

The diagnosis of society that emerges from the film by Feliks Falk is as shocking as the eponymous "top dog" representing this society.

*Kornblumenblau*, screenplay by Leszek Wosiewicz and Jarosław Sander (based on the memoirs by Kazimierz Tymiąński, *Uspokoić sen*), directed by Leszek Wosiewicz, cinematography by Krzysztof Ptak, music by Zdzisław Szostak, cast: Adam Kamień, Krzysztof Kolberger, Marcin Troński, and others, Irzykowski Film Studio, 1989 (in the third ten).

The extermination camp in Auschwitz – the evidence of totalitarian insanity and crime, the place of an extreme human trial. The film by Leszek Wosiewicz depicts monstrous reality of the camp. At the same time, it forces the audience to think about totalitarian realities in general, about the ways to avoid the [death] sentence, which belongs to the rules of the system. The criteria set by the system determine the situation of people. The film contains a penetrating image of the fundamentally different existential situations of people sentenced to [death within the frames of] the Final Solution [to the Jewish Question] and the diverse position of those for whom fate might be more fortunate.

The plot of the film follows the life of Tadek Wyczyński, a young musician who can play both popular German melodies as well as [a Russian song] *Kalinka*. Thrown into the camp world, he is a figure of a contemporary man subjected to a terrible trial.

The changing of perspective, drastic scenes, dynamic editing, unusual rhythm of imaging, use of video clips, special relations between images and sounds – all these elements contributed to the creation of a shocking message where terror, masquerade, laughter, and irony mix. Before Wosiewicz, no one has told about the fate of victims and the cruelty of slayers in such a way.

*Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema*, screenplay by Wojciech Marczewski, directed by Wojciech Marczewski, cinematography by Jerzy Zieliński, music by Zygmunt Konieczny, cast: Janusz Gajos, Teresa Marczevska, and others, Tor Film Studio, 1990 (in the second ten) (Fig. 35).

A fascinating narrative. Cinema within a cinema. The film *Jutrzenka* within the film *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema*. A reference to the famous scene from the film *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen. A reference to the classic book *Escape from Freedom* by Erich Fromm. The familiar screen characters on the screen and the audience on the screen and in the auditory. People from a bird's eye view and people in close-up. The Wojciech Marczewski's piece





**Fig. 35:** Janusz Gajos as a censor Rabkiewicz in *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema*, filmpolski.pl, 15 January 2010

intrigues also with its way of showing a problem of the fundamental issue of freedom – its institutional, systemic limitations, longing of enslaved people for freedom; a conflict between the deep, sometimes unexpected need for freedom and the circumstances that lead to choices that are bad from that point of view; censorship and self-censorship; questions about the chance of liberation from the coercion of the “spirit of time” and the possibility of breaking the circle of enslavement.

The great role of Janusz Gajos as a censor experiencing his enslavement; he is hesitant, yet declares for “the right side” and then he is not accepted by those who has rejected the enslavement earlier. This character could be any of us. It forces us to think. Today, in 2010, the film also turns out to be a great metaphor of the time of our freedom.

I would like to emphasize again the arbitrary character of the “top ten” of the Polish films I have presented. Many great films are missing. Many eminent authors of the Polish cinema are absent, just to mention Krzysztof Kieślowski, Kazimierz Kutz, Roman Polański, and Marek Piwowski. For me, the most important is the fact that we can list much more titles and much more authors to support the thesis about the advancement of cinema in our culture<sup>284</sup>.

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284 For comparisons, I give titles of works that were in the top ten of the Questionnaire: *Popiół i diament* [*Ashes and Diamonds*] by Andrzej Wajda, *Ziemia obiecana* [*The Promised*

Half of the mentioned films were produced in several-year periods after the turn of 1956, and their message was situated within the circle of the semantic-cultural code of human condition. Others use blazed trails to ask their questions and speak in their own voices. However, all of the pieces mentioned here combine great use of language of film expression; passionate way of telling the story; the use of shortenings, symbols, and metaphors; the outstanding roles of actors; and great audiovisual visions. They focus on fundamental – always important – existential issues, on understanding other people, on the fate of an individual in confrontation with History, on the most difficult choices in situations of trial, on conflicts of values, attitudes, behaviours, and on self-esteem. What those films have in common is the truth about the dilemmas we face and the burden of our experiences.

The writers have become the co-authors of successes of the films: the main screenwriter of important films of the Polish School, Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, the author of the screenplay based on his novel to *Bad Luck* by Andrzej Munk<sup>285</sup>; Jerzy Andrzejewski, author of the screenplay based on his novel to *Ashes and Diamonds* by Andrzej Wajda; Kazimierz Brandys, the author of the screenplay based on his short story to *How to Be Loved* by Wojciech Jerzy Has; and Andrzej Kijowski, who wrote the screenplay based on the drama by Stanisław Wyspiański to *The Wedding* by Andrzej Wajda. Tadeusz Konwicki took a special place in this circle, as, among others, the author of the screenplay based on the short story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz to *Mother Joan of the Angels* by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and as the author of screenplays to his films, including *The Last Day of Summer*<sup>286</sup>.

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*Land*] (1974) by A. Wajda, *Matka Joanna od Aniołów* [*Mother Joan of the Angels*] by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* [*The Saragossa Manuscript*] (1964) by Wojciech J. Has, *Nóż w wodzie* [*Knife in the Water*] (1961) by Roman Polanski, *Eroica* (1957) by Andrzej Munk, *Sól ziemi czarnej* [*Salt of the Black Earth*] (1969) by Kazimierz Kutz, *Człowiek z marmuru* [*Man of Marble*] (1976) by A. Wajda, *Illuminacja* [*The Illumination*] (1973) by Krzysztof Zanussi, *Rejs* [*The Cruise*] (1970) by Marek Piwowski, *Zezowate szczęście* [*Bad Luck*] by A Munk, *Barwy ochronne* [*Camouflage*] (1976) by K. Zanussi, *Amator* [*Camera Buff*] (1979) by Krzysztof Kieślowski, *Przypadek* [*Blind Chance*] (1981, premiered 1987) by K. Kieślowski, *Wesele* [*The Wedding*] by A. Wajda, and *Żywoł Mateusza* [*Matthew's Days*] (1967) by Witold Leszczyński.

285 Also to *Człowiek na torze* [*Man on the Tracks*] and to *Eroica* by Munk, to *Kanał* [*Kanal*] by Wajda, as well as to over 20 films of other directors; he also authored several movies (see: *Do filmu trafiłem przypadkiem. Z Jerzym Stefanem Stawińskim rozmawia Barbara Giza*, Warsaw: Trio 2007).

286 See: B. Giza, *Między literaturą a filmem...*

The formula of the auteur cinema, which I am using here, connects outstanding works. And the representatives of successive generations of cinema makers, using the cultural heritage, are often the authors of screenplays to their own films. This is the case of Krzysztof Zanussi, Feliks Falk, Wojciech Marczewski, and Leszek Wosiewicz. In the above-mentioned works, Zanussi cooperated with Edward Żebrowski, Wosiewicz worked together with Jarosław Sander using memoirs by Kazimierz Tymiński titled *Uspokoić sen*, while Falk wrote dialogues [to *Top Dog*] in collaboration with Jerzy Stuhr (Fig. 36).



**Fig. 36:** Thirtieth-fourth edition of Polish Feature Films, a poster by Mariusz Filipowicz, kino.wasowska.net, 18 January 2010

The next decades brought new, interesting proposals that cannot even be presented briefly. Let me just mention the great change caused by the breakthrough events of 1989. As a result of the transformation, the dream of generations of filmmakers came true: the state censorship was lifted, opening new prospects for cooperation and exchange of experience with foreign countries. At the same time, however, [after 1989] Polish cinematography became a subject of profound organizational destabilization which brought new limitations, this time related to market laws: calculation of losses and profits, the expectations of the liberated audience, and new cultural offers provided by development of civilization. The spirit of auteur cinema was still present in works of Agnieszka Holland (in Poland and abroad); Jan Jakub Kolski; Marek Koterski; Krzysztof Krauze; Dorota Kędzierzawska; in the works of Lech Majewski (*Wojaczek*, 1999); Robert Gliński (*Cześć Tereska [Hi Tereska]*, 2000); Piotr Trzaskalski (*Edi*, 2002); Andrzej Barański (*Parę osób, mały czas [A Few People, Little Time]*, 2005); Michał Kwieciński (*Statyści [Extras]*, 2006); and Andrzej Jakimowski (*Tricks*, 2007).

### **Honorary doctorate for the film auteur**

I would like to add one more footnote to the statement about the cultural and artistic advancement of cinema. In 2005, Andrzej Wajda received an honorary doctorate conferred by the Senate of the University of Warsaw; the text quoted *in extenso* is the justification of this decision written by me.

“The outstanding artist who contributed significantly to cultural and artistic advancement of cinema in the twentieth century becomes a holder of an honorary doctorate of the University of Warsaw – we, the enthusiasts of the cinema, feel great joy and satisfaction. Andrzej Wajda and his art for half of a century played an extraordinary role in culture of Poland, Europe and the world – his films are artistically engaging witnesses of their times. His visions of Polish affairs and the fate of Poles have activated universal problems and values; they had – as still have – the enormous power to shake up the audience. In Poland they have been stirring hot disputes and discussions, triggering great emotions, admiration and thrill, as well as discord and opposition; abroad they have inspired interest in little-known matters and their masterful style of expression has been an object of admiration. The artist owes his high position in post-war culture to, among other things, a deepened relationship with the tradition of Polish romantic art, engaged in the affairs of the nation, exposing our weaknesses and flaws, approving rebellion, creating heroic figures. His works has become close

to imagination and emotions of his countrymen, as well as understandable and fascinating for foreigners. They have been shaping social awareness.

Since *A Generation*, his feature debut made in 1954, Wajda has created nearly forty films, and even more theatrical performances, especially at the Helena Modjeska National Sary Theatre in Krakow and ten TV plays; between 1972 and 1983 he was managing the film production studio Zespół Filmowy "X", between 1978 and 1983 he was the president of the Polish Filmmakers Association; he taught at the Lodz Film School, and for several years he was managing a master film school in Warsaw; in 1997 he was elected to the French Academy of Fine Arts and to the European Film Academy. Since the breakthrough events of 1989, he was involved in civic activities: he was a member of the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, the chairman of the [Senate] Commission of Culture, a senator in the first parliament of the Third Polish Republic. Art was mixing with life, as it usually happens.

He was always taking the opportunity to make contact with the audience, he wanted to understand it, to make films that care about it, about its worries, what hurts it, to reveal what it misses, what it only vaguely senses. And, thanks to the power of his talent and his character, for several decades he has been able to create [new works] and talk with his viewers in changing but usually difficult conditions. From today's perspective, it seems fortunate that despite all the difficulties, he actively participated in such a spectacular public field of culture as cinema. He paid a high price for this participation in post-war culture – he had to struggle with censors demanding changes in his completed works, to face rejections of his projects, to abandon plans of making films, to continue games with censorship, and to master ability of dialoguing with audience in spite of censors' interference. The artist's efficiency consisted in preventing censorship impact by the way of implementation of the message; after all, the only thing can be censored that is within the horizon of a censor. And although, since June 1989, the institution of censorship has been abolished, the following years proved to be difficult for artists.

Telling stories by means of a camera became Andrzej Wajda's passion and great love. *Kanal* (1957), *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), *Lotna* (1959), *The Ashes* (1965), *Everything for Sale* (1968), *The Birch Wood* (1970), *The Wedding* (1972), *The Promised Land* (1974), *Man of Marble* (1976), *The Maids of Wilko* (1979), *Man of Iron* (1981), *Korczak* (1990), *Pan Tadeusz* (1999), *The Revenge* (2002) – to name only a dozen of the most acclaimed and most outstanding titles. His films discuss basic issues and relations between a human being, society and history.

Harsh conflicts, social tensions – and great spiritual power of protagonists. Human dramas take place between contemporary dilemmas and the pressure of history. Protagonists are confronted with reality. Heroic tone. Victories and defeats. Struggles in the name of professed values. It is always about loyalty towards oneself, memory of the past, defence of the truth, independence of humans and their responsibilities. Present perspective coincides with experiences of the past.

It is difficult to find a common formula for those numerous artworks. Some of Wajda's films, such as *The Birch Wood* or *The Maids of Wilko*, are devoted primarily to existential problems, intricacies of an individual psyche. In other works those issues are obscured and dominated by encounters – or even clashes – with history. Wajda, keenly aware of entanglement in the history, presents successive stages of those encounters, since the World War II to the times of regained independence in 1989.

In September 1939, Wajda was thirteen years old, he belonged to the generation that was maturing in the shadow of war. After the dark 1950's, the Polish October 1956 was conducive to artists. The first encounter: The image of participants of the war in films of the young director was tragic, but full of sympathy and admiration for them. *Kanal*: a dramatic wandering of the insurgent unit through underground passages towards the defeat of the uprising, towards extermination. *Lotna*: a painful tale of the defeat of 1939. *Ashes and Diamonds*: war and peace, night and dawn, the image of Poland of that period and the figure of the protagonist seeking answers, how to live on, how to dump heavy burden of the past, the conflict of motives and characters. The second encounter: For a long time, a mature artist was looking for the possibility of making a film about the recent past. *Man of Marble*: a film within a film with self-reflexive motif, [the Stalinist era, euphemistically called] the period of "errors and deviations" seen from the perspective of the 1970's; a champion bricklayer, "udarnik" [a model worker] – and a newbie female filmmaker trying to make a film about him. In different realities, he does not change, and – as protagonists of early Wajda's films – remains a steadfast hero, confronting hostile reality and faithful to his rules, honest and authentic, while the female film director matures to make conscious choices and take responsibility. The third encounter: Great social dissatisfaction grows. 1981. Rebellion of the shipyard workers, Wajda goes to Gdańsk. *Man of Iron*: a film "commissioned" by a social demand – a demand of history happening before our eyes. Lech Wałęsa and solidarity of Poles. «Solidarity» and great hopes. The fourth encounter: Poland is a sovereign country, and the Polish society

is freed from patriotic commitments; it is time of pluralism of opinions and attitudes. *Pan Tadeusz*: a nostalgic picture of a safe past, concealing the eternal drama of Polish anarchy; Sarmatian character favours lawlessness, «the last foray» is a triumph of the law of the strongest. 1812. Neither the beauty of the landscape, nor vividness of customs, nor rich language will stop the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In works of Andrzej Wajda, the opposite situations, attitudes and intentions are intertwined: a heroic man in a dead end situation and opportunities lost in result of destructive features of national character, self-sacrifice and self-interest, heroism and depravity, criticism and praise, fear and hope, faith and doubt, selfless vision and tormenting caution. The artist was sharing the viewers' convictions, questioning the official interpretation of events and undermining the well-being of his countrymen, showing the lack of common sense, the lack of execution of law, the lack of responsibility; he was resonating with moods of the audience and making warning diagnoses. He was previously speaking from the screen on behalf of his audience, now he speaks to the audience on his own behalf.

Today, he seeks<sup>287</sup> a hero entangled not in experiences of the past, but a hero of our time, being a part of civilizational and systemic changes; he wonders how to talk, by means of a camera about issues considered most important by contemporary Polish audience.

The power of Wajda's works was a result of awe-inspiring artistic visions, of suggestive story-telling with a movie camera. It involves unparalleled ability to express ideas through human dramas, through specific dramatic events. Mental leaps, sharp vision, suggestive shots, combining rapid and static clips, dynamic visualizations, musical commentary – all those elements are strengthening the author's message. Finally, an exceptionally adequate cast and great acting, creation of characters in front of us, tension between action and spoken words, between dialogue and silent reactions to words, the behaviours of protagonists, the main carriers of Wajda's meanings, especially the character of Maciek Chełmicki, whose features, style, look was given by Zbyszek Cybulski. No one was able to censor his acting in 1958. The protagonist created by him had to die to be a moral winner, to establish a legend, to turn Maciek into a symbol of a hero in the Polish cinema. The scene of igniting glasses of alcohol as "death lanterns" for fallen comrades; the scene in which Maciek fires a mortal shot to Szczuka, and then hugs the falling victim; the scene of Maciek's death in the

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287 Ed. note: Andrzej Wajda passed away in 2016.

dumpsite – became a part of memory of the world cinema. And the national symbols: a sabre, a white horse, red poppies. A charge of cavalry against tanks, stinking sewers, a charming polonaise in *Pan Tadeusz*, a symbol of past illusions, replaced by a trance-like dance in *The Wedding* and hypnotized dancers in the final scene of *Ashes and Diamonds*.

The craft of Andrzej Wajda gave the highest rank to the profession of film-making and justified validity of the term «the Tenth Muse» given to cinema by Irzykowski. The vast majority of his films were based on literary material. He was inspired by classic authors (Adam Mickiewicz, Stanisław Wyspiański, Aleksander Fredro, Władysław Reymont, Stefan Żeromski) and by works of contemporary writers (including Jerzy Andrzejewski, Władysław Iwaskiewicz, Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski, and Wojciech Żukrowski). However, those film adaptations of literary works lived their own lives on screen, subjected to the director's interpretation and audiovisual realizations. Andrzej Wajda built a bridge between the already recognized art and cinema; he not only transferred to his films ideas and content present in literary works and paintings<sup>288</sup>, but also took from those works and implemented in his films social functions previously played in culture by painting and (especially) literature. At the same time, literature has been necessary for him to work on films, for he has been extremely attached to impulses of literary visions. Every time Wajda comes up with an idea of film, his constant concern is: «who will write it?». Often, when he does not find an author, he gives up the idea. However when he has a perfect literary material he is easily able to depart from it.

In Wajda's cinematic oeuvre, his native language – its sound, melody, rhythm, poetic beauty – plays a great role; the language of characters – be it a common language full of colloquialisms or poetry spoken in the so-called Polish alexandrine (thirteen-syllable metrical line) – integrated into film frames co-creates audiovisual entity (Fig. 37).

Wajda<sup>289</sup> is considered one of the greatest masters of the world cinema; he has been awarded in Poland and abroad. In 1990 he received the European Felix

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288 Ed. note: Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, *Polska klasyka według Andrzeja Wajdy* [*Polish Classic Literature According to Andrzej Wajda*], Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2010.

289 Ed. note: Last feature films by Andrzej Wajda (1926–2016) were: *Katyń* (2007); *Tatarak* [*Sweet Rush*, 2009]; *Wałęsa. Człowiek z nadziei* [*Wałęsa. Man of Hope*, 2013]; and *Powidowki* [*Afterimage*, 2016]. See also: Tadeusz Lubelski, *Wajda*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie: Wrocław 2006.





**Fig. 37:** The Academy Award for Wajda, wajda.pl, 20 January 2010

Award for life achievement and an outstanding achievement and artistic conduct at the Cannes International Film Festival; in 1998 – the Golden Lion Honorary Award, in 1999 – the Crystal Iris for life achievement at the National Film Festival in Brussels, and in 2000 an honorary Oscar from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He is Doctor Honoris Causa of the American University in Washington DC, the University of Bologna, the Jagiellonian University and the University of Lodz<sup>290</sup>.

## The future of auteur cinema

The situation of cinema, including auteur cinema, has been changing gradually but fundamentally by new technologies. First, thanks to television, films moved out of the dark cinema halls. They lost their charm and mystery from the time of *laterna magica*<sup>291</sup>. However, they became present in many homes of TV-watchers,

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290 M. Hopfinger, *Andrzej Wajda. Pasja opowiadania kamerą*, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2005, nr 51.

291 M. Hopfinger, *Doświadczenia audiowizualne: między latarnią czarnoksiężką a obrazem wydarzeń 11 września 2001*, in: *Nowoczesność i doświadczenie*, pt. 2, eds. Ryszard Nycz, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Krakow: Universitas 2008.

and gained an unprecedented, much broader audience. This applies also to auteur cinema. Then, VCR made it possible to record films broadcasted on television and watch films recorded on video cassettes, expanding the circles of viewers even more. Video rental stores were established, and next to home bookshelves people placed stands with recordings of their selected, valued, and favourite film works. VCRs made it possible to stop fleeting audiovisual images, let them be read at any pace, freezing frames, repeating them, and multiple watching. It was another, very fundamental breakthrough, which changed the way of receiving audiovisual communicates. Finally, digitization – especially thanks to the invention of DVDs – resulted in growth of repertoire of available film works, their huge variety, their quality, as well as audiovisual materials complementing knowledge about circumstances of making films, about deleted scenes not included in their final versions, and about co-creators and characters. The experience of cinema people and their work will become a reference system for increasingly common, not only professional, audiovisual activities. Will optical film become a thing of the past? How is cinema changing in the era of the new media? And what will happen to auteur cinema?<sup>292</sup>

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292 See: “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2001, nr 35–36, issue titled *Kino i nowe media* [Cinema and the new media], especially: Anne Friedberg, *Koniec kina — multimedia i zmiana technologiczna*, transl. Dorota Plat [original version: Anne Fiedberg, “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change”, in: *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, London: Arnold 2000, pp. 438–452]; Thomas Elsaesser, *Kino cyfrowe: nośnik, wydarzenie, czas*, transl. Agnieszka Wilczyńska, Ewa Majewska [original version: Thomas Elsaesser, “Digital Cinema: Delivery, Event, Time”, in *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable? The Screen Arts in the Digital Age*, eds. Thomas Elsaesser and Kay Hoffmann, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 1998]; cf. also: *Wiek ekranów. Przestrzenie kultury widzenia*, eds. A. Gwóźdź, Piotr Zawojski, Krakow: Rabid 2002; Sylwia Galanciak, *Realność vs komputer. Efekty cyfrowe a filmowa ontologia*, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2006, nr 54–55; Michał Pyka, *Film na kasecie, płycie, w telewizji i Internecie*, “Kultura Popularna” 2003, nr 1(3); Anna Notaro, *Technologia w poszukiwaniu artysty. Kwestie autoryzmu/autorstwa a współczesne doświadczenie filmowe*, tłum. Karolina Kosińska, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2007, nr 60 [original version: Anna Notaro, “Technology in Search of an Artist: Questions of Auteurism/Autorship and the Contemporary Cinematic Experience”, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 57, Spring 2006, pp. 86–97]. Perhaps there is also a great potential to be discovered in cameras of mobile phones (cf. Dorota Relidzyńska, *Kino z kieszeni*, “W podróży”, 2008 nr 11).

I am convinced of the vitality of auteur cinema (as I understand the term), about its further presence and participation in the changing culture. I believe that it will remain important in future and that, in many respects, it will be treated like literature<sup>293</sup>.

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293 Ed. note: See also: *Autorzy kina polskiego* [*The Authors of Polish Cinema*], eds. Grażyna Stachówna, Joanna Wojnicka, Kraków: Rabid 2004; *Autorzy kina polskiego*, volume 2, eds. Grażyna Stachówna, Bogusław Zmudziński, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2007; *Autorzy kina polskiego*, volume 3, eds. Grażyna Stachówna, Bogusław Zmudziński, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2007; *Kino polskie jako kino narodowe* [*Polish Cinema as National Cinema*], eds. Tadeusz Lubelski and Maciej Stroński, Kraków: Korporacja ha!art 2009; Tadeusz Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty* [*The History of Polish Cinema. Authors, Films, Context*], Katowice: Videograf II 2009; *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego* [*The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski*], ed. Tadeusz Lubelski, Kraków: Universitas 1997; Paul Coates, *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England: Flicks Books: 1999; Annette Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, New York: Hyperion 1999; Joseph G. Kickasola, *The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski. The Liminal Image*, New York–London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc 2004; Marek Haltof, *The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski. Variations on Destiny and Chance*, London: Wallflower Press 2004.



## 8 TV series

Television, which was the next stage in the development of audiovisual media, changed a lot on the platform of communication. Unlike cinema, TV was audiovisual from the very beginning, and its communication moved from public sphere to private space. The popularity of television among broad audience was enormous. People were extraordinarily curious about it; they were ready to invest a lot in order to experience it. In return, they participated in current events, and watched cinema films and various TV programs on small screens. Television has gradually expanded its presence and offer, and made audiovisual communication widely and constantly available. As a result, circulation of information has incredibly accelerated. The audiovisual communication – both documentaries and feature films – were created and they operated in new conditions, on new principles, and they were unprecedentedly diversified.

During the fifty years of existence of television in Poland, between the mid-1950s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the TV broadcaster has changed its strategies because the basic circumstances – political and systemic, civilizational and cultural, social and educational – have changed. As for viewers, it is true that even though the cinema had broad and diverse audience, it was television, gradually gaining popularity, that has won mass audiences<sup>294</sup>. Also TV has changed over the past half century. It has remained popular in the entire society. And permanently criticized – for various reasons.

From the very beginning, television distanced itself from artistic traditions, did not repeat aspirations of cinema, which wanted to be the Tenth Muse and consistently headed for the Parnassos. TV was primarily a medium of communication, and at the same time it freely benefited from the achievements and models developed by culture, including artistic culture. However, its element and matter is social communication, and its “essence” is commonness, an experience of everyday life.

Television, present in domestic space, every day shows the events from Poland and abroad, journalism, entertainment, and sport programs. TV screen eliminates distance, creates impression of closeness, and participation

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294 Rafał Marszałek wrote about it quite aptly in 1978 (cf. *Krytyka i mass-media*, in: *Szkice o krytyce filmowej i telewizyjnej*, ed. Aleksander Kumor, Wrocław: Ossolineum).

of viewers<sup>295</sup>. Its repertoire is dominated by various audiovisual stories based on fiction. They are accepted by the audience and enjoy great popularity and unflinching interest. They perfectly correspond with a schedule of each TV station based on periodicity.

Since the beginning of the existence of television, its offer – being a part of the order determined by times of a day and night and subsequent days of a week – interfered with schedule of its recipients in real time. Among other things, there were morning and evening news for adults, educational programs for school children and youth, and regular entertainment and sports programs; there were Mondays with teleplays, the Wednesday broadcasts of sports events, Thursdays with the [Theatre of Sensation] “Kobra” [presenting teleplays with detective/crime plot], weekly cultural magazine *Pegaz*, or Polish film days. The periodicity of broadcasts gave the TV programs transparency and predictability, allowing their viewers to plan their time in front of TV sets and stabilizing the audience of particular offers, accustoming people to specific titles at specific times.

Periodicity was not a new phenomenon anyway. For a long time, magazines were offering regular columns, and many novels were published in episodes in the press. Yet the closest model for television in this respect was daily, lasting many hours of radio schedule. Radio, just like television, was offering its listeners spending time throughout a day and in subsequent days. This basic similarity between radio and television distinguishes them from other forms and ways of social communication, including film watched in a cinema or a literary work – being separate, single messages limited by duration of a screening or acceptable volume of a book, and possibly only loosely connected in a series of publications or films. It distinguishes them also, though in a different way, from daily press.

Polish television made its first steps in the 1950s, and accelerated after 1956, yet in 1960 there were less than 43,000 TV sets in the country. However, the dynamics of development of audiovisual infrastructure was high, and the number of TV sets was growing rapidly – in 1965 there were already over 2 million of them, in 1970 over 4 million, and in 1980 – nearly 8 million. From 1970, a second television channel was launched. The new medium expanded and diversified its

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295 Cf.: Andrzej Bątkiewicz, *Semiotyczne uwarunkowania transmisji telewizyjnej*, in: *Z zagadnień semiotyki sztuk masowych*, eds. Alicja Helman, Maryla Hopfinger, Hanna Książek-Konicka, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1977, p. 211; Mateusz Halawa, *Życie codzienne z telewizorem. Z badań terenowych*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2006; Sylwia Galanciak, “Świat ołtarzyków. Telewizja wkracza w przestrzeń domu”, in: eadem, “Widz zaangażowany. Telewizyjne strategie budowania

program offer, and began to play an increasingly prominent culture-making role. It also paid political and propaganda services to the state monopoly<sup>296</sup>.

## The first episodes of TV series

Periodicity and repeatability of particular TV programs almost automatically formed them into series, not only on the basis of certain common features of the communicates, but also because they were broadcasted at fixed times. They were arranged into a television “hourly schedule”, or TV “framework”.

The category of repeating episodes began to function when television had reached a certain critical mass as a cultural and communication institution. That was why it was only since the 1960s that larger productions were created for television with intention to be serialized<sup>297</sup>. For example, the series about contemporary issues – *Barbara i Jan* [*Barbara and Jan*], seven episodes made in 1964 (screenplay by Jerzy Ziarnik, Janusz Jaxa, Stanisław Bareja, Hieronim Przybył, directed by Jerzy Ziarnik, Hieronim Przybył); *Wojna domowa* [*Civil War*], fifteen episodes made between 1965 and 1966 (screenplay by Maria Zientarowa, directed by Jerzy Gruza); *Doktor Ewa* [*Doctor Ewa*], nine episodes made in 1970 (screenplay by Wilhelmina Skulska and Janusz Laskowski, directed by Henryk Kluba). In that time, two well-made war-themed TV series were also created, which enjoyed great popularity: *Four Tank-Men and a Dog*, twenty-one episodes in three series, made between 1966 and 1969 (screenplay by Janusz Przymanowski, directed by Konrad Nałęcki)<sup>298</sup> and *Stawka większa niż życie* [*More Than Life at Stake*], first as a theatre production in the TV Theatre of Sensation, then the TV

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relacji medium–odbiorca w stacjach ogólnopolskich po 1989 roku”, doctoral dissertation under the supervision of M. Hopfinger, monograph.

296 Ed. note: Katarzyna Pokorna-Ignatowicz, *Telewizja w systemie politycznym i medialnym PRL. Między polityką i widzem* [*Television in the Political and Media System of Polish Peoples Republic. Between Politics and the Audience*] Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2003.

297 See: Maciej Łukomski, *Film seryjny w programie polskiej telewizji (lata 1959–1970)*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Radia i Telewizji 1980.

298 TV broadcasts of this series were probably accompanied for the first time by numerous promotional activities, dictated, as one can suppose, by propaganda reasons: Janusz Przymanowski’s books were reissued, “Telewizyjne Kluby Pancernych” [TV Tank Men Clubs] were initiated, mass events with the actors, the tank and the dog were organized, the press published articles about the series, the serial-related gadgets were on purchase; see: Grażyna Stachówna, *Film telewizyjny*, in: *Film. Kinematografia*, ed. Edward Zajiček, Warsaw: Instytut Kultury – Komitet Kinematografii 1994 (Encyklopedia Kultury Polskiej XX Wieku).

series in three parts, each consisting of six episodes, made between 1967 and 1968 (screenplay by Andrzej Zych, or Zbigniew Safjan, and Andrzej Szypulski, directed by Andrzej Konic and Janusz Morgenstern); the character of captain Kloss, the protagonist of the series, was a Polish secret agent acting as a double agent in the Abwehr during World War II in occupied Poland<sup>299</sup>. Popularity of both series survived the fundamental civilizational and political changes<sup>300</sup>.

All those ventures were referring to literary patterns and were implemented mainly by cinema people in film production studios “Syrena”, “Rytm”, and “Tor”. The experience of cinema as a way of expression, preparation for audiovisual productions, staff capacity, and productive capabilities formed a direct base for activities of television. Television appeared in Poland about fifty years after the cinema and – unlike the latter – was not exposing its links with literature and literary culture. TV wanted to treat literature as one of many [resources], and to draw from all available traditions. However, first TV series made on the basis of screenplays written especially for television, were connected with Polish literary tradition – for example, *Stawka większa niż życie* was associated with works of Henryk Sienkiewicz<sup>301</sup> (Fig. 38).

Novel plots, extensive narratives, internally rich literary characters, and complex relationships between protagonists have become a source of television stories in episodes. Especially in the 1970s many respected novels have become sources of television adaptations. Polish television produced, among others, the series based on novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz: *Przygody Pana Michała* [*The Adventures of Sir Michał*] – based on *Fire in the Steppe* [original title *Pan Wołodyjowski*] – with Tadeusz Łomnicki in the main role (directed by Paweł Komorowski, thirteen episodes, 1969); *Rodzina Połanieckich* [*The Połaniecki Family*] (directed by Jan Rybkowski, seven episodes, 1978); Władysław Reymont – *The Peasants* (directed by Jan Rybkowski, thirteen episodes, 1973) and *The Promised Land* (directed by Andrzej Wajda, four episodes, 1974); Bolesław Prus: *The Doll* (directed by Ryszard Ber, nine episodes, 1977); and Maria Dąbrowska: *Nights and Days* (directed by Jerzy Antczak, twelve episodes, 1978). The TV series based on literary works

299 See, e.g.: Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, *Nasz człowiek w Abwerze*, in: idem, *Mieszkańcy masowej wyobraźni*, Warsaw: PIW 1970.

300 Ed. note: Piotr K. Piotrowski, *Kultowe seriale* [Cult TV Series], Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka 2011; Marek Łazarz, *Czterej pancerni i pies. Przewodnik po serialu i okolicach* [Four Tank-Men and a Dog. Film Guide About the TV Series], Wrocław: Torus Media 2006.

301 Cf. Danuta Palczewska, *Historyczna baśń w odcinkach (Uwagi o genezie «Stawki większej niż życie»)*, in: *Szkice o sztukach masowych w Polsce*, eds. A. Helman, M. Hopfinger, Maria Raczewa, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974.





**Fig. 38:** Advertisement of DVD edition of *Lalka*, a TV series directed by Ryszard Ber of 1978, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 April 2009

were made in next decades too – just to mention *Komediantka* [*Commedienne*] based on the novel by Władysław Reymont (directed by Jerzy Sztwiertnia, nine episodes, 1987) or *Nad Niemnem* [*On the Niemen River*] based on a novel by Eliza Orzeszkowa (directed by Zbigniew Kuźmiński, four episodes, 1987), and later *With Fire and Sword* based on the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz (directed by Jerzy Hoffman, four episodes, 1998), or *Early Spring* based on the novel by Stefan Żeromski (directed by Filip Bajon, six episodes, 2003)<sup>302</sup> (Fig. 39).

Those TV series, intended for broad audience, appealed to motifs and conventions well known from the obligatory school canon and books read at home, and proved to be a platform of understandable, community-related references. The titles mentioned above often had their cinematic versions, produced simultaneously by the same film teams, sometimes by the same directors. There, television was close to literary and cinematic tradition, and yet it could show more than cinema productions that had to fit into time limits of feature films (Fig. 40).

Among many other traditional and popular TV series, I would like to mention: *Czterdziestolatek* [*A Forty-Year-Old*], directed by Jerzy Gruza (twenty-one episodes, 1974–1976); *07 zgłoś się* [*07 Report!*], directed by Krzysztof Szmagier, Andrzej J. Piotrowski, and Kazimierz Tarnas (twenty-one episodes, 1976–1988)<sup>303</sup>; *Z biegiem lat, z biegiem dni* [*As Years Go By, As Days Go By*], directed by

302 Cf.: Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, *Wielka epika na ekranie. O kinowych i serialowych doświadczeniach Filipa Bajona*, in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją. Seryjność w kulturze*, ed. Alicja Kisielewska, Kraków: Rabid 2004.

303 Cf.: G. Stachówna, *Jednoznaczny świat porucznika Borewicza*, “Dialog” 1990, nr 3.



**Fig. 39:** Barbara and Bogumił Niechcic – *Noce i dnie*, Alicja Kisielevska, *Polskie tele-sagi*, Krakow: Rabid 2009, p. 136



**Fig. 40:** Magda and Stefan Karwowski with children – *Czterdziestolatek*, A. Kisielevska, *Polskie tele-sagi...*, p. 205

Andrzej Wajda and Edward Kłosiński (eight episodes, 1980); *Dom* [*The House*], directed by Jan Łomnicki, based on the screenplay by Jerzy Janicki and Andrzej Mularczyk (three series, 1980–1987), about life residents of the house on Złota Street in Warsaw from the end of World War II to the 1960s; and a biopic series *Modrzejewska* [*Modjeska*] with Krystyna Janda in the main role (directed by Jan Łomnicki, seven episodes, 1989). A separate place was taken by *The Decalogue* – the famous series directed by Krzysztof Kieślowski, based on the screenplay co-written by Kieślowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz (ten episodes, 1989), composed of separate, autonomous narratives illustrating and interpreting the Ten Commandments<sup>304</sup>.

However, the most popular TV series presented by the Polish television became *Escrava Isaura* (40 episodes, directed by Milton Gonçalves and Herval Rossano, 1976), a Latin American soap opera broadcasted in the mid-1980s<sup>305</sup>. It heralded the change in TV series style.

The above-mentioned examples of TV series were selected to emphasize that television without hesitation made use of both literary tradition and achievements of cinema.

The structure of those series was similar to a long film story consisting of smaller, dramatically closed forms with a limited number of the so-called episodes. Those TV series were called “traditional”, and the way of their implementation was given a name of “manufactory system”, for a significant part of them resembled stories from literary and film works (and their properties, such as intention of presenting a special, unusual story about extraordinary characters, which is interestingly composed and contains some kind of timeless message) transferred into television framework<sup>306</sup>. Those examples emphasize continuity of cultural experiences.

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304 Ed. note: Christopher Garbowski, *Krzysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue Series. The Problem of the Protagonists and Their Self-Transcendence*, Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press 1997; Marek Lis, *Figury Chrystusa w Dekalogu Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego* [Christ Figures in Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Decalogue*], Opole: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2013; *Kieślowski czyta Dekalog* [Kieślowski Reads Decalogue], eds. Marek Lis and Michał Legan, Opole: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2014; *Of Elephants and Toothaches. Ethics, Politics and Religion in Krzysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue*, eds. Eva Badowska and Francesca Parmeggiani, New York: Fordham University Press 2016.

305 Cf.: Mieczysław Gałuszka, *Ideologia i wartości serialu w odbiorze potocznym (przykład serialu «Niewolnica Isaura»)*, “Przekazy i Opinie” 1991, nr 2.

306 Cf.: Jerzy Uszyński, *Serial epoki przemysłowej*, in: *Polskie seriale telewizyjne 2005*, ed. idem, Warsaw: Telewizja Polska S.A. 2005.

TV series, which had a large and stable audience, were only one of many fiction-based positions in the repertoire of Polish television, limited to only two channels. The access to satellite television implicated additional costs and was limited by a system of necessary permits issued only to few. The change came with the breakthrough events of 1989.

Until then, for more than three decades, participants of culture were being accustomed to the presence of television; they were becoming used to its specific features, to its difference from copy of a book, from a visit to the cinema, or even from the daily reading of a newspaper. People adjusted to the fact that TV could be always available: every day, at any time. Television began looking for its own formula.

Until the end of the 1980s, television operated in the conditions of the state's monopoly, sharing its properties and changing with its changes. And when the system collapsed, the state television tried (and is still trying) to keep the privileged position of the former monopolist.

### The decade of TV series

The breakthrough of 1989 meant major changes: building democracy, freedom, abolition of censorship, opening to the world. Fundamental re-construction of the economy, decentralization of institutions of social life cancelled most severe bans and orders. Independent press, private publishing houses, and local and regional radio stations were established. At the same time, the transformation meant [imperative of] economic calculation, limitation of state patronage, as well as commercialization of culture: market-oriented thinking, competition, new standards, advertising and marketing, and a struggle to win the recipient. It was a shock that caused a great change, also in the domain of television<sup>307</sup>.

Although state television still enjoyed a privileged position, its competitors were growing with time. It began with satellite programs of foreign stations, later also broadcasted in Polish language version, received by almost 2.5 million satellite dishes in 2000 and in approximately 4 million households connected to cable networks. They were followed by ground-based private stations, especially Polsat, which in 1994 obtained a legal license to operate terrestrially in Poland, and TVN, broadcasting since 1997<sup>308</sup>.

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307 Cf.: Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie masowe a demokratyzacja systemu politycznego*, in: *Współczesne systemy komunikowania*, ed. eadem, Wrocław: Wydawnictwa UWr 1997; eadem, *Przemiana systemu medialnego w Polsce po 1989 roku*, in: *Współczesne systemy komunikowania...*

308 Cf.: Tomasz Mielczarek, *Telewizja w Polsce. Bilans lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, "Studia Medioznawcze" 2002, nr 1(6).

The needs, expectations, and choices of the audience began to play a decisive role in shaping TV program offers. Winning the audience meant winning advertisers. The public television – despite all the negative features and experiences of the past decades – was still in much better situation: besides the income from advertising, it was financed by licence fees, and possessed the huge audiovisual archive, qualified staff, and faithful audience. Regardless of the problems caused by the new situation – it worked and did not have to start from the beginning. In the first half of the 1990s, feature films and TV series became the dominant of both channels of the Polish Television. In an average week of 1994, around 70 episodes, including replays, were broadcasted. The prevalent part of the offer consisted of most popular American productions (e.g. *The Bold and the Beautiful* – in production since 1987). Polish production was modest yet – for example: *W labiryncie* [*In the Labyrinth*] (directed by Paweł Karpiński, 120 episodes, 1988–1990); *Matki, żony i kochanki* [*Mothers, Wives, Lovers*] (directed by Julisz Machulski, 22 episodes, 1995–1998); *Alternatywy 4* [*Alternative Street, No. 4*] (directed by Stanisław Bareja, 9 episodes, 1983, premiere in 1986/1987); and *Ekstradycja* [*The Extradition*] (directed by Wojciech Wójcik, 6 episodes in 1995; 9 episodes in 1996, 10 episodes in 1998) – enjoyed the greatest success, because local realities attracted the largest audience. The decade of TV series was about to begin.

In the 1990s, the number of TV sets was approaching 10 million, so television was available in almost all Polish households. Polls confirmed that TV became an ever-present element of Poles' everyday life. At the same time, according to critics, the quality of TV offer – being always negatively assessed – has decreased even more. The reports on television published in [an influential daily newspaper] *Rzeczpospolita* in 1999 and 2000 informed that the fight for high viewing rankings has led to banalization and trivialization of program content and to coquetting the audience of unrefined tastes<sup>309</sup> (Fig. 41).

The decade of TV series, which continues to this day (2009), opened in 1997 with the production of *Klan* [*Clan*] and *Złotopolscy* [*The Family Złotopolski*], the outcome of a contest for soap opera made by the Polish Television. *Klan*, directed by Paweł Karpiński based on the idea of Wojciech Niżyński, has been broadcasted by the Channel 1 of the Polish TV from 1997; *Złotopolscy*, based on the screenplay of Jerzy Purzycki and collaborators, and directed by Radosław Piwowarski and others, has been broadcasted by the Channel 2 of the Polish TV. Since then, TV series has become a large part of the program of all television stations. The list of the most popular series to date include, among others: *Klan*, that opened the

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309 Cf.: *ibidem*, p. 74.



**Fig. 41:** Krystyna and Paweł Lubicz – *Klan*, tvp.pl, 20 January 2010

decade of TV series; two series broadcasted by the TVP 2: *M jak miłość* [*L Is For Love*] (since 2000<sup>310</sup> and *Na dobre i na złe* [*For Better or Worse*] (since 1999) (the main screenwriter for both was Ilona Łepkowska); as well as two series broadcasted by TVP 1 since 2000: *Lokatorzy* [*Tenants*] (the screenplay by Zbigniew Kamiński on the basis of an American license); and *Plebania* [*Presbytery*], based on a Polishscreenplay and directed by, among others, Wojciech Solarz.

At the end of 1997, Polsat also launched the sitcom *13 posterunek* [*Precinct No. 13*], directed by Maciej Ślesicki, in 1998 the broadcasting of *Miodowe lata* [literally: *Honey Years*], the Polish version of the American sitcom [*The Honeymooners*], has begun, and 1999 marks the start of other sitcoms: *Graczykowie* [*The Graczyk Family*], *Rodzina zastępcza* [*Foster Family*], and *Świat według Kiepskich* [*The World According to Kiepscy*]. In 2002, TVN launched the series *Kasia i Tomek* [*Kasia and Tomek*], an adaptation of a Canadian series [*Un gars, une fille*], and in 2003 – the soap opera *Na Wspólnej* [*On Wspólna Street*]<sup>311</sup>.

310 Cf.: Katarzyna Citko, «*M jak miłość*», czyli o negocjacjach związanych z procesami produkcji i odbioru serialu, w: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją...*

311 Cf.: J. Uszyński, *Serial epoki przemysłowej...*





**Fig. 42:** Barbara and Lucjan Mostowiak – *M jak miłość*, directed by Ryszard Zatorski et al., filmpolski.pl, 20 January 2010

The huge serial production lasted for the entire decade. It gained “industrial momentum” and abandoned “homemade system” of production. New production companies, preferring teamwork, were created. They included both authors-oriented and directors-oriented teams, numerous collaborators, and consultants. Very often dozens or more screenwriters worked on one series, with a long number of directors involved. During the work on multi-episode productions, their conceivers and authors often changed. Some filmmakers, for example Kazimierz Kutz, expressed opinions that TV series suppressed classic cinematography. According to others, multi-episode series became a salvation for the film industry, especially in the years of organizational chaos and financial collapse after 1989. Although many famous cinema directors have been employed by television (for example, Maciej Dejczer, Maciej Wojtyszko, Radosław Piwowarski, Ryszard Bugajski, Leszek Wosiewicz, Jan Kidawa-Błóński, Janusz Zaorski), the rules are different there. This is especially visible in the case of actors whose situation has radically changed by TV series. As it was rightly observed by Mirosław Bork, a director and a producer, the situation in television is different than in cinematography: the stars are not guarantors of success, it is the success

that creates stars<sup>312</sup>. TV series in a short time has created popularity of many actors who were little-known before. The concepts of talented screenwriters – Ilona Łepkowska, Wojciech Niżyński, Jerzy Purzycki, and many others – were the foundation of success in this field.

Throughout the entire decade between 1997 and 2007, new TV series were based on original works of Polish screenwriters as well as on foreign “formats” (sets of themes plus narrative solutions) adapted to Polish conditions. TV stations were also broadcasting many repetitions and many series, especially those made by American producers, primarily feature series: dramas, comedies, thrillers, adventure movies, series for children and youth, animations. Monthly, almost a thousand of series’ episodes were shown.

Drama series: soap operas and sitcoms, settled best in the schedules of Polish TV stations, gaining loyal audiences familiar with their stories and critics who could not accept their formula. The reports were filled with negative evaluations, and similar opinions were formulated in articles and dissertations. Alicja Kisielewska wrote that *Klan* was following the model of melodrama taking advantage of embarrassing emotional engagements of spectators and suggesting an illusory, mythical image of reality, an object of dreams of average Poles<sup>313</sup>. In another article about the serial genre, published later, the same author stated that producers [of TV series] were referring to emotional community and transforming the image of reality burdened with distortions, into the media image, which was easily presenting easy matters, offering easy recipes and providing easy reception. That was possible due to TV technology and its manipulative nature. The author referred to the opinion expressed in the 1970s by Stuart Hall that in the genre of TV series “life” was given to the possession of a myth which was magically solving conflicts of reality<sup>314</sup>. Nota bene, in the 1980s Stuart Hall observed that every recipient was actively co-creating meanings of media texts<sup>315</sup>. Other authors expressed similar

312 Piotr Sarzyński, *Siła seriali. Raport, Polityka*, 28 August 2004.

313 See: A. Kisielewska, *Klan i «Klan» — czyli świat serialu telewizyjnego*, in: *Intermedialność w kulturze końca XX wieku*, eds. Andrzej Gwóźdź, Sław Krzemiń-Ojak, Białystok: Trans Humana 1998.

314 See: A. Kisielewska, *Serial telewizyjny jako forma mitologizacji kultury*, in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją...*; Stuart Hall, *Serial telewizyjny albo obłaskawienie świata (kilka wstępnych uwag krytycznych)*, transl. Anna Wyka, “Przekazy i Opinie” 1979, nr 2; cf. also: Teresa Bogucka, *Rodzina wszystkich Polaków, Wysokie Obcasy*, 27 August 2005.

315 See: S. Hall, *Encoding/decoding*, in: *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, eds. S. Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, Hutchinson, London 1980, pp. 128–138.



opinions: “Lack of formal complication in soap operas is compensated by strong emotionality”, specific “emotional engineering”, common emotions are immersed in seemingly everyday life, “hyperrealism without realism”, which is based on the unclear status of photography, facilitating the blurring of the border between image and reality as well as on passivity of the audience focused on entertainment<sup>316</sup>. The critics pointed out naive mythologizing, manipulating the image of reality and the viewers’ emotions. The genre was by far negatively diagnosed: it is neither art nor a reflection of reality; in fact it was easy entertainment for passive recipients. Anyway, the phenomenon of TV series is assessed on the basis of technology of television, and its first cause is the nature of photography, for it is photography was the first that owed its existence to machines and contributed to development of so-called mass art and its audience. Regrettably, *profanum* triumphs<sup>317</sup>.

The fact that TV series, despite their critics, not only do not lose the followers among the audience, but on the contrary, the interest in this genre grows – gives food for thought. The double attitude towards TV series, approval and disapproval, was described in the series of articles by Alicja Helman in *Kino* monthly magazine in 1991<sup>318</sup>. Other scholars express different opinions. Wiesław Godzic sees nothing wrong in providing pleasures – especially for women – by TV series. He objects the negative diagnosis of this genre. He draws attention to its pro-social character, addressing current issues of social life, and its participation in breaking taboos. He also defends the audience for its active and individual interpretation of the world presented in TV series<sup>319</sup>. According to Jerzy Uszyński, even though TV series suggest ready formula, their effectiveness in promoting certain patterns is greater than effectiveness of feature films or journalism – due to their longevity and regularity of impact<sup>320</sup>. Beata Łaciak in her article published in 2006 treats TV series as an element of discourse on social problems – poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, crime, homelessness, domestic violence. And although some of those problems are presented unsatisfactorily,

316 Cf.: Tomasz Ferenc, Bogusław Sułkowski, *Fotografia i telenowela — dwa przykłady konstruowania rzeczywistości*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2004, nr 4, pp. 91nn.

317 Cf.: T. Bogucka, *Triumfujące profanum. Telewizja po przełomie 1989*, Warsaw: Sic! 2002.

318 See: A. Helman, *Za co Kochamy i dlaczego nienawidzimy seriali*, “Kino” 1991, nr 5, 6, 8, 9, 11; cf. also: G. Stachowna, *Seriale — opowieści telewizyjne*, in: *Mitologie popularne. Szkice z antropologii współczesności*, ed. Dariusz Czaja, Krakow: Universitas 1994.

319 See: Wiesław Godzic, *Płeć, władza i kłopotliwe przyjemności: przypadek mydlanej opery*, in: idem, *Telewizja jako kultura*, Krakow: Rabid 1999.

320 See: J. Uszyński, *Repertuar serialowy*, in: *Problematyka kulturalna w polskiej telewizji publicznej. Studium antenowe*, Warsaw: Telewizja Polska S.A. 2000 (Biblioteka Akademii Telewizyjnej).

TV series can be a significant source of knowledge about social problems and the method of shaping the image of those problems. Various social organizations are aware of this and try to influence attitudes and behaviours of recipients by means of TV series<sup>321</sup>.

Television found its formula in TV series, also in Poland, soon after the breakthrough events of 1989. Of many varieties of this genre, which Jerzy Uszyński tried to systematize<sup>322</sup>, soap operas and sitcoms have gained the greatest popularity among viewers. Soap opera – an episodic story with an open dramatic structure, yet keeping continuity of the plot and produced in realistic convention with melodramatic turns – plays the role of a specific mirror of reality (for example, *M jak miłość*, *Klan*, *Na Wspólnej*). Sitcoms – comic series of episodes, composed of sections “closed” from dramatic point of view, without a continuous story, based on the conventionality of the play and witty, often exaggerated commentary on current events – play the role of a distorted mirror of reality (for example: *Świat według Kiepskich*, *13 posterunek*, *Kasia i Tomek*). These two types of TV series genre present narratives from different perspectives: on the one hand, there is “a friendly mirror”, gilding the reflected world, and on the other hand, a false mirror distorting reality. They complement each other in the ways of commenting on their stories.

They also have common features: high frequency of appearing on the air, fixed times of emissions, repetitive narrative schemes in different stories, numerous motifs and characters, suggestive protagonist, emotional character, contemporary action and strong rooting in local realities, and scenes based on dialogues and conversations (which was already considered to be the specifics of TV films). Their actions most often take place in closed spaces of a house or workplace, creating an illusion of direct observation of interpersonal relationships, primarily in the circle of family and friends<sup>323</sup>.

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321 See: Beata Łaciak, *Polskie seriale obyczajowe jako element dyskursu o problemach społecznych*, “Societas/Communitas” 2006, nr 2(2).

322 See: J. Uszyński, *Telewizyjny pejzaż genologiczny*, Warsaw: Telewizja Polska S.A. 2004; cf. also: Jane Feuer, “Genre Study and Television” in: *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. Robert C. Allen, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1992, pp. 138–160; Paweł Nowicki, *Co to jest telenowela*, Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR 2006; Dagmara Romanowska, *Telegatunki. Zarys teorii*, “Kultura Popularna” 2002, nr 1; W. Godzic, *Telewizja i jej gatunki. Po «Wielkim Bracie»*, Krakow: Universitas 2004.

323 Cf. especially: S. Galanciak, “Oczywista jednokierunkowość? — telenowela jako przykład serialowej formy fabularnej”, in: eadem, “Widz zaangażowany...”

Messages communicated by TV series also perform important functions for the community – cognitive (“small realism”); integrative (for various social strata, differences between milieus and generations, variety of experiences); and pattern-creating (the power of shaping patterns of social, ethical, and emotional behaviours and attitudes).

What is the phenomenon of popularity of those communicates everywhere, where TV stations take into account needs and expectations of their recipients – in England, the United States, or Denmark, and, as it turned out, also in Poland after the breakthrough events of 1989? What is so fascinating about them? After all, it is neither the uniqueness, nor unrepeatability, nor originality, nor artistic craftsmanship, nor aesthetic sophistication. The banality of those fictional stories seems to be their real strength, and not an “easy way out” attributed to them. Is there any deeper truth about life and our lives in them? After all, some of them are shallow, yet others are quite deep, multi-dimensional, and even really clever.

The literature and the cinema – especially great literature and cinematic masterpieces<sup>324</sup> – accustomed us to unique, individual statements of talented artists, to works full of complicated problems, extraordinary ideas, to protagonists with fascinating adventures, complex personalities, deep thoughts and experiences, thrown into situations without good solutions, torn apart by irreducible contradictions, etc. However, they also balance between innovation and repetition<sup>325</sup>. Even more the weaker, but much more numerous literary and film works present less-than-outstanding narratives, often referred to as “not original” or even “epigone”, but they make us clearly aware that we read or watch formatted stories, fit for a book of a particular size, measured with printing sheets, or on audiovisual medium of a particular duration adapted to [average] time of cinema screening. Here, we deal – once, actually – with particular, individual works; their construction is justified within a given message: it is finite and closed even when it is intentionally “open”. In literature – especially in great literature – though from centuries divided into types and genres, we hardly seek a schematic “repeatability”. We consider it to be art. Thus it is assumed to be insightful, original, and unique. Only in relation to the so-called realistic literature, we use the category of typicality referring to specific features of characters,

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324 Cf., for example: Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, London–New York: Routledge 2004; Andrzej Werner, *Dekada filmu*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN 1997.

325 Cf.: Umberto Eco, *Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics*, “Daedalus” Vol. 114, No. 4, The Moving Image (Fall, 1985), pp. 161–184.

events, and situations recognized as representatives for a given place and time<sup>326</sup>. On the other hand, in case of the cinema, which is present in culture for one hundred years, we think in terms of standardization, movie genres, “genre cinema”<sup>327</sup>, bestowing the name “auteur cinema” for works of distinguished form and content. The cinema audience is immensely larger than the literary audience.

Almost all inhabitants of Poland watch television, hence TV audience is highly diverse, and a significant part of this diverse audience watches TV series (in some cases up to 80% of the entire population). The TV series re-create banal and loft situations and events experienced by so-called ordinary, average people, who are somehow similar to the viewers, thus they quite easily trigger mechanisms of projection and identification. They are periodically re-told, concerned about synchronicity between characters and viewers, similarity of their experiences, possibility of comparing them, as well as plausibility of such identifications. Everyday life, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, makes people laugh and cry, always eliciting emotions; it is rather black and white, but a little embellished, better than reality. It secures a “partnership” participation in narratives, commenting, expressing opinions and emotions. “Life is a story that you never have enough” [as in a song opening each episode of one of the Polish soap operas]. There is no place here for an aura of a single, unique work of art, as it was understood by Walter Benjamin<sup>328</sup>. Polish productions are based on the recognition of the local market of needs; they compete for viewers’ attention, for their presence in front of TV sets. They respond to expectations of the audience. I guess I do not need to add: to *various* needs of *diverse* audience. Reconstruction of different “poetics” is not difficult; they are recognized. Taming the world by means of TV series takes place on different levels of sensitivity, in different ways – through observations and diagnoses, sometimes keen, sometimes rather trivial, between innovation and repetition. In the United States, the formula of TV series, especially in the first years of the twenty-first century, have gained not only popularity, but

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326 Cf.: Michał Głowiński, *Realizm*, in: *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. Janusz Sławiński, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1976.

327 Cf.: D. Palczewska, A. Kumor, *Kulturowe wyznaczniki dzieła filmowego. (Z zagadnień standaryzacji filmu)*, in: *Wstęp do badania dzieła filmowego*, ed. Aleksander Jackiewicz, Warsaw: WAiF 1966; *Kino gatunków*, ed. A. Helman, Krakow: Rabid 1991; *Kino gatunków. Wczoraj i dziś*, ed. Krzysztof Loska, Krakow: Rabid 1998; *Wokół kina gatunków*, ed. K. Loska, Krakow: Rabid 2001.

328 See: Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, transl. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin Books 2008 [German original *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, published in 1935].

also recognition. For example, the series produced on the hitherto remarkable scale: *Lost* by ABC, premiered in 2004, or *Rome* by BBC and HBO, premiered in 2005, or *Doctor House*, a series produced by FOX, which since the premiere in 2004 has been aired by TV stations in 66 countries<sup>329</sup>.

Despite that, TV series as a genre are still critically assessed. Glorification of everyday life, or departure from uniqueness to overt repetition and from complexity to trivial simplicity cause harsh criticism. Nevertheless, the same features that make TV series, mediocrity, ordinariness, and commonness, reach the area beneath the surface of phenomena that is assigned to them, to the “nature of everyday life”, and reveal the truth about our behaviours, feelings, experiences, about our live consisting of schemes and stereotypical situations: banal and lofty, sometimes dramatic, special and unique, and although repetitive, lived individually. Narratives continued for years give the world a common understanding. They can help viewers in understanding their own mistakes and disappointments, limitations and possibilities of their lives<sup>330</sup>. Literary and cinematic works of fiction call into existence extraordinary characters. By definition, they condense their biographies, make them unique, they pile up difficulties, obstacles to overcome, to trigger heroic fight of protagonists. In general, this is a false formula of life. This accumulation of events and problems, focusing on unusual and fascinating situations differs from most experiences, and it seems rather artificial. Stories presented in TV series develop in the opposite direction, and at the same time allow for intimate, long-term contact with protagonists, for their careful observation, for getting to know them closely. They provide a special basis for reflection, comparison, and evaluation.

It seems that television based on periodical repetitions has recognized its own specific abilities in TV series. And this form of audiovisual communication can include various narratives and may still surprise the critics<sup>331</sup>.

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329 Cf.: Bartosz Węglarczyk, *Nowe seriale Ameryki*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 October 2006; Karol Jałochowski, *Doktor filozofii*, *Polityka*, 18 October 2008.

330 Cf. e.g.: *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*, ed. Jerzy Trzebiński, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne 2002.

331 After writing this part, I received a book by A. Kisielewska, *Polskie tele-sagi — mitologie rodzinności* [*Polish TV Sagas: Family Mythologies*] (Krakow: Rabid 2009). This is a very thorough work on TV series. Based on her research, the author formulates her own assumptions and methodological proposals; she emphasizes the literary origins of Polish TV series, their transformation from a film in episodes to a family TV saga, and presents arguments for the thesis about the special genre of Polish “family TV series”.

## Besides the feature TV series

Television is a TV series, writes Andrzej Gwoźdź, and it is a significant statement, emphasizing the general principles of organizing broadcasted programs. These include, above all, repetitive and periodical nature of the entire broadcasted program, based on the promise of an infinite stream of specifically continued and interlinked audiovisual communicates. Particular points of a program implement this general principle by building an intra-television discourse and integrating television time with the non-TV-based schedule of its audience<sup>332</sup>. “Wiadomości” [News], “Fakty” [Facts], “Wydarzenia” [Events] – information services are transmitted at regular intervals. The information channel TVN 24 became a specific TV series about current events. Not only news programs, including reports on events taking place “just now” and discussions about current issues, are arranged in long chains of episodes that appear at regular times each day. Also, reports from certain special, unusual events take on features of TV series – for example, broadcasts from the meetings of the first investigative committee regarding the [corrupt] proposal of a transaction made by a well-known film producer to the editor-in-chief of the well-known newspaper. Also, the so-called great media events are repeated periodically and remain in collective memory: the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, the life of Princess Diana turned into a spectacle, the annual grand finales of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, the pilgrimages of John Paul II, especially to Poland, and the constant presence of his pontificate in social consciousness<sup>333</sup>.

The interest of participants of culture in documentary forms grew in the second half of the twentieth century. Non-fiction literature and testimonies of direct participants of events found many readers. Also press and radio reportage gained popularity. It evolved, among others, thanks to the use of light weight audio recording equipment and handy tape recorders. There were many ambitious and excellent authors of film documents in Poland; their works were interesting from cognitive and formal point of view, but they were also causing

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332 See: A. Gwoźdź, *Telewizja jako serial*, in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją...*

333 Cf.: Daniel Dayan, Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1992; Jacek Amsterdamski, *Na oczach świata. Analiza społecznych wymiarów wybranych wydarzeń medialnych*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2004, nr 4; idem, «Z takiej materii utkane są bajki». *Medialny spektakl o Dianie Spencer*, “Images” 2005, nr 5–6; S. Galanciak, „Najbliżej medialnej wspólnoty. Wydarzenie medialne jako źródło społecznej tożsamości”, in: “Widz zaangażowany...”

troubles – first due to the censorship restrictions, then due to their difficult distribution<sup>334</sup>.

Television seemed to be a convenient medium, a proper place to broadcast documentary films, yet they were constantly pushed into the distant plan on TV schedule, dominated by news, journalism, and feature films. However, the growing interest in non-fiction, events taken from life, vicissitudes and experiences of their real participants were also reflected in television, which began to not only broadcast documentary films but also to produce them on its own.

From today's perspective, a TV series titled *An American Family*, made between 1971 and 1972 by Craig Gilbert and American educational television, is considered a herald of contemporary forms of TV documentary<sup>335</sup>. For the first time, private issues – the daily life of an American family named Loud, a married couple and their several children – became the subject of a documentary series. The Louds, who may be considered a model family from the advertising, felt distinguished by the proposal to film their private life and they consented to the presence of cameras and television crew in their home for many months. For the first time a TV series was not a staging of a screenplay by professional actors, but a portrait of people in their "life roles" and in their natural surroundings. According to Mirosław Przyłipiak, this series combines a documentary photographic method with Gilbert's own point of view and "although there is no doubt that it is a milestone in the history of documentary television forms, yet it is so deeply rooted in the documentary art tradition that it remains a unique work to this day"<sup>336</sup>.

Development of social communication on an unprecedented scale, the mass range of television, non-stop broadcasting – all those elements were conducive to seeking new solutions that would meet the needs of participants of culture. Since the late 1980s, documentary and documentary-like forms – that until then had seemed to be pushed to the margins of TV schedules full of other offers – became

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334 Cf., among others: Marek Hendrykowski, *Sztuka krótkiego metrażu*, Poznań: Ars Nova 1998; Mirosław Przyłipiak, *Poetyka kina dokumentalnego*, Gdańsk–Słupsk: Wydawnictwo UG & Wydawnictwo Pomorskiej Akademii Pedagogicznej w Słupsku 2004; *Klucze do rzeczywistości. Szkice i rozmowy o polskim filmie dokumentalnym po roku 1989*, ed. Małgorzata Hendrykowska, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2005.

335 Cf.: M. Przyłipiak, «*An American Family*» jako zapowiedź współczesnych form serialowych dokumentalizmu telewizyjnego, in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją...*

336 Ibidem, p. 236.

very popular on television. Now, as it could have been expected, they are arousing great interest of the audience, also in Poland. Among new television proposals, there were so-called docusoaps, enjoying record-breaking number of viewers. They did not fit in the previously common distinctions between fiction and documentary.

The beginnings of docusoap in Poland date back to 1999. At that time, the following productions were made: *Szpital Dzieciątka Jezus* [*The Infant Jesus Hospital*] directed by Nono Dragović and Grzegorz Siedlecki, *Pierwszy krzyk* [*The First Cry*] directed by Wojciech Szumowski, and *Nieparzyści* [*The Unpaired*] directed by Ewa Straburzyńska. In the next few years, they were followed by, among others: *Kawaleria powietrzna* [*Air Cavalry*] and *Ja, alkoholik* [*I, Alcoholic*] by Jacek Bławut, *Aniołki* [*Little Angels*] by Maciej Szumowski, *Czirliderki* [*Cheerleaders*] by Krzysztof Magowski, *Zielona karta* [*Green Card*] by Jarosław Sypniewski and Sławomir Grunberg, *Dziewczęta z Ośrodka* [*Girls from the Center*] by Robert Gliński, *Adopcje* [*Adoptions*] by Dariusz Jarzyna. The Polish docusoap is a series in which material is recorded by means of documentary techniques, while it is told by means borrowed from fictional genres, mainly from feature series. Thus, docusoap turns out to be a genre suspended between a documentary film and a feature film, focused primarily on satisfying ludic and affective needs, although it sometimes shows educational and informational ambitions. It takes up serious issues and introduces authentic heroes, yet – because of its literalism and schematization of the ways of telling its stories, because of banalization of the presented world, and because of focusing on entertainment component – it does not follow the best traditions of documentary film and only pretends its social engagement. Docusoaps push too far the unwritten boundary between the private and the public sphere; they reveal intimate experiences of participants of the show, and violate the common customs<sup>337</sup>. Docusoaps evoke great interest of the audience, yet they arouse profound doubts of critics.

Another new program introduced by TVN in 2001 was the infamous *Big Brother*, which has inaugurated a new genre in Poland – a reality show. It aroused

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337 Cf.: M. Hendrykowska, *Telenowela dokumentalna*, in: *Klucze do rzeczywistości...*; W. Godzic, *Telewizja i jej gatunki...*; Beata Kosińska-Krippner, “Poetyka telenoweli dokumentalnej”, doctoral dissertation under the supervision of M. Hendrykowski, monograph. The author describes in details Polish production practice, gives thematic and formal criteria for determining the genre of docusoap. The dissertation is the first in such a comprehensive and multi-faceted presentation of the new phenomenon and the new genre in Poland. It contains a filmographic annex with basic information about Polish docusoaps.



great emotions and fierce polemics. Almost universal reluctance and criticism expressed by people of culture were paired with enormous curiosity and great popularity of the general audience<sup>338</sup>.

Both docusoap and reality show provoked a discussion on the subject of documentary art. The debaters were referring to the best traditions of documentary film, which involved discovering reality, seeking the truth, deep reflection, and [high-quality artistic] form; authors of such works took care of both the message and the image of their characters, without raising ethical controversies. Critics were pointing out pragmatism of current undertakings of TV producers and their dependence on interests of TV stations. They were questioning the infringing of the limits of morality. However, technological and organizational capabilities as well as so-called high ratings decided about the wide acceptance of new documentary series and about the readiness of the audience to participate in those programs which were focused on new content and form, on presentation of common reality, of the so-called ordinary people, in privacy of all and everyone, in searching for authentic problems and authenticity of behaviours – all these aspects contributed to breaking current rules and limits. Popularity of those programs may prove, among other things, the distance of the audience from conventional plots of literature and cinema, from heroic, impeccable role models, and unbroken heroes. Perhaps the audience counts on new impressions and emotions, on unpredictable behaviours of people in new situations, maybe awaits the artists of real life rather than professional actors, and prefers “reports on real life” instead of (or alongside) recognized artistic forms.

The film works were usually classified as “feature films” and “documentaries”. The authors of the former were attempting to create stories of some degree of probability using invented characters and fictitious events. Documentary works were used to depict real people in real situations, showing their true picture, as we say. Docusoap or reality show also show real people in real situations, yet critics of this phenomenon claim that the presented picture is false. And the way of presentation is false because their authors in the first place want to please the audience and entertain them. As for the intentions – they can change. As for the form of the new genres, the producers of traditional documentaries were

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338 Cf. i.e.: *Podglądanie Wielkiego Brata*, ed. W. Godzic, Krakow: Rabid 2001; Ewa Mazierska, *Reality tv — próba analizy*, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2001, nr 35–36; W. Godzic, *Telewizja i jej gatunki...*; M. Przyłipiak, *W stronę nowej telewizji*, in: idem, *Poetyka kina dokumentalnego...* I presented my opinion on the *Big Brother* program in the article *Powtórzenie wędrujące przez media* (in: *Między powtórzeniem a innowacją...*).

applying appropriate methods or tricks to the world in front of the camera in order to achieve assumed goals and to get the impression of naturalness – just to mention the well-known practices of Flaherty. Isn't every story based on conventions, and it is the viewer's task to decode them appropriately? Does communicative status of audiovisual message depend on constant tension between the power of illusion in recalling reality and the awareness of conventions used in production?

### The series outside of television

Just like film “left” the cinema, the series, which seemed to be closely related to periodical broadcasting and permanent presence of TV screens in our homes, left TV. They either gained independence, published in separate series, or situated themselves in a different environment of communication. It began with videocassette recordings of individual episodes by their fans in order to become independent from the schedule of TV syntagma. Detachment from screen – a big cinematic one and a small TV one – was possible thanks to technological inventions. The use of cinematic achievements on television served to build the offer of the new medium and it was institutional. On the other hand, the recordings of TV series broadcasted on television by private persons were associated with their choices and decisions, with their desire to record and keep a communicate that they liked. Digitalization made the practice easier and allowed it to be used by TV stations, which now – apart from the broadcasted program – offer [for sale] recordings of entire series on voluminous DVDs (for example, *Magda M.*, *The Sopranos*).

Broadcasting and viewing of the series are now being redefined by the Internet, to which Polish TV stations are entering with their productions. For example, the interactive television launched by TV offers – for a certain fee – to the interested audience a possibility of watching the episodes of series both after and before they are broadcasted on TV. For example, at the web page [oficerowie.itvp.pl](http://oficerowie.itvp.pl), one can watch all of the episodes of the series *Oficer* [*The Officer*] broadcasted in 2004–2005, as well as episodes of the new series titled *Oficerowie* [*The Officers*] a few days before their broadcast on “Dwójka” [TVP channel 2]. As a supplement to the series, the Internet TVP also announces blogs and video blogs run by their fictional characters<sup>339</sup>. In turn, TVN offers its viewers the opportunity to see missed episodes of, for example *Magda M.*, on

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339 Cf.: Zbigniew Domaszewicz, *TVP: zrobimy telewizję totalną*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 January 2007.

the website: [www.magdam.onet.pl](http://www.magdam.onet.pl), on the Onet portal. In addition, the “second circulation” of TV series in cyberspace is accompanied by a repeated ritual of everyday talks about the series not only with family or friends, but also on free-access publicly available websites promoting popular TV series, as well as on the web pages run by the series’ fans<sup>340</sup>. There are Internet portals, services, and websites posting cyber-series or web-episodes – both shortened versions of the most popular TV series, mainly American (for example, *Dynasty*, *The Sopranos*), as well as series produced specifically for the Internet and mobile telephony. In both cases they have their own, specific drama, adapted to short, several-minute forms. The episodes appear regularly, and archives of previous fragments are available next to the latest episode to allow the viewers to get an idea of the plot and to get to know the characters. Interestingly, these sections or episodes are autonomous and do not have a consistently developed plot, so the sequence of events is not so important. In some services, the Internet users can influence the content of the presented stories by suggesting threads, initiating intrigues, creating characters, attributing certain characteristics to them, and by collectively composing the screenplay. For example, the BBC invites the viewers to collaborate on productions. The online magazine *Episodic Review* is dedicated to presentation of English-language cyber-series; it publishes summaries and announcements of episodes of the most popular stories.

In the context of interest in commonness of characters, their problems and behaviours, the genesis of the famed series *Lonegirl15*, considered to be the first of this kind, seems interesting. In 2006, a vlog run by a teenage girl appeared on YouTube and attracted interest of Internet users. When subsequent entries were gaining more and more popularity, it turned out that this was not a private vlog, and that the alleged teenager was a professional actress. The entire project was professionally prepared and produced as a web series. The episodes, specifically conceived for the Internet lasted a few minutes maximum; they were based on close-up scenes and expressive dialogue. The Polish production was based on this format<sup>341</sup>.

The mobile telephony also actively takes part in taking TV series out of traditional television medium. The producers direct their short, almost instant

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340 Cf.: Mirosław Filiciak, M. Halawa, *Telewizja bez telewizorów, Polityka*, 10 February 2007; Dorota Gut, *Łowcy epizodów, Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 January 2001; Anna Mikołajczyk, «*Ally McBeal*» — serial politycznie (nie)poprawny, in: *Lustra i krzywe zwierciadła. Społeczne konteksty kina i telewizji*, eds. Konrad Klejsa, Grzegorz Skonieczko, Krakow: Rabid 2002. The author not only gives examples of the fans’ opinions but also presents pictures and fragments of dialogues of TV series’ protagonists.

341 See also the project of Agora i A2 Multimedia company presenting one- and five-minute episodes of the TV series *Nickola*, started on 26 January 2009, on the web

episodes to people waiting in queues, traffic jams, at bus stops, wanting to enter their “dead time”. The mobile telephony in the third generation networks opens the opportunity to watch specially prepared episodes (mobile sops) outside of the households. They can be addressed, for example, to the long-distance commuter who travels by public transport. In May 2006 subscribers of the Orange network could see the next new episode of the series *Magda M.* not as usual on TVN, but on [wap.orange.pl](http://wap.orange.pl) by means of their 3G mobile phones<sup>342</sup>.

Cyber-series, which use interactivity, referring to the cooperation of Internet users, based on fan activities, become close to some games, such as *The Sims*. In turn, one author who wrote about *The Sims 2* compared this game to a TV soap opera. In this very popular computer game, the players create a family and its members, invent their features, take care of home, build relationships between individuals, arrange their vicissitudes, manage their everyday life and their fate. “It’s as if we were directing our own *Dynasty*, *Sex and the City* or *M jak miłość*.”<sup>343</sup>

As a result of digitization, a series as a television genre gains a new form; it is situated in new contexts and undergoes various transformations. Through various “con-texts”, TV series also enters the zone of active participation operating in cyberspace through interactive mechanisms<sup>344</sup>.

Television in Poland, after decades of being rooted in tradition, thanks to literary and film patterns, in monopoly conditions, after the period of turbulent development of the television market, which made the domestic series a significant part of the TV offer, uses DVD, Internet, VOD (video on demand), and mobile telephony to keep the viewers’ interest in serials and to use their new versions<sup>345</sup>.

page [www.n1ckola.pl](http://www.n1ckola.pl) (cf.: Tomasz Gryniewicz, *Czy «N1ckola» zagra w sieci*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 January 2009; Artur Małek, «N1ckola» — serial internetowy (rozmowa z Maciejem Wichą, dyrektorem serwisów informacyjnych i społecznościowych w Agorze S.A.), [www.InternetStandard](http://www.InternetStandard) [accessed January 21st 2009]). Interestingly, *N1cola* after finishing the Internet emission “returned” as a TV program – its episodes merged into 30-minute pieces were presented in TV 4 Channel.

342 Cf.: Marta Strzelecka, *Kultura w 30 sekund*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2nd–3rd June 2007; Marek Hołyński, *Telenowela z kieszeni*, *Polityka*, 21 January 2006.

343 Konrad Godlewski, *Komputerowa telenowela, która zawojowała świat*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18th–19th September 2004.

344 Cf.: M. Filiciak, *Wirtualny plac zabaw. Gry sieciowe i przemiany kultury współczesnej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2006; Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: NYU Press 2008.

345 Ed. note: Mirosław Filipiak, *Media, wersja beta. Film i telewizja w czasach gier komputerowych i Internetu*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra 2013.

## 9 Computer games

In the 1960s, new attractive games that used electronics appeared on the toy market. Initially, they aroused understandable interest, as any novelty in that segment. Their popularity was gradually increasing, as technical solutions introduced into production of those toys were becoming more complex. In 1973, special consoles were invented that allowed electronic games to be transferred to a TV screen. The production of first-generation PCs caused the next stage in evolution of games. Further technical improvements contributed to their development and complexity. First, they were produced and used everywhere where there were good technological facilities, in particular a high level of electronics and large number of computers. Then the key issue was a relatively easy access to the Internet – in the United States, in many European and Asian countries. Since the 1990s, when modern technology spread to many other regions of the world, electronic games have developed even better and their popularity is still growing.

Currently, electronic games occupy a prominent place in the entertainment industry market. After teenagers, the games became a favourite past time for adults and children, not only young men, but also pensioners, and not only males but also females. Played on special consoles or on screens of subsequent generations of computers, they are based on gradually more complex designs, sophisticated graphics, and complex audiovisual effects.

In Poland computer games began gaining popularity in the 1980s, mainly among young people, schoolchildren, and students. They have free time, curiosity, and skills to use computers. However, as time passes, an average age of players steadily grows, for successive generations are better prepared to use computers and accept this form of spending time. “Gamer Generation” – this name was given to players who are just over thirty years old and took the opportunity to master secrets of computer games relatively early.

### **The ludic dimension of culture**

The natural context of electronic games is the domain of play. Our tradition, however, grants the right to play [only] to children. The fact that they play is in accordance with popular conceptions; it is accepted as an effective form of socialization and usually treated favourably. On the other hand, playing by adults is a subject to various restrictions and only then positively assessed. Those restrictions are related primarily to the time and the place of fun activities. Adults may play in a unique period, specially intended for it – a festive time devoted

to celebrations or carnival, clearly distinguished from time dedicated to ordinary, everyday, obligatory activities. Playing usually happens in places adapted for the purpose – at festive tables, in decorated rooms, in carnival processions, or in other places focused on entertainment: in cafes, cinemas, on stages. In the exceptional times and in designated places people play – both in rural and urban areas – using the accepted repertoire of rules and behaviours. Play understood in this way, positively evaluated by researchers, is a source of pleasure, but not blasé, it can be entertainment, but not a trivial one. Based on direct relations, on experiences shared with other people, on active, integrating participation – it has the necessary social dimension, and fulfils important functions in socialization. This connects play with the main role of children's plays. Play understood in this way serves everything that is fundamentally important in a person's life and what is not fun: work, learning, duty, effort, responsibility, seriousness, and everyday struggle.

Such a comprehension of play could be adequate in traditional culture with a stable social structure and a constant repertoire of customs and the binding hierarchy of values and behaviours, in which the sphere of work is the most important and other areas of life are subordinated to it. Such culture is based primarily on direct social interactions. Such comprehension of play in contemporary culture leads to negative conclusions, suggesting disappearance of active and pro-social forms of play in favour of passive and solitary behaviours, declaring replacement of play by entertainment based solely on providing hedonistic pleasures – being just a substitute of play and resulting in an escape from real fun<sup>346</sup>.

In the above diagnoses, contemporary forms of entertainment – such as broadly understood genre films, most television programs, and especially TV series, as well as albums of famous singers sold in millions of copies – are not

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346 Cf.: Bogusław Sułkowski, *Zabawa. Studium socjologiczne*, Warsaw: PWN 1984; idem, *Zabawa*, in: *Pojęcia i problemy wiedzy o kulturze*, ed. Antonina Kłoskowska, Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze 1991; Marian Golka, *Pojmowanie zabawy*, in: *Karnawalizacja. Tendencje ludyczne w kulturze współczesnej*, eds. Jan Grad, Hanna Mamzer, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2004; idem, *Spoleczno-kulturowe oddziaływanie zabawy*, in: *Ludyczny wymiar kultury*, eds. J. Grad, H. Mamzer, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2004; idem, *Przyjemność i zblazowanie*, in: *Kultura przyjemności. Rozważania kulturoznawcze*, eds. J. Grad, H. Mamzer, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2005; idem, *Ucieczka od zabawy?*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako medium, tekst i rytuał*, eds. Augustyn Surdyk, Jerzy Z. Szeja, v. 2, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 2007; Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death. Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Viking: New York 1985.

appreciated. Those phenomena, situated in low culture in opposition to high culture, in mass culture in opposition to elite culture, recently classified also as “popular culture” – are contrasted with the authentic values of traditional play. Those and other manifestations of forms of entertainment – especially electronic ones, indirect by definition – are treated as doubtful and even harmful from social and individual point of view. They belong to the consumer culture, which has transformed in a specific way the customs of old leisure classes and extended them to the contemporary mass societies<sup>347</sup>.

The need for modern entertainment appeared along with changes in culture, with the category of time free from work, with access to social communication on a mass scale, with democratization of participation in culture. That has not changed the views of many researchers on the role of play in the new situation; they have still almost exclusively valued the forms already accepted for a long time. For example, old music, which is called “art music” or “classical music”, is opposed to popular music published in millions of copies which is considered light, easy, and pleasant. All different genres of popular music are rated low as “entertainment” equated with commercialism<sup>348</sup>. The ludic dimension of contemporary culture is generally criticized and valued negatively. The particularly extreme diagnosis by Neil Postman can be interpreted as another attempt to take aristocratic perspective on “the revolt of the masses”<sup>349</sup>.

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in the conditions of post-industrial, informative and post-mass society, ludic practices not only play a different role than before, but they also occupy a different place in the entire culture. Today, attention is paid to the emergence of play from the old enclaves, to the expansion of ludic sphere to another, non-ludic spheres of culture, to propagation of ludic elements to the areas of our lives, which traditionally were considered serious – to education, art, business, public scene, and politics. Their repertoire changes and expands. Currently, the emergence of a powerful market

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347 Cf.: Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. Martha Banta, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009; Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Berkley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1999; Edgar Morin, *L'Esprit du temps*, Grasset-Fasquelle: Paris 1962; George Ritzer, *Enchanting a Disenchanted World. Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*, Los Angeles–London– New Delhi– Singapore– Washington DC: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2009.

348 See especially the essay by Theodore W. Adorno *On Popular Music* written in 1941 and reprinted in: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1994.

349 See: N. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death...*

of ludic services can be observed, their far-reaching professionalization and significant participation in national economies. The ludic dimension of all contemporary culture – its carnivalization – can be noticed. This change – described or criticized – has been provisionally diagnosed and recorded<sup>350</sup>.

Computer games definitely played a role in this transformation as well as in noticing the ludic dimension of contemporary times by researchers. For producers, creators, and recipients of computer games explicitly and openly declared that they just want to have fun and entertain themselves. Computer games were the first type of audiovisual communicates, which not only was not situated in the domain of art (just like television half a century before), but it demonstrated its play-related character.

### The evolution of games and the culture of participation

The electronic games were initially spontaneously created by enthusiasts of new technology, scientists who used very expensive and hard-to-find computers for professional reasons. In the 1970s and 1980s, games were often half-amateurish. They were played on first minicomputers, such as Commodore, ZX Spectrum, Atari. Initially, players were fascinated with such games as *Pong*, *Pac-Man* 1980, *Tetris* 1987. For many years – a long period if compared to the contemporary fast changes – for most people the presence of games in culture was limited to hardware advertisements – the next PlayStation Sony consoles, Microsoft Xbox, or offers of Nintendo, and to the launching of celebrated games for consoles and/or computers: *Civilization* 1990, *Wolfenstein 3D* 1992, *Doom* 1993, *Warcraft* 1994, *Quake* 1996, *Duke Nukem 3D* 1996, *Tomb Raider* 1996, *Diablo* 1997, *Fallout* 1997, *Final Fantasy* 1997, *Baldur's Gate* 1998, *Starcraft* 1998, *EverQuest* 1999, *Unreal Tournament* 1999, *Star Wars: Force Commander* 2000, *FIFA* 2001, *Spider-Man: The Movie* 2002, *World of Warcraft*, *Painkiller* 2004. Only sparse – though intriguing – information and press articles would reach the general public<sup>351</sup>.

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350 Cf. volumes ed. by J. Grad and H. Mamzer: *Karnawalizacja...; Ludyczny wymiar kultury...; Kultura przyjemności...*; cf. also: Agata Skorzyńska, *Gry i zabawy w perspektywie performatyki. O potrzebie interdyscyplinarnych badań w ludologii*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra w kontekście edukacyjnym, społecznym i medialnym*, eds. A. Surdyk, J. Z. Szeja, "Homo Communicativus" 2008, nr 2(4); Andrzej Bełkot, *Karnawalizacja jako pojęcie ludyczne*, "Homo Communicativus" 2008, nr 2(4).

351 See, e.g., articles published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*: Adam Leszczyński, *O rozwoju gier komputerowych* (27 March 2001); Konrad Godlewski, *Cywilizacja gry* (23 August 2004); Wojciech Orliński, *Artysta w krainie gier* (26 January 2004); and essays by Edwin Bendyk published in *Polityka* weekly magazine, among others: *Gra w dwa*



Games were taking roots in culture gradually, becoming an attractive individual entertainment requiring both appropriate equipment and the skills, the active attitude of the players and their imagination. Today, the static games with linear storylines and simple graphics belong to a distant history. Their complexity was developing in two ways.

On one hand, by verbal, textual, and graphic signs available on keyboards, games have been proposing more and more complex imaginative exercises to navigate in multidimensional virtual worlds; they have been offering different ways of taming this world; they have been providing the players with opportunities for making their own choices and decisions. Such textual-only interface exists today in still expanding, popular MUDs, which rely on a joint multiplayer game using links. The virtual space of games and social relations between the players are built in the games only through the language communication which is a “flywheel” of players’ imagination<sup>352</sup> (Fig. 43).

On the other hand, especially since the 1990s, computer games from year to year have had gradually more suggestive graphics and gradually more effective sound settings. Today, a typical graphics card provides an illusion of three-dimensionality of the game space, and the realism of displayed graphics begins to look confusingly real. Thanks to the use of the *motion capture* technology, a three-dimensional record of motions of a real person is created, where a figure of an artificial hero and an image of his/her face are placed over the skeleton. The concrete sounds and music reinforce the impression of reality. The interactive real-time simulation is carried out in various computer simulators, in adventure or strategic games. For example, war games create a full motoric and audiovisual illusion of battles. New opportunities have opened up by the combination of games with the Internet communication of a large number of players. It has led

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światy (7 December 2002); with Wojciech Krusiński, *Wielka gra* (21 January 2006); *Komórkowcy, sieciuchy i inni* (28 October 2006).

352 Cf.: Piotr Sitarski, *Środowiska tekstowe — czy ślepy zaułek w rozwoju mediów interaktywnych?*, in: *Słowo w kulturze mediów*, ed. Zbigniew Suszczyński, Białystok: Trans Humana 1999; idem, *O tworzeniu postaci w MUD-ach*, in: *Gender — film — media*, eds. Elżbieta H. Oleksy, Elżbieta Ostrowska, Krakow: Rabid 2001; idem, *Rozmowa z cyfrowym cieniem. Model komunikacyjny rzeczywistości wirtualnej*, Krakow: Rabid 2002; J. Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne. Nowe zjawisko kultury współczesnej*, Krakow: Rabid 2004, pp. 116nn.; Wojciech Wiśniewski, *Prawdziwe życie w nierzeczywistym świecie. MUD-y jako zjawisko społeczne*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako...*, v. 2.



**Fig. 43:** The civilization of games – PC games fairs in Leipzig, Germany, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 August 2004

to creation of multiplayer network games, which are becoming more and more popular. A new field of electronic sports has emerged from them.

The multimedia capabilities of current computers, the increasingly interactive interfaces set up a particular, specific audiovisuality of the world of games. The audiovisuality allows the players to simulate imaginary worlds – for example, fantasy – and imitate everyday world. This audiovisuality of games, initially identified with cinematographic audiovisuality, differs fundamentally from the latter one, just like a computer game differs from a film. Film works are fixed audiovisual communicates intended for viewers. The viewers, by definition, are outside of a film; they can react to it from a distance or become emotionally and intellectually involved, they can identify with protagonists or not accept them, interpret the plot in accordance with the author's intention or reject it. Although they can interpret a film message quite easily, they remain outside of it, regardless of how it is interpreted.

Computer games situate their recipients in a different way. It is necessary to involve the players in the course of a game – without their participation the game cannot be continued. Participation of avatars in the game is essential. The avatars are visualizations directed by players themselves. In other words, players perform a dual role: they enter the world of a game as intermediate, but necessary participants, and, at the same time, they remain outside as the co-creators of a game. They act in the space of a game and observe this action from the

outside. The audiovisuality of the co-created space of players' actions and the perceived game virtualizes the program of a given game. This audiovisuality unites co-creation of the game with its observation<sup>353</sup>.

These two ways of evolution of games – textual and audiovisual – were closely connected with complication and differentiation of their scenarios. As the game production became a huge industry, games themselves have gradually become more complex, and their plots have been more and more often constructed non-linearly, with their main threads and side motifs, populated by numerous characters. Games are no longer considered as nothing but attractive form of entertainment, they are beginning to provoke players to make moral choices and make them aware of results of their decisions made while playing. Games begin to include elements of the real world and playing games becomes a part of daily routine.

The original, natural context of games was and is, of course, fun. But the so-called culture of participation gradually becomes another, equally obvious context. This term captures an active attitude of people to contemporary culture, not only their participation in culture as recipients, but also their involvement in processing and creation of their own communicates. Electronic games are just one of the main pillars of culture of participation<sup>354</sup>.

Interactivity as a part of technological changes is the basis of the expanding ability of an active participation in culture. It is considered to be a constitutive feature of games, regardless of how this feature is understood. Games cancel the category of a recipient who is not actively involved in their course, and set up the category of a user: for the first time in indirect communication, a recipient must become an active participant to make this new text of culture exist. The space of games creates a semantic but also pragmatic dimension in which the players choose their strategies of conduct. The activities of a former recipient

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353 Cf.: Zbigniew Wałaszewski, *Audiowizualność gier komputerowych*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako...*, v. 2.

354 Cf.: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York–London: New York University Press 2006; M. Filiciak, *Wirtualny plac zabaw. Gry sieciowe i przemiany kultury współczesnej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2006; idem, *Gry komputerowe jako przejaw kultury uczestnictwa*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako...*, v. 2; Dominika Urbańska-Galanciak, *Homo players. Strategie odbioru gier komputerowych*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2009.

and a current active user are a prerequisite for functioning of this type of texts of culture. This is the basic premise of active participation in the virtual world<sup>355</sup>.

The new type of engagement of Internet users creates conditions conducive to going beyond participation in the game itself; it makes some fans – enthusiasts particularly well acquainted with a given cultural text – to propose their own variants of a plot, modifications and adaptations of various components. It becomes relatively easy thanks to the possibilities of new digital technologies, their ever-wider availability democratizing the entire culture. It means various more and more popular amateurish attempts and subversive strategies related to artistic projects, such as game patching or machinima (films based on materials taken from games, made since 1996). Thanks to those practices – changing, supplementing, or proposing new meanings – it becomes possible to integrate the various points of view on a wide range of issues into a broader circulation, and to critically rework apparently professional offers. In result, the interactive paradigm of culture and its participatory nature expand. And games are an important part of this paradigm<sup>356</sup>. The Web is an environment in which all Internet users can implement their own ideas, satisfy their need for creativity, abandon institutional activities of communication intermediaries, and launch various undertakings. The phenomenon of taking over the initiative by participants of

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355 Cf.: Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press 2001; Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, *Komunikowanie w sztuce interaktywnej*, in: *Kultura i sztuka u progu XXI wieku*, ed. Sław Krzemień-Ojak, Białystok: Trans Humana 1997; Z. Wałaszewski, *Interaktywność gier komputerowych*, in: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia*, ed. Maryla Hopfinger, Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa 2005; Katarzyna Prajzner, *Interaktywność. Kilka uwag o definiowaniu pojęcia*, in: *Między słowem a obrazem*, eds. Małgorzata Jakubowska, Tomasz Kłys, Bronisława Stolarska, Krakow: Rabid 2005; Marcin Składanek, *Od tekstu do przestrzeni informacyjnej. Sytuacja komunikacyjna w mediach interaktywnych*, in: *Między słowem a obrazem...*; idem, *Perspektywa społeczno-kulturowa w badaniach interakcji człowieka z komputerem*, in: *Perspektywy badań nad kulturą*, ed. R. W. Kluszczyński, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Lodz: Wydawnictwo UEŁ 2008; Aleksandra Przeglasińska, "Interaktywność jako sposób doświadczania rzeczywistości wirtualnej", annual paper on the seminary of M. Hopfinger "Nowe media w kulturze audiowizualnej" in School of Social Sciences at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2008.

356 Cf.: M. Filiciak, *Modyfikacje gier przez użytkowników: od kontrkultury do postkonsumpcjonizmu*, "Kultura Popularna" 2003, nr 3; D. Urbańska-Galanciak, *Homo players...*; Łukasz Ronduda, *Strategie subwersywne w sztukach medialnych*, Krakow: Rabid 2006, especially chapter "Strategie subwersywne w Internecie".

communication on the Internet was named “Web.2.0”. In accordance with laws of convergence, it also affects more active attitudes of participants in the old media practices.

This trend is used by professional producers and designers. On their initiative, the most active users test and review professional productions and become their originators. For example, Will Wright, the creator of the game *SimCity*, took into account a lot of fan proposals and numerous patches, and included the best of them in the next editions of the game<sup>357</sup>. Another example: Sony – a leading company of the game market – announced the opening of the virtual world “Home” for users of PlayStation 3 console in 2007. And Phil Harrison, the head of Sony Computer Entertainment, declared: “We turn back the rules of the game”, encouraging the audience to take part in creation of games on their own<sup>358</sup>.

In 2001 the Nintendo company proposed games for the Wii console, which fundamentally changed the way of game control, exacting physical activity of the players. In many American schools, games of that kind were successfully introduced in physical education classes<sup>359</sup>. There are strong indicators that the ludic dimension of games themselves as well as of other cultural practices stimulate creative attitudes and additionally support dissemination of patterns of active behaviour.

The attractiveness of computer games depends, as I think, primarily on the fact that they offer their participants action – in real time – which is not only voluntary, but also runs in a secure framework: in a specially created game environment. Moreover, this action can be repeated, improved, and modified. It ensures active participation, but – even if taken seriously – it is participation in a play. With regard to the rules of a game, one can freely create one’s heroes, equip them with selected properties, bestow them with specific skills, and give them ideal physical attributes. One can test successive solutions, make mistakes, repeat attempts and efforts, and reverse the course of events – within the rules of the game. Possibly, beyond its rules, one can propose one’s own solutions, which, as I already mentioned, has been appreciated and accepted by producers for some time as a way of acquiring new ideas. They can be the source of further satisfaction. The question of relationship between the order of the virtual world and the

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357 Quoted after: Ł. Ronduda, *Strategie subwersywne...*, p. 188.

358 Information in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 March 2007.

359 Cf.: Piotr Cieśliński, *Zagrać w siódme poty*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 September 2008.

order of the real world remains open. I will return to this issue at the end of this chapter.

The intense development of games over the last two or three decades made them part of the ludic dimension of culture and the contemporary culture of participation.

## The role-playing games

The electronic games have gained their first successes by referring to earlier ludic forms, especially to “paper games”: board games and card games. Then they used the elements well-established in culture: myths, heroic characters, popular threads and narrative motifs, famous cartoons, well-known literary and film works. Of course, from the very beginning games were diversified – some of them were logic games, others were skill-based, some were simulations, others were role-based (RPG), some offered adventure, others demanded strategic thinking. There were various criteria and proposals for their descriptions and classifications<sup>360</sup>.

From the beginning, the most controversial were action games, the so-called shooters, in which players were supposed to eliminate everything that appeared in their field of vision, although the background was usually the eternal struggle between Good and Evil. Reasonable criticism of violence, cruelty, and brutality present in such games – as well as in other texts of culture – did not stop designers and producers of computer games, as well as players. There was a great, attractive power in them, which was supported by development of new technologies and a growing number of enthusiasts, as well as by the direction of contemporary transformations. Almost no one believed in a chance of cultural ennoblement of games.

Nowadays, games are already well-rooted in our contemporary culture; they are subject not only of negative opinions, but also of interest, description, and interpretation of researchers.

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360 Cf.: J. Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne — nowe zjawisko kultury współczesnej*, Kraków: Rabid 2004; Jan Stasiński, *Alien vs Predator? — gry komputerowe a badania literackie*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP 2005; M. Filiciak, *Wirtualny plac zabaw. Gry sieciowe i przemiany kultury współczesnej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne 2006; Marek Adamiec, *Słownko o grach komputerowych*, in: idem, *Dzieło literackie w Sieci*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo UG 2004; D. Urbańska-Galanciak, *Homo players...*; Sławomir Łukasz, *Magia gier wirtualnych*, Warsaw: Mikom 1998.

Here I am primarily focused on the games I consider as specific audiovisual parallels of literary communicates. Therefore, I am interested in various computer role-playing games<sup>361</sup>. I try to see in those games a contemporary way of satisfying the need to construct oneself through participation in telling, playing, and repeating stories. I also try to see how it works in selected games. Of course, here, unlike in literature, and unlike in cinema and television, we deal with “play[ing] stories within these artificial worlds” (Will Wright). While literature, film, and television tell stories to their readers and viewers, games propose to their players co-creation of stories by playing them according to the accepted or selected rules of a given game. Although in a different way than in the earlier texts of culture, an articulable story gives meaning to every game. No role-playing game can exist without a played and developing story. In this situation, I consider the dispute between the so-called narratologists and ludologists to be seeming, substitute and only provisionally provoking polemics<sup>362</sup>.

In games, literature is used differently than in the cinema. There is no question of adaptations of entire works, which so often helped in evolution of the cinema, in formation of the language of film expression, in proposing patterns of building characters and specific narrative solutions. Literary basis of film adaptations was treated as a pass to the accepted culture. Literature helped cinema to root in cultural tradition and supported its ennoblement in contemporary times<sup>363</sup>. Initially, digital images were relatively primitive, yet this does not explain a different way of using literary tradition. Technological problems cannot be a serious argument here. In cinema adaptations, primitive technology was not an obstacle at all. In computer games – especially in the computer equivalents of narrative role-playing games (CRPGs) – instead of classic adaptations, one can clearly see inspirations from certain literary genres, especially SF and fantasy, as well as specific motifs,

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361 See, e.g.: J. Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne...*; J. Stasienko, *Alien vs Predator?...*; Stanisława Kurek-Kokocińska, *Kultura coraz bardziej popularna: gry fabularne*, “Literatura i Kultura Popularna” 1998, v. 7, ed. Tadeusz Żabski; Agnieszka Fulińska, Jakub T. Janicki, *Wstęp do analizy strukturalnej gier fabularnych*, “Teksty Drugie” 2002, nr 6; *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako...*, v. 1, especially articles pt. 3: “Gra a dyskurs literacki”.

362 Cf.: P. Sitarski, *Gry w które grają komputery. O narracyjnych uwarunkowaniach przygodowych gier komputerowych*, in: *Kultura. Język. Edukacja*, ed. Robert Mrozek, v. 2, Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ 1998; J. Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne...*; J. Stasienko, *Alien vs Predator?...*; M. Filiciak, *Wirtualny plac zabaw...* (cf. also opinion of Will Wright quoted by M. Filiciak, p. 55); D. Urbańska-Galanciak, *Homo players...*

363 More on this issue see: M. Hopfinger, *Adaptacje filmowe utworów literackich. Problemy teorii i interpretacji*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974.



literary characters, and symbols<sup>364</sup>. On the other hand, relationships between games and the cinema are alive. Not only films are adapted by games, but the former also evolve under the influence and charm of the latter<sup>365</sup>. In turn, films made on the basis of games are usually of poor quality. Game, focused on active participation of the players, on their participation in playing the story, on screen requires translating a plot into the relationships between actors. The activities of films' fictional characters must replace the moves of the players, filling the world shown in a film, which is intended to be watched. The space of a film must be constructed differently than the space of a game; it must be expanded in depth. And the film narrative is more complicated, concentrated, and adapted to observation by viewers, to be viewed from outside of the screen world.

With time, games, based on rich and diverse literary or film experiences, processing and using them in a specific manner, began making their own proposals. Some of them have gained great interest and recognition of participants of this audiovisual phenomenon of today, still new, in comparison to television and the cinema.

I will discuss several examples of the famed games: an adventure fantasy game *The Witcher*, produced and realized in Poland by CD Projekt; a game about fantastic adventures of the contemporary female archaeologist *Lara Croft*, and two simulators of everyday life: *The Sims* and *Second Life*.

### *The Witcher*

On October 26, 2007, the Polish premiere of a computer game *The Witcher* took place. Information passed to the public was mainly focused on the organizational and business scale of the venture. The work of a team of several dozen people lasted four years. The cost of the production exceeded the budgets of the well-known costume movies. It was emphasized that this was the first electronic super-production made in Poland by a Polish company. That company, CD Projekt, founded in 1992 by two high school students, was able to accumulate capital necessary for that production by introducing Polish versions of popular games to the Polish market. The marriage of the cinema and the industry began over one-hundred years ago, thus the spectacular dimension of an electronic

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364 Cf.: J. Z. Szeja, *Gry fabularne...*; J. Stasienko, *Alien vs Predator?...*; Alina Biała, *Gry w literaturze — literatura w grach*, "Kultura Popularna" 2006, nr 3; P. Sitarski, «Mortal Kombat», czyli jak uratować świat, in: *Między słowem a obrazem...*

365 Cf.: Konrad Klejsa, *Czy naprawdę «trzeba grać, żeby wygrać?» O fenomenie gier komputerowych*, in: *W świecie mediów*, ed. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, Krakow: Rabid 2001.



production should not be surprising, though the scale of this particular “private” initiative was undoubtedly impressive. And the producers of *The Witcher*, the owners of the CD Projekt, Michał Kiciński and Marcin Iwiński, won the Polish edition of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year competition and took part in the world gala of the Entrepreneur of the Year competition<sup>366</sup> (Fig. 44).



Fig. 44: *Wiedźmin*, www.geralt.pl, 30 October 2007

366 Cf.: Konrad Niklewicz, *Twórcy «Wiedźmina» zwyciężyli*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 December 2008; Zbigniew Domaszewicz, *Ludzie chcą grać po polsku*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 May 2003; K. Godlewski, «*Wiedźmin*» w komputerze, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 November 2005; Tomasz Gryniewicz, «*Wiedźmin*» zagra na parkiecie, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 October 2007; Jan Długosz, W. Krusiński, «*Wiedźmin*» od lat osiemnastu, *Polityka*, 20 October 2007; TIGI, «*Wiedźmin*» schodzi jak ciepłe bułeczki, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 November 2007; Adam Grzeszak, *Czary z Atari*, *Polityka*, 1 December 2007.

The figure of a witcher is well known to the enthusiasts of a fantasy prose by Andrzej Sapkowski. At the end of 1986, the monthly SF and fantasy magazine *Fantastyka* published the first short story about that hero. It was followed by several dozens of stories. Then Sapkowski published a series of five novels devoted to a witcher Geralt which gained a cult following<sup>367</sup>. The world conceived by Andrzej Sapkowski inspired creators of the game, and earlier – filmmakers<sup>368</sup>. While fans of the Sapkowski's prose reacted to the film with fierce criticism, the game was received well and evaluated highly.

Such a great interest in imaginary fantastic worlds is attributed primarily to the works of Tolkien which gained immense popularity in the second half of the twentieth century. Apparently, the readers found in those works a way to interpret their own world and to look for the meaning of their existences<sup>369</sup>. Currently, fantasy is a popular, distinct segment of contemporary culture. Besides literary genre, it includes film productions and computer games. Fantasy games are the most popular genre among the games.

The popularity of Sapkowski's prose takes part in interests of broad groups of readers in Poland and abroad in speculative fantasy. Therefore, it turned out to be extremely accurate to base a computer game on books which are well-known and published in huge number of copies not only in Poland, but in Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Spain. The readers in the United States and Western Europe know the witcher from a collection of short stories translated into English, titled *The Last Wish*. The relatively small number of copies of this book was easily sold not only to readers interested in works of Andrzej Sapkowski but also to fans of computer games intrigued by the previews of the game and inspired by Sapkowski's prose.

Michał Madej, the main designer of the CD Projekt RED, hopes that the protagonist of the game has a chance to "exist globally". However, as an observer from outside, I guess that *The Witcher* may turn out to be a breakthrough game in Poland not only in the production and business sense, but also in the substantive sense. In my opinion, the semantic possibilities of computer games have matured to generate important issues and problems. The differentiation of players and their expectations also seems sufficient to undertake such an attempt.

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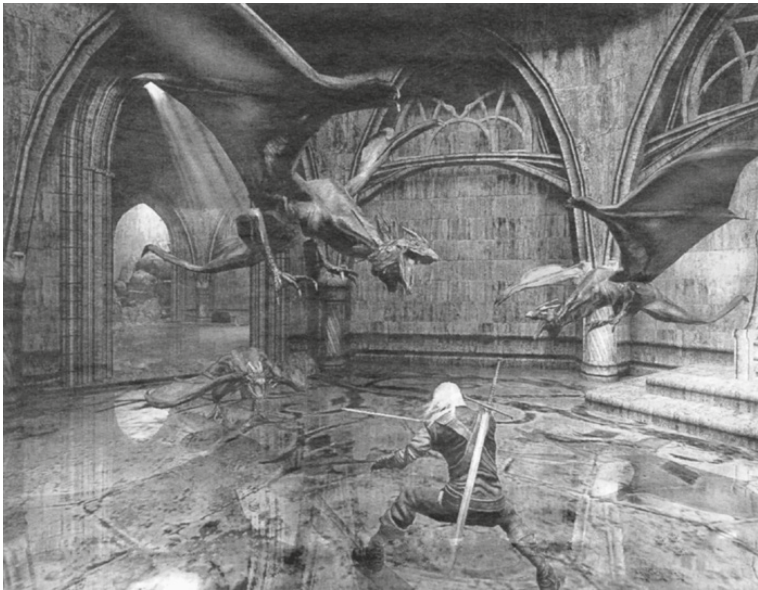
367 Cf.: Katarzyna Kaczor, *Geralt, czarownice i wampir. Recykling kulturowy Andrzeja Sapkowskiego*, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria 2006.

368 *Wiedźmin*, screenplay by Michał Szczerbic, directed by Marek Brodzki, original music soundtrack composed by Grzegorz Ciechowski, Poland 2001.

369 Cf.: J. Z. Szeja, *Przyczyny popularności fantastyki i gier fabularnych w kulturze współczesnej*, in: *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra jako...*, v. 1.

Therefore, the conditions are conducive to creation of a game that – while having all advantages of “interactive entertainment” – can fascinate both with its form and its content, and result in cultural ennoblement of games (Fig. 45).

Wojciech Orliński wrote about *The Witcher*, sensational in the audiovisual aspect, that “it looks like a game sponsored by some crazy patron of fine arts”<sup>370</sup>. At the same time, the world in which Geralt of Rivia acts is neither black and white nor one-dimensional – it is complex, full of conflicts, animosities, and aggression. Terrorism, racism, attitudes, and statements that can be associated with anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and violence are not a harmless margin. The arguments of conflicted parties are not distributed equally, and Good is not separated from the Evil. Therefore, the situation of the players is not comfortable. They are supposed to choose: either to remain neutral or to take sides in a conflict – and not only theoretically, but also practically: in the way of participating in the game, for various stories can be played, each choice has consequences



**Fig. 45:** A scene from *The Witcher*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 November 2007

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370 See: W. Orliński, *Byłem Wiedźminem*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 November 2007.

and leads to a different resolution of the story. The game has a nonlinear plot. Although the world is inhabited by elves and witchers, this is the story addressed for adults.

The game has gained an enormous popularity. It was prepared in many language versions – in Russian, German, English, French, Spanish, also in the Chinese text version – taking into account local customs and rules. In the first year, it sold in over one million copies<sup>371</sup>.

*The Witcher* can also be played on mobile phones<sup>372</sup>.

And currently very few people think that games are a one-season wonder.

### **Lara Croft**

This is confirmed by the success of the series of games with Lara Croft lasting continuously since 1996. The heroine of the game *Tomb Raider* – Lara Croft – became a contemporary icon. *Tomb Raider*, an adventure action game, belongs to the genre which is very popular amongst players. In the mid-1990s, their most important aspects were: three-dimensional space, multilevel labyrinths, muscular heroes, chilling situations, and fast action. Players were required to have, above all, good orientation in rapidly changing situations, [ability to make] instant decisions, and great agility. The task was to avoid deadly threats and defeat enemies. *Wolfenstein* (1992), *Mortal Kombat* (1992), *Doom* (1993), *Quake* (1996), and *Duke Nukem* (1996) – these are the most famed games of this genre, with brave male protagonists and addressed to male players (Figs. 46 and 47).

In *Tomb Raider*, a game released in 1996, the protagonist is a young and attractive woman. In this three-dimensional game, created in the Third Person Perspective, the sensual silhouette of Lara Croft fills the foreground of the screen. Lara – the first female protagonist in the world of men's games – turned out to be not only an extremely physically fit heroine, but also the slayer of human monsters and other beasts skilfully using all kinds of weapons. Besides, she was equipped with features that have aroused esteem, respect, admiration, and great fondness at the same time (Fig. 48).

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371 Cf.: T. Gryniewicz, *Milion wiedźminów*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 October 2008; Z Michałem Kicińskim rozmawiał Konrad Niklewicz: *Dobrze się bawimy tym, co robimy*, "Gazeta.pl"; 16 December 2008.

372 Cf. Przemysław Poznański, T. Gryniewicz, *Wiedźmin powalczy w komórkach*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 October 2007.



**Fig. 46:** Lara Croft, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 June 1997



**Fig. 47:** Lara Croft, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 December 2003

The game was designed by a small British company named Core Design, founded in 1988 by Jeremy Heath-Smith, and was sold in 1995 to a wealthy company Eidos to raise capital for the more and more expensive production. The idea of creating a game about an attractive and intelligent girl was accepted by the new owner, who provided appropriate budget and guaranteed creative independence to the young team, consisting of dozens of designers, scriptwriters, graphic designers, IT specialists, programmers, and musicians. Lara was conceived by Toby Gard. For almost two years the team was working to implement the intentions of the designers and to create a classy heroine meeting basic



**Fig. 48:** Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft, *Wysokie Obcasy*, 11 August 2001

features of the genre (action-adventure), but at the same time having an interesting biography and an extraordinary personality.

The biography itself of the virtual heroine, being a part of both the real world and the fantasy world, intrigued the players. She was born in 1968 in Wimbledon. She came from a rich family of British aristocrats. Brought up in the best private schools, she was very well educated, and her knowledge was impressive. Her passion was archaeology. She chose a career on her own account. She valued her independence, and she was able to defend it. She was a rational, intelligent, and courageous person, determined in action, independent, and effective; her character evoked admiration. She could overcome every obstacle to achieve the purpose of her expedition, and (of course) to save the world from disaster. Finally, she was considered the first virtual sex symbol. Although her private life almost did not count for her, and she kept men at a distance, she became an idol of delighted players. She gained immense popularity and fans' followings. She also made women play the game. It turned out to be a great attraction to lead such a character in the game. At the same time, commentators of the game often

expressed their opinions that “Lara quickly became an object of male fascination”, an example of fetishization and objectification of a female body<sup>373</sup>.

*Tomb Raider* first hit the Japanese and European markets. Until mid-1997, a few million copies of the game were sold. The next parts of the series with the image of Lara Croft were made, also sold in millions of copies. In *Tomb Raider: Last Revelation* – the fourth part of her adventure – graphic solutions were improved, while the plot was expanded and complicated. Over 21 million copies of the game were sold over five years. The fans wrote letters to Lara, and stories about her. Some people thought that the large breasts and sexy silhouette were the key to her success, and that she gained breath-taking popularity primarily through marketing and advertising, though I think they were wrong: such elements would not be enough. Lara Croft – a collection of pixels, several geometric solids in computers’ memory, electronic fantasy of programmers – responded to the new expectations of the players and that’s why she became a big virtual star.

And, quite extraordinarily, she began a new life in the real world. Lara Croft appeared on the covers of popular magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Rolling Stone*), posters with her image were compared to those of Marilyn Monroe, she appeared in over a dozen advertisements, and the biggest fashion dictators (Gucci, Alexander McQueen, Jean Colonna) designed garments for her. Several models hired by Eidos became her impersonators. One of them, the Dutch model Lara Weller, met with fans at the end of 1999 in Warsaw: in multimedia salons, on the radio and television, she promoted the most recent part of the famous game. Another model recorded a CD with Dave Stewart credited as “Lara Croft”, and, being a fan of U2, she accompanied the band on a world tour. Cartoons and novels about Lara, albums with her images on their covers and guides for the players were published. Numerous websites were dedicated to her.

There was an opinion about the fleeting nature of games: their lifespan lasts one season or so and their popularity ends rapidly. The critics were writing about “being tired with Lara”, about exhaustion of the formula, thanks to which the virtual heroine was winning hearts and minds of the players. At the end of *Last Revelation*, the fourth part of the game, Lara disappeared. The next part of *Tomb Raider – Chronicles* – opened with the symbolic funeral of the protagonist.

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373 See: Ewa Witkowska, *Cyberfeminizm — wirus w starym systemie*, “Zeszyty Artystyczne” 2003, nr 12, p. 48; cf. also: Leszek Pułka, *Sezonowe spektakle ciała w cyberprzestrzeni*, in: idem, *Kultura mediów i jej spektakle na tle przemian komunikacji społecznej i literatury popularnej*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr 2004; Ł. Ronduda, *Strategie subwersywne...*, E. Bendyk, W. Krusiński, *Wielka gra. Raport, Polityka*, 21 January 2006.



At the same time, the intensive search for the missing was underway. The fans were retelling the most interesting adventures of Lara. The game premiered in December 2000. It summed up the entire classic *Tomb Raider* series and it was the last part of it. It was supplemented with the editor of levels, with the help of which the series *Tomb Raider* I–IV was created and with the users' manual on CD, so that the players could create designs of the protagonist's adventures on their own. The producer provided the recipients with the material on the basis of which the so-called mods, or modifications, could be created. "Game patching/game moding" is considered the most egalitarian and universal strategy for modifying games, a variation of software art<sup>374</sup>. After the fictional disappearance of Lara, her popularity did not fade. Besides the computer games and consoles, also the mobile telephony was interested in her. After 2000, special games for mobile phones were made, as well as a portable GameBoy console. Her adventures were shown to the viewers of Sky GameStar, a digital channel of British television, and to the viewers of an interactive Canadian television.

Lara, however, has returned in the game for computers and consoles, because "people still love Lara, she intrigues them" (Jeremy Heath-Smith). That was why the Lara – the biggest icon of electronic entertainment – had another premiere at the end of 2002. The game titled *Angel of Darkness* has opened a new stage of the famous series. It used the most recent technology: a new code of the game engine was introduced, the rules of control were changed, the ability of 360-degree rotation of camera was added, giving players a sense of freedom. Sixty frames per second speed ensured smooth animation and dynamics of the game.

The successive parts were produced. First *Tomb Raider Legend*. Then *Tomb Raider Anniversary*, on the tenth jubilee of [the premiere of] the first game about Lara. The new game was inspired by events and threads known from earlier episodes. At the same time, it had a fascinating plot, in-depth secondary characters, upgraded graphic engine of the game, as well as new and fully interactive locations. Lara, whose appearance and movements were re-processed by the most recent technology, remained a charismatic heroine.

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374 Cf.: W. Orliński, *Wirtualne kobiety. Gwiazdy z komputera podbijają świat*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 July 1997; Kimberley A. Strassel, *Brytyjskie gry komputerowe w światowej czołówce* (reprinted from *The Wall Street Journal Europe*), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 czerwca 1997; Olaf Szewczyk, *Smok i seks*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 listopada 1999; A. Leszczyński, *Zmęczenie Larą*, *Tomb Raider IV* *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 lutego 2000; Robert Leszczyński, *Lara goes to...*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 kwietnia 2000; Leszek Talko, *Lara i ja*, *Wysokie Obcasy*, 11 sierpnia 2001; L. Pułka, *Sezonowe spektakle...*; Ł. Ronduda, *Game patching/machinima*, w: tenże, *Strategie subwersywne...*



The World of Tomb Raider – the official Polish site of the *Tomb Raider* series founded in 2002 – informed that on November 18, 2008, the next game, *Tomb Raider Underworld*, was launched in the United States. Soon it was followed by the premiere in Europe, as well as in Poland in versions for computers (PCs) and consoles PlayStation 2 and 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS, and for the Wii console. *Underworld*, as well as the games of the entire series, used motifs related to mythologies of ancient civilizations. That time Lara was to unravel the mystery of the Mayan calendar. The game's world was extremely suggestive. Thanks to thousands of photos and refined graphics, it impressed with the beauty of the location (among others, Mexico, Thailand, and Australia). At the same time, the plot maintained the fantasy-like atmosphere. Thanks to the motion capture technology Lara's moves seemed even more fluid and natural. The space of the game, its scenery and the appearance of characters were changing under the weather conditions. The surroundings and objects were fully interactive. At the same time, a precise soundtrack, the main theme, and the background music mingled with the atmosphere of the game. Solving mysteries, overcoming dangers, a journey with Lara ensured a participation in an extraordinary adventure.

So *Tomb Raider* with Lara is still in-game.

We should also mention movies. Two films about Lara with Angelina Jolie premiered in 2001 (*Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, directed by Simon West, cinematography by Peter Menzies, Jr., DVD/VHS premiered 2002, HD DVD 2006) and in 2003 (*Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life*, directed by Jan de Bont, cinematography by David Tattersall, music by Alan Silvestri).

Lara's adventures in the form of animated films as *Tomb Raider Re\Visioned*, made by various cartoonists, were broadcasted irregularly in 2007 on the Gametap website.

Most computer games were made in the fantasy convention. This genre is fully illustrated by *The Witcher*, while the series *Tomb Raider* combines fantastic sceneries and locations with the figure of a contemporary heroine.

### ***The Sims***

From the very beginning, however, games based on other foundations were also created. Those games – primarily strategic and simulative – were referring to contemporary life and professional experiences of the players. Among them, at the end of the 1980s, the most famous one was *SimCity*, in which the players in the roles of an urban designer and a city mayor undertook the task to build and manage the city. The author of this game was Will Wright, and it was produced by Maxis, belonging to the biggest electronic games company Electronic Arts.

Yet it was another game created by Will Wright and released by Maxis – *The Sims*, premiered in 2000 – that aroused the greatest and immediate interest. *The Sims* was the first simulator of everyday life. The matter and the space of the game were common life situations. There were no mysterious lands, no elves, no trolls, no dragons, no magical items, no fearless heroes, no unbelievable adventures, no fights between Good and the Evil. In fact there was nothing to win – at least in the sense of the other games. The players' task was to design the characters of the Sims and their living space to make their way of being, their choices and decisions (made on their behalf) in the world of the game to be a source of satisfaction for them. The game was considered to be the biggest hit ever in the history of electronic games and, including *The Sims 2* and “expansion packs”, it was sold in over 100 million copies. It was published in over 20 language versions. The International Game Developers Association (IDGA) in 2001 awarded *The Sims* the prestigious title of the Game of the Year (Fig. 49).



Fig. 49: *The Sims*, pl.thesims3.com, 23 January 2010

The characters created by the players were only to some extent dependent on them, and their reactions were not fully predictable. The player created conditions of everyday life for characters established by him/her. The characters were spending time on common activities; the players could, for example, arrange their apartment, have impact on their work, control their career, let them start a family, establish relations with other characters, arrange events, evoke emotions. The so-called expansion packs was expanding the repertoire of possible situations, behaviours, and threads. *Vacation, Hot Date, House Party, Livin' Large, Unleashed* – complete *The Sims*. The expansion packs: *University, Open for Business, Free Time, Nightlife, Bon Voyage, Apartment Life*, as well as *Mansion and Garden Stuff, Celebration Stuff, IKEA Home Stuff, Kitchen and Bath Interior Design Stuff, Happy Holiday Stuff*, and several others “stuff packs” complemented *The Sims 2*, diversifying possible scenarios and enriching various segments virtual life of the Sims and their demiurges.

A massively multiplayer online variation of the game, called *The Sims Online* premiered in 2002. A player of this game could co-operate or compete with characters led by other participants. Any number of people could play simultaneously. The realism of the game world, very important for individual enthusiasts, was now to be strengthened by the advertising of the well-known brands such as McDonald's, Intel, or H&M. However, *The Sims Online* was not received well, probably because massively multiplayer online games were not popular enough at that time (Fig. 50).

However, it was in *The Sims Online* that a virtual election episode took place in 2004, a year of real election in the United States. In the virtual city of Alphaville there was an electoral campaign of candidates for the mayor of the city. The report on the campaign was published by the local virtual newspaper “Alphaville Herald”, run by Urizenus – in the real world, Peter Ludlow, professor of philosophy and linguistics. As a result of the manipulation, the election ended with the failure of the Sims community in Alphaville. Democracy failed in the virtual world. Henry Jenkins, who described this virtual episode of *The Sims Online*, emphasized the merging of real and virtual worlds and the role that virtual experiences could play for civic engagement<sup>375</sup>.

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375 See: H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture ...*



**Fig. 50:** *The Sims*, gazeta.pl, 5 June 2008

Another attempt to popularize the online version was to simplify the contacts between the Sims and in result to intensify establishing of attractive relations between them<sup>376</sup>.

In 2009 the announced premiere of *The Sims 3* took place. The most recent version of the game uses technological solutions that are to allow the players the almost unlimited demiurgic functions. They can design any character with any image parameters. And – what is even more intriguing – also personalities of the Sims can be designed almost freely. The game provides 700 million

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376 Cf.: A. Leszczyński, *Koniec z Hollywood?*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 December 2002; Dariusz Ćwiklak, *Gra zespołowa*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17 December 2002; HUBS, *Zgrana gala*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 February 2003; Hubert Salik, *Co jest grane*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6 September 2004; W. Wiśniewski, «*The Sims*» — *ucieczka w codzienność*, “*Kultura Popularna*” 2005, nr 2; Jakub Kuchnio, «*The Sims Online*» *za darmo!*, “*Gazeta.pl*”, 27 February 2008; Eric Pfanner, *Entering Virtual Worlds for Real-Life Pitches*, *The New York Times*, 29 May 2008; Piotr Stasiak, *Sim z blokow*, *Polityka*, 6 September 2008.

combinations of personality features. A high level of realism characterizes environment in which the Sims can move freely, meet other Sims, make new contacts, and visit friends. This allows the players to organize the Sims life according to their imaginations and creative possibilities<sup>377</sup>. The fans of *The Sims* series are interested, I suppose, in the “high level of realism” of objects, space, environment, probability of events and behaviours – in other words, in simulation of everyday life in various manifestations and dimensions. This simulation is supposed to create a realistic context in which the players place or want to place their characters in, created according to their own imaginations and, perhaps, longings, similar to how reality could look in favourable circumstances – similar to the ones they would like to live their lives too (Fig. 51).



**Fig. 51:** *The Sims*, gazeta.pl, 5 June 2008

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377 See: [www.TheSims3.com](http://www.TheSims3.com) (20 March 2010); [www.ea.pl](http://www.ea.pl) (20 March 2010); Dominik Błaszczkiewicz, *EA zapowiada «The Sims 3»*, “Gazeta.pl”, 20 March 2008.

To what extent the world of the Sims is controlled by the players? To what extent a computer program is responsible for functioning of the rules of the game? Was *The Sims* series – the first simulator of everyday life – so interesting to the millions of players because it allowed them to build in the game an environment resembling everyday realities? Or, maybe, they found it attractive because they could put “themselves” in such a context, not only testing the scenarios of the Sims’ behaviours, but also considering one of them as players’ own alter ego? Can we say that one of the Sims becomes then the centre of actions of a player, who because of him/her/himself/herself tries various roles, tests many situations, confronts himself/herself with his/her own life experiences? Does such a great interest in the game result from the need and desire to escape from reality? Or, perhaps, is the game treated like a testing ground – like a laboratory of real life? Both of those variants seem probable, depending on millions of factors and circumstances.

Can we call *The Sims* a game of life from the distance?

### ***Second Life***

*Second Life* is not a game. It is a virtual world where one can be. It was the first virtual world that was noticed by the public and gained interest of millions of Internet users in various countries.

The origins of visualization of virtual worlds were described by Wojciech Siwiak<sup>378</sup>. Although the technical possibilities were allowing for construction of three-dimensional spaces, yet they still had not given the impression of spatial continuity. And although avatars – the visual counterparts of the Internet users – had been created, they were built of sharp, angular shapes and could not move smoothly. Their conventionality – by necessity – was too far advanced. The low level of interactivity was not conducive to the active participation of the Internet users. Some researchers even wrote about “regressive participation”.

The virtual world of *Second Life* appeared on the Internet in 2003, created by Philip Rosedale, the owner of the American company Linden Lab. The technologies were allowing then for much more than before: not only for three-dimensional spatial environments, but also for high degree of its illusiveness in invoking the physical world; not only for simple interactivity, but also for users’ involvement in active operations inside the electronically generated world. *Second Life* is

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378 See: Wojciech Siwak, *Hipertekstualna podróż przez wirtualne światy*, in: *Intermedialność w kulturze końca XX wieku*, eds. Andrzej Gwóźdź, S. Krzemień-Ojak, Białystok: Trans Humana 1998.

not a “normal” game; it is a digital “game of life”. Some people think that *Second Life* creates an independent media reality, “virtual *realis*”<sup>379</sup>. Others believe that it highly simulates physical reality. Anyway, *Second Life* is a virtual space in which various equivalents of the outside world are brought into existence. For example, the centres of Tokyo or Amsterdam, virtual churches, diplomatic posts, agencies of various companies, models of stadiums and hotels, the sites of universities and publishing houses, disco clubs and concert halls, shops and clubs, galleries and editing boards of magazines and journals<sup>380</sup>. The Internet users stay within the *Second Life* environment through their avatars. Avatars – direct counterparts for the Internet users – can be created arbitrarily. Avatars represent people as their images, but not only. They are equipped by their creators with properties selected by them, including character traits. The Internet users assumes full responsibility for behaviours and lifestyles of their avatars. They can also identify with their avatars, and the identification process can be multilevel (Fig. 52).

The access to *Second Life* is relatively simple. It requires installation of Linden Lab software, the acquisition of a virtual site, and the management of one’s own avatar. In that world, avatars live their “second” life and do business, starting with exchange of real money into the local currency – Linden Dollars. The possibility of earning and conducting financial transactions turned out to be a strong impulse for the development of *Second Life*. Living conditions, the equipment of virtual space, its management and development are provided by the program of this simulation and ingenuity of its participants. The infrastructure of *Second Life* is intended to simulate the real world. It is supposed to be better than the real world for it provides for avatars – “delegates” of the Internet users in the virtual world – almost unlimited possibilities of functioning. “I made the better world”, its demiurge may say, for those who are ready to experience new events, meet new people, create themselves again. A trip to the virtual “land of improbability” thanks to the participation in *Second Life* is probably so special because of this very possibility of starting from scratch, on new principles<sup>381</sup>. The creation of

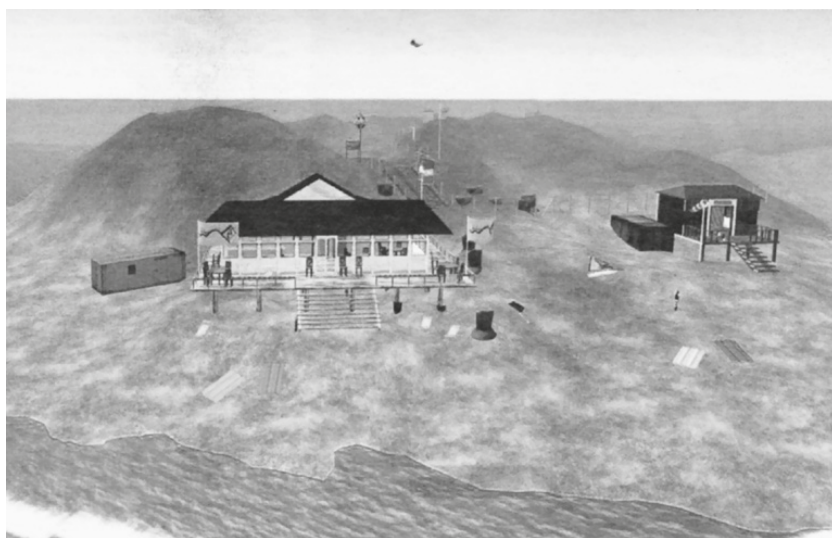
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379 Cf.: Michał Ostrowicki, *Wirtualne realis. Estetyka w epoce elektroniki*, Krakow: Universitas 2006; idem [Sidey Myoo], *Tożsamość człowieka w środowisku elektronicznym*, “Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2008, nr 62–63.

380 Among others, the editing board of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, cf. Rafał Romanowski, *Uwaga na biurko redaktora naczelnego!*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Krakow, 22 August 2007.

381 Cf.: Z. Domaszewicz, T. Gryniewicz, *Internet na świetlistym szlaku?*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 January 2007; Marta Strzelecka, *Stworzyłem lepszy świat, rozmowa z Philipem Rosedale’em*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 July 2007; M. Strzelecka, *Kamera w «Drugim Życiu»*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 September 2007; *Korespondencja z «Second*





**Fig. 52:** *Second Life*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 July 2007

avatars introduces their “carriers” into the space of virtual world; they become “electronic alter ego” of the users releasing them from limitations and obstacles of the physical world<sup>382</sup>. The choice of appearance in the virtual version is equal to the adoption of “electronic corporality” and allows people to actually exist in the electronic world. The Internet users can test their avatars in various ways and submit them to various strategies to enrich their own life experiences. Yet the adoption of “electronic corporality” can also become the basis for further identity mechanisms and lead to identification with the avatar figure. This dimension

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*Life»* Imy Tammas/Marty Strzeleckiej, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 October 2007, 25 October 2007, 8 November 2007, 19 November 2007 – after several weeks the author gave up visiting SL, which in her opinion has only commercial meaning; Piotr Czerski, *Outland. Pragnienie drugiego życia: uzależnienie od gier komputerowych*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 16 September 2007; Jacek Dukaj, *Minus ciało. Spory-polemiki: teologia «Second Life»*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 16 September 2007; *Żyje się tylko dwa razy*, Piotr Lipiński rozmawia z Cezarym Ostrowskim, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 31st–June 1st 2008; Łukasz Sakiewicz, *Dyskretny urok awatara. Wirtualne życie Polaków*, *Gazeta Wyborcza* — Duży Format, 19 February 2008.

382 Cf.: M. Ostrowicki, *Od rzeczywistości do elektronicznego realisu. Człowiek w technologicznej głębi*, in: *Perspektywy badań nad kulturą...*; idem [Sidey Myoo], *Tożsamość człowieka...*



of identification is called “incorporation”, while the consciousness-related aspect of identity processes is called “existentialization”. An electronic personality can be shaped in correspondence with the current personality in the real world or in a specific contrast to it. The participants of *Second Life* may freely manage their behaviours, engage in selected roles, and test themselves in a variety of situations, arrange relationships with various people as they would like to in their dreams, feel deep emotions, repeat various efforts, realize themselves. “The value of environments such as the world of *Second Life* consists in creating a space for development of humans who find and experience a world that is different than the reality of the physical world”<sup>383</sup> (Fig. 53).



**Fig. 53:** *Second Life*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21st–22nd October 2006

The integration of humans with the electronic environment may be holistic, and it may lead to the fullest possible identification with the existence in the electronic anthroposphere. Such state is called an “electronic incarnation”, and it is assumed that it may become a chance to complement the form of personality of a user in the order of physical reality. An electronic incarnation can be conducive to the creation of a fuller existence, and as a result of mutual complementation of experiences from the real world and the virtual world, a total “composite

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383 M. Ostrowicki, *Tożsamość człowieka...*, p. 149.

identity” can be formed. The immaterial character, the specific comfort of that “second life” may also give rise to various dilemmas and problems both within the electronic *realis* and between that and the real existence. It may create a vast repertoire of real problems, conflicts, threats to human existence, located between technology and culture, and for relationships between technology and culture in the macroscale (Figs. 54 and 55).



**Fig. 54:** Philip Rosedale’s avatar, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 July 2007



**Fig. 55:** Michał Ostrowicki’s avatar, courtesy of M. Ostrowicki

The enormous popularity of *Second Life* is conducive to many new virtual initiatives. For example, in July 2008 Google opened the virtual world called “Lively”, which was to be integrated with other services on the Net and allowing their use. However, in November 2008, the company announced the closure of the project. Sibley Verbeck bases his idea on another concept: he proposes to design miniature virtual worlds on the websites of individual customers. The access to them would be as simple as to any website. According to the predictions of the analysts, more and more active Internet users will be creating their avatars in virtual lands<sup>384</sup>.

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384 Cf.: TIGI, *Google ma drugie życie*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 July 2008; T. Gryniewicz, *Nowa fala wirtualnych światów*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 July 2008; TIGI, *Google zwiija wirtualny świat*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 November 2008.

## Real/fictional

The preliminary exploration of the world of fictional electronic games prompts questions about their communication status. The status of the previous audiovisual communicates – films, TV – was based on their analogue character and consisted of a tense play between the power of illusion in evoking the real world and the awareness of conventionality of its presentation. That resemblance to the real world was and still is conducive to the actualization in perception of everyday experiences as if independently of – or besides – the already shaped communication's consciousness. It has become the basis for metonymic interpretation – in a sense, regardless of the producers' efforts to attain the inner structure, the complexity, and the semantic complications of the works. Development of audiovisual means of expression and the increase of abilities of the recipients are conducive to metaphorical interpretation, in spite of a high degree of similarity attributable to analogue audiovisual texts. Thus, the communication status of those communicates oscillates between metonymic interpretation and metaphorical interpretation<sup>385</sup>.

How is it with games, where audiovisuality is digital, not analogue, and the position of the recipients changes fundamentally, because they co-create the space and the course of the game, and they also stay within the space of the game and at the same time observe it from the outside? What are the relationships between the virtual world and the physical world in games? What is real and what is fictitious? And why questions about understanding of texts, about their interpretations by recipients have been replaced with questions about “human identity in electronic environment”?

Tony Wilson suggests treating the Internet as a sphere of play in which various human activities can be accomplished: cognitive, emotional, and ideological ones. His position is not far from the current views on the expansion of ludic factor in contemporary culture<sup>386</sup>. At the same time, Tony Wilson believes that the Internet allows for a cognitively prolific liberation from everyday life, detachment from its various nuisances<sup>387</sup>. Meanwhile, it turns out that people

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385 Cf.: M. Hopfinger, *Kultura współczesna...*, pp. 135nn. On “metonymic interpretation” and “metaphoric interpretation” see: Janusz Lalewicz, *Mechanizmy komunikacyjne «twórczej zdrady»*, in: idem, *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej. Problemy rozpowszechniania i odbioru literatury*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1985.

386 Cf.: N. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves...*

387 See: Tony Wilson, *Hermeneutics, Reception, and Popular Culture*, Polity Press, Oxford 1993.

are passionate about talking about their lives, conquering the Internet for their everyday life – they talk about it in blogs, on individual websites, in extremely popular social services. Thus, with the spread of the Internet access, the everyday life, filtered by the users' narratives, went into the cyberspace where it encounters games of various types and genres, also with fantasy role-playing and everyday life simulators. All those diverse activities share, as one might suppose, the same need for self-expression and self-fulfilment.

Sherry Turkle, unlike Tony Wilson, thinks that nowadays cyberspace has already become a part of everyday life, and online experiences compete with people's life experiences. On the one hand, we have gained a new insight into the issues of human identity, new perspectives for self-reflection and self-esteem, while on the other hand, we can see erosion of the boundaries between the real world and the virtual world. Yet the foundation of one's integrity is his/her functioning in the real world<sup>388</sup>.

The scenarios implemented in the virtual world allow us, among other things, to materialize visions of ourselves, our capabilities and limitations, allow us to gain a distance to our own reactions and behaviours, ideas, fantasies, or illusions. Is the sense of fictitious autonomy of narratives – relatively distinct in prose, film, and television – violated, or minimized in the virtual world of games, especially depending on the type of game? Should participation in games be treated rather as substitutive experiences and actions, as escapist behaviours – or, as a form of training of life, an introduction to behaviours in reality?

Or shall we assume that the opposition between the real and virtual dimensions is false, even with regard to text games, as it is proposed by Jerzy Szeja<sup>389</sup>? According to him, the worlds of games are not separated from the outside world, and the players' life experiences, skills, and personality traits have a key impact on their position both in social groups outside the game and among other players. Participation in games – from text-based to simulations – makes the seemingly separate dimensions intersect, especially in multiplayer games.

And what if we consider not only participation in games, but also in virtual worlds, in which avatars become the alter egos of the Internet users? There are more questions than answers.

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388 See: Sherry Turkle, *Identity in the Age of the Internet*, New York: Simon & Schuster 1997.

389 See: J. Z. Szeja, *Świat graczy*, in: eds. A. Surdyk, J. Z. Szeja, *Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier. Gra w kontekście...*

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## Bibliographic note

This book would not exist without my previous studies conducted for many years and published in: *Adaptacje filmowe utworów literackich. Problemy teorii i interpretacji* (Wrocław: Ossolineum 1974); *Kultura współczesna — audiowizualność* (Warsaw: PIW 1985); *W laboratorium sztuki XX wieku. O roli słowa i obrazu* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993); *Kultura audiowizualna u progu XXI wieku* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN 1997); and *Doświadczenia audiowizualne. O mediach w kulturze współczesnej* (Warsaw: Sic! 2003).

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