

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
TERESA PEKALA – Philosophical and Aesthetic Contexts of the Phenomenon of Marginalization in Late Modernity	9
KRZYSZTOF CICHON – Around the margin in eighty worlds and twenty years. Remarks on the paradoxical nature of the notion of a margin	23
PAULINA SZTABIŃSKA – Contemporary artist and the notion of center and periphery	45
GRZEGORZ SZTABIŃSKI – The margins of transcendence in contemporary art	57
AGNIESZKA KUCZYŃSKA – <i>Surréalisme en 1947</i> – occultism and the post-war marginalisation of Surrealism	87
EWA WOJTYNIAK-DEBIŃSKA – Extrasensory Images: Marginal Phenomenon or Important Trend in the European Art?	101
DOMINIKA ŁARIONOW – Scenography studies – on the margin of art history and theater studies	115
RYSZARD W. KLUSZCZYŃSKI – Interactive film within the paradigm of institutional cinema	127
GRZEGORZ DZIAMSKI – Polish Files in the Lomholt Archive of Mail Art	137
EWA KUBIAK – Cultural metissage – the descriptive concept of hybrid phenomena on the peripheries of cultures	147
ANETA PAWŁOWSKA – The Ambivalence of African-American Culture. The New Negro Art in the interwar period	167

ROMAN KUBICKI – The discreet charm of margins. A considered attempt to make a timid introduction to the rather non-existent aesthetics of Blaise Pascal	195
KAZIMIERZ PIOTROWSKI – The Taming of Irreligion. Essay on the Abuse of the Non-Sacred Idea	215
PIOTROWSKA-TRYZNO MAJA – The Living Death: ‘Trick or treat!’ The Vivid Presence of Death Symbolism in Contemporary Art and a Philosophical Interpretation of its Existential Role	243
ELEONORA JEDLIŃSKA – Art on the brink, <i>ergo</i> the margin of life: Marek Chlanda’s <i>The Tango of Death</i>	257
MAGDALENA SAMBORSKA – The Art of Women – from the Margin to the Mainstream	275
AGNIESZKA ŁUGOWSKA – The Art and Craft Divide – on the Exigency of Margins	285
JULIA SOWIŃSKA-HEIM – Margins and marginalizations in a post-socialist urban area. The case of Łódź	297
Artist’s essay: Anders Liden – Art and Revelation	313
Notes on the Contributors	319

INTRODUCTION

Margins and Marginalization

The concepts spelled out in the title *Margins and Marginalization* usually carry negative connotations. They are associated with having to live outside the main current of events, or with the peripheral and thus inessential aspects of an artwork. Such an understanding assumes a sharp division into major, central, important elements, and minor or marginal ones. However, the validity of such division has been questioned by some contemporary theoreticians and artists. Its arbitrariness and relativist character had been also pointed out in the past.

The aim of the 2014 volume is to investigate the occurrence of the titular concepts in the theory and practice of both old and contemporary art. We wish to examine different conceptualizations of margins and marginalization and we are open to a broad range of approaches to his topic.

Marginesy i marginalizacja

Pojęcia „marginesy” i „marginalizacja” zwykle wywołują negatywne odczucia. Kojarzą się one z przymusem życia poza głównym nurtem określonych spraw, bądź z elementami ubocznymi, a więc nieistotnymi jakiegoś dzieła. Przy takim rozumieniu zakładany jest ostry podział na to, co naczelne, centralne, ważne oraz to, co uboczne lub peryferyjne.

Zasadność takich podziałów była kwestionowana przez niektórych teoretyków i artystów współczesnych. Wcześniej także wskazywano na ich względny charakter i niepewność zakładanego w nich wartościowania. Celem bieżącego numeru „Art Inquiry” jest prześledzenie występowania tytułowych zagadnień w działalności artystycznej i teorii sztuki współczesnej, a także dawnej. Pragniemy uwzględnić różne sposoby ich ujmowania. Zakładamy więc programowo otwarcie na wiele zakresów występowania i wiele sposobów pojmowania marginesów i marginalizacji.

Teresa Pękala

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
teresa.pekala@umcs.lublin.pl

PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC CONTEXTS OF THE PHENOMENON OF MARGINALIZATION IN LATE MODERNITY

Abstract: In the postmodern period we are dealing with many manifestations of marginalization, the understanding of which requires the use of a different language and different categories than those employed during the high phase of modernity. Giving an axiological meaning to the manifestations of marginalization in art is a comparatively recent phenomenon, a product of modernity. Divisions of art before and after its autonomization occur according to different rules. The article recounts the views of J. Habermas, C. Greenberg, and J. F. Lyotard on the central and the marginal in art, and it asks the question about their usefulness today in analyzing the phenomena of the marginal. To understand the ongoing paradigmatic change it might be advisable to consider the reflections of D. Mersch, who points out the ambivalent status of the concept of art and the avant-garde, which permits us to vindicate other concepts, for example that of the rearguard (*arrière-garde*). The age of modernity produced and already partly overcame the totalizing discourse on art, which condemned whole areas of artistic activity to exclusion. The size of the margins seen from this perspective turns out to be variable and dynamic, which calls into question the practice of giving an axiological meaning to the concept. The arguments for the change in thinking that take place in late modernity is the positive appreciation of events and individual experiences, the phenomena of the ephemeral as understood by G. Böhme, and the return to the idea of the whole built on different foundations.

Keywords: margins, exclusion, postmodernity, art, discourse, decline of metaphysics.

Marginalization is a manifestation of a certain state of affairs consisting in being 'outside', 'beside', 'in the background', or 'not in the center'. In the title of the article I am deliberately using the term 'phenomenon' rather than 'problem' because one of the central ideas of this text is the belief that in the

epoch of late modernity we are dealing with many manifestations of marginalization but they are no longer treated as such a significant problem as it was not long ago. Even if some scholars still regard the existence of margins (fringes, periphery) and marginalization as a leading issue, the diagnosis of the phenomenon is presented in the problem framework inadequate for the times in which we live.

According to the PWN Dictionary of Polish [*Słownik języka polskiego*] the word “margin” has the following meanings: 1. the rim of a page not filled with writing or print; 2. something that is secondary, less important; 3. that which happens outside of the mainstream of economic, political or cultural life; 4. the expectation that something will come into existence. Only one of the foregoing meanings has explicitly negative connotations, saying that something that is marginal is less important. The margin of a page is neither more nor less important, it is a space which divides and at the same time joins a text with that which still belongs to the written page but is no longer a text. Such spaces/places “in between” are favorite metaphors in postmodernity. In the literal sense, similar margins provide historians with invaluable knowledge about the reception of a text, its authors, owners, and readers. The meaning that describes the fact of remaining outside the mainstream of some sphere of life, including art, does not necessarily refer to less significant events for a whole: it usually makes this whole more specific. The pejorative implication stems from a particular axiology that an era, its culture, or a group adopts, thereby favoring some spheres while denying significance to others. The history of European art is a good example that aesthetic criteria vary, retaining, however, certain constant paradigmatic determinants. It is only far-reaching civilization changes that radically violate canonical values. When examining the phenomenon of the marginal in art we should therefore remember that it is historically relativized and is not universal. We could risk a thesis that the axiological meaning of margins and the marginal in art is a comparatively recent phenomenon and a true child of modernity. Divisions in art in former times, before its autonomization, occurred according to different rules than those arising from art theory founded on the myth of the aesthetic. Art as part of the project of modernity, both in the Heideggerian and the Schillerian versions, had a mission to accomplish and it was only modern art that was able to realize this mission. Despite significant differences between many projects of modernity, they shared a belief in the important role of art in strengthening or saving something that could be called the idea of modernity. How this special role to be played by artists is understood renders the internal divisions characteristic of all modernity. An example of the ambivalence of attitudes in estimating the success of the mission assigned to art are the views of J. Habermas. He does not share the

optimism associated with the influence of “the rearguard of Enlightenment” on artists or philosophers. “Communication processes need a cultural tradition covering *all spheres* (...). A rationalized everyday life, therefore, could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through breaking open a *single* cultural sphere – art.”¹ Nevertheless, he does not deny that “the idea of modernity is intimately tied to the development of European art.”² In the kind of thinking that saves modernism, art tends to function as the rearguard, i.e. in the positive role of the guard of Enlightenment. Without entering at this point into a dispute with the authors of the Enlightenment project and other differently understood projects of modernity, I would only like to draw attention to the place of art, as a certain form of activity, in modernist theories, mainly in philosophy. In the modernist period, art treated as a concept comprising all its varied meanings belongs to central rather than marginal categories. This position is confirmed by the historically established meanings of the term “modernism”. In the narrower sense, it refers to the changes in art and in aesthetic consciousness in the early 20th century. Although the project of modernism presupposes many options and standpoints, their status is established by reference to the idea of the whole. In the broadest meaning of modernism, which comprises the main ideas of modern times, art occupies a prominent position. Artistic activity contributes to a differing degree to the so-called grand metanarratives: the Enlightenment idea of human emancipation (Schiller), teleology of the Spirit (German idealist philosophy and its continuators), and the hermeneutics of sense (Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur). In each of these grand narratives, art and artists are granted an important position, sometimes a favored one. Art, alongside philosophy or as its most sensitive instrument, is expected to lead mankind towards better times or save the idea of humanism and other precious values of the Western culture. It is thereby an important element of Utopian thinking. Therefore, the position that art occupies in the discourse of modernity is definitely not marginal. The modernist autonomization of art was both the result and the causative factor of modernization processes. However, far-reaching caution should be exercised when approaching a generalizing interpretation that makes possible similar conclusions about art as a whole in the epoch of modernism. In general, it can be said that examination from the time perspective of late modernity requires that we formulate non-categorical judgments, which at best convey the ‘spirit of modernism’ rather than its specific forms. It is only the analysis of the

¹ J. Habermas, *Modernizm – niedokończony projekt*, [Modernity – An Unfinished Project], in: *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*, ed. R. Nycz, Wydawnictwo Baran i Suszczyński, Kraków 1997, p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

phenomenon of modernity from different points of view, and accepting discontinuity and separation of the meanings of modernist philosophy in art and in economics that reveals the whole complexity of the position of art in/and among various discourses³. A separate but important problem is the analysis of the concept of art made by the avant-garde. In Clement Greenberg's classical interpretation, the avant-gardes were a reaction to the modernist attempt to retain the radically purist idea of the autonomous work of art⁴. According to Hermand's classification, avant-gardism is distinguished from modernism as pure innovation by its social involvement. The juxtaposition of the discourse of modernity in the broad sense and aesthetic discourse shows the aporeticity of the thinking that apparently accepts multiple interpretations of the images of the world created by science, morality and art, but at the same time it does not want to abandon the idea of the Enlightenment project as a whole. Thus, when the seemingly internal problem of aesthetics, which is the position of the avant-garde in relation to the whole of the modernist art, is examined in the context of the global antinomies of the period, the borderlines and leading concepts become even more problematic. The general question of the present volume: 'what are artistic margins, how to interpret the phenomenon of the marginality of certain categories, concepts or subjects?' has to take into account the historical and thematic distinctness of modernism in the broad sense. Why modernism rather than another epoch? It appears that it is within modernism, based on metaphysical tradition, that such a strong opposition was able to develop: between the center and the peripheries, between the essential and the marginal, between that which – in art but not only in it – is permanent, and that which is ephemeral, transitory, and phenomenal. A separate issue is the current relevance of this development, which I will discuss later, and the validity of the question about the marginal (margins) and the marginalization of certain phenomena at the phase of modernism termed postmodernity or late modernism/modernity. We shall stop for the time being at the stage of the discussion which defined the research perspective at the time of entry into the phase of mature modernity, within which there was a reckoning with modernism in the writings of Lyotard, Welsch, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Baudrillard, Virilio, Vattimo and many other philosophers. Without returning to the details and the main concerns of that debate, we can treat it as a terminal point not so much of the evolution of modernism as of the discourse on it. As I have already written several times, I do not think that

³ W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna* [Unsere postmoderne Moderne], transl. R. Kubicki, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 1998, p. 93.

⁴ C. Greenberg, *The Notion of Postmodern*, in: *Zeitgeist in Babel. The Postmodernist Controversy*, ed. I. Hoesterer, Bloomington 1991, pp. 42-49.

there was any crucial turning point between modernism and postmodernism. At this point I agree with Peter Strasser, author of the well-known article *Epochen-Schwindel*, who challenged the thesis of the innovative nature of postmodernism. For the discourse on modernity, however, it was an important moment because it made us realize the highly antinomic character of the period, which was established enough to be summed up⁵. It was then that the basic divisions functioning in practice within art were explicitly named, and attempts were made to sum up the experiences of the avant-garde and answer the question of why some determinants of art were rejected while others were regarded as negligibly important, i.e. marginal. Of even greater importance than the attempts to sum up the already gained experience of the avant-garde and its consequences for the establishment of the phenomena regarded as artistically marginal was the question about the claim of the avant-garde discourse to be universally valid. Characteristic of the direction of that discussion were the reflections of Dieter Mersch. He begins with the most relevant issue important for understanding the paradigmatic change taking place at that time: he asks about the starting point in the description of the ongoing process. Should art be situated in relation to the avant-garde or the avant-garde in relation to art? Today, this question may seem hardly revealing. Several conceptions of art can be mentioned such as contextual or institutional art, which showed the incompatibility or even flaw of this question by demonstrating differences between the evaluative and descriptive concept of art. Mersch's merit lies in pointing out the historical nature of both the concept of art and the concept of the avant-garde. Just as there is no timeless concept of art, so too there is no one concept of the avant-garde, Mersch insisted.⁶ Reconstruction work is necessary which would provide, as Mersch writes, a road map in the development of modernism. In a processual interpretation, relationships between the avant-garde and art should be treated as mutual at each stage of the historical development of modernism. The distinction of a certain logic of the process permits us to see that not only aesthetic manifestations, kinds of pictures, objects and installations change then, but at the same time so do the space of art, its *limits*, time limitations, that which art names and that which it does not: in a way also its institutional order, the system of differences, that in which art is distinct through its *othernesses*⁷. Only in this comprehensive presentation of the process of transformations, in which the changing avant-garde changes art and the

⁵ P. Strasser, *Epochen-Schwindel*, in: *Postmoderne – Philosophen und Arabeske*, Frankfurt am Main 1989, pp. 36-49.

⁶ D. Mersch, 2002, *Reflexion und Performativität. Ausbruch der Kunst aus dem Ghetto der Avantgarde*, http://nyitottegyetem.phil-inst.hu/kmfil/MERSCH/kunst_1.htm [12.07.2014].

⁷ *Ibid.*

changed art co-determines further innovations, can we understand changes that took place in the period of modernism. The transformation taking place in this way can be described as a transition from *the art work to the event*. Finally, some *exit of art from the avant-garde ghetto* can be found⁸. Quoting from Adorno, the German scholar further analyzes the rifts and splits within modernism based on the example of art. For our discussion Mersch's stance is important as it emphasizes the ambivalent status of the concept of art and the avant-garde, thereby pointing out the instability of the point of reference in determining the central and the marginal. It should be added that philosophers who refer to the experience of the avant-garde, for example Lyotard, pointed out many years ago that discourse strategies are exclusive. Just as there is no one order of art, no inviolable essence of it, so too there is no universal language at all. Within language games, which are the only order of discourse, there is no superior criterion for choice or universal rules. Each statement, also about art, creates a situation, in which something will be rejected, suppressed or passed over. In his study *La differend* (1983) Lyotard explicitly presented the problem of justice-injustice – although it was examined in the area of linguistics and social life, yet the revealed mechanisms of how discourses function can be interpreted as going beyond this domain. Lyotard's study is, I believe, fundamentally important for the analysis of phenomena of marginalization and exclusion, and it can be treated as a philosophical prolegomena to late 20th- and early 21st-century debates on this subject. There is no room here to present the details of the history of the debate, in which Lyotard's study mattered so much. Of significant importance is keeping a distance, observed already at that time, towards the basic divisions within modernism together with their consequences. The outcome of the discussions at that time was that the influence of the totalizing avant-garde discourse on the image of art, not only most recent but also that of long ago, was noticed. In my book *Awangarda, ariergarda. Filozofia sztuki nowoczesnej* [Avant-gardes, arrière-gardes. Philosophy of modern art] I analyzed these phenomena using the concept of rearguard⁹. The critical function of this concept consists, on the one hand, in revealing latent discourses and themes marginalized and suppressed by the avant-garde discourse. These include many categories that, in some cases even today, are regarded as marginal, irrelevant for understanding contemporary art. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that like the concepts of art and the avant-garde (as pointed out by Mersch), the concepts of the avant-garde and the rearguard are opposed only within historically limited discourse. In

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ T. Pękala, *Awangarda i ariergarda. Filozofia sztuki nowoczesnej*, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2000.

practice, different avant-gardes and rearguards may change places in the history of art. Using the concept of the rearguard one can not only reveal “the margins” of art and excluded discourses, but also reinterpret the whole image of art. I regard this as a useful but not the only tool for “rewriting modernity” in relation to art. At the turn of the 20th century, the rearguard trends returning to discourse helped problematize the firm modernist oppositions such as new/old, original/derivative, present/past, or center/peripheries. There are many examples of weakening the axiological undertone of the existing divisions. Their theoretical outcome was, inter alia, several studies, crucial to the then ongoing changes, on the discourse of originality, which, as theorists like R.E. Krauss insisted, co-occurs with the discourse of copy, and archetypal models compete with intellectual ones. In the contexts of reckoning with the legacy of the avant-garde, the history of the Western concepts of art and beauty were closely examined, paying attention to their ambivalent status. The most important achievement of the finished modernism/post modernism debate was without doubt gaining critical distance towards the different forms of the conceptualization of artistic experience. Just as the meta-artistic consciousness of postmodernism was expressed at that time in references, citations, stylizations and allusions to the art of different epochs, including the recent legacy of the avant-garde, similarly metatheoretical reflection supported radical pluralism in interpretive strategies. The result of these processes was re-evaluation of the aesthetics of content, historicism, regionalism, decorativeness, and the enormous career of *design*. To sum up this theme, it should be emphasized that the period of modernism produced and already partly overcame the totalizing discourses on art which condemned large areas of artistic activity to exclusion. The size of the margins seen from this perspective turns out to be changeable and dynamic, which calls into question the recognition of this category as a distinctive feature of creative activity. Should we therefore look for the sources and the sense of contemporary marginalization when they are both challengeable categories?

I place the foregoing doubts within the framework defined by the diagnosis of the history of modernity as a permanent process which gradually but systematically weakens its metaphysical foundations. I concur here with the interpretation of Vattimo’s *Verwindung* made by Iwona Lorenc, who argues that the process of weakening the vitality of cultural and mental structures based on metaphysical premises has accompanied modern thought from the time of Erasmus, Rousseau, and the Romantics, intensifying in Nietzsche and Heidegger, postmodernism being only its culmination and the realization of

hidden tendencies¹⁰. Taking a longer temporal perspective, Scott Lash voices his views from a similar standpoint: unlike Lyotard cited above, he notices the rejection of the “grand narratives” already within modernism, which is evidenced by Nietzsche’s views, who condemned fundamentalism not only in the aesthetic domains¹¹. Nietzsche’s highlighting of the rhetorical dimension of culture shifts the boundaries between the aesthetic and the historical, thus anticipating the change of whole cultural discourses, especially the process of the aestheticization of reality. The observations that arise after one follows the history of modernity support the conclusion that everything concerning art is part of the long-term process of reinterpreting the foundations of Western culture. Thinking about art needs to take into account the stage in thinking about modernity that has conducted philosophical criticism of modern culture. Relationships between the aesthetic and the philosophical and between the aesthetic and the domain of practical living also determine the direction of thinking about art and in a sense create the framework of its internal axiology. I believe that the emphasis on the essential, the original and the central in opposition to the phenomenal, the transitory and the marginal still lies in metaphysically established thinking. The lesson taught to us by contemporary culture is, first, dealing with facticity, non-identity and the fragmentary that were still underestimated not long ago. Second, it is a challenge to not yield to the temptation of the rhetoric of breaking and denying all continuation. This attitude is not the “winding down” of metaphysics. The changes in today’s art should therefore be treated with great caution. The concept of the margin and the marginal is encumbered with the ideas not entirely free from metaphysical entanglements. A common attitude in the social and artistic discourse in the last decades has been to expose all manifestations of exclusion and stigmatize marginalization, which is sometimes accompanied by the attribution of exceptional importance to the incidental. The discussion on present-day social problems focuses on two issues: exclusion and universalism. Both of them give rise to many ethical questions as evidenced by the dispute concerning the theory of E. Laclau¹². Summing up this dispute, Tomasz Szkudlarek writes: “Exclusion is no longer a moral problem, although it still remains on the list of social problems”¹³.

¹⁰ I. Lorenc, *Minima aethetica. Szkice o estetyce późnej nowoczesności*, Wyd. Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2010, p. 11.

¹¹ S. Lash, *Dyskurs czy figura? Postmodernizm jako “system oznaczania”* [Discourse or Figure. Postmodernism As A Regime of Signification], in: *Odkrywanie modernizmu*, ed. and intr. R. Nycz, Wyd. Universitas, Kraków 2004, p. 472.

¹² E. Laclau, *Ethics, Politics and Radical Democracy – A Response to Simon Critchley, Culture Machine*, 2004, vol. 4, cited after: T. Szkudlarek, *Ekskluzywność: polityka, estetyka, panika*, in: *Powrót modernizmu*, ed. T. Pękala, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2013, pp. 80-83.

¹³ T. Szkudlarek, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

While in the sphere of social life opposition against marginalization will be desirable as long as unjust exclusions take place, this problem is not so axiologically obvious in the area of artistic practices. Taking inspiration from Szkudlarek, we might ask whether exclusion is no longer a problem of art. This question is partly answered by J. Ranciere¹⁴. In the world of universal aestheticization, art exercises a political function in the sense that it establishes the boundaries of perceptibility and shifts beyond them the whole area of that which, for whatever reason, is not recognized by the authorities as important for building the community. An aesthetic criterion for exclusion can be a beautiful place, which is demonstrated from different positions by W. Welsch and by the already mentioned J. Ranciere. It should be remembered what the experience of the avant-garde has taught us: it is easy to fall into the trap of another dominant discourse, this time focused on a different kind of values. The superficial aestheticization of the world results in diminishing in daily life the excluding role of that which, for aesthetic reasons, could be regarded as exceptional, exclusive. 'The palling of exclusivity refers us [...] to *exclusion becoming commonplace*, to the wide distribution and mass dissemination of exclusion as a strategy for constructing the reality. Exclusions are visible and legal; therefore, the modernist strategy for criticism meant to expose exclusions does not make sense'¹⁵. There is no room here to dwell longer on the theme of the social context of the exclusion problem. As the foregoing statements show, it is also important in understanding the role of art. On the one hand, one can see the weakening of art's critical potential in unmasking exclusions, which are present on the surface of social life anyway. On the other hand, art and its next avant-gardes are permanent players on the market of symbolic goods. Highly instructive in this respect are analyses of the literary field carried out by P. Bourdieu. He shows how selection rules are made, what decides about the discovery of a work of art, and how nostalgic reference to once rejected canons can become a new orthodoxy. Bourdieu's opinion is another important voice that relativizes the category of the marginal in art. He argues that it is not enough to say that the history of the art field is the history of struggle for a monopoly to impose valid categories of perception and assessment: it is the *struggle* that creates the history of the field, which gains a temporal dimension through struggle. It is clear what position in this struggle for life and survival is assigned to *distinctive features*, which distinguish galleries, groups and

¹⁴ Cf. J. Ranciere, *Estetyka jako polityka*, [L'Esthetique comme politique], transl. J. Kutyla, P. Mościcki, Wyd. Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2007.

¹⁵ T. Szkudlarek, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

painters from one another¹⁶. The distinctive features, on the basis of which recognizable, leading and central trends are distinguished, and the absence of which (features) causes other trends and phenomena in art to be regarded as marginal, are termed by Bourdieu as *false concepts*, which, as tools of practical classification, produce a new quality; it is these that create similarities and differences by naming them. Once again the problem of the power of discourse returns. In this context Bourdieu refers to the dynamism of meanings of the avant-garde and the rearguard to illustrate the variability and conventionality of similar classificatory meanings. ‘The avant-garde painters have much more in common with the avant-garde of the past than with the rearguard of this avant-garde’¹⁷. The author of ‘reflexive anthropology’ is largely in opposition to the author of ‘aesthetics as politics’ (J. Ranciere), arguing that the world of art is governed by specific laws, and, along with the relationships of art with the world of politics and power, it is necessary to take into consideration the whole complex system of artistic institutions that draw a particular art work into complicated interrelations. It is also important to restore in research the category of creative subject which changes the emergent ‘fields of cultural production.’ The voice of the French sociologist is consonant with the voices that criticize discourse, long present in philosophical and aesthetic discussions, in favor of returning to concrete individual experience. Mersch (referred to above) used similar terms, speaking of the process of transition from the work of art to event. The main object of interest should not be an artistic fact deprived of individual context but a participating event.

Incidentality, facticity, resists discourse – representatives of radical hermeneutics argue. However, the rhetorical epoch did not end with Nietzsche’s writings, we are almost in the middle of it. No wonder, therefore, that radical hermeneutists raise an ethical point, warning against disregarding the truth of individual experience. J. Caputo’s post-Nietzschean philosophy explicitly calls into question the actual applicability of cultural beliefs hidden in discourses to local, casual experiences¹⁸. That which is associated with the transitory, the finite, and the mortal, as well as that which is incidental and ephemeral eludes language. The question arises whether experiences of this type – in a way marginal for the history of human history – can be explored by art? The question is only seemingly rhetorical. We can agree that art has always entered these areas and, due to evidence, reminded us of their

¹⁶ P. Bourdieu, *Reguły sztuki. Geneza i struktura pola literackiego* [Les regles de l’art], transl. A. Zawadzki, Universitas, Kraków 2007, p. 244.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁸ J.D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics. Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 209.

existence more accurately. We are now, however, in the field of influence of another stage in art evolution, in which, after having challenged its own rules, art appears to be returning to essential questions and trying to redefine its place. Its main asset is no longer the aesthetic; on the contrary, the task of art is, according to Welsch, anaestheticization. The above-cited contexts of discussion on what is the leading theme at present, what builds the new field of art – to use Bourdieu's term – do not give an unequivocal answer. Many conceptions, however, confirm the critical distance to the originally modern antinomy of the existing differentiations into the central and the marginal. In the contexts of the ongoing debates one can feel the wish to return to the idea of the whole built, however, on entirely different foundations than the one promoted by the modern era. An example of similar tendencies is the interest in *aisthesis*, which takes into account the cognitive character of aesthetic experiences and appreciates the role of sensory cognition. Artistic activity interpreted in terms of experience and event is by nature less receptive to the rhetoric of exclusion and marginalization. Experience, in the sense assigned to it by Dewey, and recently by Gernot Böhme, is treated precisely as a whole which abolishes the divisions into subject and object, nature and art, or theory and practice. In the increasingly clear tendency of postmodern aesthetics to restore contact with the sphere of everyday life and popular opinion, to regain the ties with practice and action, and with the sphere of emotions and the senses, the problem of the margins of life, revealed by art, recedes into the background. An interesting example of totalizing ideas in art can be architectural projects that change the concept of the external and the internal, and start from a new understanding of the human surroundings. The theories of Gernot Böhme influenced architectural thinking all over the world, as exemplified by the work of such architects, artists, and theorists as Herzog and De Meuron, Olafur Eliasson, James Turrell and Bruno Latour. The leading principles of the new realizations and new aesthetics are atmosphere, synesthesia, and physiognomies, i.e. the concepts involving multi-sensory cognition and contact with Nature. In Böhme's conception this is accompanied by the enhanced appreciation of the ephemeral, i.e. of that which is often explored by performative art focused on the experiences of the corporeal¹⁹. At present it is difficult to observe some universal logic of transformations, a logic that would define the perspectives of art in the aestheticized world, and further specify the aesthetic itself. Representatives of weak thought, like G. Vattimo, assert that as long as our thinking is based on

¹⁹ G. Böhme, *Die sanfte Kunst des Ephemeren*, in: *Sichtbarkeiten 1: Erscheinen. Zur Praxis des Präsentativen*, ed. M. Fliescher, F. Goppelsröder, D. Mersch, Diaphanes, Zürich–Berlin 2013, p. 90.

seeking firm metaphysical foundations that establish, for example, the thematic center and margins, it will not be able to positively experience this truly postmodernist epoch, which is postmodernity²⁰. The lack of distance to the ongoing processes is probably one of the causes that make our thoughts roam the margins of postmodernity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Böhme G. (2013) *Die sanfte Kunst des Ephemeren*, in: *Sichtbarkeiten 1: Erscheinen. Zur Praxis des Präsentativen*, ed. M. Fliescher, F. Goppelsröder, D. Mersch, diaphanes, Zürich–Berlin 2013, pp. 87-108.

Bourdieu P. (2007) *Reguly sztuki. Geneza i struktura pola literackiego* [Les regles de l'art], transl. A. Zawadzki, Universitas, Kraków.

Caputo J.D. (1987) *Radical Hermeneutics. Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.

Greenberg C. (1991) *The Notion of Postmodern*", in: *Zeitgeist in Babel. The Postmodernist Controversy*, ed. Hoesterey I., Bloomington, pp. 42-49.

Habermas J. (1997) *Modernizm – niedokończony projekt* [Modernity – An Unfinished Project], in: *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*, ed. R. Nycz, Wydawnictwo Baran i Suszczyński, Kraków.

Laclau E., *Ethics, Politics and Radical Democracy – A Response to Simon Critchley*, *Culture Machine* 2004, vol. 4, <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/268/253>.

Lash S. (2004) *Dyskurs czy figura? Postmodernizm jako "system oznaczania"* [Discourse or Figure. Postmodernism As a Regime of Signification], in: *Odkrywanie modernizmu*, ed. and intr. R. Nycz, Wyd. Universitas, Kraków, pp. 471-506.

Lorenc I. (2010) *Minima aesthetica. Szkice o estetyce późnej nowoczesności*, Wyd. Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa.

Mersch D. (2002) *Reflexion und Performativität. Ausbruch der Kunst aus dem Ghetto der Avantgarde*, http://nyitottegyetem.phil-inst.hu/kmfil/MERSCH/kunst_1.htm [12.07.2014].

Ranciere J. (2007) *Estetyka jako polityka*. [L'Esthetique comme politique], transl. J. Kutyla, P. Mościcki, Wyd. Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa.

Strasser P. (1989) *Epochen-Schwindel*, in: *Postmoderne – Philosophen und Arabeske*, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 36-49.

Szkudlarek T. (2013) *Ekskluzywność: polityka, estetyka, panika*, in: *Powrót modernizmu*, ed. T. Pękala, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin, pp. 80-83.

²⁰ G. Vattimo, *Koniec nowoczesności*, transl. M. Surma-Gawłowska, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 13.

Vattimo G. (2006) *Koniec nowoczesności*, transl. M. Surma-Gawłowska, Universitas, Kraków.

Welsch W. (1998) *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna* [Unsere postmoderne Moderne], transl. R. Kubicki, A. Zeidler- Janiszewska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa.

FILOZOFICZNE I ESTETYCZNE KONTEKSTY ZJAWISKA MARGINALIZACJI W PÓŻNEJ NOWOCZESNOŚCI (streszczenie)

W epoce ponowoczesnej mamy do czynienia z wieloma przejawami marginalizacji, których zrozumienie domaga się użycia innego języka i innych kategorii niż w latach rozkwitu modernizmu. Nadanie aksjologicznego znaczenie przejawom marginalności w sztuce jest zjawiskiem stosunkowo młodym i jest wytworem modernizmu. Podziały w sztuce przed jej autonomizacją i po jej przekroczeniu przebiegają według innych zasad. W tekście przypomniano poglądy J. Habermasa, C. Greenberga, J.F. Lyotarda na temat tego, co w sztuce centralne i marginalne, by następnie zadać pytanie o ich przydatność do analizy zjawisk marginalności obecnie. Do zrozumienia dokonującej się zmiany paradygmatycznej pomocne być mogą refleksje D. Mer-scha, który zwraca uwagę na ambiwalentny status pojęcia sztuki i pojęcia awangardy, co pozwala rehabilitować inne kategorie, jak na przykład pojęcie ariregrady. Epoka modernizmu wytworzyła i częściowo już przewyciężyła totalizujące dyskursy o sztuce, które skazywały na wykluczenie całe obszary działalności artystycznej. Obszar marginesów widziany z tej perspektywy okazuje się zmienny i dynamiczny, co stawia pod znakiem zapytania nadawanie znaczenia aksjologicznego pojęciu marginesów. Argumentami za dokonującą się zmianą w myśleniu w okresie późnej nowoczesności jest pozytywne dowartościowanie zdarzeń i doświadczeń jednostkowych, zjawisk efemeryczności, jak u G. Böhme, a także powrót do zbudowanej na innych podstawach idei całości.

Słowa kluczowe: marginesy, wykluczenie, ponowoczesność, sztuka, dyskurs, upadek metafizyki.

Krzysztof Cichon
k.cichon@wp.pl

AROUND THE MARGIN IN EIGHTY WORLDS AND TWENTY YEARS. REMARKS ON THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF THE NOTION OF A MARGIN

Abstract: This article obviously aims at messing around, checking if borderlines of disciplines can be ignored, so as not to lose sight of their margins. The increase in the interest in margins may be associated with the change of the cultural paradigm at the turn of 1980s and 1990s, the so-called “spatial turn”, i.e. a rediscovery of the cognitive indispensability of spatial metaphors. This turn was also influenced by intrinsically ex-centric and centrifugal strivings of the avant-garde. However, a much greater incentive to deal with the topic is provided by the common uncertainty of our own position, role and usefulness in the global circulation of culture. A strong sense of marginalization or marginality in the culture described as global is paradoxical in the light of geometry’s “intuition-free” generalizations. There is no margin on the surface of a sphere, at most each point of the spherical space can be described as peripheral locality. And in each such locality, peripheral vicissitudes may occur and do occur, as dramatic as they are uninteresting to anyone outside the locality. It is quite a precise model – *more geometrico* – of the cultural processes which are most frequently called *alienation, defamiliarization, disillusion, enstrangement or estrangement*. Only having referred a margin to a triangle formed by the three terms *остранение, Verfremdung, dépaysement*, can we fully understand the reasons for the constant fascination with the marginal.

Keywords: alienation, disillusion, enstrangement, *остранение, Verfremdung, dépaysement*, perimeter-periphery, *das Unheimliche*/the uncanny.

Margins and marginalisation are frequently analysed in relation to modern culture and art. Those who write about margins do not usually go beyond what is considered to be the common area of cultural anthropology, sociology of space, history of ideas, and aesthetics, as well as ethnology, cultural and economic studies¹. This area is so vast that one may not even get close to its

¹ Referring to a subjective-marginalist trend in economy, developing from the 1870s, which eagerly used microeconomic research, we realize that “after a while” we find ourselves in

margins, not to mention entering them. And there stretches the equally vast area covering the history of old art, iconography, religious studies and theology.² And again, one may spend dozens of years studying iconographical details, elaborating ekphrases of artworks without using the notion of marginality. This article obviously aims at messing around, checking if borderlines of these disciplines can be ignored, so that we do not lose sight of their margins.

The increase in the interest in margins may be associated with the change of the cultural paradigm³ at the turn of 1980s and 1990s, the so-called “spatial turn” (Ger. *räumliche Wende*, *topologische Wende*, *raumkritische Wende*), i.e. a rediscovery of the cognitive indispensability of spatial metaphors.⁴ This turn was also influenced by the intrinsically ex-centric and centrifugal strivings of the avant-garde. However, a much greater incentive to deal with the topic is provided by the common uncertainty of our own place, position, role, and usefulness in the global circulation of culture. The circulation of new trends, facilitated by the Internet, shifted interest in the latest cultural affairs, often described as liquid modernity⁵, which owes its

the field of sociology, and then of political studies and cultural studies, and that above-mentioned row of disciplines spontaneously forms a circle. See: H. Przybyła, *Filozoficzne korzenie nurtu subiektywno-marginalistycznego w ekonomii*, in: *Marginalizm zachodni*, (ed.) U. Zagóry-Jonszty, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach, Katowice 2011, p. 63-66.

² The article and above-mentioned distinctions refer to the European culture and its main, Christian religious tradition.

³ A series of turns – increase in interest in particular notions and metaphors describing culture is a phenomenon which was initiated in the middle 1960s by the linguistic turn; R. Rorty (ed.), *The linguistic turn. Essays in Philosophical Method*, University of Chicago Press Chicago/London 1967; through «*ontologische Wendung*» already called for by H.-G. Gadamer (*Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophische Hermeneutik*, Mohr, Tübingen 1960); «*Kulturalistische Wendung*» in the 1990s. (D. Hartmann P. Janich, *Die Kulturalistische Wendung. Zur Orientierung des philosophische Selbstverständnisses*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1998), after the “pictorial turn” (W.J.T. Mitchell, *The pictorial turn*, in: *Picture theory. Essays on verbal and visual representation*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1994, pp. 11-34), the “iconic turn” (G. Boehm, *Die Wiederkehr der Bilder*, in: G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?* Fink, München 1994, pp. 11-38) and the “narrativist turn” (M. Kreiswirth, *Tell me a story: The narrativist turn in the human sciences*, in: M. Kreiswirth Th. Carmichael (ed.), *Constructive criticism: The human sciences in the age of theory* Toronto/Buffalo/London 1995, pp. 61-87. See: D. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2012.

⁴ *The spatial turn*, in: *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, Metzler, Stuttgart 2008, p. 664. Both linguistic expressions and those described by linguistics as metalinguistic. See: D. Piekarczyk, *Metafory metatekstowe*, UMCS Publishing House, Lublin 2013.

⁵ A great role in disseminating a metaphor of “liquidity” was played by the whole series of books by Zygmunt Bauman, which emphasized a word: liquid in a title. The most frequently repeated metaphor of culture is a metaphor of a turbulent flow and the Navier–

disorientating dynamic and chaotic nature⁶ largely to our fundamental cognitive uncertainty, lack of an explicit answer to the question which must be asked in each culture: what is the shape-form of the world we live in? Culture as a whole, as a system of symbolic connections between available facts, values, and norms behaves in a mimetic way towards what we acknowledge to be a model or image of nature⁷. We have not known it for more than a hundred years. And we do not know it not only at the metaphorical level, but also in relation to physical reality⁸. It is worth considering to what extent this vagueness or even inability to acquire a clear image of nature influences the demands for “the abolishment of the whole” and its replacement with multiplicity: “we have seen through the deception of the whole, we have learnt to recognize and acknowledge multiplicity instead.”⁹

If we do not know the form and order of the universe, the domain of human culture also reflects this vagueness. The question about the centre of the universe is, in the light of modern cosmology, a senseless question, one which cannot be answered. Culture abhors the lack of answers even more than a vacuum. Determining, defining, indicating a centre has moved from the domain of nature to the human world – *oikumene*. Consequently, various loci compete for the central position. If there is no centre, or there is no consensus on recognizing the centre, it is not possible to point to the margins. This process has been repeatedly described and recognized as the politiciza-

Stokes' equations describing its physical parameters, see: K. Cichoń, O sprytnych sposobach wypatrywania ducha. Przyczynek do ikonografii płynności, *Studia Ełckie*, 15, no. 3, 2013, pp. 369-392. Undoubtedly, contrary to the extremely “rational” and bureaucratic world from before one hundred years ago, described by Max Weber through the metaphor of a steel cage (*eisernen Käfig*), a contemporary form of culture is much freer, yet unceasing fluctuation of elements was also an obvious component of reality in the old culture.

⁶ An inability to capture a rule, an algorithm, a formula describing the principles which govern this chaotic movement of culture poses a challenge to technologically oriented culture. It is proved by fast developing attempts to analyze and shape the history of culture with statistics and IT tools. An example of such an attitude, described as big data mining, may be a net map, and metaphors as “HCI” (human-computer interaction); see: L. Manovicz, *The Language of New Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts 2001.

⁷ Of course the influence is mutual. Principles determining *oikumene* were being used at explaining the nature. An example is Heraclitus thesis: “War is the father of all and king of all”; *πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστιν, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς* (Herakleitos, D: 53; see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, hg. W. Kranz, Vandermannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin 1954, Bd. I, p.16.

⁸ N. Afshordi, R.B. Mann, R. Pourhasan, Czarna dziura u początku czasu, *Świat Nauki*, 9 (277), September 2014, pp. 29-30.

⁹ W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, transl. R. Kubicki A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 1998, p. 238.

tion of culture¹⁰. The term “functionary” (Fr. *fonctionnaire*; Ger. *Funktionär*)¹¹ explains to what extent it is politically necessary to precede each common human activity with a “critical” and “democratic” argument (discourse) on reference points, criteria, canons, centres and margins. The expression *fonctionnaires publics* was used in 1770 by A.R.J. Turgot¹². It is hard to imagine any element – Paradise, Hell – of the old world, rooted in religion, described with this term. Symptomatically, Turgot was one of the authors of the Enlightenment theory of progress, breaking the static vision of the social world and the philosophy of history. As early as in the 19th century, the term “functionary” was used in political context, and after the Springtime of the Peoples in 1848, it frequently described a revolutionary way of acting.¹³ Today it seems natural to us that certain areas of reality either function or do not function (are switched on or off). The meaning of this word conveys a belief about impermanence and changeability. There is nothing surprising in the statement that “the centre does not hold”, unless we recall the Cartesian coordinates and the geometric image of the world. In geometry (or at least in its European version of Greek origins), a centre, like an edge, perimeter, etc. cannot alternately function and not function. If they are once determined, they just exist. They may only be taken or not be taken into consideration. Under the influence of pragmatism, the opposition of “functions/does not function” has become synonymous to “is/is not”. This aporia between the static-geometric language and the progressive-revolutionary one reveals a conflict between the poetics or metaphors describing reality. The margins or marginalia in question also sometimes “function” better and sometimes worse.

A characteristic feature of contemporary and modern maps and descriptions of *oikumene* is the fact that they are unprecedentedly dominated by science treated as the only authoritative cognitive tool. On the one hand, science is unable to explicitly recognize the forms of nature against which *oikumene* positions itself and which it unwillingly imitates; on the other hand, for the last two hundred years, the standards of scientific cognition have greatly influenced the structure of the imagination or at least intersubjectively communicated its visions and schemes. The especially noticeable standards, which are most frequently called for include the Cartesian demand for clarity and explicitness of knowledge, and an inclination towards treating the *more*

¹⁰ A recent example is a series of lectures by Andrzej Turowski, *Politozy sztuki współczesnej* presented in 2013 in the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

¹¹ See: G. Schlünder, *Funktionär*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 1972, vol. 2, pp. 1145-1146.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1145.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1146.

geometrico method as a universal one, justified not only in relation to Nature, but also to the world of human experiences¹⁴. It is worth noting the consequences of the well-known distinction made by Mircea Eliade between the “secular space” and the space in traditional cultures, the “sacred space” in which the *sacrum* is located.¹⁵ For these reasons, the homogenous secular space, striving for the elimination of discontinuities, localities, heterotopias, including a scientific model of space, does not provide for anything like a margin. “For a secular person (...) space is homogenous and neutral, without any discontinuities between qualitatively varying elements. Geometric space may be divided and limited in any direction, yet its structure does not create any qualitative diversity and, consequently, any orientation”¹⁶ It is difficult to talk about a margin, either in relation to Newton’s absolute, indefinite space or to Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome¹⁷ growing in different directions, if they do not contain any privileged, characteristic points. The strong sense of marginalization or marginality in the culture described as global is paradoxical in the light of geometry’s “intuition-free” generalizations. There is no margin one could point to on the surface of a sphere, at most each point of the spherical space can be described as peripheral locality. And in each such locality, peripheral vicissitudes may and do occur¹⁸, as dramatic as they are uninteresting to anyone outside the locality. It is quite a precise model – *more geometrico* – of the cultural processes which are most frequently called *alienation, defamiliarization, disillusion, or estrangement* (*Fr. aliénation, étrangeté, éloignement, dépaysement, distanciation*). *Verfremdung* (alienation) is frequently acknowledged as a source term for numerous similar descriptions of presence in the form of Leibniz’s cluster of monads linked in the global (certainly rhizomatic) network, and, despite that, unwilling to take an interest in what is beyond them. It was used by Bertold Brecht after he watched a performance of the Beijing opera in Moscow (*Verfremdungseffekt in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst*, 1936), as an opposite to

¹⁴ However, under the influence of the interest in irrational and unaware elements of human psyche started by Freud, extreme epistemological scientism lost its position dominating in the late 19th century.

¹⁵ M. Eliade, *Sacrum i profanum. O istocie sfery religijnej*, transl. B. Baran, Aletheia, Warszawa 2008, pp. 18-19; [Das heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari: *Kłaczce*, transl. Bogdan Banasik. “Colloquia Communia”, 1988, no. 1-3 [*Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, vol. 2, Mille plateaux, 1980].

¹⁸ Apart from “sudden change of fate” (Aristotle, Poetics VI, 1450 a 34f.) περιπέτεια created from πτπειν – fall, sudden turn, which is associated with a drama, it has a meaning which describes a physical movement, a sudden turn, turning up which leads to a fall (μεταβολή; see Aristotle, Poetics XI, 1452 a 23f), appearing where we did not intend.

Aristotle's category of "empathy" (συμπάθεια; Lat. *sympathia*)¹⁹. According to Brecht, *Verfremdung* produces the desired effect of surprise and curiosity instead of traditional clarity, obviousness and comprehensibility (*Über experimentelles Theater*, 1939). We may also mention the twenty-year-long attempts to find or rather construct a category describing a similar way of acting postulated for art, within the circle of the Russian avant-garde. In 1916, Viktor Borisovich Shklovsky, a member of the avant-garde group OPOYAZ (Obshchestvo izucheniya Poeticheskogo YAZyka – Society for the Study of Poetic Language), analysing literary language, used the neologism *остранение* (translated as "defamiliarization" or "estrangement") in his essay "Art as Technique". Writing about the ability of literature to produce an effect of oddity, which helps us to avoid everyday linguistic automatism, Shklovsky associated defamiliarization with literary images²⁰, in order to describe them as "presenting an object outside the usual order".²¹ The third term is *dépaysement* (change of scenery) used by the Surrealists, which described the state of disorientation, something which we did not expect²². A belief about the need for such aesthetic activity informs vast areas of avant-garde art, searching for unconventionality, strangeness, eccentricity. Eccentricity as a synonym of *Verfremdung*, and at the same time a comprehensible term, explains the relations between the avant-garde and the margin²³, similarly to the literary meaning of *dépaysement* – alienation, seclusion, disorientation, exile (here – exile to the margin). Only having referred the margin to a triangle formed by the three terms: *остранение*, *Verfremdung*, *dépaysement*, can we fully understand the reasons for the constant fascination with the marginal. The margin is a term describing particularly

¹⁹ T. Weber, *Verfremdung*, in: *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. K. Gründer, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2001, vol. 11, p. 653; see: J.J. White, *Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory*, Camden House, Rochester, N.Y. 2004, p. 107. Aristotle is putting together in one fragment notions of empathy and catharsis (κάθαρσις), see: *Politics* 1340a-b, 1341b.

²⁰ („Я лично считаю, что остранение есть почти везде, где есть образ"). In В. Шкловский, *Искусство как прием*, <http://www.opojaz.ru/manifests/kakpriem.html> (29.08.2014).

²¹ Е. Перемышлев, *Шкловский, Виктор Борисович*, in: *Энциклопедия Кругосвет*, Универсальная научно-популярная онлайн-энциклопедия; http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/kultura_i_obrazovanie/literatura/SHKLOVSKI_VIKTOR_BORISOVICH.html, (accessed 29.08.2014); В. Шкловский, *Собрание сочинений в трех томах*, Художественная литература, Москва 1973-1974, vol. 1-3.

²² J. Engelhardt, *Gestus und Verfremdung: Studien zum Musiktheater bei Strawinsky und Brecht/Weill*, Emil Katzwichler, München-Salzburg 1984, p. 73.

²³ Contrary to the intention of Brecht, who emphasized (*Der Verfremdungseffekt in anderen Künsten*, 1936) that his understanding of *Verfremdung* has nothing in common with the Surrealists' search for impressive strangeness, based on mesmerizing, suggestive experiences, so referring to traditional aesthetic requiring empathy (*Einfühlungsästhetik*); see: Th. Weber, *Verfremdung* in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 11, p. 654.

interesting locations for the avant-garde's desire to arouse interest and cause surprise. However, the medieval inscriptions *ubi sunt leones* in the margins of maps are much older than the avant-garde belief that margins are a natural location for "enormous miracles" and monsters²⁴. The concept of the avant-garde as a form of culture having self-awareness of its own identity, its own alienation or its own unavoidable centrifugal marginality is making a comeback. Thanks to the terms *Verfremdung*, *dépaysement* and *осмпаеиue* we can more easily understand what connects such phenomena as collage, montage, or deformation, which are so typical of 20th- and 21st-century art, with margins and marginality.

In order to better determine the character of contemporary margins, we should add one more term in two language variants: *das Unheimliche/the uncanny*. The German term, used as a synonym of what fills us with terror (*das Schreckliche*), made a glittering career in Romanticism thanks to psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Used by Ernst Jentsch in 1906²⁵, it became one of the crucial notions of the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, who described states of anxiety, fear and terror (*Schreckhaften, Angst- und Grauerregenden*)²⁶. In 20th-century humanities, it was employed in aesthetics as *Unheimliche*, the *uncanny* (Fr. *inquiétant, l'inquiétante, étrangeté*). The synonymy of *Unheimliche* and *Verfremdung* naming the same state of strangeness, separation from what is familiar and understood, does not herald the vast and unclear, incoherent, chaotic spaces which open when we realise that every local marginality may be treated and described as "uncanny".

What is local, marginal is perceived as strange, incomprehensible, odd. We are dealing with the kind of perception differing from the previously discussed one, which focused on the centre; this perception concentrates on the margin of the observation field, on what disrupts our perceptual habits. A margin, a borderline, an edge is often a place which attracts curiosity (*curiosité*), recognized by Krzysztof Pomian as an important driving mechanism of modern European culture.²⁷ The European passion for collect-

²⁴ Intuition for indispensabilities of it what bizarre and marginal for full understanding (*miraculous revelation*) we can read in the Aby Warburg's note: *per monstra ad spheram*; see: J. Szczuka, *Per monstra ad sphaeram. Aby Warburg i jego biblioteka, Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty*, 1999, vol. 53, no. 1-2, pp. 25-28.

²⁵ E. Jentsch, *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen*, "Psychiatr.-neurologische Wochenschrift", 22 (1906), pp. 195, 198.

²⁶ S. Freud, *Das Unheimliche* (1919), in: *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet*, ed. Anna Freud (u.a.), Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, Frankfurt a. Main 1999, vol. 12, pp. 227-278. See: H. Hühn, *Unheimliche das*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 11, p. 172.

²⁷ K. Pomian, *Collectors and curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, transl. by E. Wiles-Portier, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K. 1990.

ing, “scoring” successive margins in the hope of discovering odd curiosities has become a common fascination for the avant-garde, then the so-called counterculture²⁸, and today, in a commercialized form, for many “alternative” groups. An accurate motto for this 20th-century cultural trend is the title of the novel by Milan Kundera *Život je jinde* (Life is elsewhere), published in 1969, the same as the predictions of Theodore Roszak for *Counter Culture*. Kundera’s continuing search for the “somewhere else”, the wonderful, interesting life, always slipping away, may be recognized as one of the metaphors for something invisible or elusive. Krzysztof Pomian, searching for an explanation of the passion for collecting new experiences associated with the curiosities not to be found anywhere else, writes about “la collection entre l’invisible et le visible”. Giving up metaphor, we must acknowledge it as a symptom of (not necessarily religious) transcendence. The human inclination towards the spatial visualization of abstract transcendence as something similar to, yet extending beyond, a margin, must be probably acknowledged as the source of both fascination with margins and marginality, and their controversiality. We should also attend to one more spatial aspect which constantly accompanies the images of these abstractions, namely, to their orientation in space, to the literarily understood mutual relation between *margin* and *transcendence*. The descriptions of culture referring to the notion of transcendence use vertical metaphors. *Top* and *bottom* are oppositional categories, typical of mythological, religious descriptions of reality, which outline the space of transcendence. Always leading outside the limits of *hic et nunc*, on the one side – downwards, towards the metaphors of the source and depth, on the other – upwards, towards the metaphors of the divine apotheosis of the Absolute. Ignoring the contrast between top and bottom was listed in 1948 by Hans Sedlmayr among the seven symptoms of contemporary culture, leading, in his opinion, to the degrading loss of the centre (*Verlust der Mitte*)²⁹. It seems that this is not about not distinguishing top and bottom, but about downgrading the vertical plane of transcendence to a marginal role in culture against the much more comfortable horizontal plane of “globality”, consisting of local-marginal viewpoints. The lack of interest in either the deep sources or soteriological heroizing apotheosis results from the “unlimited” possibilities of acting on the homogeneous plane of the global market, situated at the same level, presumably equally accessible to

²⁸ What is interesting is distinctly antireligious feature of a protest against authorities, see Th. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, University of California 1969.

²⁹ “Aufhebung des Unterschieds von «Oben» und «Unten».” As cited in: H. Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit*, EBG Verlags, 10 Auflage, Wien 1983, p. 164.

everyone. People “travel” along the vertically directed dimension of transcendence, usually carried by the narrated stories³⁰. Narration, telling, “sinking into” deeper and deeper stories always leads away from the life where action (Lat. *actio*) takes place. This difference in perpendicular dimensions, mutually crossing traditions was expressed by the distinction between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. The pragmatic manner of acting has been always directed (at least from the beginning of the modern times), at restraining, controlling Nature. Occupying, restricting the successive points in the Universe and including them inside *oikumene* may be presented in the Cartesian order of rational and explicit geometry (more precisely, in the order of all disciplines which act in accordance with the *principia mathematica*). Soon after Descartes’ proposal, the sovereign order of a story, narration which is independent of the requirements of geometry³¹ was defended by Giambattista Vico, who accentuated the role of language as the basic dimension of the human world and activity³². Pondering over the boundaries of the notion of margin, we can use a simple model specifying the margin as each point where a diachronically perceived plane crosses the one which we recognize as the area of synchronically appearing phenomena. The former is closer to narration, language, and history as well as the flow of time, the latter – to iconicity, geometry and the expansiveness of space. In such a model, each point is a margin; the problem appears if we want to determine the position and nature of the centre. Let us refer to the words of the “classic”: “Tell me, o Muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy (...) Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatsoever source you may know them.” That is how Homer begins the story of Odysseus. He suggests starting an epic poem from any, even marginal, point, not bothering with the rules of construction,

³⁰ See: footnote no. 27.

³¹ We must pay attention to two opposing features of narration. On the one hand, as a form of imagination, it seemingly is not subject to any laws or rules. Impossible figures feel fabulous in a geometric order as outlines of human imagination. History of literature provides numerous examples of narration liberated from requirements of *ratio* and logic. At the same time, embroidering a story, telling as acting within *vita contemplativa* – βίος γνωστικός, -θεωρητικός should be somehow similar to the sight or look of *contemplatio-θεωρία* based on a metaphor, a geometric order, allowing a listener to find a perspective from which a story becomes readable, understood.

³² In Vico’s views, Gadamer emphasizes his belief about the role of *φρόνησις* – practical knowledge which is directed at a particular situation. Thus, it has to capture «conditions» in their unending changeability”. In this perspective, Vico juxtaposes theoretical wisdom (*sophia sive sapientia*) used in natural sciences with much more practical *phronesis*. A question of where is currently the boundary between *actio-contemplatio* outreaches the margin of this article. As cited in: H.-G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda*, transl. B. Baran, PWN, Warsaw 2004, p. 50–51.

searching for the centre, or starting “from the beginning”, etc. It is as if he shared the postmodernist belief about the end of the “grand narratives”. He gives this advice in the invocation to the superhuman power – the Muse. Even if an invocation primarily takes the form of a justifying formula, which explains to the listeners why the familiar myths-plots, frequently narrated by earlier, anonymous *aoids*, are now recited in a different order, it can be also perceived as a way of expressing the belief that the freedom of moving in both dimensions of life: *πρακτικός* and *θεωρητικός* (practical and theoretical) requires something that exceeds human abilities. The subject of the Odyssey is coincidence, perceived as an act of gods’ will. The human hero, Odysseus, is extraordinarily distinguished by the gift of *fronesis* – smartness, worldly wisdom. Only due to that is he able to escape even the most marginal (treacherous, pleasurable, etc.) vicissitudes and pursue his aim. Odysseus is cut out to be a hero, since he is “very canny” and will deal with any turn in action or fate. Greek *πολύ-τροπος* may be translated as “seeing or knowing much, knowing many ways, multidirectional, multidimensional”. We are dealing with Odysseus, because the hero is nothing other than a mobile centre in a comeback tour to the starting point, Ithaca, which closes the perimeter-*periphery*. In this sense, the action-packed epic illustrates the movement characteristic of self-reflection bending towards its starting point – as is the case with every theory and numerous contemplations. The centre may appear in the place of each margin when we direct our attention there. Within the space of *vita activa*, each smallest episode which is granted reflection, turned into a story, becomes the centre of this story, standing out from the surrounding marginal actions. Within the space of *vita contemplativa*, each moment of narration, point in a story which induces someone to take action may be the most important-central point of this story. The simultaneous use of the possibilities given by these separate spaces requires the employment of a symbol. Or rather, a symbol may be understood as a result of this simultaneous activity. If it works, the outcome is art. Explaining the historical understanding of a symbol, Gadamer quotes Schelling: “Mythology in general, and any piece of mythological literature in particular is not to be perceived schematically or allegorically, but symbolically. For the demand of the absolute artistic representation is: representation with complete indifference, so that the universal is wholly the particular, and the particular at the same time wholly the universal, and does not simply mean it.”³³ Searching for the definition of a margin, we have unwillingly reached the

³³ F.W.J. Schelling, *Die Philosophie der Kunst* (1859), transl. by D. Scott as *The Philosophy of Art*, University of Minnesota Press 1989, p. 14.

definition of a symbol and the relationship between the marginal and the central as an element constructing symbolic order.

Which makes no sense (not so much from the logical as from the geometrical point of view): while searching for and discussing the margins of the global culture (adequate for a spherical model)³⁴ is a completely natural phenomenon as one of the numerous conventions of linguistic games, and does not evoke a sense of paradox, the controversiality of the concepts of margin and marginality results from their equally strong connection with what establishes a geometric-spatial metaphorical costume of all theories. In the game of narration, multiplicity of perspectives, appearances and views, which would make each image useless, “impure”, is by all means acceptable, or even expected. It is a repeatedly discovered truth: “In the introduction to his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein gave an account of his experience with holistic attempts and his transition to the alternative solution of ‘sketches of landscape’ (...) The field of Wittgenstein’s thought (...) cannot be considered from only one point of view; it must be rather ‘traversed along and across’. It can be made available via different ways and through numerous ‘landscape sketches’, whereas even at the end we will not achieve an integral image, but we are condemned to the truth of many perspectives.”³⁵ Welsch’s remarks create a territory which is accessible only to *ἀνδρα πολύτροπον*, *oikumene* as a locus of an unending game and its equally unending reporting.

Let us consider the example of a map in order to reveal the source of the controversiality of the margin in contemporary culture. The central point of the maps of the world (*mappae mundi*), or rather outlines depicting the whole in its basic structure, was Jerusalem, frequently marked in the very centre, at the meeting of the three continents known to antique and medieval geography. Jerusalem was considered to be the centre of the world not only due to its real importance, but because this was where the crucial moments of

³⁴ Sphericity is a visual equivalent of the belief about the existence of the Whole. About a consistent nature of the reality. Even if, according to Lyotard’s or Welsch’s belief we reject existence of the Whole and we acknowledge chaotic irregularity to be more compatible with the reality, there is still some place for a margin within. Even if we can point out margins in the metaphor of randomness and shapelessness of: *carchat- d’âme*, which was used by surrealists. See G. Bataille, *Informe*, in: “Documents”, 7, 1929. Topping the edifice of National Nederlanden in Prague (*Tančící dům*) designed by Frank Gehry is an excellent example of artistic using the irregularity: “The building was incorporated into an early 20th century street, and is situated next to a house crowned with an openwork globe. Gehry repeated that motif, but transformed it by attaching several steel rods that jut out of the spherical surface”; see: K. Cichoń, But Gentlemen! Globalisation (in Art) is no Longer an Issue, *Art Inquiry*, vol. IV(XIII), 2002, p. 103.

³⁵ W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, p. 248.

the history of salvation (*historia sacra*) took place. The centre of not only the map, but also the territory of *oikumene* is marked with the most important myths cementing the culture. The fact that it is no use searching for a centrally located capital of the world on contemporary maps results not only from a different method of visualizing space, but also from a different political situation. It is the effect of the belief defining the last stage of culture (postmodernism) that there are no longer any great narrations, no myths cementing the whole, no agreement about the common theological *historia sacra*. From Lyotard to Welsch, this belief is considered to define modernity.³⁶ According to these opinions, we live in the world without a centre, but at the same time, in the world which is interested in the nature of margins, whose outlining requires the presence of a centre.

The *mappae mundi* were not used to depict the shape of the world and the spatial relations between its parts. The illuminations usually accompanying *mappae mundi* were the representations of Adam and Eve. It was more important for a reliable representation of the world's condition to recall the original sin as something that impoverished and infected Nature than to outline the lands and the seas. *Mappae mundi* were schematic portrayals of history. Apart from the directions of the world, they revealed its beginning (*arché*), and, at the same time, its end and purpose (*telos*).

For the first time, we are reaching an interesting question of the marginal location of God in relation to the world. The extreme points of the linearly developing *historia sacra*: the creation and the Last Judgement often overlapping in the East in the example of Stoic cyclical *apokatastasis*, are distinct manifestations of the presence of God, who says about Himself: "I am Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1, 8); "I am the First and the Last" (ἔσχατος) (Rev. 1, 18). It is hard to find more explicit, extremely marginal self-description. The apocalyptic phraseology reveals the extent to which the notions of margin and marginality are inseparable from the timeless, geometric notions of Greek origin. The *Beginning* and the *End* are not perceived as margins. When we talk about a margin, we rarely mean time and the past, and almost always – space and the presence. The maps with a distinctly marked centre in relation to which margins can be outlined are created by cultures in which the

³⁶ "To put it extremely simply, what we acknowledge to be «postmodernist» is distrust of metanarration. (...) Credibility of all stories is excluded; in order to authorize the post-modern scientific discourse, we cannot refer either to dialectics of Spirit or even to the idea of human emancipation" J.F. Lyotard, *Kondycja ponowoczesna. Raport o stanie wiedzy*, transl. M. Kowalska, J. Migasiński, Fundacja Alethea, Warszawa 1997, pp. 20, 162; "Splitting up with the past is an act of many generations. (...) Lyotard's typology seems to be acceptable: As long as we experience dissolution of the whole as a loss, we exist in modernity. Only when we start perceiving this dissolution positively, we move on to post-modernity". As quoted in: W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, p. 242.

flow of time, history is experienced as *historia sacra*, as a mythical world axis determining the centre. The places which differ fundamentally from the others: the centre and margins, acknowledged by Eliade to be identical to the sacral space, define the location of the cultures in which myth is still considered to be manifesting its power. It seems that in a scientific, extremely rationalized vision of the world, this type of differentiation should not exist. According to Leszek Kołakowski, “The myth of the Intellect absolves us of desperation, it is reason against randomness, yet it cannot be reasonable itself. It is, however, supported by the law originating from the equal arbitrariness of both options: for the myth or against it”.³⁷ Permanent presence and permanent interest in the margin seems to be an argument for Kołakowski’s intuition that both Intellect and Science are contemporary, special forms of myth³⁸.

Let us now move to a sketchy, brief description of the ways of perceiving a margin and its relation with the centre in the old, pre-Enlightenment culture and iconography. Let me mention three crucial factors which influenced the expression of form and the perception of content in the old culture:

- the central perspective with a meeting point located near the centre of the picture;
- a strong connection between the composition of the artwork and the rhetorical-cognitive figures of thought (*figurae mentis*), in which the content of each analysed notion existed in the centre of both the speaker’s and the listeners’ awareness;
- the placement of ornamental elements (sometimes mistakenly treated as meaningless and only decorative) on the margins (on the border or the architectural frame surrounding figural representations).

Owing to the abovementioned factors, the interest in marginalia in the painting-focused visual culture from before the 20th century was limited³⁹. The history of art most frequently illustrates this late realization of the epistemological consequences of framing pictures (both the painted ones and the related mental, internal pictures) with the interest and surprise aroused in the 1870s by the work of Edgar Degas, which accentuated “the fragmentary

³⁷ L. Kołakowski, *Obecność mitu*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1994, p. 49.

³⁸ This is also a belief expressed by T.W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

³⁹ We cannot disregard the fact that the European culture “grew out” of the exotic focusing attention on itself relatively late. Secularisation played a significant role. Religious culture, convinced of its role as a truth depository, is much less prone to pay attention to the surroundings. In art history, appearance of parallel, comparative perspectives was strongly influenced by development of the oriental trend and interest in “primitive” art. As a result, different aesthetic canons, widening “margins of artistic freedom” for the avant-garde expansion, were accepted.

nature and seeming randomness of its layout, suggesting an objectivity and an indifferent gaze of a camera recording everything that appears in the field of vision deliberately limited by the picture frame.”⁴⁰

The most obvious reason for not paying attention to what is placed near the edge is the hierarchical structure of the image of the world in the old culture. Understood as a reflection of the order of Nature (and the supernatural, divine order), the hierarchical structure situated itself in the centre of most of the old cognitive systems. This can be very easily seen in the iconography of power. The notion of power is nothing more than one of the consequences of recognizing the hierarchical structure of the image of reality⁴¹. Locating the most important person in the centre is an almost unbreakable rule. The archaic nature of power suggests that the hierarchy formed gradually, as an optimal method of adaptation to the environment. The Stoic term *hegemonikon* (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, Lat. *principatus, principale, principalitas*) denoting the central, deciding part of a soul is the remainder of understanding power not only as an external social structure, but also as an internal, cognitive one. Similar terms were used to describe the separate, active part of a soul by Plato (ἡγεμονουον; 1 Tim. 41 c; Men. 88 c; Leg. 963 a.) and Aristotle (ἡγούμενον; *Ethica Nicom.* 1113 a 6.).

The tendency to shape metaphysics so that it includes both abstraction and the physical world based on the question about the substance (ουσία, Lat. *essentia, substantia*), which has characterized European philosophy at least since the Enlightenment, favoured focusing attention on the nature of the centre, around which, according to the archaic sense of hierarchy, everything else gathers and organizes⁴². The image of substance was influenced by

⁴⁰ M. Porębski, *Historia sztuki w zarysie*, vol. 3. *Wiek XIX i XX*, Wydawnictwo Arkady, Warszawa 1988, p. 163.

⁴¹ A term “Image of the World” is used as a synonym of “Model of the world”, or an idea, and not in its modern meaning as a combination and listing of “all things in the world” in a schoolish order of 150 chapters initiated by the work by Jan Amos Kommeński (Comenius), *Orbis sensualium pictus hoc est omnium principalium in mundo rerum, et in vita actionum, pictura et nomenclatura* (Nürnberg 1658).

⁴² Martin Heidegger derived this constant inclination of a metaphysics language towards conciseness or good sense, inclination towards constant dealing with the “widest area”, where everything is a thing (a thing = res = ens = what exists)” from the term of ὑποκείμενον, “It may seem that everybody knows that a thing is something around which certain qualities have gathered”. Then we can speak about the core of things. Greeks used to name it τὸ ὑποκείμενον.” Ὑποκείμενον is what gathers, connects τὰ συμβεβηκότα – accidents – features. Searching “a place” for a margin, we should recall Heidegger’s questions about the difference between a language and a thing. Between essence and an accident. “Who would like to question these simple, basic relations between a thing and a sentence, between a structure of a sentence and a structure of a thing? Yet, we must ask: does a structure of a simple indicative sentence (connection of a subject and a verb) reflects

Aristotle's physics, according to which all material bodies move towards their "natural places".

An attempt to find out which term is the most suitable for the notion of margin used, say, in the culture of the European *linguae sacrae*: Hebrew, Greek and Latin led to (Deleuze would write "created") *spatial* disorientation, restarted the linguistic game of meanings and misrepresentations. We must be careful not to turn the analysed margin into the centre of our attention. Even the order of the translation becomes problematic. Let us assume that Greek is a starting point, according to the historical role of *koiné* as an intermediary between the hermetic (and initially marginal) Old Testament tradition and the mainstream of the civilization of Greek and Roman antiquity. The contemporary meaning of the word "margin" can be discerned in the word οἰσχατος, -η, -ον- "last, further, extreme", which in the language of philosophy was more frequently used to express extremities in the temporal sense, initiating various eschatologies⁴³. The concept can be then found in the distinction of whole/part (Gr. ὅλον/μέρος; Lat. totum/pars). A progenitor of the margin is μέρος – "part, section, sectioned portion". *Pars pro toto* explains the abovementioned notion of collecting viewed by K. Pomian as an activity that should yield an immaterial, "holistic" sense. Among the less spatial, yet more evaluative terms preceding "margin" were ἀσημιος – "insignificant, unimportant" and obviously the antithesis of what is important (μέγας) – small (μικρός).

The most important term in Greek philosophical tradition was πεπερασμένον, meaning what is limited, and πέρας⁴⁴ (the border itself), usually in opposition to what is boundless (ἄπειρον)⁴⁵. Melissos from Samos taught that what existed consisted of ὕλη formed in such a way that it had a centre and a separated edge⁴⁶. A similar geometrical structure of an image can be found in the belief expressed by the generation-older Parmenides that what existed

a structure of a thing (concordance of substance with accidents)?; see: M. Heidegger, *Źródło dzieła sztuki*, pp. 11-12 [*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*] in: *idem, Holzwege*, (1949), pp. 305. 306–310; cf. J. Derrida, *Parergon*, [in:] *idem, Prawda w malarstwie*, transl. M. Kwietniewska, *słowo/obraz/terytorium*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 79.

⁴³ We give up connecting contemporary margin with such words as τὸ χεῖλος, τὸ κράσπεδον, which can mean edge, rim and correspond to Latin *margo-inis* – edge, border, which is a source for the term in modern languages.

⁴⁴ Aristotle (*Metaphicis*, 1022 a 5-14) is writing about the ambiguity of πέρας.

⁴⁵ M. Gatzemeier, *Grenze*, [in:] *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, vol. 3, p. 873.

⁴⁶ D: 976 A 10-13; see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, hg. W. Kranz, Vandermannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin 1954, Bd. I, p. 264. Theories of an organism, emphasizing an almost identical distinction between *Urmitte* and *Peripherie* see: Franz von Baaders, *Schriften zur Gesellschafts Philosophie*, hg. J. Sauter, Fischer, Jena (1925).

was “a finite, indivisible plenum, that is a motionless, finite, spherical (σφαῖρος) continuous full body (τὸ πᾶν ἔν).”⁴⁷ The motif of a ball/sphere as a perfect shape is a metaphor of the originally technical term of *periphery* – the boundary, determined not as a result of reflection, but through the mechanical motion of a compass around a stuck point (κέντρον; Lat. *centrum*). Thanks to the Pitagorean tradition, the spherical metaphor for the universe and the notion of peripheries as something located furthest away from the hegemonic centre became widespread as early as at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries BC⁴⁸. Parmenides’ belief about the identity of what is (ἔν καὶ πᾶν), so also about the identity of the whole and its parts, which can, according to what we have established, aspire to the role of a predecessor of the margin, is a starting point for an interesting thread of paradoxical conceptions which accompany the thinking about the centre and the peripheries.⁴⁹

The spherical forms of nature quickly inspired the ideas about the whole of human knowledge. Quintilian writes about *orbis doctrine*⁵⁰, Augustine – about *circulus disciplinarum*⁵¹. The Greek term which spherically limited the scope of the abilities and knowledge accessible to a human being was ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, Latinised as *globus intellectualis*⁵².

This way of thinking about the sciences – techné/ars, formed by tracing a regular shape, was iconically expressed in the motif of the “Vitruvius’ man”, always placed inside the shape symbolizing abstract cognition. Internal divisions, boundaries between particular disciplines-arts, adding up to “the whole” of human cognition, were outlined with the use of original rational differentiation – διορισμὸς διάκρισις, *distinctio*⁵³, which structuralized emo-

⁴⁷ D: 28 B 8, 43-45; see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, hg. W. Kranz, Vandermannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin 1954, Bd. 1, p. 238; see S. Swieżawski, *Dzieje europejskiej filozofii klasycznej*, PWN Publishing House, Warsaw–Wrocław 2000, p. 30.

⁴⁸ It seems that an environmental, geographical impulse which prompted a process of proceeding spherical geometrization of cosmographic images, not only in the Greek culture, but also earlier, e.g. in the cultures of Mesopotamia, was a spherical form of a horizon covered with a semi-dome of heaven. In Hesiod’s writings *Theogonie* 720ff) we can find a trace further and consistent complementation of the visible world through adding an underground hemisphere housing Tartar: “as far beneath the earth as Ouranos is above Gaia/so far from earth to murky Tartaros” (ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ’ ἀπὸ γαίης: τόσον γὰρ τ’ ἀπὸ γῆς ἐς τάρταρον ἠερδέντα).

⁴⁹ It was perfectly used by a Parmenides’ disciple, Zeno.

⁵⁰ Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 1, 10, 1.

⁵¹ Augustin, *Contra academicos*, 3, 7; see: W. Kramer, *Globus intellectualis* in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, p. 678.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 677.

⁵³ O. Muck, 1972, *Distinktion*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2 p. 271.

tional experience. In this model there are no marginal places. Thus, it is difficult to tell how a discipline should analyse the prolem of the margin using its own methods. We have imperceptibly, unthinkingly come full circle and we are again at the first paragraph of this text. “In the Humboldt university model each discipline has its own place in the system, which is crowned by speculation. When one discipline enters the field of another one, it causes confusion, ‘noise’ in the system”⁵⁴. There is nothing left to do but introduce disorder, increase the amount of “noise” as long as there is separate space for a margin⁵⁵. It will not be difficult if we consider the apparently paradoxical features of the margin and marginality. Let us begin by recalling a myth, the myth of rational science and of the obviousness of the accurate distinctions introduced *per ratios*. We can use the figure of doctor Rama, mentioned by Leszek Kołakowski: “Dr Rama is numbered among the disciples of Levi-Strauss, who created the unique kind of trousers worn by both men and women, and who, on that basis, stated that everything could be treated as a structure built on even oppositions, in such a way that a single notion was deprived of its meaning without its oppositional pair; indeed, if we cut one trouser leg, the other leg had no sense.”⁵⁶

From the point of view of the common sense which still, in spite of the subsequent “turns” of culture seems to be located near the centre of the human *oikumene*, one-leg trouser very much resembles that “monstrous” nonsense – an *object d’art*. Ineffaceable marginality, thanks to which – paradoxically – art is gaining the privileged status of a special, unique space, paid exceptional attention; the space breaking the continuity of the secular space⁵⁷, and hence gaining the status of the “sacred-mythical” of uniqueness.

The relation between the local margin and the constantly shifting centre is the basis of the attempts to mythologize art, still undertaken in contemporary culture. It is a constant process of myth creation. In the myth every local *bagatelle* grows to the size guaranteeing autonomy, and with time even the rule over its environment (*hegemonikon – principalitas*)⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ J.-F. Lyotard, *Kondycja ponowoczesna*, p. 146.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114: “Classical divisions within a scientific field are therefore questioned; certain disciplines disappear, boundaries of some others start to intermesh, which gives rise to new disciplines. (...) Old faculties break into diverse institutes and foundations, universities lose functions of speculative legitimisation (...)”.

⁵⁶ L. Kołakowski, *Legenda o cesarzu Kennedym*, in: *idem, Cywilizacja na ławie oskarżonych*, Res publica, Warszawa 1990, p. 328.

⁵⁷ Contradictory with scientific axiom of *Einheit der Wissenschaft*; see: R. Carnap, *Logical foundations of the unity of science*, in: *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (IEUS) 1(1938), no. 1.

⁵⁸ In the Anglophone world this happened when the marginal colonies assumed the proportions of the New World. Perhaps that is why they are inventing and observing ever more

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamowicz Elza, ed. (2006) *Surrealism: Crossings/frontiers*, Bern: Peter Lang: AG.
- Adorno Theodor, Horkheimer Max (1947) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Amsterdam: Querido.
- Afshordi Niayesh Mann Robert B., Pourhasan Razieh, *Czarna dziura u początku czasu*, „Świat Nauki”, 9 (277), September 2014, pp. 29-30.
- Aristotle (2001), *Poetyka*, in: *Dzieła wszystkie*, Warszawa: PWN, vol. 6.
- Augustine (1970) *Contra academicos*, in: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. 29, ed. W.M. Green K.-D. Daur, Turnhout: Brepolis.
- Baaders von Franz (1925) *Schriften zur Gesellschafts Philosophie*, ed. J. Sauter, Jena: Fischer.
- Bachmann-Medick Doris (2008) *Spatial Turn*, in: *Metzler Lexikon Literatur-und Kulturtheorie*, ed. A. Nünning, Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, pp. 664-665.
- Bachmann-Medick Doris (2012) *Cultural Turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Bataille Georges (1929), *Informe*, Documents 7.
- Boehm Gottfried (1994) *Die Wiederkehr der Bilder*, in: ed. G. Boehm, *Was ist ein Bild?* München: Fink, pp. 11-38.
- Cichoń Krzysztof (2002) *But Gentlemen! Globalisation (in Art) is no Longer an Issue*, „Art Inquiry”, vol. IV (XIII), pp. 77-106.
- Cichoń Krzysztof (2013) *O sprytnych sposobach wypatrywania ducha. przyczynek do ikonografii plynności*, „Studia Elckie”, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 369-392.
- Comenius Ioannes Amos (1658), *Orbis sensualium pictus hoc est omnium principalium in mundo rerum, et in vita actionum, pictura et nomenclatura*, Nürnberg.
- Deleuze Gilles Guattari Felix (1988) *Kłucze*, transl. Bogdan Banasik, „Colloquia Communia”, 1988, no. 1-3 [*Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, vol. 2, Mille plateaux, 1980].
- Derrida Jacques (2003) *Prawda w malarstwie*, transl. M. Kwietniewska, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz/terytoria.
- Diels Hermann (1954) *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, ed., W. Kranz, Berlin: Vandermannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, vol. 1-3.
- Eliade Mircea (2008) *Sacrum i profanum. O istocie sfery religijnej*, transl. B. Baran, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia.
- Engelhardt Jürgen (1984) *Gestus und Verfremdung: Studien zum Musiktheater bei Strawinsky und Brecht!*, München–Salzburg: Musikverlag Emil Katzwichler.
- Freud Sigmund (1919) *Das Unheimliche*, in: *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet*, ed. Anna Freud & al., Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, vol. 12, pp. 227-278.

new “glocalizations”; see: K. Cichoń, *But Gentlemen! Globalisation (in Art) is no Longer an Issue*, *Art Inquiry*, vol. IV(XIII), 2002, p. 103.

- Gadamer Hans-Georg (1960) *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophische Hermeneutik*, Tübingen: Mohr.
- Gatzemeier Matthias (1974) *Grenze*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed., J. Ritter, vol. 3, pp. 873-875.
- Hartmann D. Janich P. (1998) *Die Kulturalistische Wendung. Zur Orientierung des philosophische Selbstverständnisses*, Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp.
- Heidegger Martin (1949, 2012) *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, ed. F.-W. von Herrmann, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Hühn H. (2001) *Unheimliche das*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 11, ed. K. Gründer, pp. 172-174.
- Jentsch Ernst (1906) *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen*, „Psychiatr.-neurologische Wochenschrift“, 22, pp. 195-198.
- Kołakowski Leszek (1990) *Cywilizacja na ławie oskarżonych*, Warszawa: Res publica.
- Kołakowski Leszek (1994) *Obecność mitu*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.
- Kramer Werner (1974) *Globus intellectualis*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, ed., J. Ritter, pp. 677-678.
- Kreiwirth Martin (1995) *Tell me a story: The narrativist turn in the human sciences*, in: ed. M. Kreiwirth Th. Carmichael, *Constructive criticism: The human sciences in the age of theory*, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, pp. 61-87.
- Kundera Milan (1973) *La Vie Est Ailleurs*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Liotard Jean-François (1997) *Kondycja ponowoczesna. Raport o stanie wiedzy*, transl. M. Kowalska, J. Migasiński, Warszawa: Fundacja Alethea.
- Manovich Lew (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Mitchell William John Thomas (1994) *The pictorial turn*, in: *Picture theory. Essays on verbal and visual representation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 11-34.
- Muck Otto (1972) *Distinktion*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2, ed. J. Ritter, pp. 271-272.
- Перемышлев Е. (2014) *Шкловский, Виктор Борисович*, in: *Энциклопедия Кругосвет, Универсальная научно-популярная онлайн-энциклопедия*; http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/kultura_i_obrazovanie/literatura/SHKLOVSKI_VIKTOR_BORISOVICH.html.
- Piekarczyk Dorota (2013) *Metafory metatekstowe*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Pomian Krzysztof (1990) *Collectors and curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, transl. by E. Wiles-Portier.
- Porębski Mieczysław (1988) *Historia sztuki w zarysie*, vol. 3. *Wiek XIX i XX*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Arkady.
- Przybyła Helena (2011) *Filozoficzne korzenie nurtu subiektywno-marginalistycznego w ekonomii*, in: ed. U. Zagóry-Jonszty, *Marginalizm zachodni*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach, pp. 63-66.

Quintilian (1922) *Institutio Oratoria*, with an English transl. H. Edgeworth Butler, Cambridge London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann Ltd.

Rorty Richard, ed. (1967) *The linguistic turn. Essays in Philosophical Method*, Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press.

Schelling Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph (1983), *Filozofia sztuki*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa: PWN.

Schlünder Georg (1972) *Funktionär*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, Basel: Schwabe Verlag, vol. 2, pp. 1145–1146.

Sedlmayr Hans (1948) *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit*, Wien: EBG Verlags, (10 Auflage, 1983).

Świeżawski Stefan (2000) *Dzieje europejskiej filozofii klasycznej*, Warszawa: PWN.

Шкловский Виктор (1973-74) *Собрание сочинений в трех томах*, Москва: Художественная литература, vol. 1-3.

Szczuka Jakub (1999) *Per monstra ad sphaeram. Aby Warburg i jego biblioteka*, „Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty”, vol. 53, no. 1-2, pp. 25-28.

Weber Thomas (2001) *Verfremdung*, in: *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. K. Gründer, Basel: Schwabe Verlag, vol. 11, pp. 653- 658.

Welsch Wolfgang (1998) *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, transl. R. Kubicki A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.

White John J. (2004) *Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory*, Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House.

DOKOŁA MARGINESU W OSIEMDZIESIĄT ŚWIATÓW I DWADZIEŚCIA LAT. UWAGI NA TEMAT PARADOKSALNEJ NATURY MARGINALNOŚCI (streszczenie)

Celem artykułu jest oczywiście wprowadzenie bałaganu, sprawdzenie, czy możliwe jest ignorowanie granic dyscyplin choćby po to, by ani na moment nie tracić z oczu marginesu. Wzrost zainteresowania marginesami, marginaliami da się powiązać z kolejną zmianą paradygmatu kultury na przełomie lat osiemdziesiątych i dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku, tzw. zwrotem przestrzennym, czyli (ponownym) odkryciem dogodności poznawczej metafor przestrzennych. Rola w przygotowaniu tego zwrotu odegrały też z natury eks-centryczne, odśrodkowe dążenia Awangardy. Choć o wiele silniej działającym bodźcem skłaniającym do zajmowania się tym tematem jest powszechna niepewność własnego usytuowania, własnej pozycji, roli i przydatności w globalnej cyrkulacji kultury. Silne poczucie marginalizacji czy marginalności w kulturze określanej jako globalna jest – gdybyśmy chcieli konsekwentnie posługiwać się „wolną od intuicji” zdolnością geometrii do uogólniania – paradoksalne. Na powierzchni sfery nie jest możliwe wskazanie żadnego marginesu, co najwyżej da się każdy punkt kulistej powierzchni opisywać jako peryferyjną lokalność. I w każdej takiej lokalności mogą rozgrywać się i rozgrywają peryferyjne perypetie. Równie dramatyczne co nikogo spoza obrębu lokalności nieobchodzące. Jest to dość dokładny model – *more geometrico* – procesów kulturowych, jakie najczęściej nazywa się alienacją czy atomizacją.

Dopiero odniesienie marginesu do trójkąta utworzonego z tych trzech terminów: *отстранение* *Verfremdung*, *dépaysement*, pozwala w pełni zrozumieć przyczyny ciągłej fascynacji tym, co marginalne. Margines to nazwa opisująca miejsca szczególnie atrakcyjne dla awangardowej chęci wzbudzania zaciekawienia i zdumienia. Powraca zagadnienie Awangardy jako formy kultury mającej samoświadomość własnego wyobcowania, czy własnej nieuniknionej odśrodkowej marginalności. Pojęcia *Verfremdung*, *dépaysement* i *отстранение* ułatwiają zrozumienie, co łączy tak typowe dla sztuki XX i XXI wieku zjawiska jak kolaż, montaż, deformacja z marginesem i marginalnością. Dla lepszego określenia, jakie są dzisiejsze kulturowe kontury marginesu warto dodać jeden jeszcze termin w dwóch wariantach językowych: *das Unheimliche/uncanny*.

Ludzką skłonność do przestrzennego wyobrażenia sobie abstrakcyjnej transcendencji jako czegoś podobnego, ale „sięgającego dalej” niż margines, wykraczającego poza marginalność, trzeba uznać za przyczynę z jednej strony fascynacji, z drugiej problematyczności marginesu i marginalności.

Zastanawiając się nad granicami pojęcia margines można posłużyć się prostym modelem, w którym margines jest każdym miejscem przecięcia płaszczyzny postrzeganej diachronicznie z drugą, jaką odbieramy jako obszar synchronicznie pojawiających się zjawisk. Pierwsza z nich bliższa jest narracji, językowi, historii i upływowi czasu, druga ikoniczności, geometrii i rozległości przestrzeni. W takim modelu każdy punkt jest marginesem, kłopot pojawia się, gdy chcemy określić, czym jest w nim centrum.

Słowa kluczowe: alienacja, marginalizacja, *отстранение*, *Verfremdung*, *dépaysement*, peryferium, *das Unheimliche/uncanny*, paradoks.

Paulina Sztabińska

Department of Art History, University of Łódź
paulina.sztabinska@uni.lodz.pl

CONTEMPORARY ARTIST AND THE NOTION OF CENTER AND PERIPHERY

Abstract: Taking into account the division into centers and peripheries was an important component of modern artistic consciousness. Given the development of global culture in the second half of the twentieth century, one might think that this division has become outdated. Such a view, however, is overly simplistic. First of all, there are many models of globalization (imperial, network, reception, institutional). Each of them takes into account the tension between the center and the periphery and the desire to change their mutual relations. In my article, I will briefly characterize individual models of globalization, and then move on to discuss the work of Mirosław Bałka and Zbigniew Libera. These artists make the complexity of the contemporary relationship between the central (associated with the pursuit of generality) and the local the subject of their creative reflection. Bałka transforms the provincial into a component of the global culture, while Libera focuses on the implicit meanings of the products of the global culture. The discussed examples show that the boundaries between the center and the periphery in contemporary art have become complicated. The most important thing is not to keep up with what is happening in the center, but to observe how artists creatively and individually combine global with local elements.

Keyword: center – periphery – globalization – contemporary artist – Mirosław Bałka – Zbigniew Libera.

Taking into account the distribution of centers and peripheries has been an important component of modern artistic consciousness. In the case of modern artists, it drove them to obtain an education or to become involved in the activity prevailing in the art of the given period. Patrons, in turn, wanted the commissioned works to resemble those in the artistic centers. This led to the employment of the artists mainly deriving from leading art centers. As for the viewers, knowing the criteria applicable in artistic centers lets them think of

themselves as art connoisseurs having a good aesthetic taste. This generated a struggle for the primacy in art. Various places competed with each other for the role of the artistic center.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the situation became somewhat more complicated, but essentially it remained unchanged. Discussing the history of the classical avant-garde, Mieczysław Porębski drew attention to the formation of the three canons of its comprehension. The first, which he described as “French-Parisian”, was based on the concept that the retreat from Impressionism was a decisive step towards the shaping of modern art¹. It was to emerge mainly in France, and especially in the capital. The second canon, “German-expressionist”, emphasized the role of expressionist-constructivist art, in which “the Germans or the Russians almost equal the French”². The third model, referred to as “international”, seemingly did not entail any division into the center and the periphery, releasing modern art from being bound to a specific geographical location³. Avant-garde art could be practiced in different countries, as it was not the dwelling place of the artist that mattered but his conscious participation in the issues central to the development of the art of the moment. What was important for an avant-garde artist was not a particular point in space he occupied, but the state of mind (relevant information, inventiveness enabling him to recognize new opportunities, etc.), which determined his position at the forefront of creative exploration. Porębski pointed out that according to this model, avant-garde artists, “each in his own way and on his own, rationalized and interpreted the sequence of creative discoveries, experiences and events, overlapping between Paris and Amsterdam, Milan and Zurich, Munich, Berlin and Cologne, St. Petersburg and Moscow, Krakow, Warsaw and Łódź.”⁴

I believe, however, that all the three cases mentioned by Porębski entail a desire to centralize art. In the first two, centralization is localized geographically. There is only one problem: which country – France or Germany – is the artistic center of Europe or the world? In the third case Porębski mentioned, the division into the center and the periphery is not so obvious. On the one hand, it seems that modern art is created in a multitude of geographical locations. On the other hand, centralization has to do with ideas. Anyone who does not join the central idea of modernity is a peripheral artist, regardless of where he lives. Provincialism and peripherality in this case is a state of mind unable to keep up with the course of avant-garde art, and not the result of

¹ M. Porębski, *Czy istnieje historia sztuki XX wieku?*, in: *Sztuka XX wieku. Materiały z Sesji SHS, Słupsk 1969*, ed. M. Gantzowa, PWN, Warszawa 1971, p. 13.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

geographical location⁵. The concept of international avant-garde, however, did not eliminate the disputes about the geographical location of the center of modern art. This is evidenced by the initiatives undertaken in the 1940s and 1950s, not only by artists and art critics, and also politicians, to make New York the capital of the avant-garde⁶.

Such concept of the avant-garde shows that the division into center and periphery can be made in various ways. Today, it is most clearly manifested in the debate on globalization. Typically, the concept of globalization entails the belief that it is important to search for the factors combining various geographical locations. From this point of view, some authors believe that the concept of the international avant-garde was a harbinger of globalization. It anticipated the later state of affairs in economy, business and politics⁷.

The theoretical approaches to globalization include the theory of cultural imperialism, the network model, the theory of reception, and the institutional model⁸. Each of them takes into account the tension between center and periphery and the desire to change their mutual relationship. The oldest and simplest theory of global culture is the thesis of cultural imperialism. It is based on the universally understood division into a geographically located center of power which imposes its culture, and the periphery which remains under its influence. This division leads to the homogenization of culture and art across the world. As pointed out by Diana Crane, the imperialist model presupposes injustice, an advantage of the center over the periphery, and although it is still quite widely accepted⁹, it has provoked the emergence of antiglobalization movements.

⁵ A very good example is the art by Władysław Strzemiński, who, although in 1922-1931 he lived in Koluszki and his physical disadvantage prevented him from travelling freely, believed that he was involved in the most important events, that he was in the center of the debate of modern art, since he was knowledgeable about ideas put forward at the time, and contributed his own notions to the new concepts.

⁶ S. Guilbaut, *Jak Nowy Jork ukradł ideę sztuki nowoczesnej. Ekspresjonizm abstrakcyjny, wolność i zimna wojna* [How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War], transl. E. Mikina, Hotel Sztuki, Warszawa 1992.

⁷ However, as Grzegorz Sztabiński noted, "modern concepts differentiate it [globalization – P.S.] from internationalization [typical of the interwar avant-garde – P.S.] not just because of the level and intensity of penetrating boundaries. The dispersion involves in this case a comprehensive, mutual penetration of world, national, local and individual aspects of social life. This leads to the compression of time and space, which causes that cultural phenomena are devoid of locations, distances and boundaries. They are deprived of territory". Cf. G. Sztabiński, *Inne idee awangardy. Wspólnota, wolność, autorytet*, Neriton, Warszawa 2011, p. 102.

⁸ Cf. D. Crane, *Culture and Globalization. The Theoretical Models and Emerging Trends*, in: *Global Culture. Media Arts, Policy and Globalization*, eds. D. Crane, N. Kawashima, K. Kawasaki, Routledge, New York 2002, p. 2, Cf. also G. Dziamski, *Sztuka w kulturze globalnej*, „Format” 2003, no. 43, pp. 3-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Since the early 1990s, it is the network model that is becoming increasingly popular. The theory of cultural flows likens global culture to a network without any distinct center and periphery, or in fact a system with multiple centers. These flows are not unidirectional, and therefore the effect of globalization is not the homogenization of culture, but its hybridization. Selected elements of local and national cultures combine with cultural trends stemming from other sources¹⁰. The theory of network flows is coherent with the pluralization of the world, exploring cultural differences and using the possibilities inherent in them for the establishment of a fully global culture. A very important role is played by the concept of globalization, or adapting global trends to local conditions¹¹.

The third approach to globalization mentioned by Crane is the reception model. It emphasizes the active involvement of the recipients in the process of cultural transmission¹². However, as noted by Stuart Hall, “a message can be read in accordance with the code of the sender, but also in breach of it, it can be read in the oppositional or negotiated code.”¹³

The fourth approach quoted by Crane is the institutional model. The proponents of this theory believe that globalization is not a freely emerging process, nor a result of technological development. New modes of communication play an important role in the development of global culture, but equally important is the political situation. Dziamski wrote that “in the case of culture, this policy boils down to three recommendations: demonopolization, deregulation, privatization, abolition of borders for global trade.”¹⁴

The different concepts of globalization find an interesting reflection in the work of contemporary artists. Some of them view the relationship between center and periphery as primarily a matter of hybridization or creolization, consequently blurring the line dividing the familiar and the foreign, the owned and the borrowed, the near and the far. Others, however, emphasize the complexity of the contemporary relationship between the central (which entails the pursuit of generality), and the local.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ More on the subject: R. Robertson, *Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity*, in: *Global Modernities*, ed. M. Featherstone, S. Lasch, R. Robertson, Sage, London 1995, pp. 25-44. Cf. also G. Dziamski, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹² D. Crane, *Culture and Globalization...*, p. 4.

¹³ S. Hall, *Encoding/Decoding*, an edited extract from *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, in: *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, P. Willis, Hutchinson, London 1980. Cited after: G. Dziamski, *Sztuka w kulturze...*, p. 4. Cf. also S. Hall, *Encoding, Decoding* (1973), in: *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During, Routledge, London–New York 1993, pp. 90-103.

¹⁴ G. Dziamski, *Sztuka w kulturze...*, p. 5.

It is interesting to observe the unique ways in which contemporary artists overcome the old understanding of the division into center and periphery. This issue may not be the explicit theme of their works, but it is one of the discourses that can be read off them. In this paper, I will focus on two Polish artists: Mirosław Bałka and Zbigniew Libera. I will attempt to show the discourses present in their art regarding the relationship between center and periphery. Each of them strives to go beyond the particularistic perspective to work in the trans-local dimension, but each does so by adopting a different model of globalization.

MIROSŁAW BAŁKA – TRANSFORMING THE PROVINCIAL INTO A COMPONENT OF WORLD CULTURE

Analyzing the work of Mirosław Bałka, one can see that the artist often oscillates between personal elements, relating to his private life and the memories of his childhood and youth, and references to the general and universal. Also, the relationship between his place of origin (Otwock – a typical Polish provincial town) and the great centers of art which now exhibit his work is a prominent theme of his art. In his works Bałka attempts to turn the provincial into the global, showing that certain experiences are universal. Such an approach can be attributed to both the network model of globalization and Crane's reception model.

In his early, figurative art, Bałka focused on the themes that on the one hand related to his childhood and youthful experiences, while on the other hand, due to the issues they addressed, were more general in character. A good example of such work is his *Souvenir of the First Holy Communion* [*Pamiątka Pierwszej Komunii Świętej*]. This work, relating to a specific event in the artist's life, was located in an old abandoned house in Żuków, reminiscent of his family home. Its appeal is, however, broader and more general. Young Bałka's religious maturity, signified by his taking the first Holy Communion, was associated with the exam confirming his later artistic maturity – his diploma at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Speaking about the work, the artist has sometimes emphasized the religious context of the reference to the Holy Communion, while in other interviews he has focused on its link with his graduation from the art school. The artist shares his experiences in those domains with every Catholic (the first Holy Communion) and every student (diploma examination), regardless of their place of residence and origin. Depending on the country, the outfits and the script of those rituals may be somewhat different, but their general idea and purpose are the same every-

where. The local is linked with the global. This work, however, differs from traditional art in that the artist takes into account the process of its reception, which can be consistent with the code of the sender or depart from it. Bałka said, "The concept of this sculpture was created in a very intuitive way. It was an attempt to provide a plane of dialogue between me and the Church, between me and my childhood, my parents, punishment, and reward. First of all, I thought about taking a look at the experience of an eight year old boy forced into that oppressive formality, imposed by the dress and the order of ceremony. This work is a commentary on a very profound experience, based on a photograph – the souvenir."¹⁵

In his later works, the artist abandoned representation for minimalism¹⁶. A very interesting work of this type was the exhibition *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, held at the Warsaw's Zachęta Gallery in 2001 and arranged in two parts. The title of the first one, *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N*, are the coordinates of Bałka's family home in Otwock. The second part of the exhibition was titled "GO-GO (1985-2001)" and, as Ewa Gorządek wrote, "it was the artist's perverse take on the convention of a retrospective"¹⁷. In the work *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N*, the interior of the gallery was arranged to resemble a 1:1 scale layout of the artist's home in Otwock, where he was born, and where he had his studio. The main entrance door to the exhibition rooms were reduced to the dimensions of the door frames of his house, with metal tubes marking the location of three bedroom windows. Next to the walls, the artist placed thirty five terrazzo panels sized 70 x 70 x 8 cm, in a chronological order. Each panels was a headstone commemorating the artist's exhibitions. Each one had an inscription painted black and containing information about the title of the exhibition it commemorated and the date of its opening and closure. A number of connotations can be attributed to terrazzo in the artist's oeuvre. In the work + *GO-GO*, on the one hand it can be associated with the family home of the artist and the profession of his grandfather – a professional mason. On the other hand, it is evocative of traditional tombstones, commemorating the people beneath. In Bałka's work,

¹⁵ M. Bałka, *Każdy chłopiec boi się inaczej. Rozmowa Mirosława Bałki z Bożeną Czubak*, „Magazyn Sztuki” 1998, no. 19, http://magazyn-sztuki.art.pl/archiwum/nr_19/archiwum_nr19_tekst_1.htm (16.07.2014).

¹⁶ Given the limited time I do not address the analysis of these works, nor Bałka's most famous project *Mydlany korytarz* [Soap Corridor], which fits the network and reception model of globalization. I wrote more on this work in the context of the idea of performativization in the paper: *Performatywny charakter twórczości Mirosława Bałki* [Performative character of Mirosław Bałka's work] (presented during the Polish National Conference of Esthetics, *Estetyka performatywności*, Kraków 2012).

¹⁷ E. Gorządek, *Mirosław Bałka*, http://www.culture.pl/baza-sztuki-pelna-tresc/-/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/miroslaw-balka (16.07.2014).

however, they do not carry information about persons, but about past exhibitions. The inscriptions on the panels were cut by the artist's father, who had made most of the inscriptions on the gravestones in the local Otwock cemetery. This gesture, as pointed out by Magdalena Kardasz, can be read as a symbolic combination of family creative activity, reenacting a fragment of private and public history¹⁸. Also important for the artist was the order of the exhibitions titles – their sequence¹⁹.

In the catalog accompanying the exhibition *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, Magdalena Kardasz pointed out that the title of this work defines the "two intersecting areas of [Bałka's] thematic interests. The first one is a reflection on the place precisely defined by longitude and latitude (his childhood home, which now houses his studio) which was where his sensibility formed and where he now works. The objects created at this location can be seen at the exhibition. The second theme is being and passing away, remembering and forgetting. The tombstones of the exhibitions measure time."²⁰ This generalized sense provides an opening to the universal content concerning both the province and the center. Bałka's oeuvre shows that globalization is not a threat to locality; on the contrary, the local or even the provincial may function on a global scale. It creates a chance for the local to be disclosed to the world. Furthermore, Bałka's works show that the globalization of art is not the same as its Americanization. It turns out that what is typically Polish can become part of the art world.

ZBIGNIEW LIBERA – IMPLICIT MEANINGS OF PRODUCTS OF GLOBAL CULTURE

Zbigniew Libera approaches the problem of globalization in a different way. Like Bałka, the artist does not reject global culture, nor is he trying to create a counterweight, knowing that this strategy is ineffective²¹. His actions are coherent with the network model of globalization, but he implements it differently than Bałka. Libera is not trying to combine the local and the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ M. Bałka, *Ciało: Wędrowiec i jego Cień. Interview of Adam Szymczyk with Mirosław Bałka*, "MATERIAŁ – gazeta o sztuce współczesnej" 1998, no. 1, no pagination.

²⁰ M. Kardasz, *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, in: *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, exhibition catalog, Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Zachęta, Warszawa 2001, p. 77.

²¹ These strategies illustrated with different examples have been discussed briefly by G. Dziamski w przytaczanym już tekście *Sztuka w kulturze...* p. 5.

personal with the global. He introduces into his work elements of a global nature, residing in the mass awareness in different countries. He uses what is regarded as manifestations of the contemporary to formulate his own communications, treating them as complete sets of symbols, ideas and patterns. In his works, Libera exploits the components of international popular culture: Lego, Barbie dolls, etc., together with the meanings they entail: creative fun, cult of the beautiful, slim body, etc. However, he employs them to convey serious or tragic messages – about the Holocaust, or the concealed enslavement of an individual. Libera's projects are hybrids of sorts, they lack the division into the familiar and the foreign, the owned and the borrowed, the near and the far.

Libera is interested in toys, in their implicit educational role, the opportunity to shape the child through their use²². The “toys” proposed by the artist are designed primarily for adults, for those who produce them and introduce them into the world. As he has said, “Toys are not ‘really’ things. They are, however, not just gadgets; because of their ability to function in relation to real objects, their very function changes. Through toys, you can observe the mechanisms of our ideas about ourselves, about our world.”²³ The artist is particularly interested in the toys associated with the mechanisms of “disciplining the body”²⁴ and focusing on the roles imposed on the sexes (cf. for example the film *Jak tresuje się dziewczynki* [How to train little girls, 1987], *Ciotka Kena* [Ken's aunt, 1994], *Body Master dla dzieci do lat dziesięciu* [Body Master for children up to ten years old, 1995], *Możesz ogolić dzidziusia* [You can shave the baby, 1996]). Also important are the extreme “systems of control”, as in the case of *Lego. Obóz koncentracyjny* [Lego. The concentration camp, 1997].

In the works mentioned above Libera manipulates popular toys, arriving at their absurd, perverted versions. In a series of ten dolls entitled *You Can Shave the Baby*, the baby dolls have hairy armpits, genitals and legs, which is typical for adults. As noted by Izabela Kowalczyk, this work “refers to the cultural complex of a hairy body, which is the opposite of the desired appearance of a woman. The hair on a woman's body is usually treated as something savage, untamed, and unwanted, because the female body should

²² Cf. E. Jedlińska, *Polska sztuka współczesna w amerykańskiej krytyce artystycznej w latach 1984-2001*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2005, p. 465.

²³ Z. Libera, *Rozmowa ze Zbigniewem Liberą* (rozmawia Adam Szymczyk), „Magazyn Sztuki” 1995, no. 6/7, p. 41.

²⁴ More on the subject: I. Kowalczyk in the book *Ciało i władza. Polska sztuka krytyczna lat 90*. Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2002 (especially the chapter *Zbigniew Libera: techniki dyscyplinowania ciała*, pp. 185-217).

be perfectly smooth.”²⁵ The title, which is also the name of the toy printed on the packaging – *You Can Shave the Baby* – suggests a certain type of action, instruction for the “game”. In this way, Libera joins the global discourse on the contemporary care of the body, bordering on the absurd. In his work *Ken’s Aunt*, Libera uses a Barbie doll, which he deliberately makes fatter, distorting the familiar and universally accepted image of an ideal body.

Libera’s most famous work is *Lego. The Concentration Camp*. It consists of Lego sets produced in a very limited edition and packaged in boxes designed by the artist. The work bears the well-known logo of the Danish company. This project sparked much controversy, mainly due to its too literal reading. Explaining his intentions, Libera said that “this work was inspired by the very rationality which is the basis of the Lego system, and which seemed frightening: you cannot use these elements to build anything that the precise, rational system does not allow.”²⁶ Thus the work perversely alluded to the main principles of concentration camps, based on rationalism and order²⁷. Analyzing *Lego. The Concentration Camp*, Eleonora Jedlińska wrote that Libera’s work “is not about camps, but about images and the abuse of these images. The artist reveals in a drastic way that mass culture manipulates crime, turning it into a product. Juxtaposing the toy with the camp, the artist intentionally provoked shock – the same shock that is used in the rhetoric of contemporary consumerist ideology.”²⁸

The sample works discussed above show that in contemporary art the distinction between the center and the periphery has become more complicated. It does not matter in which country the artist lives, as the network model and the reception model of globalization involve the intermingling of different cultures. Unlike in the case of the international avant-garde, however, there is no attempt to create a single leading mainstream of contemporary art. Instead, the idea is to perform a smooth integration with the global, while maintaining one’s own identity (as in the case of Bałka) or to subversively disclose the hidden meanings of the globally familiar objects (as Libera does). Keeping up with what is happening in the center is not essential. What does matter, as Dziamski wrote, “are not so much the texts of

²⁵ I. Kowalczyk, *Ciało i władza...*, p. 198.

²⁶ Z. Libera, *Rozmowa ze Zbigniewem Liberą...*, p. 42.

²⁷ More on the rationality behind concentration camps, see Zygmunt Bauman in the book *Nowoczesność i Zagłada* [Modernity and the Holocaust], Fundacja Kulturalna Masada, Warszawa 1992.

²⁸ E. Jedlińska, *Polska sztuka współczesna...*, p. 468.

global culture, but what we do with them, how we use them, what meanings we give to them, how much we infuse them with our localism.”²⁹

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balka Mirosław (1998) *Ciało: Wędrowiec i jego Cień. Interview of Adam Szymczyk with Mirosław Balka*, „MATERIAŁ – gazeta o sztuce współczesnej”, no. 1, no pagination.

Balka Mirosław (1998) *Każdy chłopiec boi się inaczej. Rozmowa Mirosława Balki z Bożeną Czubak*, „Magazyn Sztuki”, no. 19, http://magazyn-sztuki.art.pl/archiwum/nr_19/archiwum_nr_19_tekst_1.htm (16.07.2014).

Bauman Zygmunt (1992) *Nowoczesność i zagłada* [Modernity and the Holocaust], Warszawa: Fundacja Kulturalna Masada.

Crane Diane (2002) Culture and Globalization. The Theoretical Models and Emerging Trends, in: *Global Culture. Media Arts, Policy and Globalization*, eds. D. Crane, N. Kawashima, K. Kawasaki, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-25.

Dziamski Grzegorz (2003) *Sztuka w kulturze globalnej*, no. 43, pp. 3-5.

Guilbaut Serge, (1992) *Jak Nowy Jork ukradł ideę sztuki nowoczesnej. Ekspresjonizm abstrakcyjny, wolność i zimna wojna* [How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism. Freedom and the Cold War] transl. E. Mikina, Warszawa: Hotel Sztuki.

Gorządek Ewa (2009) *Mirosław Balka*, http://www.culture.pl/baza-sztuki-pelna-tresc/-/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/miroslaw-balka (16.07.2014).

Hall Stewart (1980) *Encoding/Decoding*, in: *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, P. Willis, London: Hutchinson, pp. 128-138.

Hall Stewart (1993) *Encoding, Decoding* (1973), in: *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During, London–New York: Routledge, pp. 90-103.

Jedlińska Eleonora (2005) *Polska sztuka współczesna w amerykańskiej krytyce artystycznej w latach 1984-2001*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Kardasz Magdalena (2001) *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, in: *Around 21°15'00"E 52°06'17"N + GO-GO (1985-2001)*, exhibition catalog, Warszawa: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Zachęta, pp. 77-86.

Kowalczyk Izabella (2002) *Ciało i władza. Polska sztuka krytyczna lat 90.*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!

Porębski Mieczysław (1971) *Czy istnieje historia sztuki XX wieku?*, in: *Sztuka XX wieku. Materiały z Sesji SHS, Słupsk 1969*, ed. M. Gantzowa, Warszawa: PWN.

²⁹ G. Dziamski, *Sztuka w kulturze...*, p. 5.

Robertson Roland (1995) *Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity*, [in:] *Global Modernities*, ed. M. Featherstone, S. Lasch, R. Robertsoni, London: Sage, pp. 25-44.

Sztabiński Grzegorz (2011) *Inne idee awangardy. Wspólnota, wolność, autorytet*, Warszawa: Neriton.

Szymczyk Adam (1995) Rozmowa ze Zbigniewem Libera, „Magazyn Sztuki”, no. 6/7, pp. 40-42.

WSPÓŁCZESNY ARTYSTA A ZAGADNIENIE CENTRUM I PERYFERII (streszczenie)

Uwzględnianie podziału na centra i peryferie stanowiło istotny składnik nowożytnej i nowoczesnej świadomości artystycznej. Biorąc pod uwagę rozwijającą się w drugiej połowie XX wieku kulturę globalną, można by sądzić, że podział ten dezaktualizuje się. Pogląd taki jest jednak nadmiernie uproszczony. Przede wszystkim istnieje wiele modeli globalizacji (imperialny, sieciowy, recepcji, instytucjonalny). W każdym z nich brane jest pod uwagę napięcie między centrum i peryferiami oraz dążenie do zmiany relacji między nimi. W artykule krótko charakteryzuję poszczególne modele globalizacji, a następnie przechodzę do omówienia twórczości Mirosława Bałki i Zbigniewa Libery. Artyści ci czynią przedmiotem twórczej refleksji złożoność współczesnych relacji między lokalnym i centralnym (związanym z dążeniem do ogólności). Bałka dokonuje przekształcania tego, co prowincjonalne w składnik kultury światowej, natomiast Libera koncentruje się na niejawnym znaczeniach wytworów kultury globalnej. Omówione przykłady pokazują, że granice między centrum a peryferiami w sztuce współczesnej komplikują się. Najistotniejsze bowiem nie jest nadążanie za tym, co dzieje się w centrum, a to, na ile twórczo i indywidualnie artysta łączy elementy globalne z tym, co lokalne.

Słowa kluczowe: centrum – peryferie – globalizacja – współczesny artysta – Mirosław Bałka – Zbigniew Libera.

Grzegorz Sztabiński
University of Łódź
grzegorzsztabinski@op.pl

THE MARGINS OF TRANSCENDENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Abstract: According to the widespread opinion, contemporary art does not seek to express transcendent reality. Questioning this view, the author of the article examines two aspects of the problem. The first concerns the use of Christian iconography in contemporary works. The artists employ it a non-traditional way, usually in the contexts related to everyday life, which leads to an impression of secularization. Sometimes such actions provoke protests from viewers due to alleged blasphemy. Sztabiński sees the root of the problem in the formation of a new sensibility bent on emphasizing the “earthly” dimension of existence, and treating transcendence only as a more or less tangible prospect. This situation is defined here as an interest in the “skin of transcendence”, in reference to the title of the article by S. Brent Plate. Artistic examples enabling the author to clarify the meaning of this metaphor include the works of Robert Gober, Kiki Smith, Teresa Murak and Wolfgang Laib.

The second type of references to transcendence in contemporary art will be discussed here in the context of the iconoclastic tradition. The author examines twentieth-century non-representational art in the light of the book by Alain Besançon devoted to the intellectual history of iconoclasm. Besançon described this kind of art as an expression of the desire to convey “a truly worthy image” of the divine, as it is liberated from all earthly concerns. In view of that, can postmodern artistic practice, involving the reduction of the geometric forms believed to express transcendence (such as Malevich’s “black square”) to their banal practical uses, be considered to create simulacra of transcendence? The author also reflects on the quest for an extra-metaphysical path towards transcendence in contemporary art, as the artists try to find it in “abnormal language” and private epiphanies.

The article concludes with some comments on the necessity of treating what appears to be marginal in contemporary art as a valid area of research. The author argues that not only the margins of transcendence, but all other artistic margins should be subjected to broader scholarly reflection.

Keywords: contemporary art – transcendence – secularization – modern iconoclasm – the role of the margins in the study of art.

According to the widespread opinion, contemporary art does not seek to express transcendent reality. This does not mean that the artists active today avoid the use of the iconic themes specific to different religious traditions. On the contrary, compared with the activity of the avant-garde, whose representatives were trying to renew the languages of art and introduce new iconography, postmodernists gladly appropriate traditional imagery, though generally without respecting its original meanings¹. Their work has either ludic character (employing pastiche, irony, wit), or is designed to perform a critical function in relation to traditional forms of worship, but in both cases the reference to transcendence seems to be irrelevant. In the ludic variant, religious iconographic motifs are of use because they are immediately recognizable, and they easily induce associations and emotions that can be artistically manipulated. The original meaning thus becomes subject to semantic games. In critical art the assumed reference to religious beliefs or views does not serve the purpose of linking the work with transcendence, but rather activates the chain of reflections on the social phenomenon of religious faith. It does not matter whether the paintings or sculptures with sacral content actually direct us toward something beyond or above them, since it is the represented set of beliefs and the behavior of the believers that become the object of observation. What matters to the artist is the fact that certain social groups practice a particular religion in some specific form, that they include people of a certain age, with specific political beliefs, more or less closely related to religious issues. The works of the artists representing critical art are therefore usually indifferent to the questions of transcendence, while being strongly involved in the current socio-political discourses.

The problem of the disappearance of reflection on transcendence in art can be examined in the context of the choices made by the artists and the type of sensitivity found in the art recipients. Philosophers and sociologists, however, try to link these issues with more general characteristics of contemporary mentality, manifesting itself in other areas of human behavior. In his *Postmodern Ethics*, Zygmunt Bauman disputes the common belief that modern people have become selfish, self-centered and egotistic as a result of godlessness and the breakdown of faith in the religious dogmas inherent to modern times. He believes that this connection should actually be seen in a reversed order. It was not the secularizing trends that caused the disappearance of the sense of transcendence and the breakdown of religious faith, manifested both in daily life and in the secular, comprehensive philosophical visions that formerly often suggested the existence of something

¹ I do not address the activity of painters and sculptors working for different religious groups and carrying out the commissions in accordance with the guidelines received from them.

above or beyond the practical, materialistic life. "It is because," Bauman writes, "modern developments forced men and women into a condition of 'individuals', who found their lives fragmented, split into many loosely related aims and functions, each to be pursued in different contexts and according to a different pragmatics – that an 'all-comprising' idea promoting a unitary vision of the world was unlikely to serve their task well and thus capture their imagination."² There is no place for transcendence – both as conceived by the great religions, and in the secular sense, as a desire to be part of the Whole, of a certain superior logical order of existence, to be in alignment with the sources of good and sense – in the mainstream of modern life to which we all must conform, if we wish to keep up with the changes it entails.

Does this mean that the desire for transcendence has disappeared completely in contemporary society, and that there is no place for it in contemporary art? I believe it does manifest itself, though in a partial, random way. It is not a consequence of accepting a comprehensive metaphysical system within which it could be articulated. The earlier notional systems addressing transcendence are not adequate for the conditions of modern life and the character of art created today. The new, post-modern philosophies eliminate transcendence from their focus of attention; in consequence they lack the concepts that would allow for its identification and characterization, and the terminology they use is devoid of any transcendent references. The traditional conceptual apparatus of the metaphysical systems is unfit for the current random ways of experiencing reality. If modern man has any needs relating to transcendence, they remain unnoticed and elusive. This also applies to those engaged in art. Their intuitions of transcendence, even if still rooted in the great religious or philosophical systems, seem woefully fractured, poor and incomplete, compared with the complex visions of spirituality offered by tradition. In the world of contingency, secularization, practicality, and the variety of problems making up the content of everyday life, there is a risk that transcendence may be treated as an irrelevant addition, taken into account only occasionally.

The phrase "margins of transcendence", which I wish to use here in the context of art, thus has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it points to the marginalization of what is perceived as existing outside or above the sphere of ad hoc and random beings, its marginality in the mainstream religious and philosophical traditions in which the topic has been discussed. On the other hand, it is meant to emphasize the fragmentary character and the randomness of the "excursions" of contemporary artists into transcendence. That fragmenta-

² Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Wiley-Blackwell 1993, p. 6.

tion and randomness means that they are often overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant. Creativity in art is thus interpreted as being associated with other objectives, often contrary to the intentions examined here.

THE SKIN OF TRANSCENDENCE

The title of this section refers to the well-known article by S. Brent Plate, “The skin of religion. Aesthetic mediations of the sacred” (2012). Using the simile comparing the role of religion to the role of the skin in the physical body, the author tries to understand religion through its sensually mediated experience. He is reluctant, however, to address the traditional concept of the “so-called im-mediate, mystical experience of the gods and goddesses”. He questions the practical importance of the interpretation of sacred texts and the intellectual exploration of doctrinal issues. Instead, he assigns significance to “the sensual sacred experiences of the human in her/his physical spaces”³. Therefore, this approach emphasizes the role of the senses. The author not only asserts their importance (unlike many traditional religions), but he suggests that the mundane aspects of religious experience, namely what people eat, taste and see in their sacred places, should be given more consideration.

Plate is aware that his conception amounts to the aestheticization of religion, as it highlights the role of sensory factors both in the arrangement of the places of worship, the conduct of the rituals, the music, performance and props. In his opinion, their role is not limited to the additional stimulation of spiritual experience. He believes that sensory factors are inseparable from the sacred, claiming that “Religion itself is, in part, produced by the experiences formed in these mediated sites betwixt and between.”⁴ He is thus proposing a reconceptualization of religion, focusing on the skinscape – a space for sensory (and more broadly – physical) experience.⁵ These spaces are different for different religions, providing different experiences both as regards their character and scope. They were different in the past and they vary today depending on one’s faith. They are important for modern man because of their potential to expand through sensory experimentation. They are open not

³ S.B. Plate, *The Skin of Religion. Aesthetic Mediations of the Sacred*, „Crosscurrents”, 2012, June, p. 162.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

⁵ Plate’s concept refers to the notions of the French Marxist philosopher – Henri Lefebvre, expressed in the book *The Production of Space* (transl. By D. Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell, Oxford 1991 [1974]), which garnered considerable interest after its publication in the US.

only to different varieties of beauty, but also to the horrible, the sacrilegious or the blasphemous, which take the believers to the borderline of the experience of the sacred. An important part of the skinscape is art, which is not limited to its ritual function, but rather involves endless experimentation. As Plate concludes, “The skin of religion is a training ground, and the skinscape can be reoriented. But note that the reorientation and reproduction of new meanings and identities and communities begins with a transformation of sense perception. Reformation is somehow always about sensual renewal.”⁶

The concept put forward by the American author could be regarded as an eccentric (if only because of the shocking simile) endorsement of the attitudes adopted today by many people looking for a kind of “thrill of transcendence” in contact with religion (or many religions). I became interested in it, however, because it clearly involves something more than just engaging in what might be called religious tourism or folklore. In the opinion of the American author, the “sensual renewal” is not confined to the stage of disinterested experience⁷. “The skin of religion” is a metaphor emphasizing the fact that religion signifies through the physical, the contact between man and object. It also suggests that a mystic vision may contain tangible elements, giving the impression as if someone or something touched us. Plate uses here the phrase “haptic religiosity”. This variety is, of course, not found in the doctrinal mainstream of any religion, but elements of similarly understood hapticity appear in the accounts of many mystics, and words relating to touching, penetrating, or piercing are an important component of metaphors conveying the experience of the person experiencing transcendence. Divine beings or heavenly light appear to the person experiencing a mystical state in a nearly physical manner. However, it is emphasized that the interaction takes place outside the realm of the senses and the body.

The phrase “the skin of religion” may bring us closer to capturing the attitude to religion characteristic for our times. People expect a new range of sensory experiences in contact with religion, hoping that they will open up unspecified transcendent perspectives. Can such an attitude be attributed to artists as well? Characterizing the work of the representatives of the European avant-garde art of the first half of the twentieth century in the context of religion, Eleanor Heartney wrote that they rejected its organized forms, identifying them with reactionary and authoritarian forces. Yet distancing themselves from orthodox beliefs, they still employed “the rhetoric of

⁶ S.B. Plate, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁷ For example, the author refers to a passage of Scripture, which says that the senses are to be trained to distinguish good from evil.

transcendence and spirituality”⁸, in reference to their art. It is difficult to say whether this was just rhetoric. I am inclined to believe that such books as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* by Wassily Kandinsky, or *God Is Not Cast Down* by Kazimir Malevich, along with the work of these artists emerging during this period, constitute an authentic attempt to identify new ways to transcendence based on the invented languages of art. Heartney rightly points out, however, that this quest was based on the abandonment of traditional religious themes and focusing on the possibilities offered by artistic abstraction. This trend continued after World War II, although the relationship between the atmosphere of spirituality characterizing the created paintings and the concretization of the transcendent references became increasingly unclear. The American author gives the example of Rothko’s Chapel in Houston, a “non-sectarian sanctuary” – meditative space commissioned by Catholic patrons and displaying the paintings of Marc Rothko – a Jewish artist. Another example is the work of Barnett Newman, another Jewish artist, who made a series of non-representational paintings relating to the Stations of the Cross (1958-1964). Perhaps the most radical stance was adopted in that period by Ad Reinhardt, who postulated the separation of the image and the artist from all contexts of religion, iconography, society, etc. However, this eventually led him to search for a single principle of life (resembling a religious one), and to attempt to create “pure” paintings (arrived at through the process of constant elimination).⁹

The conception which emerged from the experiences of the avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century, and their continuators in the beginning of the second half of the century, was based on the belief that abstract spirituality should replace more concrete religious activity (based on faith and good deeds) aimed at reaching transcendence. If the artists alluded to religious concepts, they usually invoked the quest of the mystics. It was even believed that if the mystics had used the medium of visual art instead of verbally describing their visions, they would have created abstract paintings. All of these ideas can be regarded as strongly contrasting with the notion of “the skin of religion”. Transcendence as understood by the abstractionists was meant to entail the transgression of the sensory level, which was

⁸ E. Heartney, *Art & Today*, Phaidon Press, New York 2008, p. 266.

⁹ Reinhardt wrote: „I had been called a Zen Buddhist, a neo-Christian, a Calvinist, a Hindu, and a Muslim, simply because there were people that wanted to read the paintings as symbolic of those religions [...] but painting really has no relation to any of the religions nor ever has.” (*Art as Art. The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. B. Rose, University of California Press, Berkeley 1991, p. 14). This assertion can be understood as meaning that, according to the artist, the authentic path to transcendence requires abandoning all roads indicated by religious denominations.

reflected in their abandonment of figuration and the extreme reduction of the shapes and colors in their paintings. If a transcendent being exists above the realm of random beings, the proper way to approach it seemed to be the rejection of the visual attractiveness of art. The aesthetic criteria were thus suspended. Contact with abstract paintings was to put the viewer on his path to transcendence by releasing him from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and from the practical objectives and duties to perform there. This experience was regarded as richer, more comprehensive, and more radical than the one offered by the churches in the ordinary religious life. It was thought that the dematerialization of art, or the deprivation of the works of art of visual distractions, would bring the viewers closer to the intangible transcendent being.¹⁰

After the radicalism of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde's artistic aspirations, the emergence of postmodern art was easy to interpret as a rejection of transcendence. Postmodern works, both as regards their content and form, focused on the material and the visual, and related to specific social and political problems. If the works featured any religious imagery, it took the form of quoting the most stereotypical iconographic themes, or using figures of Christ or Virgin Mary bought in souvenir shops as ready-made components. On this basis it was argued that postmodern works are not concerned with faith or spirituality, but rather with The Church as an institution and religion as a social phenomenon. Of course, in the last four decades, many artists have expressed hostility towards religion and dismissed the importance of faith. But this should not become a basis for unjustified generalizations, especially in the light of the intriguing fact that the authors of the works deemed blasphemous and heretical often emphasized the role of education in the spirit of a particular religious tradition, and often declared that they were now believers.¹¹ Heartney mentions such names as Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, Dawid Wojnarowicz, Kiki Smith, Joel-Peter Witkin. The list could be of course further expanded. The American author points out the connection of those artists with Catholicism. She believes that this denomina-

¹⁰ These views alluded (though without invoking antecedents) to the twelfth-century dispute between Victorians and Cistercians. Thinkers gathered in the monastery of St. Victor in Paris believed that visible beauty is similar to the invisible. The human mind, when properly excited by shapes, colors, and scents, becomes closer to the contemplation of a higher, extrasensory perfection. The Cistercians believed the opposite. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "a very beautiful image of a saint man or woman is displayed, and it is believed that the greater the saint, the more colorful it should be. People run to it and kiss it, they are invited to submit their gifts, and they admire the beauty more than they worship the holiness (quoted in W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. II, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2009, p. 209).

¹¹ Cf. E. Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics*, <http://nbrokaw.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/postmodern-heretics-2.pdf>, accessed on: 30.09.2014.

tion, as opposed to Protestantism, focuses on the material, corporeal factors, not treated as the opposite of spirituality. She writes that “A stress on the physical body has long been a key element in Catholicism. While Protestants view the kingdoms of God and Man as essentially separate, Catholicism stressed the continuity of the divine and the human. All the major mysteries of Catholicism – the Immaculate Conception, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Transubstantiation of the Host into the Body of Christ, the Ascension and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary – emphasize the role of the human body as vessel of divine spirit”.¹²

Emphasizing the role of bodily, or – more broadly – material factors can be associated with secularization. However, as noted by modern scholars examining this problem, Catholicism and other religions of the world (Weltreligionen) approach the relation between man and God unlike the societies of old, which combined religion and magic: transcendence is achieved here through the mediation of everyday objects. The Bible has many passages indicating that reality as a field of human activity does not necessarily require magical-religious reverence. However, the general transcendent perspective of the Bible provides depth for our experiencing the material world and human labor.

Franco Crespi believes that the secular and the religious perspectives usually coexist, and the experience of the divine is possible in both these cases. However, they imply different ways of understanding secularization. What is seen as secularization from the former perspective, turns out to be a different approach to the issue of transcendence in the latter. Crespi observes that “While in a secular perspective, man remains immersed in reality (...), in religious Christian perspective (though this probably also applies to other religions) man is at the helm, foregrounded, distinguished from objects that are revealed to him in their ‘vulgarity’, their ‘secular character’. It is man in his relationship with God who gives things their meaning [...]”.¹³ The meaning of objects – be it purely secular or transcendent – is therefore dependent on the perspective from which it is apprehended. People are shown their freedom, which from the Christian point of view can best be understood as the role of a child of God who has been given the right to rule over all creation.¹⁴

Is the complex of phenomena referred to here as “the margin of transcendence” associated with the roughly outlined contemporary debate on the

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ F. Crespi, *Proces sekularyzacji: od desakralizacji do religii*, Polish transl. by D. Pawłowska, in: *Ateizm oraz irreligia i sekularyzacja*, selected and edited by F. Adamski, Wydawnictwo PETRUS, Kraków 2011, p. 128 (English translation mine).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

issue of secularization? I believe that these issues cannot be too closely linked, nor should we consider the former to be an outcome of the latter. The issue is much more complex. Thus, we can talk at most about the tendency present in different domains to open them to the phenomena previously neglected or rejected. When it comes to art, this trend is reflected in the artists employing religious motifs and iconography as components of their works, combined with secular themes. These combinations can shock the followers of a particular religious denomination, and therefore artists are accused (and even taken to court) of desecrating the sacred, of blasphemy, etc. I am not going to examine the validity of this type of allegations. However, on the basis of several examples, I would like to consider the diminishing distance (perhaps shocking to some recipients) between the spheres of the sacred and the profane in contemporary art. I wish to take a particularly close look at the liminal areas, where the reference to transcendence is often uncertain¹⁵, or where the sense of transcendence appears in a margin.

In the tradition of European art, the reasons for using religious motifs are usually quite clearly defined – positively or negatively. In the first case, artists use them to attempt a direct reference to transcendence (through making images of saints, depicting scenes from the Scripture, etc.), or to evoke the sacred through a unique presentation of some selected elements of the secular reality.¹⁶ In the second case, they are used to express lack of belief (cf. e.g. Dada and Surrealism, which mocked religious feelings by changing the sense of the familiar motifs of sacral art)¹⁷, or to manifest aggression towards the famous works of that kind. The situation becomes more complex in the case of American art. This has been pointed out by the authors of the

¹⁵ I do not take into account artistic activities for which the use of religious themes is only an opportunity to tackle other issues (such as feminist or political). Therefore, I will not address the work by Dorota Nieznalska *Passion*, (featuring elements such as the image of male genitals on the cross), famed in Poland due to the charges of offending of religious feelings, as the author, defending herself, pointed to the lack of connection of the meaning of her work with religion, a strictly immanent character of the message.

¹⁶ An excellent example is the painting by Caspar David Friedrich *Cross in the Mountains* (*Tetschen Altar*), 1807-08. It presents a large crucifix located on a mountain top partially covered with vegetation and surrounded by several trees. The image is a realistic landscape, but there is a sense of connection between God and nature emanating from it. Symbolic religious motifs are placed only on the decorative golden frame – they are: God's omniscient eye, ears of wheat, and grapes as a reference to the Protestant Eucharist *in utraque specie*, etc.

¹⁷ An example would be a painting by Max Ernst *La vierge corrigeant l'enfant Jésus devant trois témoins* (Mother of God rebuking baby Jesus in the presence of three witnesses). It corresponds to canonical Renaissance-Mannerist theme of Madonna and Child, albeit converted into ironic and profane, secular representation of mother spanking her naughty child. The halo fell from the head of Jesus, and lies on the floor.

introduction to the comprehensive book *The Visual Culture of American Religions*. David Morgan and Sally M. Promey emphasize the fact that the American society has always been ethnically and culturally diverse. Therefore, the same motifs, including religious ones, can be interpreted differently by different people. One example would be the canonical image of Jesus. For some, Jesus is, as they put it, “a visual Platonic Form, an eternal ideal that orders the physical universe into a series of copies of itself.”¹⁸ White people regard these images as the epitome of “the reproduction of the original beauty of Truth”. In contrast, people of other races perceive them as the embodiment of the “white truth”. Even among the followers of the same religion, such different connotations introduce substantial additional sense, modifying the meaning of the religious images. According to Morgan and Promey, this is the source of both the power and the problematic nature of religious images in the American tradition. It also influences the present, leading to unconventional religious behavior. On Good Friday in 1993, at Freedom Plaza in Washington DC, the clergyman George Stallings tore up and burned a generic picture of Jesus granting his blessing. This action should be interpreted neither in terms of blasphemous, anti-religious behavior, nor in connection with the beliefs of the Protestant iconoclasm. The context was actually the Good Friday reflection on the real violence inflicted upon the body of the crucified Jesus, and the action was set against the background of a call to a spiritual “purification” in connection with the link between the white “mythological” Christ and the African-American experience.

Commenting on the event, Moragne and Promey write that, contrary to the belief of the Reverend Stallings, who wanted to show that religious images are irrelevant compared to deeds, that they are just pieces of printed paper, the action is a testament of the power attributed to images. They believe that the human effort expended in the destruction of images, the defense of their dignity, or the struggle in their name shows that they do have considerable significance and impact. The authors also mention and analyze various features of images within the religious practices and behaviors, and in many areas of secular life. They point out that one of the aspects of the “life” of images is their “death” or destruction. They write that “Iconoclasm is a measure of the intensity of feeling and conviction associated with certain kinds of images. Iconoclasm is thus part of a larger visual-symbolic strategy.”¹⁹ The acts of destruction are performed not, as preached by Luther and Calvin, to prevent the image from becoming an idol obscuring God.

¹⁸ *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, ed. D. Morgan & S.M. Promey, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2001, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

Many of contemporary acts of iconoclasm do not result from negating the relationship between image and transcendence, or from the lack of faith in the power of its social impact, but stem instead from the belief in the existence of such links and their significance. The violent actions performed on images (ranging from their tearing or destruction, through drastic modifications to their appearance) are meant to draw attention to the power of images.

Morgan and Promey formulate a program of research on the material culture of religion. In this framework, they want to change the order of posing questions. They do not want to start with religion, examining its material presence, the way in which material objects illustrate religious stories, or function as material embodiments of theological doctrines. They propose to approach the problem starting from the opposite end: they wish to consider how material objects can constitute religions, participate in important religious practices, etc. Thus, they abandon the treatment of the material culture of religion as “ancillary to some Platonic reality called ‘religion’, implying that the world of matter is a lower form of representation, a corporeal copy of a higher, spiritual Idea.”²⁰ The starting point is what I have previously described – after Plate – as “the skin of religion.” This approach, called “the material turn”, proposes to understand objects not as substitutes for words, but as non-verbal articulations of space, possession, the past, present, future, etc. With this approach, it turns out to be less important what images are, but more important what they “do”: what effect they have, what is done with/to them, how they are used to achieve specific objectives. Morgan and Promey write that “Visual culture can be fruitfully treated as evidential and not merely illustrational in the historical study of American religions.”²¹

I believe that the same change has occurred in the approach to the issues related to religion in postmodern art. The “material turn” in this case entails a reversal of the order of the proceedings. Earlier, the starting point for the artists (including the avant-garde ones) was an experience transcending the boundaries of the natural or the visible, and then they sought the means to express it. Today, they start with the observation of images and objects, including those associated with religious worship, attending not to their canonical, traditionally accepted functions, but to the often unusual contexts in which they may occur. The purpose of such treatment may be their desecration or blasphemy, but it can also be the desire to find oneself on the border of transcendence. While the ritualized forms of religious worship do determine in advance the functions of the images and objects used during the

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

rituals (they have a clearly defined identity and purpose), one can also explore what they can “do”. It is not certain what this exploration will bring, but there is a chance one may come closer to discovering what is often hidden behind the routine of the formal worship.

In September 1997, Robert Gober completed his installation called *Virgin* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Its central element was an oversized sculpture of Virgin Mary, typical in terms of form, punctured halfway up with a six feet long pipe. On the right and the left side of the figure, the artist placed large suitcases, with their lids open. Behind the figure was a niche in the wall where a steep wooden staircase was visible, onto which a cascade of water was flowing, trickling into a nearby hole. This work provoked protests from Catholic circles. Particular outrage was provoked by the “tainting” of the holy figure – its “desacralization”. The entire installation was described as “a nightmare”. There were, however, other opinions as well. A woman who identified herself as a “devout Roman Catholic” called the installation beautiful and inspiring. Commenting on its disturbing form, she said that good art is never comfortable. Another woman, a practicing Catholic and a feminist at the same time, voiced her disappointment with the Church of which she was a member. She wrote that the installation was “one of the most profoundly sacred spaces [she has] encountered in an art venue”²² What caused such difference of opinion?

Discussing the work of Gober in his insightful article, Eric Doss examines it in the context of the increasing (in his opinion) importance of the matters of faith and holiness in contemporary America. He draws attention to the various forms which the clergymen of various denominations use to reach the faithful (television programs, books about physical healing, personal transformation and religious transcendence, printing on T-shirts, etc.). Gober’s installation stands out against this background, because of its personal nature. The artist has Catholic roots and is a homosexual; it is well known that the Catholic morality abhors homosexuality. The exhibition space was therefore filled with various objects relating to the Christian tradition, but also to the daily life and the body, and their complex interrelations. The basic arrangement of the installation resembled the layout of a Christian church. The transept corresponded with the symmetrically arranged suitcases, the pipe set the direction of the nave, and the apse was the staircase with water. The figure of the Virgin Mary located in the center, whose penetration with the pipe was sometimes interpreted as a rape of the female body or Gober’s attack on Catholicism, in the light of this interpretation turns out to be an

²² E. Doss, *Robert Gober’s “Virgin” Installation. Issues of Spirituality in Contemporary American Art*, in: *ibidem*, p. 144.

articulation of the Christian idea of “Mother Church”. Along with the overall structure of the work, there are many elements that gradually reveal themselves when one approaches it. They have the character of personal narrative and are located in different places under the floor of the gallery. For example, the seemingly old-fashioned suitcases, open and inviting one to look inside, are placed over the sewers, where one can see colorful plastic plants, stones and shells. Another opening reveals the legs of a man and a child, shown up to the knees.

The installation is complex and provokes many interpretations. They can relate to the relationship of a physically tormented body and divinity, the difficulty of connecting the earthly with the heavenly. Also evoked are numerous Freudian connotations. From the point of view of the reflections presented in this article, however, it is most noteworthy that the installation inhabits a liminal space: situated between what is earthly and material, and the diverse religious and non-religious suggestions of transcendence.

Another type of references to Christian iconography is exemplified by the works of Kiki Smith. While Goyer tries to associate Christian iconography with personal issues, Smith sees it as an opportunity to tackle universal issues. However, the universalism is deeply rooted in subjectivity. The area where what is most general and most personal come together is – according to the artist – the body. Therefore, most of her works show its outer shell, as well as what is directly below it, and the internal organs. An example of such a combination of seemingly contradictory components is the sculpture *Virgin Mary* (1993). It is made of bronze and it depicts a standing figure of a naked woman with hanging arms. Such a depiction differs from the traditional way of showing the Virgin Mary, but alludes to the portrayals of Christ's body after the resurrection, during the presentation of the wounds on his hands. In the sculpture by Smith, we see the inside of the hands and forearms, where the veins are marked with silver inlay. It is thus not a canonical representation of any version of the figure of Madonna. At first, the sculpture gives the impression of biological naturalism. However, as Heartney writes, perceived against the backdrop of various Catholic versions of femininity, it creates a stir by suggesting “the cost of submission to God's will”.²³

Another work by Smith directly exploiting the Christian iconographic tradition is *Mary Magdalene* (1994). Its point of reference is the sculpture by Donatello from 1455. In both cases, the former prostitute turned saint is depicted in her old age. However, while the Italian artist showed her as a haggard, half-mad hermit draped in animal skins, Smith, as Heartney writes, decided to restore the traces of her erstwhile sensuality. In the

²³ E. Heartney, *Art Today*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

tradition of Christian iconography sensuality was usually contrasted with holiness, especially if it was linked to a radical condemnation of earthly values and turning to transcendence. The sculpture by Smith challenges these divisions. This applies, moreover, not only to the examples discussed here, but the entire oeuvre of the artist. In an interesting conversation with Carlo McCormick, when asked by the interviewer about her fascination with the mechanics of human anatomy, she said that AIDS had a lot to do with the awareness of the body as a social weapon. Clearly, the place of the body in our minds has changed; we perceive it now as something important, because we have become aware of the body as an organism.²⁴

Representations of bodies in the works by Smith are accompanied by many discourses relating to social and political issues. The artist does not shy away from them because they are concerned with the meaning of life, both her own and that of most people. They also touch upon spiritual matters as the component of various domains of experience. For example, feminist divisions into the male and the female, the body and the mind acquire a different meaning when approached from the perspective of women's mystical tradition or, as Smith claims, when we begin to wonder how the role of Mary – the mother bearing God in the flesh in her womb – affected her body.²⁵

References to Christian iconography, such as the ones mentioned above, are not a necessary condition for situating the work on the edge of transcendence. It is extremely interesting to observe the examples of contemporary artistic practice in which the transcendent perspective appears as a consequence of the focus on what is completely secular. Material objects of nature and man-made creations used for completely practical purposes reveal their liminal status in relation to the intangible and not random.

Polish artist Teresa Murak only once expressly employed Christian symbolism, when she presented a large cross planted with watercress at the 1983 exhibition *Znak krzyża* [Sign of the Cross] held at the Parish of Divine Mercy in Warsaw. Watercress (*Lepidium sativum*) in different stages of growth has been the main creative material employed by the artist since the beginning of the 1970s, regarded as her artistic trademark. When this plant is regularly watered, it very quickly germinates and grows. Murak used it in her "sowing actions" in the form of objects or installations, and made it part of her performances. These activities permeate one another in her work and the object resulting from sowing cress sometimes becomes a starting point for

²⁴ Kiki Smith, „Journal of Contemporary Art”, <http://www.jca-online.com/ksmith.html>, accessed on: 30.09.2014.

²⁵ E. Heartney, *Postmodern ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

a performance. This happened in 1974 in Kielczewice in the Lublin region, the artist's home town. Firstly, she made a 70 meter long cloth and sowed it with watercress to be cultivated in a monastery attic throughout the Holy Week. Then, on Easter Sunday, the object was ceremoniously moved to the church and after the service it was "launched" onto the waves of the local river Bystrica.

Sowing cress (also on the artist's own body), cultivating it, and observing its growth are material activities which evoke significant symbolic connotations relating to the mystery of life, fertility, and growth. These connotations often take a secular form, especially when the objects or performances are presented in art galleries. Murak's activity has been compared to the works of Ana Mendieta, e.g. by Sebastian Cichocki.²⁶ Both artist experiment with organic matter referred to their own body, the desire to tap into the hidden forces of nature, the sources of life. Similar interpretations have also been offered by other Polish art critics. For example, Iwo Zmysłony referred to Murak's work as "feminism of the earth", claiming that "it shows femininity in the archetypal or even cosmological dimension – almost completely abstracted from eroticism".²⁷ The artist does not comment on such interpretations of her work; her own concise texts mainly report on the activities she performs.²⁸ She admits, however, that she was inspired by Christian spirituality, and declares loyalty to the tradition and doctrine of the Catholic Church. It can be assumed that the immanent, cosmological interpretations account for only part of the semantic perspective of her work, located on the borderline of transcendence. Murak does not name it, nor does she refer to it through overt symbols, but she takes it into account as the highest level of the meaning of her work.²⁹

In the case of the works by Wolfgang Laib, references to what exists beyond or above the material appear as though by chance, not fully intentionally. The artist uses ephemeral materials such as pollen (e.g. from hazel, dandelion, buttercup), beeswax, milk, rice, stones, etc., to create regular geometrical forms, for example circles or cones. These activities appear to

²⁶ www.academia.edu, accessed on: 30.09.2014.

²⁷ <http://www.obieg.pl/print/29069> accessed on: 30.09.2014.

²⁸ For example, "Cress seed sown, fed with water, begins to swell and burst in the dark. I water it every hour, I stay awake, I care for it, I light a candle (quoted in *ibidem*).

²⁹ A similar meaning is typical of other works by Murak. For example, *Ścierki wizytek* (1988) consists of authentic, worn items used by the nuns of the convent of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Warsaw for the purpose of cleaning. Cichocki described it as "an abstract map of spiritual discipline", but their sight is not associated with resigning from the material aspects of life and subordination to a strict rule, work, and humility. Rather, rags, thanks to their peculiar beauty, make a bridge between daily work and the opening transcendent dimension.

combine an interest in the elements of nature and in geometry as a product of the human mind. It may seem that the artist is trying to simultaneously follow the inspiration of the Italian *arte povera* and American minimalism. Both of these artistic trends of the 1960s were strongly materialistic in character. However, Laib's work creates an atmosphere of secrecy offering, as Sarah Tanguy puts it, "a direct apprehension of the divine".³⁰

The special character of this apprehension consists in the fact that heading toward transcendence we do not give up the earthly, the material, and the sensual. Tanguy wrote that Laib's work "is about embracing contradictions, creating a spiritual physicality that combines existentialist practice with Platonic and utopian aspirations".³¹ The artist does not specify the transcendent references. He does not use any familiar symbols to suggest the specific religious or philosophical traditions to which he would like to direct the recipients' thoughts. If at times his works do feature forms associated with the history of a particular religion (e.g. Ziggurats, or Mesopotamian "temple-mountains" in the installation *Nowhere-Everywhere*, 1998), the materials used in their construction (in this case wood and beeswax) change their basic meaning. Laib believes that universalization occurs in this way. As he has said, "When I show pollen or milk in any country in the world, everybody knows what they are. And this has nothing to do with German art or with European art. It is something so universal any human being can relate to without language or explanation".³² The artist sees the basis of the universal nature of his work in the ingredients he uses and the geometric shapes he gives them, and thus in the material and the sensual. In contrast, the range of reference of transcendent works is individual. It depends on the recipient whether he wants to concentrate on them or engage in a game of possible references between what is real, currently seen, and symbolic. As Hearney put it: "he provides meditative spaces and objects that function as a door to alternative realities".³³

³⁰ S. Tanguy, *Making the Ideal Real: A Conversation with Wolfgang Laib*, *Sculpture Magazine* 2001, No. 4, <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag01/may01/laib/laib.shtml>, accessed on: 30.09.2014.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ E. Hearney, *Art & Today*, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

THE ICONOCLASTIC PERSPECTIVE

At various times in the history of art, the major issue in the relation between art works and transcendence concerned the materiality of the works. They are concrete objects, producing experiences in their recipients due to their inherent sensory qualities. In the case of the visual arts, this effect was associated most frequently with their ability to reproduce the appearance of people and objects. The issue of artistic transcendence (understood in this case as going beyond the visible) was related to the question of whether we are able to ascend to an extrasensory level while we can only show material reality in the works of art. The philosophical answer to this question was often negative. For example, Plato believed that the images depicted in paintings or sculpture not only fail to bring us closer to the world of Ideas, but they adversely affect our souls, driving them away from what should be the object of their attention. From this point of view, he thought much more highly of geometry. However, in religious art a different position was usually adopted. The Christian tradition tended to distinguish between the right and the wrong attitude to images rather than to condemn them.

This problem emerged in the dispute between the supporters of iconolatry and the iconoclasts. The Old Testament repeatedly prohibits the making of painted images and statues of God, which was meant to prevent the Israelites from committing idolatry. It was also to remind people that God is transcendent – beyond the reach of human knowledge and artistic expression. This prohibition, however, was not absolute, permitting the use of images in temple worship. However, in the New Testament, an important argument in favor of the possibility of depicting transcendence is the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus, who – through his birth in human form – became the image of the invisible God. This justified the emergence of religious images found already in the catacombs and early Christian basilicas.

The art historians researching iconoclasm tend to focus on its religious manifestations. This issue can, however, be seen more broadly and then it turns out to be also important for other periods of art, including contemporary works. This point of view was adopted by Alain Besançon in his well-known monograph on “the intellectual history of iconoclasm”.³⁴ He was less interested in specific visual consequences of that position, and more in the problem of the possibility or impossibility of imaging God as a transcendent being. In his book, he adopted a historical point of view. In the successive chapters, he presented the history of the dispute on the representation of divinity,

³⁴ A. Besançon, *L'image interdite. Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme*, Fayard, Paris 1994.

considering its philosophical and theological manifestations. Therefore, the scope of the concept of iconoclasm was significantly expanded. Besançon believes that it appeared already in the ancient Greece, where two concepts of transcendence collided. On the one hand, the transcendent manifested itself in socially acceptable forms, reflected in the arts in the statues of gods represented as humans. On the other hand, some philosophers of the period considered the attempts to represent the transcendent as senseless and sacrilegious. However, these objections were elitist in character. In practice, sculptural and painterly images of the gods proliferated. The social significance of their creation was noticed in ancient Rome; the divine status of its emperors predictably spurred the cult of the images of those imperial “political gods”. Though their relation with transcendence was weak, the persuasive role of their iconic presentations was important. In early Christianity, the Jewish prohibition on making images of God met the iconophilic Greco-Roman tradition. The combination of these positions made it possible to refer to the figure of Jesus, connecting the transcendent with the material. At the same time the Church – reinforcing its role – adopted the Roman concept of imperial images. Thus religious art began to develop, despite the opposition from Byzantine iconoclasm. In the Latin and Catholic Europe in the modern era, the production of sacred images was not contested and simply flourished. The makers of those images particularly stressed their educational and pastoral functions, as well as the opportunities they provided for teaching the principles of faith and inspiring piety.

The second iconoclastic cycle was associated with the emergence of Protestantism.³⁵ Besançon believes that it was not a repetition of the previous one, but was inspired by the new approach to the problem of transcendence and the climate associated with the development of science, the decline of rhetoric, a new vision of the world and a new type of society. The French author examines the spirituality of Kant, hostile to images, as well as the aesthetics of Hegel in this perspective. He notes that Hegel placed the problem of the divine image in the center of his reflections on the history of art. The concept of the “death of art” is interpreted as a kind of iconoclasm involving giving up images and replacing them with philosophical concepts.

³⁵ Besançon does not address in more detail the concepts of Protestant theologians. Meanwhile, reflected in their views were very important ideas about the relationship between art and transcendence. Sergiusz Michalski writes that Protestants exhibited “fear of images” because they considered them an illusion, something false, only pretending to be the truth with their external appearance. Supporters of Wycliffe claimed that “that which nourishes the eyes, infects the soul” (*Protestanci i sztuka. Spór o obrazy w Europie nowożytnej*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1989, p. 305). Protestants were convinced of the superiority of words on the way to transcendence. Luther even renounced the state of ecstatic communion with God, considering himself to be a humble interpreter of Scripture.

Besançon's account of the intellectual history of iconoclasm, which I have very briefly presented here, shows that the question of the relationship between art and transcendence took on different forms in the course of history and appeared in multiple contexts. In many cases, it was instrumentalized, serving other goals. This situation also occurs in the twentieth century. A good example is the use of references to Christian iconography by the leaders of the totalitarian states. In such paintings, the image of God is replaced by – for example – Stalin's portrait in the hope that the connotations formed by the tradition of religious art will be transferred onto the Communist leader, creating a divine aura around him. In many respects, this situation resembles the ancient Roman imperial cult, although today it occurs in the context of the overtly hostile approach to religious transcendence.³⁶

In the twentieth century, Besançon sees the iconoclastic position in the works of the representatives of abstract art, especially geometrical abstraction. He assigns a special place to the works of Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Malevich, which he derives from a unique form of "symbolist religiosity" from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the influence of theosophy. He writes that the idea of abstract art was created in the "womb of a religious, or – to be more precise – mystical – movement".³⁷ On the one hand it can be assumed that what motivated the work of these artists once they abandoned the creation of images of visible reality was the belief – typical for iconoclasm – that such images do not bring them closer to the transcendent, but even obscure it and distract from it. On the other hand, they did not give up art, nor did they proclaim iconoclasm. On the contrary, they attributed an important role to artistic activity, under the condition that it changed its character to non-representational. The rejection of presenting reality in painting was ultimately to result in images becoming a better way to transcendence than words, whose advantage over images had been emphasized by the iconoclasts. Language, contaminated by being used in everyday life, obfuscates the transcendent, just like representational painting. Therefore, one must discover new means capable of expressing it. The position of the representatives of abstract art, as Besançon points out, is therefore the same as that of the mystics, who – having a sense of direct communion with God – complained about the difficulty to communicate what they experienced. Therefore, the French author writes that we are dealing with

³⁶ The remark presented here on the role of Stalin in the context of the discussed problem does not exhaust the complexity of the subject. Boris Groys considers that the total power of Stalin could not be restricted by "anyone's presence even in the transcendent world" and therefore he includes the Russian avant-garde in his discussion. (Cf. B. Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, Princeton 1992, p. 94).

³⁷ A. Besançon, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

“new iconoclasm, if one takes into account that the abandonment of references to ‘objects’ and nature does not come from fear of the divine, but from the mystic ambition to give it a truly worthy image”.³⁸

The theme of the iconoclasm inherent in abstract art can be continued even further. Byzantine iconoclasts did not doubt the existence of transcendence and only asked the question of the right path to it. However, some representatives of the avant-garde reversed this order. This was noted by Andrzej Turowski, when he called the work of Malevich “formal transcendence”.³⁹ The artist does not seek any new means of expression adequate to the perceived content, but instead assumes that the form shapes the content, making it tangible for us. Thus, non-representational painting does not depict transcendence, but rather creates or reveals it. Malevich is primarily a “creator of language”, focusing on how to enable the direct perception of the immaterial. Such iconoclasm (if this term still applies here) consists in using abstract forms to access the world of spirituality, transgressing practical life and allowing for the direct experience of the transcendent.⁴⁰

The iconoclasm of geometric abstraction in the early twentieth century is particularly important from the point of view of the process of simulation and the emergence of simulacra, which we experience in the modern world. Writing about them, Jean Baudrillard pointed out that they are a radical continuation of the very thing that the iconoclasts were warning against. As he argued, “this is precisely because they predicted this omnipotence of simulacra, the faculty simulacra have of effacing God from the conscience of man, and the destructive, annihilating truth that they allow to appear – that deep down God never existed, that only the simulacrum ever existed, even that God himself was never anything but his own simulacrum – from this came their urge to destroy the images.”⁴¹ The French author therefore believes that it is only in our time that the iconoclastic urge can be fully explained. If the iconoclasts had only meant, as is generally believed, that images should not obscure the idea of God, it would not have been

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

³⁹ A. Turowski, *Wielka utopia awangardy. Artystyczne i społeczne utopie w sztuce rosyjskiej 1910-1930*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1990, pp. 90-93.

⁴⁰ Turowski indicates that a similar approach to the word is found in the declaration by Aleksei Kruchenykh published in 1913 in the collection of poems illustrated with alogical works by Malevich. The poet wrote: “so far it has been claimed that the mind dictates the word, and not vice versa. We discovered this mistake and created a free language – extra-cerebral and universal. Historically, artists arrived at words through thought, and we reach a direct perception through the word” quoted in *ibidem*, p. 95).

⁴¹ J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation*, transl. S.F. Glasser, University of Michigan 1994, p. 6.

a sufficient reason to destroy them. One can live with the sense of distorted truth, or ponder how to rectify it. In contrast, “metaphysical despair” results from the feeling that images do not hide or reveal anything, that they are created to resemble a transcendent model, but are non-referential and self-sufficient. According to Baudrillard, this had to be resisted at all costs. He also lists the successive stages of the realization of the situation of the image, taking into account the views of the iconoclasts as one of the stages. First, it is assumed that the image “is the reflection of a profound reality”, then it is noticed that “it masks and denatures a profound reality”, in consequence, it is presumed that it conceals “the absence of a profound reality”; finally, this is followed by the realization that the image “has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum”.⁴² The last stage is appropriate for the situation today. Myriads of images do not represent anything any more, they do not refer to anything, and are themselves a reality, replacing different varieties of reality. From our point of view it is important that certain types of images replace or “produce” transcendence in our minds.

Referring to the disputes of the past, Baudrillard writes that the iconoclasts, accused of contempt and rejection of images, were the ones who saw their actual value, realizing that they distort transcendent reality. It can be said, therefore, that they forced the artists to reflect on their own activities, which resulted in many new avant-garde concepts. On the other hand, the French author writes that iconoclasts “were the most modern minds, the most adventurous, because, in the guise of having God become apparent in the mirror of images, they were already enacting his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations”.⁴³

Could the above-mentioned activity of the avant-garde iconoclasts stop this process at least in relation to art? Perhaps the most radical example of this trend was Malevich’s concept of Suprematism. Its basic icon became his *Black Square*, whose form, while not feeding the eyes, not generating delusions, became, as the artist emphasized, a “window” opening to transcendence. Explaining this quest of Malevich, Turowski wrote that he made “an attempt to shift the plane of expression onto the plane of content, fused the presented with the presenting (the shape disappeared in the concept)”.⁴⁴ The form, however, still existed and although it was very much reduced, it was able to function in art without any connection with immaterial reality taken into account by the artist – it was able to become its simulacrum.

⁴² *Ibidem*, pp. 11-12.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴⁴ A. Turowski, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

Observing contemporary art, one can note two variations of the impact of Malevitch's *Black Square*, as well as other Suprematist forms, as simulacra. The first variation entails the artists continuing to attribute to themselves the power of summoning transcendence. In reality, however, no matter how painterly elaborate, the forms do not "dissolve" in the spiritual. At the most, they suggest transcendence, or reduce it to a type of sensory aesthetic experience. They may not obfuscate or replace it, but certainly their referential connection to the transcendent is very weak.

The second variant of Suprematist forms functioning today as simulacra is much more radical. It is based on irony and involves destroying the illusion that it is possible to create images able to maintain a link with transcendence without turning into objects from everyday life. Many examples can be found in contemporary Polish art. In 1985, Paweł Susid created a painting in which Malevitch's Black Cross was interpreted as "a design for a table for 4 people". In 2004, Ewa Partum showed the Black Square as a road sign, attaching it to a pole in front of the entrance to her property.

In the same year, Jarosław Modzelewski turned it into a bathroom ornament in his installation *Black Tiles, White Tiles*. In all these cases, the artists did not limit themselves to showing Suprematist forms as simulacra of transcendence, but argued that they can be attributed different, more practical significance and functions. A slightly different aspect of the problem was highlighted in the film by Supergrupa Azorro *Rodzina* [Family] (2004). It shows an average modern family discussing serious artistic issues in front of the TV. Meanwhile, the children playing on the carpet make plasticine copies or drawings of famous works of art. At one point, the girl takes a marker and draws a black square on a white background. This form is one of the many shapes she has produced. Since there is no significant difference distinguishing it from the others, there is a suggestion that it was deprived of any transcendent referentiality, even ironically approached.⁴⁵

Does the situation outlined here suggest that contemporary art does not make references to transcendence, and the artists who presume their existence are deluded?⁴⁶ The problem is even more complex, as many analysts of modernity emphasize that we live in a postmetaphysical period. Sensitivity to anything that transcends immanence has been significantly weakened or disappeared. Characterizing the situation from a philosophical point of view,

⁴⁵ Examples included here, as well as others, are more widely discussed by Miłosz Słota in his M.A. thesis written under my guidance: *Ironiczne reinterpretacje sztuki awangardowej w dziełach współczesnych* [Ironic reinterpretations of avant-garde art in contemporary works], Łódź 2013.

⁴⁶ I am not addressing the issues of religious art, whose representatives create within a certain worldview and associated artistic principles.

Agata Bielik-Robson writes that “postmodern spirituality is not possible, because metaphysical thinking, which is its essential component, is on the wane”.⁴⁷ We cannot go beyond the material, rise above the individual. Moreover, we do not approach this situation as a state of crisis, but treat it as “emancipation from spirituality”. Therefore we can say, referring to earlier discussion, that replacing references to transcendence in art with simulacra is not experienced as a negative state. Therefore, the strategies of radical unmasking, dismantling, and deconstruction on the one hand, and of parody, ironic revision, or paraphrases on the other are treated as liberating.

Bielik-Robson also points to two strategies of searching for differently conceived transcendence. Their “otherness” lies in the fact that their point of departure is not general concepts of spirituality, substance, subject, or self. There are no metaphysical assumptions. Nor are there any signs opening a road to transcendence. A multitude of private languages and perspectives is accepted. The results are unpredictable, the goals are uncertain, and the disputes – intractable. However, there is a belief in the “ability to create sense”, though often manifested in surprising ways.

The first strategy described by Bielik-Robson derives from an interpretation of the views of Richard Rorty. He distinguished between the language typical of physics – descriptive, with rules of its use subject to strict criteria and the demand that its statements be verifiable, and the “abnormal languages” – ones that do not comply with these rules, employed in philosophy, mysticism, poetry, etc. For the latter, it is appropriate to build “new metaphors” which do not describe anything, but which are capable of engaging people in different ways. One of the directions of such engagement is the domain of the spiritual. Therefore, they can be considered “a substitute for the traditional spiritual language, a paraphrase of the metaphysical perspective”.⁴⁸

One might raise a number of objections to such a concept of non-metaphysical spirituality, pointing out that it is a parasitic form of traditional spirituality, though it tries to cut itself off it (through its self-referential language), a kind of “game of salvation”, which we will play until it becomes boring, and so on. These objections made by Bielik-Robson can be complemented by ones relating to art. Today, it is the work of the post-Surrealists that features most original “abnormal languages”. Surrealism itself is also often described as an area of new spiritual discoveries. With respect to this movement, however, one should remember the insistence of its main

⁴⁷ A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formę duchowości*, Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 267.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 273-274.

theoretician André Breton that “surréal” is not the same as “surnaturel”. The surreal is contained in the physical, natural, visible reality, and has no relation to transcendence.⁴⁹

The second postmodern strategy of dealing with spirituality, according to Bielik-Robson, may be seen in the reflections of Charles Taylor. She points to his Ideal of Authenticity, which he emphasizes is not a manifestation of the “right to narcissism” widely accepted today and its resulting superficial creations, but an expression of the unique individual self, which can reach profound depths. Such experiences, including religious experience, do not reveal a universally valid truth, nor are they something given or inherited, but they are often random (they do not comprise a holistic metaphysical vision). Instead, they have a sense-making value, opening into being and facilitating the alignment of the “I” and something beyond it. This leads to an individual epiphany, which is always associated with personal vision. It can bring us outside of our subjectivity, but that path leads through a particularly intense awareness of internal experiences.

Taylor derived his concept of epiphany from the views of the nineteenth-century Romantics. This term was also used in relation to twentieth-century literature. For example, it was used to describe the moments in James Joyce’s novel *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* in which minor events, objects, or statements manifested deeper meanings, initially overlooked. The concept of epiphany can also relate to the manifestation of transcendence in contemporary art. I will provide two such examples below.

The first is the work of Roman Opalka. The artist described himself as a religious agnostic. He wrote: “I do not approach God as a religious phenomenon, but as an emblematic, physical and at the same time logical manifestation, paradoxically associated with extreme exaltation of spirituality”.⁵⁰ Thus, he did not treat the transcendent as the point of departure for his work, but his artistic practices, based on extremely reduced means of expression and the strict observance of adopted rules, resembled the rituals and asceticism associated with spiritual development within religions. In the case of Opalka, his specific practices were not designated by any superior instance, but they led – with mental concentration – to individual epiphany. The artist did not use the word, he wrote about the “adventures”⁵¹ that he experienced during his process of painterly counting. These adventures, taking into consideration the nature of Opalka’s activity, could be unexpected

⁴⁹ Por. K. Janicka, *Światopogląd surrealizmu*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1969, p. 192.

⁵⁰ *OPALKA 1965/1 – ∞*, La Hune, Flammarion 4, Paris 1992, p. 18.

⁵¹ Por. R. Opalka, *Anti-sisyphos*, Cantz Verlag, Stuttgart 1994, p. 175.

glimpses of infinity, leading to a singular non-religious feeling of transcendence.

The second example is one of the new series of works by Jan Berdyszak, entitled *Reszty reszt* [The rest of the rest]. It refers to the earlier work by the artist, in which he tackled the problem of the whole. This time, however, he focused on the theme of “non-whole, incompleteness”. In sketchbook 158 from 1999-2004, he wrote that “subtractions, gaps, and uncertainties of equivalents must be included in the creative processes”.⁵² The works that use them provide the sense of contact with the “worlds abstracting themselves in an incomparable way”.⁵³ This experience, not associated with any particular metaphysics, is an epiphany taking us beyond or above the areas in which we live our ordinary lives.

CONCLUSION

James Elkins, considering the strange position occupied by religion in contemporary art, emphasizes that it is certainly not connected with the main trends of current artistic pursuits. He writes: “Contemporary art, I think, is as far from organized religion as Western art has ever been, and that may even be its most singular achievement – or its cardinal failure, depending on your point of view. The separation has become entrenched.”⁵⁴ The American author associates this situation with the radical absence of religious themes in museums and galleries which define the contemporary institutional “art scene”. The curators do not include works that address such subject matter in exhibitions, critics do not write about them in professional art magazines. However, a considerable amount of religious art remains outside the “art scene”. This domain has its followers and responds to genuine demand, often tackling the problems by which people are profoundly affected. Elkins believes, however, that those who avoid discussing religion and contemporary art together are completely right.⁵⁵ To justify this claim, he refers to the text

⁵² J. Berdyszak, *Ze szkicowników*, in: *Jan Berdyszak. Reszty reszt*, katalog wystawy w Galerii Sektor I, Katowice 2009, p. 34.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁵⁴ J. Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*, Routledge, New York 2004, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Elkins gives an example of the painting by Janet McKenzie *Jesus of the People* (1999), which at the international exhibition “Jesus 2000” was chosen as the best image of Christ at the turn of the century. That Jesus is a black man, whose body was modeled after a woman’s body. He is surrounded by the following symbols: Christian halo, yin-yang, and an Indian feather. The painting, as McKenzie emphasized, is to symbolize “trans-

by Thierry De Duve, who examines the painting by Manet *Le Christ mort et les anges* (1864).⁵⁶ This early modernist work is a combination of four distinctive motifs known from the tradition of Christian art, though usually presented separately: an episode from the Gospel of St. John, the figure of the dead Christ (painted by Holbein, among others), the scene of taking Christ's body down from the cross, and the Pieta, with Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus in her lap, sometimes in the company of angels. Jesus in Manet's painting has his eyes open, which evokes associations with further iconographic motifs.

The innovatory character of the painting by the French artist therefore derives from the simultaneous use of multiple religious narratives and their transcendence. Is this treatment only an instantiation of a singularly eclectic, nineteenth-century approach to iconography? De Duve, followed by Elkins, draws farther-reaching conclusions. They believe that Manet's work redefines the religious theme as a humanist one. The religious motif becomes an opportunity to tackle secular issues. Christ is viewed as a human. Moreover, the painting was not intended to be displayed in a church, but at the Parisian Salon. Manet thus meant to achieve something in the domain of painting, not of religious doctrine. Taking this into account, we can say that what prevails in the painting is not an expression of faith in God, but of belief in painting. A religious truth "can be expressed only as painting". This shift of focus is very distinctive because, as Elkins writes, "In the past centuries, religious truths were expressed in painting, meaning with the help of painting, or simply using painting."⁵⁷

If one were to agree with this statement, the development of art from the mid-nineteenth century has been non-transcendent in character.⁵⁸ This also applies to the situations involving references to religious themes. Artists are more concerned with faith in art than with religious faith. Interest in religion, if present, involves finding specific inspiration in painting rather than the quest for a path to transcendence, and sacralization of art rather than a new understanding of the sacred.

The examples of artistic activity of the avant-garde iconoclasts, who were looking for transcendence by reforming the language of art – discussed in the

cent knowledge" "Native American and the Great Spirit" (cf. J. Elkins, *op. cit.*, p. 16). Contemporary religious art sometimes opens to the current issues and is an attempt to integrate them.

⁵⁶ T. De Duve, *Look, One Hundred Years of Contemporary Art*, transl. S. Pleasence and F. Woods, Ludion, Brussels 2000.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ De Duve also mentions the works of Malevich in the article. He notes a reference to the tradition of Russian icons, but thinks that the artist takes into account first of all the "human meaning" typical of the era when belief in God lost its vitality.

second part of this article – can be interpreted in similar terms. As evidenced by the writings of some contemporary scholars, they can be also seen as a formal revolution with political implications.⁵⁹ However, postmodern activity, presented here through the example of selected works by Polish artists, are directed not at highlighting the role of art, but at blurring the line between visual elements aimed at transcendence, and the banal everyday reality.

The view on the relationship between contemporary art and transcendence I have adopted in this article is different from the two above-mentioned approaches. I believe that Elkins's approach (inspired by de Duve's reflections) too heavily emphasizes the dichotomy between art and religion. According to this view, the image must be oriented either at painting, or at the truths of faith. However, today (as Jean-François Lyotard pointed out repeatedly) many phenomena are of a liminal nature. What matters in them is what is seemingly incidental – the margins. It turns out that without them the understanding of the problem is deformed, reduced to a generalization not corresponding to the heart of the matter. It is as if someone wished to reduce the view of a mountain to a triangle, believing that the irregularities of its outline were just random deformations. I do not want to disavow the value of generalization and abstraction with this comparison. I just want to point out that many important issues could elude us if we accept the main option while overlooking its margins. Indeed, in many important cases the margins occupy an increasing amount of space and become ever more important. In this paper I have reflected on the liminal states – difficult to classify unambiguously – between secular art, sometimes even regarded as blasphemous, and transcendence. I think that a similar gap may appear on the borderlines of visual concretism, a phenomenon that exists not only in the arts.

This article does not address one of the most important aspects of the problem signaled in the title: the relation between the body/carnality and transcendence. This issue, however, requires a broader discussion, for which there is not enough space here.

*Translated by
Katarzyna Gucio*

⁵⁹ Such interpretation of the Suprematist art of Malevich, including his treaty *God Is Not Cast Down*, is presented by Timothy J. Clark in a comprehensive text *God Is Not Cast Down* (in: *idem, Farewell to an Idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1999, pp. 225-297).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baudrillard Jean (2005) *Symulakry i symulacja*, transl. S. Królak, Warszawa: Wyd. SIC!
- Bauman Zygmunt (1993) *Postmodern Ethics*, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Berdyszak Jan (2009) Jan Berdyszak. *Reszty reszt*, katalog wystawy, Katowice: Galeria Sektor I.
- Besançon Alain (1994) *L'image interdite. Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme*, Paris: Fayard.
- Bielik-Robson Agata (2000) *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formę duchowości*, Kraków: Universitas.
- Clark Timothy J. (1999) *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Crespi Franco (2011) Proces sekularyzacji: od desakralizacji do religii, transl. D. Pawłowska, in: *Ateizm oraz irreligia i sekularyzacja*, ed. F. Adamski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo PETRUS.
- De Duve Therrie (2000) *Look, One Hundred Years of Contemporary Art*, transl. S. Pleasence and F. Woods, Brussels: Ludion.
- Elkins James (2004) *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*, New York: Routledge.
- Groys Boris (2010) *Stalin jako totalne dzieło sztuki*, tłum. P. Kozak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!.
- Heartney Eleanor (2008) *Art & Today*, New York: Phaidon Press.
- Heartney Eleanor, *Postmodern Heretics*, <http://nbrokaw.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/post-modern-heretics-2.pdf>.
- <http://www.obieg.pl/print/29069>.
- Janicka Krystyna (1969) *Światopogląd surrealizmu*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Kiki Smith, *Journal of Contemporary Art*, <http://www.jca-online.com/ksmith.html>.
- Lefebvre Henri (1991 [1974]) *The Production of Space*, transl. by D. Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Michalski Sergiusz (1989) *Protestanci i sztuka. Spór o obrazy w Europie nowożytnej*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Morgan, D. and M. Promey (eds.) *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (2001), Berkeley–Los Angeles.
- Opalka Roman (1994) *Anti-sisyphos*, Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag.
- OPALKA 1965/1 – ∞ (1992) Paris: La Hune, Flammarion 4.
- Plate S. Brent (2012) *The Skin of Religion. Aesthetic Mediations of the Sacred*, "Cross-currents", June, pp. 162-180.

Reinhardt Ad (1991) *Art as Art. The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. B. Rose, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Słota Miłosz (2013) *Ironiczne reinterpretacje sztuki awangardowej w dziełach współczesnych*, Łódź: praca niepublikowana.

Tanguy Sarah (2001) Making the Ideal Real: A Conversation with Wolfgang Laib, *Sculpture Magazine*, no. 4, <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag01/may01/laib/laib.shtml>.

Tatarkiewicz Władysław (2009) *Historia estetyki*, t. II, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Turowski Andrzej (1990) *Wielka utopia awangardy. Artystyczne i społeczne utopie w sztuce rosyjskiej 1910-1930*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

MARGINESY TRANSCENDENCJI W SZTUCE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ (streszczenie)

Według powszechnie przyjmowanej opinii, sztuce współczesnej obce jest dążenie do wyrażania rzeczywistości transcendentnej. Autor artykułu, kwestionując ten pogląd, bierze pod uwagę dwa aspekty zagadnienia. Pierwszy związany jest ze stosowaniem przez współczesnych artystów motywów pochodzących z ikonografii chrześcijańskiej, jednak używanych w sposób odbiegający od tradycji. Różnica polega przede wszystkim na włączeniu ich w konteksty związane z życiem codziennym, co prowadzi do wrażenia ich sekularyzacji. Czasami działania takie wywołują protesty odbiorców ze względu na domniemaną profanację. Autor widzi przyczynę problemu w kształtowaniu się nowej wrażliwości polegającej na zaakcentowaniu „ziemskich wymiarów”, w stosunku do których transcendentna pojawia się jedynie jako mniej lub bardziej uchwytna perspektywa. Sytuację tę, w nawiązaniu do tytułu artykułu S. Brenta Plate'a, określa jako zainteresowanie „skórą transcendentnej”. Przykładami artystycznymi pozwalającymi sprecyzować sens tej metafory są prace Roberta Gobera, Kiki Smith, Teresy Murak i Wolfganga Laiba.

Drugi aspekt odniesień do transcendentnej występujących w sztuce współczesnej rozważany jest na tle tradycji ikonoklastycznej. Autor nawiązuje do książki Alaina Besançona dotyczącej historii intelektualnej ikonoklazmu. Z tego punktu widzenia interpretowane są przejawy dwudziestowiecznej sztuki nieprzedstawiającej. Besançon określił je jako wyraz pragnienia dania boskości „jej obrazu naprawdę godnego”, gdyż uwolnionego od tego, co ziemskie. Czy w związku z tym postmodernistyczne praktyki artystyczne, polegające na sprowadzaniu form geometrycznych uważanych za wyraz transcendentnej (np. Malewiczowskiego „czarnego kwadratu”) do banalnego sensu praktycznego, można uznać za tworzenie symulaków transcendentnej? Autor rozważa też poszukiwanie poza-metafizycznej drogi ku transcendentnej w sztuce współczesnej poprzez operowanie „nienormalnym językiem” i prywatne epifanie.

Artykuł kończy uwagi dotyczące uwzględnienia w badaniach tego, co wydaje się marginalne w sztuce współczesnej. Biorąc pod uwagę swe rozważania dotyczące marginesów transcendentnej, autor wyraża przekonanie, że także inne marginesy artystyczne powinny stać się przedmiotem szerszej refleksji badawczej.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka współczesna – transcendentna – sekularyzacja – nowoczesny ikonoklazm – rola marginesów w badaniach nad sztuką.

Agnieszka Kuczyńska
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin
agakuczynska@wp.pl

SURRÉALISME EN 1947 – OCCULTISM AND THE POST-WAR MARGINALISATION OF SURREALISM

Abstract: The exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947*, organised in Paris (Galerie Maeght) by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp was an attempt to consolidate and reorient the Surrealist movement in the post-war reality. According to the trend set by Breton in his *Rupture inaugurale*, Surrealism was going to become tied with occultism more strongly than ever before. The exhibition, whose main topic was “a new myth”, was arranged in the form of an initiation path, consisting of the Hall of Superstitions, the Labyrinth of Initiation, etc. One reason for the critical panning of the exhibition was the fact that in that period all forms of esoteric trends were associated with Fascism, and myth was more and more frequently acknowledged as an obstacle in building new, rationally organised society.

The aim of this paper is to present how the strategy of Breton, who proclaimed the need for establishing “a new myth” and connecting Surrealism with occultism against the Paris intellectual milieu, contributed to the marginalisation of the Surrealist movement.

Keywords: Surrealism – occultism – myth – fascism – exhibition.

On 7 July 1947, the International Exhibition of Surrealism was opened at Galerie Maeght in Paris. Although the exhibition proved to be a turnout success¹, many commentators perceived it as a beginning of the end of the movement. “Indeed, after the exhibition at Maeght this art lost its impetus on the international front, and the answers which it gave to the changing world

¹ G. Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, transl. A. Anderson, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2004, p. 472 described it as “a lively success”. The total number of visitors amounted to 40,000 visitors.

(both in the visual field and the field of ideas), lost their attractiveness”, wrote Piotr Piotrowski².

The post-war position of Surrealism was determined, to a great extent, by the fact that many first-plan figures associated with the trend (i.e. André Breton, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, André Masson) had decided to emigrate. Surrealist art, as *Entartete Kunst*, had limited opportunities to develop under the German occupation³. It was only the *La Main à Plume* group that tried to pursue the Surrealist activity in Paris. However, in the period of difficult post-war settlements, it was the moral attitude that had major significance. A few months after the liberation, Albert Camus wrote that the French society had been divided into “men of the Résistance” and “men of treason and injustice”⁴. The Surrealists coming back from emigration found themselves in a very inconvenient situation. The status of moral winners granted a dominating position to the participants of the *Résistance* – the French resistance movement, where an important role was played by *Partie Communist Française* (the French Communist Party). Although Surrealism distinctly situated itself on the left side of the political spectrum, its relations with the *PCF* were very tense. Breton defined his ambitions to bind poetry with revolution by bringing together Marx and Rimbaud: “Transformer le monde, a dit Marx, changer la vie, a dit Rimbaud, ces deux mots d’ordre pour nous n’en font que un”⁵. From the early 1920s, he tried to combine the Surrealist concepts of dream images, obsessive love, with the program of the *PCF*. However, the period when he was a card-carrying party member was as short as a couple of months of 1927. A conflict about the Surrealists’ participation in the International Congress of Writers in the Defence of Culture (1935) organised by the Communists resulted in an official break with the *PCF*. The main source of the problems was the different perception of the role of art by the Surrealists and the Moscow-dominated Communist party representatives, who promoted social realism. Breton always emphasized (also in the post-war period) the need for an artist’s absolute independence. He sought the

² P. Piotrowski, *Surrealistyczne Interregnum*, in: *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu uczniowie*, ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Małkiewicz, Kraków 2001, p. 305.

³ G. Durozoi, *History ...*, pp. 423-426.

⁴ A. Camus, “Combat” (October 20, 1944) quoted in E.E. Adams, *After the Rain: Surrealism and the Post-World War II Avant-garde. 1940-1950*, ProQuest, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 99. On the Surrealism and politics see: H. Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism*, Paragon House, New York 1988; C. Reynaud Paligot, *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919-1969*, CNRS, Paris 1995; *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*, ed. R. Spiteri, D. LaCoss, *Studies in European Cultural Transition*, vol. 16, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate 2003.

⁵ A. Breton, *Position politique du surréalisme, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. M. Bonnet, Gallimard, Paris 1992, vol. 2, p. 459.

effectiveness of art in the revolutionary qualities of the meaning coming from the creator's unconscious. The party, on the other hand, expected the Surrealists to follow the Communists' directives and join their propaganda program. After the Moscow trials (1936-1938), Breton turned against Stalin and joined the Trotskyist opposition. A meeting with Trotsky in Mexico (1938) resulted in the Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art and the establishment of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art (*Fédération Internationale d'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant – FIARI*). As a supporter of Trotsky, he became an independent person shunned by the *PCF*, which was supporting Stalin's side. Breton's numerous former friends, such as Aragon, Éluard, Tzara, who were holding important positions in the Stalinist *PCF* as well as in the press, radio and publishing houses, became his deadly enemies.

On the other hand, the Surrealists fell into disfavour with conservative politicians, speaking out on the problem of the Indo-China⁶. Moreover, in the post-war atmosphere, where patriotism, solemnity and celebrating French tradition were highly valued, almost every artistic gesture was perceived as a transgression.

One of the most important voices in the discussion on the Surrealism's position in post-war France was the speech made by Tristan Tzara⁷, who as a *PCF* representative acknowledged the necessity of complete subordination of poetry to the party's requirements and accused the Surrealists of the lack of effectiveness in their activities. He emphasized their absence in difficult times and criticized the shallowness of the problems they were raising. The existentialists' position towards Surrealism was described by Jean-Paul Sartre⁸, who described the Surrealists in his writings as eternal youths rebelling against their bourgeois parents, who appeared to be completely unable to take action at the moment of truth. Although the polemics were sharp, in that period Surrealism must have been an unignorable challenge, making the French intelligentsia crystallize their opinions⁹.

In response to the criticism, on 21 June 1947 Breton published the *Rupture inaugurale* manifesto signed by fifty artists. Categorically confirming a break with the *PCF*, the manifesto accused the party of opportunism and betraying the proletariat by participating in the government of the bourgeois state. It

⁶ In 1947 they published a manifesto *Liberté est un mot vietnamien* signed by 25 persons.

⁷ Published in an augmented version as *Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, Nagel, Paris 1947. On the polemics Tzara-Breton see: *Mélusine*, no. 17, *Chassé-croisé Tzara-Breton*, ed. H. Béhar, L'Âge d'Homme, Paris 1997.

⁸ Qu'est-ce que la littérature?: IV. Situation de l'écrivain en 1947, *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 20 (May 1947).

⁹ M. Beaujour, Sartre and Surrealism, *Yale French Studies* 1963, no. 30, p. 86.

also specified the historic mission of Surrealism: elaborating a new myth. “A new myth” also became the chief slogan of the exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947*.

The exhibition, prepared by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp,¹⁰ was an attempt to consolidate and reorient the movement in post-war reality. The person responsible for implementing the whole project and designing the *Salle de Superstition* was the architect Frederick Kiesler. The exhibition featured ca. 200 works of more than 100 artists from 25 countries¹¹, including 30 installations specially prepared for this occasion. Breton and Duchamp described the form of the exhibition in details. On 12 January 1947, Breton sent out a letter-invitation to the exhibition¹², in which he explained its ideological assumptions. The letter determined the subjects and even the dimensions of the particular works, leaving relatively little space for the artists’ own interpretation. It shows that the exhibition was going to illustrate the theses of *Rupture inaugurale*. Like the previous exhibitions prepared jointly by Breton and Duchamp, this one also had the form of a complex installation. Its layout was subordinated to the concept of “a new myth” and shaped as a kind of path which every visitor had to follow. The decision was taken to display the work *Conglomeros* by Victor Brauner, a figure consisting of three naked bodies connected with one head, in the exhibition window. The work was chosen because, according to Breton, it had the greatest potential to give shock and, consequently, to arouse interest. The cover of the catalogue was also of provocative character. It was designed and produced by Marcel Duchamp and Enrico Donati. Its famous luxurious version was supplied with a foam-rubber, hand-painted copy of a female breast placed on a piece of black velvet. Differently from all exhibition rooms in the world, a notice read: please touch (*prière de toucher*).

¹⁰ They cooperated for the third time, after the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1938 in Paris and the exhibition First Papers of Surrealism in 1942 in New York.

¹¹ E.g. Poland-related artists: Stanisław Grabowski and Jerzy Kujawski – on the topic of participation of Kujawski in the Surrealist movement and the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1947 see: *Jerzy Kujawski. Maranatha*, Exhibition catalogue in the National Museum in Poznań, ed. A. Turowski, National Museum in Poznań, Poznań 2006. There exist many descriptions of *Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition diverging in details. My description is based mostly on the catalogue *Breton, Duchamp, Kiesler. Surreal Space 1947* of the exhibition organized by Österreichische Friedrich und Lillian Kiesler-Privatstiftung, Vienna 2013. It seems very reliable thanks to the preserved in Kiesler archive photographs of the exhibition. The project to show them in New York as a separate exhibition was never carried out.

¹² The content of this invitation was published in the exhibition catalogue, a typescript from Breton’s archives is available on the website of the Centre Pompidou: WWW.andrebretton.fr/fr/item/?GCOI=56600100837330# (10.06.2014).

Not all the aims of the project were successfully accomplished. It had been planned that the lower storey of the gallery would host the works of the precursors of Surrealism, such as Bosch, Arcimboldo, Blake, Goya, Redon, and another room – those of the transient Surrealists, such as de Chirico, Masson, and Dalí. Yet in fact the exhibition began with the stairs symbolising the successive steps of the initiation. Each step corresponded to a card from the tarot Major Arcana (the Fool card was not considered at all) and one book, e.g. the first level corresponded to the Magician and the book *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin, the third one – the Empress and *Rêverie d'une proméneur solitaire* by Jean Jacques Rousseau, the fourth one – the Emperor and *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer. It also referenced the works by Meister Eckhart, Swedenborg, Hölderlin, Sade, Jarry, Apollinaire, Fourier, Kafka, etc. At the top of the stairs leading to the first floor, a miniature lighthouse was sending light signals. The upper landing featured i.a. the sculpture by Hans Arp resembling a comet – *Fuit de la Lune* and a large canvas by Arshile Gorky. The second stage of initiation could be reached in the *Salle du Superstition* designed by Kiesler. The whole oval-shaped room was to be associated with femininity, nature, the primordial. The unsettling atmosphere was enhanced by the dark-turquoise drapes hung on the walls and the Black Lake painted on the floor by Max Ernst. Duchamp's *Rayon vert* emitted green, uncanny light. Discovering more uncanny objects and art works located there, *un initié* was to find out that nobody is resistant to primitive, magical states of mind. Religious superstitions should obviously be rejected, yet a very primordial way of mental functioning, going beyond *rational* consciousness, is essential for accepting a new myth. The primitive orientation of the mind is a crucial element of the Surrealist approach to reality¹³. The objects gathered in this room were mostly taboo-figures and totems. They included such pieces as *L'homme angoisse* by David Hare, *La Cascade architecturale* by Joan Miró, *Le Whist* by Robert Matta, *Le mauvais oeil* by Enrico Donati, *L'Échelle qui annonce la mort* by Yves Tanguy, *Le Totem des religions* and *Figure anti-taboo* by Kiesler. The next level of initiation was purification and rebirth, which were going to take place in the *Salle de Pluie* designed by Duchamp. Going through the curtain of rain symbolised purification – and it was an obvious provocation. Rain was also falling on the bronze sculpture by Mary Martins. There was also a billiard table in the room as well as some paintings. Despite all the obligatory elements of initiation rites contained in the room, an important role was also played by humour.

¹³ T.M. Bauduin, *Occultation of Surrealism: a Study of the Relationship Between Bretonian Surrealism and Western Esotericism*, Elck Syn Waerom Publishing, Amsterdam 2012, p. 234, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/462796> (26.05.2014).

Ironic distance was very important in Breton's concept of the "occultation of Surrealism". Creating the initiation path and at the same time undermining its significance was a characteristically Surrealistic effort. Treating irony and humour as an essential element of an artwork is a feature distinguishing a significant part of the avant-garde tradition from religious ritual.

The culmination of the initiation process was the labyrinth *Le Dédale*, where an adept, after going through the process of purification, could admire magical "objects". The room designed by Duchamp hosted 12 altars on which Surrealist fetishes were displayed, still in the same tongue in cheek convention. Breton wanted the altars to resemble those associated with voodoo practices and the cultic altars of the American Indians which he had seen during the journey he made in 1945 across the western part of the USA. It was then that he visited the reservations in New Mexico and Arizona and became interested in the beliefs of the Hopi and Zuni Indians. On his way back to Europe, in the winter of 1945, he visited Haiti, where he watched voodoo ceremonies¹⁴. The route through the labyrinth was outlined by a transparent Ariadne's thread. Twelve octagonal niches contained the altars devoted to a being, a category of beings, or to a subject which is capable of living mythical life – *susceptible d'être doué de vie mythique*. Those beings included amazing animals (e.g. *Le Condylure* – *Condylura cristata*, a star-nosed mole, whose pointed snout ends with red or pink appendages resembling a star), *objects fantômes* (e.g. a window from Magna sed Apta – a screen/dream interface of the main characters of George du Maurier's novel *Peter Ibbetson*; Falmer's hair from *Chants du Maldoror* by Lautréamont), *fictional characters* (e.g. Jeanne Sabrenas, the heroine of *La Dragonne* by Alfred Jarry; the Juggler of Gravity – a character designed by Duchamp for *The Large Glass*, yet never actually used). The only historical figure honoured with an altar was Raymond Roussel. Each altar corresponded to a zodiac sign. The entrance was guarded by the figure of *The Great Transparent One* by Jacques Hérold – an artistic expression of Breton's idea. The viewing of the works was constantly accompanied by the sound of an electric bell. The last room was a "Library", which contained cabinets with books, pictures and mementos associated with Surrealism. A Surrealist kitchen, which was going to crown the show, remained only a project.

Probably the best personification of the Surrealist "new myth" are the Great Transparent Ones. Breton writes about them for the first time in June 1942 in *Prolegomènes à un troisième manifeste ou non*¹⁵. They also appear in

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ N. Lübecker, *Community, Myth and Recognition in 20th Century French Literature and Thought*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London and New York, 2009, p. 53.

the catalogue of the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition 1942 in the text *De la survivance de certains mythes et de quelques autres mythes en croissance et en formation*. It is accompanied by a drawing of Jupiter and winds (according to the German doctor and alchemist, Michael Maier), a quotation from *Le Horla* by Guy de Maupassant about a man visited by a transparent creature, and a work by David Hare depicting a naked female body turned into a flame¹⁶. However, his interest dates back to the 1930s, the period of intensive, yet uneasy, contacts with Georges Bataille and his Collège de Sociologie. In 1935, Breton became a member of the group Contre-Attaque, created by Bataille, which aimed at fighting Fascism the Fascist way – with the use of violence and the social potential of mythical thought. The whole undertaking lasted for only a couple of months and turned out to be a fiasco. However, the understanding of myth presented by Contre-Attaque and propagated by the Collège de Sociologie, based on the ideas of Georges Sorel, remained important for Breton in the 1940s. At the same time it was an exceptionally ill-chosen source of inspiration, since Sorel's works were also inspiring the practitioners of Fascism¹⁷.

In *Prolégomènes*, Breton writes about the periods in history when traditional intellectual disciplines seem insufficient, when different forms of knowledge and states of consciousness are being sought. “Que penser du postulat «pas de société sans mythe social»; dans quelle mesure pouvons-nous choisir ou adopter, et imposer un mythe en rapport avec la société que nous jugeons désirable?”¹⁸ Further, he suggests that *Les Grands Transparents* constitute a myth which is capable of playing a social role. The objectives of Surrealism, which he defined in his lecture *La situation du surréalisme entre deux guerres* delivered in 1945 to the French students at Yale, are associated with using the social potential of a myth. Surrealism, a movement which penetrated “the vast, dark area of Ego, where myths immensely swell and at the same time wars hatch” must begin “preparations of practical sort for intervention in mythical life, which at the beginning takes the form of large-scale purification.”¹⁹ The whole exhibition seems to be aiming at implementing this idea. What draws attention is the pragmatic character of Breton's concept. As in *Reflections on Violence* by Sorel, the nature and form of

¹⁶ See: R. Golan, *Mis en suspens de l'incrédulité: Breton et le mythe de Grands Transparents*, in: *André Breton: La beauté convulsive*, Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou 1991, pp. 353-54.

¹⁷ N. Lübecker, *Community...*, p. 63. See also: M. Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939*, Duke University Press, Durham 2007, esp. chapter *Fascism, Modernism and Modernity*, pp. 17-62.

¹⁸ A. Breton, *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste ou non*, in: idem, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Gallimard, Paris 1990, p. 156.

¹⁹ Quoted in: N. Lübecker, *Community ...*, p. 78.

the myth are unimportant. What is important is the fact that a myth can act as an encouraging image, the energy which attracts and creates. The thing to do is to “put your head down and go for it” (“foncer tête basse”), and the rest should be left to coincidence²⁰. In the article “Vers un nouveau mythe?”, published in the Surrealist magazine *VVV*²¹, Patrick Waldberg quotes the words of Breton, who was supposed to have said that virtually everything, any kind of object – even an ashtray – may easily become a cult object.²² However, cult objects perceived in this way, assembled at an exhibition – whether they are a star-nosed mole or Falmer’s Hair – cannot cause surprise. The question of a myth also appears in the fictional conversation between Breton and President de Brosses (the creator of the term “fetish”) in *Vie légendaire de Max Ernst précédé d’une brève discussion sur le besoin d’un nouveau mythe*. Breton returns in it to the theory of myth of the Collège de Sociologie and claims that in the current situation (1942), when nationalist fetishes responsible for the war are extremely widespread, it is necessary to organize human beliefs in a different way. Breton emphasizes that artists may be creators of new myths. He gives the example of Max Ernst. In Breton’s concept there is no differentiation between art and myth. Art should become mythical, myths may be artistic. Ernst plays an important political role as a creator of contemporary myths. The shift from “myth” to “artistic myth” is significant. Undoubtedly, it is an important difference from the pre-war concept of Contre-Attaque. Despite the critical opinions which he had already heard in America, Breton stuck to his concept, arranging the exhibition in 1947.²³ The catalogue contained the text *The Absence of Myth* by Bataille, who claimed that the conviction that myth is absent or no longer important constitutes the myth of contemporary society. The word itself has become devalued and today it only means “something false” by definition. This kind of conviction is deeply wrong and dangerous: contemporary society needs a mythical base like no other²⁴.

In Surrealist theory, myth and magic are inseparably bound and serve the revival of the disenchanted Western world. The “occultation” of Surrealism

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²¹ P. Waldberg, „VVV”, February 1944, pp. 41-42.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²³ In the American “View” magazine, connected with Surrealists, Harold Rosenberg, recalling anti-rationalism of Contre-Attaque, wrote: “the production of myths, which disintegrate humanity into warring cults, has become the chief occupation of the world’s most brilliant talents, such as Goebbels, Mussolini and thousands of editors, advertising men, and information specialists.”, *Breton – A Dialogue*, „View”, no. 2 (Summer 1942).

²⁴ G. Bataille, *The Absence of Myth*, in: *idem, The Absence of Myth. Writings on Surrealism*, transl. M. Richardson, Verso, London, p. 48.

was going to serve the same purpose. This term appears for the first time in the Second Manifesto of Surrealism from 1929:

L'approbation du public est à fuir pardessus tout. Il faut absolument empêcher le public d'entrer si l'on veut éviter la confusion. J'ajoute qu'il faut le tenir exaspéré à la porte par un système de défis et de provocations. JE DEMANDE L'OCCULTATION PROFONDE, VÉRITABLE DU SURRÉALISME. Je proclame, en cette matière, le droit à l'absolue sévérité. Pas de concessions au monde et pas de grâce.²⁵

Here, “occultation” (from Latin *occulere* “conceal, cover”) means mainly concealment, darkening, hindering access. However, it also indicates a strong bond between Surrealism and occultism. Esoterism was always inscribed in the history of Surrealism, which, being “a tail prehensile” of Romanticism and Symbolism, shared their interests in this respect. It is worth noting that the books which were deemed to provide the necessary level of initiation during the exhibition in 1947 are not occultist treatises, but mainly Romantic and Symbolic literature. An important source of inspiration, at least for Breton, were also scholarly studies of Romantics’ and Symbolists’ works carried out with esoteric elements in mind²⁶.

Despite an impressive turnout, the exhibition was panned by the critics. In a letter to Breton, Duchamp wrote: “It’s wonderful still to be greeted with such scorn at our age”²⁷. However, it was not the type of an aggressive reaction that Surrealists appreciated so much. There was no scandal. It is frequently pointed out that Surrealism was much too well-known in that period to be still able to surprise the public. Bernard Dorival recommended the exhibition as another cheap, trashy entertainment for “good-natured simpletons” from the back of beyond; he compared the event to a disco in a youth club or a trip to the museum of wax figures²⁸.

Except for the difficulties the Surrealists had to face in the political landscape of post-war Paris, their failure apparently resulted from the “occultation” strategy chosen by Breton. It was also the reason why the exhibition was an obvious challenge to Communism. A short dictionary of philosophy, repeatedly reissued in Moscow in the 1940s and 1950s, describes occultism as “a relic of the Middle Ages”, “one of the most repulsive forms of idealist obscurantism”, “an instrument of muddling the consciousness of the masses

²⁵ A. Breton, *Second manifeste du surrealism*, in: *idem, Manifestes du surrealism*, Gallimard, Paris 1990, pp. 127-129.

²⁶ T.M. Bauduin, *Occultation...*, p. 17.

²⁷ E. Adams, *After the rain...*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

in the interest of the bourgeoisie”²⁹. The Surrealists who were close to the Communist party published a satire titled *Le surréalisme en 947*. A slight change in the title, which put the event 1000 years back, sneered at the supposedly reactionary character of Breton’s proposal. Another pastiche changed the title of Breton’s introduction to the catalogue *Devant le rideau* to *En plein rideau*. The original title emphasized the tension of the culminating moment right before pulling up a curtain – revealing a new myth, a new beginning, while the title after the alteration suggested that the curtain had fallen down on Breton’s head.

Moreover, in that period the hermetic tradition in France tended to be associated with the intellectuals with right-wing views, and thus it was even more unacceptable for the Communists³⁰. However, the Surrealists definitely had a leftist attitude, and their interest in occultism stemmed from their critique and rejection of the religious and cultural values of the West.³¹ Such a combination of a leftist political orientation and a serious interest in esoteric thought was uncommon and resulted in suspicion and aversion on both the left and the right sides of the political spectrum. The failure to communicate with the leftist milieu was evidenced by the failure of the book about the connections between Surrealism and occultism written by the rightist Catholic journalist Michel Carrouges.

Occultism and myth stand in opposition to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and at the same time – to intellect, progress, democracy, briefly speaking – to modernity; as such they are equal to Fascism. This idea, considerably simplifying the problem, returned frequently shortly after the end of World War II, when the need for understanding “what went wrong” with the Western civilisation was still acute. This claim is sometimes made even today. It was supported and authorised by Adorno in his *Theses Against Occultism* written in 1947 and then included in his *Minima Moralia* published in 1950. Another author who also emphasised the ties between Fascism and occultism was Orwell, in his essay on W. B. Yeats published in 1946³². Breton’s belief in myth seems paradoxical to everyone who thinks that World War II is an example of the dangers associated with employing myth for political purposes. Breton tried to counter these opinions with

²⁹ “Occultism” entry, in: *Krótki słownik filozoficzny*, ed. M. Rozentel and P. Judin, translated from the fourth revised and enlarged Russian edition, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1955, p. 407.

³⁰ T.M. Bauduin, *The Occultation...*, p. 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³² M. Pasi, *The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on Some Crucial Aspects*, in: *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years’ Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam*, ed. W. Hanegraff, J. Pijnenburg, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2009, p. 59. (59-73).

a different way of understanding the connections between war and myth. He included his views on this topic in a book written during the war, *Arcane 17*.³³ Its title refers to the 17th card of the Major Arcana tarot, the Star symbolizing hope and rebirth. The war is a failure of the Western world, rational and masculine. It can be only rescued by what is feminine and at the same time irrational – magic and a myth. However, in the post-war situation, myth and occultism, used for whatever purpose, would also be disqualified due to their association with Fascism.

It is interesting to note that Surrealism, inherently predisposed to undermine the values of the Western world, evoked associations with Fascism from the very beginning. In 1925, Roger Fry visited Paris. He saw the paintings by Miró and Masson for the first time and, inspired by this experience, wrote in his letter to Gerald Brenan about the tendency for “mysticism, obscurantism, symbolism, expressionism” in the new art and thought. “The positive classic spirit is dead for a moment. And with everything is mixed an element of violence and fascism.”³⁴ The war distinctly polarized the viewpoints. The artistic approaches were all the more difficult to accept. “In artistic culture, blasphemy, thinkable in the 1920s (...) now much too easily destabilized the whole order, in which anything not associated with humanism belonged to totalitarianism. This was expressed in the rhetoric of Strzemiński, who in 1936 called Surrealist subconscious a regressive ‘pulse and the sound of blood’, quoting extracts from *Mein Kampf* by Hitler”³⁵. It seems that the Surrealist concept of “a new myth” and “occultation”, presented during the exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947* did not have a chance to succeed. In the black and white post-war world, references to myth and occultism were automatically and exclusively associated with Fascism. It appears to have been one of the important reasons for the marginalisation of Surrealism.

In May 1955 (...) Paris was already a different city – there were no Surrealists in galleries, and those who remained faithful to the Surrealist tradition searched new ways out, avoiding Breton’s orthodox approach.³⁶

³³ A. Breton, *Arcane 17*, Brentano, New York, 1945. French edition corresponded with the exhibition opening (Sagittaire, Paris 1947).

³⁴ F. Spalding, *Roger Fry, Art and Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980, p. 250.

³⁵ A. Turowski, *Budowniczość świata. Z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej*, Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 215. It concerns Strzemiński’s article *Aspekty rzeczywistości*, “Forma” 1936, no. 5, in: Władysław Strzemiński, *Pisma*, ed. Z. Baranowicz, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1975, p. 273.

³⁶ A. Turowski, *Kłopoty z figuracją w czasach abstrakcji*, in: *Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu – uczniowie*, ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Małkiewicz, Kraków, p. 384.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams Ellen E. (2007) *After the Rain: Surrealism and the Post-World War II Avant-garde, 1940-1950*, Ann Arbor: ProQuest.
- Adorno Theodore W. (1994) *Theses Against Occultism*, in: *Idem, The Stars down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 128-134.
- Antliff Mark (2007) *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bataille Georges (1994) *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, transl. M. Richardson, London: Verso.
- Bauduin Tessel M. (2012) *Occultation of Surrealism: a Study of the Relationship Between Bretonian Surrealism and Western Esotericism*, Amsterdam: Elck Syn Waerom Publishing, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/462796> (26.05.2014).
- Beaujour Michel (1963) Sartre and Surrealism, *Yale French Studies*, no. 30, p. 86-95.
- Breton André (1945) *Arcane 17*, New York: Brentano.
- Breton André (1947) *Devant le Rideau*, in: *Le surréalisme en 1947. Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, présenté par André Breton et Marcel Duchamp, Paris: Pierre à Feu, Maeght Éditeur.
- Breton André (1990) *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Breton André (1992) *Position politique du surréalisme, Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, ed. M. Bonnet, Paris: Gallimard.
- Breton, Duchamp, Kiesler. Surreal Space 1947*, exhibition catalogue from Österreichische Friedrich und Lillian Kiesler-Privatstiftung (2013) Eva Kraus ed., Vienna. Available also online: <http://www.kiesler.org/cms/index.php?idcat=118> (12.06.2014).
- Durozoi Gérard (2004) *History of the Surrealist Movement*, transl. Alison Anderson, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jerzy Kujawski. *Maranatha* (2005) ed. A. Turowski, katalog wystawy w Muzeum Narodowym w Poznaniu, Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu.
- Lewis Helena (1988) *The Politics of Surrealism*, New York: Paragon House.
- Lübecker Nikolaj (2009) *Community, Myth and Recognition in 20th Century French Literature and Thought*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Paligot Reynaud Carole (1995) *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919-1969*, Paris: CNRS.
- Pasi Marco (2009) The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on Some Crucial Aspects, in: W. Hanegraff, J. Pijnenburg *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years' Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam*, ed., Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Piotrowski Piotr (2001) *Surrealistyczne Interregnum*, in: ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Małkiewicz, *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu uczniowie*, Kraków, p. 297-326.
- Rosenberg Harold (1942) *Breton – A Dialogue*, „View”, no. 2.
- Sartre Jean Paul (1947) Qu'est-ce que la littérature?: IV. Situation de l'écrivain en 1947, *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 20.

Spalding Frances (1980) *Roger Fry, Art and Life*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Surrealism, Politics and Culture (2003) ed. R. Spiteri, D. LaCoss, *Studies in European Cultural Transition*, vol. 16, Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington.

Turowski Andrzej (2001) *Kłopoty z figuracją w czasach abstrakcji*, in: ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Malkiewicz, *Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu – uczniowie*, Kraków.

Turowski Andrzej (2000) *Budowniczości świata. Z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej*, Kraków: Universitas.

Tzara Tristan (1947) *Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, Paris: Nagel.

Waldberg Patrick (1944) *Vers un nouveau myth? Prémonitions et défiances*, „VVV”, no. 4.

SURREALISME EN 1947 – OKULTYZM I POWOJENNA MARGINALIZACJA SURREALIZMU (streszczenie)

Zorganizowana w Paryżu (Galerie Maeght) przez André Bretona i Marcela Duchampa wystawa *Surréalisme en 1947* była próbą skonsolidowania i reorientacji ruchu surrealistycznego w powojennej rzeczywistości. Zgodnie z kierunkiem, który Breton wyznaczył w *Rupture inaugurale*, surrealizm miał związać się silniej niż kiedykolwiek przedtem z okultyzmem. Głównym tematem wystawy był “nowy mit”. Zaplanowana została jako rodzaj ścieżki inicjacyjnej. Znalazły się tam m.in. Sala Przesądów, Totem Wszystkich Religii, Labirynt Inicjacji, etc. Jednym z powodów krytycznego przyjęcia wystawy był fakt, że w tym czasie wszelkiego rodzaju ezoteryczne prądy kojarzyły się z faszyzmem, a mit coraz częściej uznawano za przeszkodę w budowie nowego, racjonalnie zorganizowanego społeczeństwa.

Celem artykułu jest wskazanie, w jaki sposób strategia Bretona, który głosił potrzebę stworzenia “nowego mitu” i związania surrealizmu z okultyzmem wbrew niechętnie nastawionemu do ezoterycznych nurtów środowisku intelektualnemu powojennego Paryża, przyczyniła się do marginalizacji tego kierunku.

Słowa kluczowe: surrealizm – okultyzm – mit – faszyzm – wystawa.

Ewa Wojtyniak-Dębińska

Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź
ewa.wojtyniak-debinska@asp.lodz.pl

EXTRASENSORY IMAGES: MARGINAL PHENOMENON OR IMPORTANT TREND IN THE EUROPEAN ART?

Abstract: This article attempts to answer the question of whether a work of art created under the influence of extrasensory images can be considered a marginal phenomenon in the European art. The author points out that in our culture the interest in this kind of creative inspiration gained importance only in the mid-nineteenth century. Then, she discusses various causes of altered states of consciousness and subsequent stages of trance during which extrasensory images appear. Focusing on works of art which were inspired by such images, she refers to the concepts of David Lewis-Williams, Stanislav Grof, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Aldous Huxley and Carl Gustav Jung. The text is concluded with a reflection on the contemporary significance of art with extrasensory sources. The author emphasizes the remonstrative nature of such art and its role in self-knowledge. It is believed that extrasensory images expand our understanding of personality and allow us to go beyond the scope of the problems imposed through the media by politicians or religious leaders.

Keywords: imagination – altered states of consciousness – visionary art – extrasensory images in art – transposing works of art.

In the history of European art, particularly from the fifteenth until nineteenth century, a clearly discernible tendency can be observed to reproduce reality according to the stimuli transmitted through the senses. Such an attitude had its roots in the ancient understanding of art as a skill of making things according to strictly defined rules. Arts that did not produce useful items adhered to the theory of mimesis – imitation of reality. Although there was a trend, discussed by Plato in *Ion*¹, of praising poetry growing out of the

¹ Platon, *Ion*, 533E, 534C, *Selected Dialogues of Plato: The Benjamin Jowett Translation*, Modern Library, New York 2001.

“divine madness” – links with divination seem to suggest that words as well as images they evoke, sent by the muses or gods, can be of extrasensory nature. For a long time, however, this concept had only a marginal impact on the work of painters and sculptors.

Mastering the techniques to render the visible was the objective of the Renaissance. Many theorists and artists, such as Giorgio Vasari, Leon Battista Alberti, or Filippo Brunelleschi, equated progress in art with the study of nature and creation according to the principles of harmony typical thereof. This manifested in the invention of the rules of perspective combining vision and knowledge. They became the basis of artistic education and drew artists’ attention to the possibility of illusive reproduction of visible reality. In the 19th century, the Romantics posed the question whether intellect and vision should be the main source of art. In the subsequent century, in the field of psychology and art theory, Francis Galton, Herbert Read and others argued that pictorial thinking, although most characteristic of childhood, also plays an important role in adulthood. For example, they pointed to the role of visualisation skills in logic problem solving or in remembering, which is as important as strict conceptual thinking².

The broad definition of the concept of extrasensory image includes any mental image, afterimage, or eidetic image appearing after the stimulus is removed. Within this category, also taken into account is the reproductive function – in this sense it is included in the category of reproductive imagination. However, according to the common belief, images extrasensory images are primarily included in the creative imagination, the task of which is the original transformation of the reality³. In this perspective, it is associated with “altered states of consciousness”. I would like to focus on this particular definition later in the text.

Both imagination and extrasensory images can also be divided taking into account the purpose and level of consciousness. Thus, we may differentiate between passive and active imagination. Extrasensory images, which are classified as passive imagination, are spontaneous, appearing independently of the will of the artist. Such a view fits into the medium concept, which treats the artist as a medium through whom images are communicated. In contrast, images consciously stimulated by the artist are assigned to active imagination. Later in this article I want to focus on passive and active extrasensory images which became a source for works of art. They can be defined as hallucinations, delusions, or “false perception”. They consist of mystical,

² E. Nęcka, *Psychologia twórczości*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2001, pp. 61-65.

³ J. Górniewicz, *Sztuka i wyobraźnia*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1989, p. 5.

narcotic, alcohol- and sickness-induced visions, as well as dreams and day-dreams. Their existence was explained by supernatural powers, a manifestation of exceptional ability of the human mind, or proof of the existence of the unconscious. Today, the emergence of an extrasensory image is associated with the weakening or loss of consciousness. Most extrasensory images are found in the so-called altered states of consciousness, accompanying alpha brainwaves (13 Hz – 8 Hz), when consciousness is slightly changed giving way to the sensation of relaxation and peace, and theta brainwaves (7 Hz – 4 Hz), which occur during dreams, meditation, or hypnosis. As numerous studies have shown, images can also be the result of disease (epilepsy, migraine, schizophrenia), the effect of sensory deprivation, social isolation, or starvation, or they may arise as a result of severe pain, participation in exhaustive dancing, listening to rhythmic sounds, as well as taking psychotropic substances (cocaine, LSD, etc.).

As has already been mentioned, as a result of the rational-empirical predilection of our civilization, representations rooted in sources other than the reality had not been popular among artists until the Romantic era. Exceptions included representations of dreams and visions which dealt with religion or mythology. Such themes were undertaken frequently, usually in an appropriately highly sophisticated form. *The Dream of the Virgin* by Simone dei Crocifissi, *Ezekiel's vision* by Raphael Santi, or *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Matthias Grünewald, are just a few examples of works in which extrasensory images inspired by religious themes were reflected in painting. Artists, even if they felt the need to register extrasensory images that appeared in their minds, usually did not give them any refined form. They were often kept only in the form of sketches⁴. It seems that images classified as passive imagination, appearing spontaneously, were recreated in their ephemeral, oneiric form, preserving their original content. As far as dreams are concerned, they were recorded in dream-books of sorts. An example would be a card from Albrecht Dürer's notebook, on which the artist hastily sketched the disaster he had dreamt about. As he wrote, "In the year 1525 between Wednesday and Thursday after Whitsunday during the night I saw this appearance in my sleep, how many great waters fell from heaven. The first struck the earth about four miles away from me with a terrific force, with tremendous clamour and clash, drowning the whole land. I was so sore afraid that I awoke from it before the other waters fell. [...] So when I arose in the morning, I painted above here as I had seen it."⁵

⁴ D. Coxhead, S. Hiller, *Dreams. Vision of the night*, Tames & Hudson, London 1990, p. 88.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

Visual renditions of William Blake's visions did not always have a sophisticated form either. Such is the case of the drawing titled *A Vision: The Inspiration of the Poet (Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall)* c.1819–20. It was done in graphite and watercolour on paper and features a sketch of a square room where the only object is a closed form outlined by a tympanum and resembling an entrance to some ancient temple. Visible inside is a lamp suspended from the ceiling, under which sits a figure writing something on a desktop. This could be the eponymous prophet Elisha writing his prophecies, but also the artist himself. Right next to him, there is a blurred outline of a standing figure – a divine messenger who sends inspiration. William Blake repeatedly mentioned the “friends in Eternity”, who assisted him in his creative work. He included their depictions (for example the spirit of a flea) in his sketchbooks at the request of John Varley.

It seems that in later eras artists emphasised the message rather than the method of presentation in their renditions of dreams or personal visions. An example might be a drawing by the French artist Jean-Jacques Grandville, who, inspired by a dream, created a unique work shortly before his death. It was published in *Le Magasin pittoresque* in 1847. It features the author as a tragic hero and a victim of murder. Then, he has a vision of “the hand of justice”. Next, he is followed by an enormous eye, from which he escapes on horseback, into the sea, where he is eaten by a fish. The dream begins and ends with a vision of a cross. The representation is dark and chaotic and communicates the despair and confusion of the artist. The work was regarded as a harbinger of the loss of life of the author.

Since ancient times, imagination aids have been used for magical purposes, for self-improvement or simply for intoxication. Archaeologists found traces of poppies and cannabis seeds in Neolithic tombs⁶. In the third millennium BC, people from the Far East chewed betel, in the fifth century BC Herodotus wrote about Scythians using hashish, and valiant Vikings ate *Amanita muscaria* – fly agaric before the battle. Some anthropologists, such as Terence McKenna, argue that “a crucial element contributing to the evolution of our species was consumption of psilocybin, which acted as an ‘evolutionary trigger’. Its effects include sharpening the senses giving a feeling of control over one’s body, expanding awareness and dealing with atavisms”⁷. Belief in the power of substances that can transport us into different worlds is not only historically documented but it is also reflected in myths and fairy tales. One example is the theme of a magic potion which was believed to

⁶ K. Pytko, *Odmienne stany świadomości*, <http://hyperreal.info/node/10025> [15.01.2010].

⁷ Ł. Berezowski, *Transhumanizm i jego farmakologiczne perspektywy*, “Trans/wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 2/2012, pp. 65-68.

grant supernatural powers or ability to move to everyone who consumed it. Ambrosia – food of the Greek gods – was said to give immortality and eternal youth.

Cases of stimulating extrasensory images in order to create art were observed already in prehistoric art. David Lewis-Williams, a precursor of the new approach to Palaeolithic shamanic practices, believes⁸ that Western European caves covered in paintings, given their inaccessibility, unique atmosphere, and isolated nature, were a perfect place the emergence of for shamanic visions, which were subsequently painted on the cave walls. In the 1980s and 1990s, along with another anthropologist Thomas Dowson, he published articles based on the study of cave art created under the influence of narcotic substances by two primitive cultures from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (the San Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert and the Coso Shoshone from the Great Basin in California). On that basis, the authors demonstrate many similarities between the analysed paintings and drawings and the sign language used by shamanic artists from the Stone Age. The anthropologists distinguished two types of images that appear in three stages of the substance influence: neurologically conditioned – entoptic ideas (visual impressions the source of which is the human nervous system) and psychologically and culturally conditioned – hallucinatory images.

In the first stage of trance, phenomena entoptic appear, also known as phosphenes. These take geometric shapes, such as points, zigzags, parallel lines, circles, grids, meanders, as well as branched forms resembling neurons. These elements are brightly coloured, they tend to flicker and move, zooming in and out. With one's eyes open, just like eidetic images, they are projected onto the watched surface and move with the movement of the eyes. In addition to psychoactive substances, they can be induced by hyperventilation, electroshock, sensory deprivation, or rhythmic movement. This type of representation can be found in many prehistoric monuments, such as the Llolin cave in Spain, or *grotte de Rouffignac* in France.

The second stage of the vision involves rationalising geometric shapes, which are converted to real items conditioned by emotions, beliefs and needs – for example a person who is thirsty may interpret a luminous circle as a cup full of water. Contemporary research on LSD confirms the occurrence of this stage. Stanislav Grof in his book *Realms of the Human Unconscious. Observation from LSD Research*⁹, presents a series of drawings from this phase. In the works drawn by respondents who took the appropriate dose of

⁸ J. Clottes, D. Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, Harry N. Abrams, New York 1998, pp. 36ff.

⁹ S. Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious. Observation from LSD Research*, Independent Publisher Book, Chicago 1994, p. 62ff.

LSD, researchers observed a gradual transformation of the actual form of a tower into an illusory form resembling an owl. Observed sideways, the two faces of the clock placed on the tower slowly turn into round eyes of an owl, and the geometric outlines of buildings gradually lose their sharp angles and eventually transform into the organic shape of a bird. Based on the rock art findings from the Palaeolithic era, such as paintings, carvings, or figurines, it is believed that the elements characteristic of this stage mainly took the form of small creatures, such as a swarm of bees, but also representations of animals with entoptic or geometric fragments.

The third stage in altered states of consciousness can be achieved after the so-called transition, which takes the shape of a vortex composed of geometric representations of the first phase, at the end of which light is visible. A painterly or sculptural visualisation of that moment may be representations resembling spirals or concentric circles, many of which can be found in prehistoric art. After exiting the tunnel, the person in trance finds themselves in a real tangible world full of strange characters and objects. They may think that they are a bird, a fox, or another animal. Paintings and engravings of polymorphous beings, such as a man with the head of a lion, or a buffalo with a man's head from the rock shelters of the Stone Age, may also support the hypothesis of North African researchers. An example might be the polymorphic figure from the cave in Trois-Freres, France, resembling a deer but with human arms and legs. Whether it is just a shaman dressed in deerskin or a vision of the third stage of a narcotic trance, it is difficult to answer, but the presence of similar representations in this state of mind is confirmed by contemporary artists-shamans. Peruvian shaman Pablo Amaringo shows in his paintings visions caused by ingesting *ayahuasca* brew. His paintings are characterized by features typical of the art of the Shipibo Indians: multi-coloured diversity, using both geometric and figurative motifs, and *horror vacui* composition in which the entire area is covered with patterns. In his 2004 work entitled *Machaco Runa*, in the lower part the author depicts the title Machaco Runa – a man who has reached the extrasensory dimensions. He assumed, as the author of described it himself, the form of a snake with the head of a man. The master pictured in this way treats a man depicted above. He is surrounded by several spirals which have the power to heal the sick¹⁰.

In the Romanticism era, mind-altering substances became more often associated with artistic creativity. The issue of aiding imagination was one of

¹⁰ Pablo Amaringo, opis obrazu *Machaco Runa*, http://yashpal.com/webstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=2_3&products_id=264&zenid=tg11pavje1dq87m4ecalupgeb5 (04.05.2014).

the major topics covered by the Romantics. The concept of a close relationship between imagination and art was presented by the German poet and writer Novalis, who argued that imagination is not just one of many components of genius, but the most important creative force. The French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, on the other hand, called imagination “queen of poetic talent”. According to a popular view at the time, in order to animate the creative talent one should seek ways to aid imagination. The turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century marks the beginning of mass-scale import of opium from China, initially used as an anaesthetic. From doctor’s surgeries, it found its way into the hands of scientists, aristocrats and artists. It was quickly discovered how dangerous using the “amplifiers” imagination can be. In his *Les Paradis artificiels*¹¹, Baudelaire appreciates the “power of increasing genius” and “otherworldly visions” caused by wine, hashish and opium, but at the same time emphasising their “evil power of addiction” (in 1849, his “spiritual brother”, Edgar Allan Poe, died as a result of abusing wine).

In the twentieth century, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (“Witkacy”), like the Romantics, looked for ways to aid imagination in narcotic sessions. To him, the vision was more important than the euphoric state. The artist emphasised that a man, unable to bear the “metaphysical monstrosity of existence”, has used mind-altering substances for centuries. Witkacy presented many interesting theories and descriptions of narcotic sessions in a book entitled *Narkotyki – niemyte dusze* [Narcotics – unwashed souls]. The artist felt that even popular stimulants, such as tea or coffee, can alter consciousness. This is consistent with studies conducted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by a German toxicologist Louis Lewin. In his publication *Phantastica, Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs*¹² the author presents a classification of substances altering consciousness. According to the study, there are four categories: hallucinogens causing visual, auditory, and other hallucinations (such as mushrooms, LSD, mescaline, cannabis, henbane, etc.), intoxicating agents (alcohol, chloroform, ether, gasoline, etc.), substances of hypnotic effect that cause stupor and dizziness and act as soporifics (opium, heroin, mandrake, Kava-kava¹³, sedatives, etc.), and mental and / or physical stimulants (coffee, tea, cocoa, coca, kola nuts, betel, tobacco, amphetamines, etc.).

¹¹ Ch. Baudelaire, *Les Paradis artificiels*, Citadel Press, New York 1994.

¹² Quoted in: R. Rudgley, *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society*, British Museum Press, London 1993, p. 4.

¹³ Kava-kava – a drink from the root of *piper methysticum*, a climbing shrub cultivated on the islands of the Western Pacific.

Witkacy tried to systematise his visual experiences. He distinguished four stages peyote sessions. The first is characterized by a sharpening of sensory experience accompanied by a slight distortion – the artist called the form he saw “living arabesques”, which often had a three-dimensional character. The next stage is the zone of memory and analysis, the so-called Freudian level, during which Witkacy vividly saw his own advantages and disadvantages. An example of the visualization of these phenomena could be part of his image *Creation of the World* (1921-1922). The central figure is a naked woman, probably the biblical Eve. Her head is touched by God, depicted as an old man in white robes, presented against the background of the Garden of Eden. Depicted below is Satan, accompanied by four creatures, perhaps condemned souls. In their vicinity, there is a pair of animals resembling cats that eat red fruit from plates – an eternal symbol of fertility and sensuality. Semantic coherence of these elements is reinforced by highlighting the erotic appeal of the woman. In the upper right corner there are three figures, one holding a bottle. These are personifications of alcoholism, smoking tobacco and drug addiction. Below, a frog offers them a pearl, a symbol of the human soul. The third stage of peyote session is the zone of psychedelic memory with symbols of the universal character: a singular cosmogony with visions of the formation of the universe, the Earth, and humankind, during which the artist undergoes numerous metamorphoses – he is a Pharaoh, king of snakes, he participates in the ritual myths. Witkiewicz’s visions often feature mythological figures. An example might be a 1929 pencil sketch showing a man with the head of a bird. This picture is typical of the ancient Egyptian representations or shamanistic sessions. Witkacy defined the fourth stage as an integrating zone, during which the mystery of the first principle and symbolism of things of the highest and final order are revealed¹⁴.

In the context of issues of the relationship between art and extrasensory images, Witkiewicz’s remarks seem to be particularly valuable since he speaks not only as a philosopher and theorist, but also as a practitioner of arts. He treats art and imagination as separate and autonomous zones, but he also takes into account their interdependence¹⁵. Witkacy emphasises that art draws upon imagination, but imagination also benefits from art.

Witkacy notes that in the first case the point is to record a specific structure in art, one which the artist experiences in his mind and which he then wants to save in his work. Thus, imaginative vision is followed by a painterly vision, which consists in stopping the imaginative visions

¹⁴ S. I. Witkiewicz, *Narkotyki – niemyte dusze*, PIW, Warsaw 1975, pp. 117-151.

¹⁵ W. Sztaba, *Gra ze sztuką. O twórczości Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 1982, pp. 145-170.

(metaphysical sensation) and making them a painting to be contemplated. Such a painting is subject to the Pure Form principle, relating to the painting surface. Witkacy also argues that the old styles in the art would not have been possible without visions. Therefore, he distinguishes two trends in art, which in his opinion grew out of peyote imagination: the first trend includes the art of Egypt and Mexico, and the second – art from China, India and Persia.

A similar problem of capturing extrasensory images was noted by the Surrealists in the twentieth century, albeit activating imagination in a different way. Salvador Dali's paranoid-critical method and the use of the phenomenon of psychic automatism were to "compel inspiration" – the goal was to "capture the image as one pins down an insect"¹⁶ Also in the works of other Surrealists visions and memories are intertwined with one another – passive and active imaginations are inextricably linked. An example would be a painting by Max Ernst *Woman, Old Man and Flower Femme* from 1923-1924. The vision is communicated in a female figure facing away, with transparent arms and torso, and with her head adorned with a huge hat in the shape of an opened fan. The figure of a man with the face of a monkey holding in his hands a miniature figure of a woman can be seen as a reference to Darwinian evolution – the presentation can also be associated with the film *King Kong*, although it was not made until ten years later.

Inspired by psychoanalytic ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, Surrealists introduced dreams, daydreams, and visions into their paintings. Called "copyists of dreams"¹⁷, artists following this trend were aware of the problem of presenting extrasensory images in painting. It was the first of all about capturing the "dream-lightning". In his text published in *Minotaur* (No. 3, 1934)¹⁸, sculptor Alberto Giacometti wrote that for many years he had only worked on sculptures that appeared ready in his mind. However, people were aware that the artist's work on the form of his work in some way interfered with the effect of dreams.

Surrealists distinguished three types of relationships between art and products of the imagination¹⁹. First, imagination frees man from rationalism and activates the creative forces. Second, it becomes an area of artistic experiments and third, imagination not only inspires art, but it is objectified through it.

Art draws from imagination, but there is also the opposite direction – extrasensory images can be complemented by works of art. At the beginning

¹⁶ R. Passeron, *Encyklopedia surrealizmu*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warsaw 1993, p. 71.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

¹⁹ J. Górniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

of the eighteenth century, the English writer and journalist Joseph Addison insisted that art develops the imagination: “poetry acts directly on imagination”²⁰. Witkacy, in contrast, insisted that imagination feeds on the imagery developed on the basis of painting, sculpture and architecture. For example, in Witkiewicz’s visions, the background of unfolding events were often works of art from different eras. According to Witkiewicz, imagination is the source of art and at the same time its effect.

The influence of art on the imagination was also emphasized by other philosophers. According to a theory presented by the American writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley in his book *The Doors of Perception. And Heaven and Hell*, works of art have the power to transfer the mind to the world of vision. Referring to the concepts of C.G. Jung, Huxley argued that works created by artists can transfer the viewer to “the antipodes of the mind” – as he described the zone of the collective unconscious generating archetypal symbols. The philosopher pointed out that visions derived from these regions can be achieved by consciously contemplating objects that have the power to transpose. Anything in the nature or a work of art that resembles objects found in the “antipodes of the mind” is capable of inducing visions. These include, for example, precious stones, which are brightly coloured, or luminous materials such as glass or marble, as they “[...] are precious because they bear a faint resemblance to the glowing marvels seen with the inner eye of the visionary”²¹. Vision-generating materials today have a smaller scope of impact – modern technology provides a countless number of such items, and, as the author writes, of “familiarity breeds contempt”²².

According to Huxley, transposing works of art should contain²³ items of vivid and luminous colours, whose effect is further enhanced by dark background or shadow play. Fragments emerging from the darkness can shine otherworldly light. An example of the first type of works can be part of Grünewald’s *Isenheim Altar* of 1515, depicting the Ascension. Hovering over the grave and depicted on a black background, the figure of Christ is emanating with unique light. The same applies to the work of contemporary American artist Alex Grey, which are created under the influence of visions caused by meditation, shamanic techniques, and hallucinogens. His psychedelic paintings are characterized by a remarkable luminosity. They are composed of translucent, decorative elements of pure, vivid colours that often, like in a kaleidoscope, form concentric, extremely complex figures.

²⁰ J. Addison, in: J. Górniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²¹ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception. And Heaven and Hell*, Fontal Lobe Publishing, 2011, p. 64.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 117ff.

These forms are not merely decorative, they symbolize the subtle energies of the body. Grey's representations are not only a record of vision, but also the message of the truth about human existence. The artist says that by using the metaphor of transparency he refers to the process of becoming transparent for the holy dimension²⁴. As the contemporary American philosopher Ken Wilber writes, "Alex's work, as any transcendental art, is not merely symbolic nor based solely on imagination. It represents a direct invitation to know and realize a deeper dimension of our own being."²⁵

In contrast, dark backgrounds frequently encountered in the Baroque, when artists followed the principle of "setting gems" involving surrounding shapes with darkness. Only their luminous fragments emerged from the shadows, emphasizing local colour. Such works include paintings by the French painter Georges de la Tour, for example *The Newborn* from 1644 to 1649. The composition features three figures whose contours disappear in the darkness. The artist applied the technique of colour luminism in which the play of light and colour intensifies the drama and mystery of the representation. At the same time, the painter used another technique of composition popular in the period of Mannerism and the Baroque: *maniera tenebrosa*²⁶, in which the contrast of the dark background and bright parts lit by an invisible candle intensifies the transposing effect of the image.

According to Huxley, heroic figures depicted as stationary also have the power of transferring into altered states of consciousness. Looking at them calms the viewer and forces him to contemplate because movement and action are natural to everyday reality. William Blake called such figures "Cherubim". They are content to only exist, not doing anything. They include figures of Egyptian gods and pharaohs, and representations of Madonna or Buddha.

The vision-generating power is also found in views of beautiful landscapes, but only seen from far away or very close. Average distance is typically human. Vast landscapes emanating silence and emptiness are characteristic of the antipodes of the mind. Such themes were used to present paradise, a spiritual space in which the highest beings and the blessed reside. An example would be the painting by Cranach *Paradise* dated 1530 showing the first parents in the wide expanse of the Garden of Eden. Visible on the horizon are inaccessible, rocky formations, calm surface of a lake, and distant

²⁴ Alex Grey, *Galeria świata buddyzmu*, <http://www.buddyzm.com.pl/?k=&e=&s=&app=15&menu=2&info=1> (01.07.2014).

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Maniera tenebrosa* (tenebrism) – composition technique involving the application darker shades in the background and contrasting them with sharply lit fragments of figures and objects in the front.

woods. At the same time, objects of nature seen from a close distance are reminiscent of the “living geometry of the Other World” Such representations appeared for the first time in impressionist paintings – Monet’s *Water Lilies* at the late nineteenth century are a perfect example. Huxley also pointed out that both distant and close representations of nature draw the attention to the general laws, in the face of which individual needs and concerns are not relevant.

Marginality of art created under the influence of extrasensory images can also be considered in terms of the concept of Carl Gustav Jung, who distinguished two kinds of art: a psychological and visionary. As he writes, the gulf that divides them is as great as the one between the first and the second part of Goethe’s *Faust*²⁷. Psychological, symptomatic art may include a large number of works²⁸, which are derived from individual experience and are based on easy to understand psychological content, such as passion, beauty, and horror of the human condition. Visionary, symbolic art is less popular because it grows out of the collective unconscious, and its experience is “it is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man’s mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehuman ages, or from a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man’s understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; [...] the primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomable abyss of the unborn and of things yet to be. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the darkness of the spirit, or of the primal beginnings of the human psyche? We cannot say that it is any of none of these.”²⁹ Affected by these experiences, the work of visionary art is created regardless of the will of the artist, who becomes only a tool in the hands of forces unknown to him. The effect often provokes shock, aversion and disgust even in its very creator. Jung also points out that artists frequently adopt a passive attitude to images from the unconscious, which consists only in reproducing them, without involving styling factors³⁰. This is because, contrary to popular belief, artistic excellence of the works of a given artists usually lacks psychic wholeness. Only a few are able to perfect both their personality and their works.

²⁷ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Literature*, in: *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 15: Spirit in Man, Art, And Literature*, Princeton University Press 1971, p. 141.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 141-142.

³⁰ J. Jacobi, *The Psychology of C.G. Jung*, Yale University Press, London 1973, p. 43.

Current trends in the arts tend to ignore extrasensory sources. Leading artistic trends of today highlight the critical involvement of artists in society. Although there are artistic and religious practices that provoke altered states of consciousness (Kim Sola, Marina Abramović, Almagul Menlibayeva, Alex Grey, Pablo Amaringo, Nemo Boko, Ulay, Pawel Althamer [peyote sessions]), but they are not dominant. According to some theorists, religion and art, expression and contemplation should be clearly separated. The contemporary, and possibly earlier marginalization of extrasensory images is also related with the order of activity imposed by society. While the art is expected to participate in the implementation of political and religious objectives and educate in a manner consistent with the collectively adopted values, it should not leave the sensory-rational-emotive realm. From this point of view, experiences described herein may be considered unnecessary and even harmful, but in the context of creative experiments the importance of their role for self-knowledge is emphasized. They also have somewhat of a remonstrative nature. As Marcin Wieconkowski writes in an article titled *Kultura zachodu głównym wrogiem ekstazy* [Western culture as the main enemy of ecstasy], “[...] if through ecstatic experience we gain a direct experience of perception, rules imposed by politicians or religious leaders will be rejected.”³¹

Translated by
Katarzyna Gucio

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baudelaire Charles (1994) *Les Paradis artificiels*, New York: Citadel Press.

Berezowski Łukasz (2012) *Transhumanizm i jego farmakologiczne perspektywy*, “Trans: wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 2, pp. 65-68.

Clottes Jean, Lewis-Williams David (1998) *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, New York: Harry N. Abrams.

David Coxhead, Susan Hiller (1990) *Dreams. Vision of the night*, London: Tames & Hudson

Górniewicz Józef (1989) *Sztuka i wyobraźnia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne.

Grey Alex, *Galeria Świata Buddyzmu*, <http://www.buddyzm.com.pl/?k=&e=&s=&app=15&menu=2&info=1>.

Grof Stanislav (1994) *Realms of the Human Unconscious. Observation from LSD Research*, Chicago: Independent Publisher Book.

³¹ Marcin Wieconkowski, *Kultura zachodu głównym wrogiem ekstazy. Rozmowa z Johnem P. Allenem „Dolphinem”*, „Trans/wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 4/2012, pp. 115-120.

- Huxley Aldous (2011) *The Doors of Perception: Heaven and Hell*, Fontal Lobe Publishing.
- Jaroszyński Piotr (1996) *Metafizyka i sztuka*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Tadeusza Radjusza „GUTENBERG-PRINT”.
- Jacobi Jolande (1973) *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, London: Yale University Press.
- Jung Carl Gustav (1981) *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jung Carl Gustav (1971) *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 15: Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nęcka Edward (2001) *Psychologia twórczości*, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Platon (2001) *Selected Dialogues of Plato: The Benjamin Jowett Translation*, New York: Modern Library.
- Podrez Ewa, Czyż Antoni (red.) (2002) *Wyobraźnia jako jaźń twórcza. Studia z etyki, literatury i sztuki*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo NERITON.
- Pytko Kazimierz, *Odmienne stany świadomości*, <http://hyperreal.info/node/10025>.
- Rudgley Richard (1993) *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society*, London: British Museum Press.
- Schurian Walter (2005) *Sztuka wyobraźni*, Köln: Taschen/TMC Art.
- Sztaba Wojciech (1982) *Gra ze sztuką. O twórczości Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Wieconkowski Marcin (2012) *Kultura zachodu głównym wrogiem ekstazy. Rozmowa z Johnem P. Allenem „Dolphinem”*, „Trans/wizje – pismo psychoaktywne”, issue 4, pp. 115-120.
- Witkiewicz Stanisław Ignacy (1975) *Narkotyki – niemyte dusze*, Warszawa: PIW.

OBRAZY POZAPERCEPCYJNE: MARGINES CZY ISTOTNY NURT SZTUKI EUROPEJSKIEJ? (streszczenie)

Celem artykułu jest próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy dzieła sztuki powstające pod wpływem obrazów pozapercepcyjnych, można uznać za margines sztuki europejskiej. Autorka zwraca uwagę, że w naszej kulturze zainteresowanie tym rodzajem inspiracji twórczej uzyskało istotne znaczenie dopiero od XIX wieku. Następnie omawia różne przyczyny powstawania odmiennych stanów świadomości i kolejne etapy transu, podczas którego pojawiają się obrazy pozapercepcyjne. Koncentrując się na dziełach sztuki, których źródłem były tego typu wyobrażenia, powołuje się między innymi na koncepcje David Lewisa-Williamsa, Stanisława Grofa, Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza, Aldousa Huxleya i Carla Gustava Junga. Tekst kończy refleksja dotycząca współczesnego znaczenia twórczości o źródłach pozapercepcyjnych. Autorka podkreśla kontestacyjny charakter tego typu sztuki oraz jej rolę samopoznawczą. Uważa, że obrazy pozapercepcyjne rozszerzają nasze pojmowanie osobowości i pozwalają wyjść poza krąg problemów narzuconych za pośrednictwem mediów przez polityków czy przywódców religijnych.

Słowa kluczowe: wyobraźnia – odmienne stany świadomości – sztuka wizjonerska – obrazy pozapercepcyjne w sztuce – transponujące dzieła sztuki.

Dominika Łarionow

Department of Art History, University of Łódź
larionow@gazeta.pl

SCENOGRAPHY STUDIES – ON THE MARGIN OF ART HISTORY AND THEATER STUDIES

Abstract: Scenography as a domain of artistic activity has always been a liminal art, placed between the visual arts and theater, with the latter being treated as a chiefly literary domain. The history of scenography to date has recorded two moments when it rose to prominence, becoming the “queen” of the spectacle: the Renaissance and modern times. The article will briefly discuss its history, to show the main reasons for the exclusion of scenography from the domain of academic research. The author will survey some recent publications on set design written by practitioners and academics.

Keywords: set design – scenography – history of theater – theater.

Scenography as a domain of artistic activity has always been a liminal art, placed between the visual arts and theater, with the latter being treated as a chiefly literary domain. Its roots reach back to the theater of ancient Greece. Even during that period, it was already a marginalized discipline. Aristotle noted in his *Poetics*, which can be partly regarded as representative for the ideas of his time, that although a spectacle is the work of the *skēnographos*, its significance depends on the craftsmanship of the playwright. Therefore, he acknowledges the quality that scenography contributes to the spectacle, but in order to achieve *catharsis*, that ancient category associated with the reception of a work of art, a work of great literary value is needed. According to this approach to the theater, the appearance of the stage is of secondary importance. Furthermore, the term *skēnographia*, which probably meant “stage painting”, or more accurately “painted on the *skēne*”, also referred to all the painting of that era which used linear perspective. It seems that the idea originating from Aristotle contributed to the dismissive view of

scenography, a refusal to see it as a discipline of art that requires specific knowledge and artistic skills. There is an anecdote about Anaxarchus of Abdera (6th century BC), a philosopher and a companion of Alexander the Great's during his expedition to India. He used to compare human life to painted images. He thought that matters of everyday life are just as illusory as dreams or the painted façade of the *skene*.

The history of scenography to date has recorded two moments when it rose to prominence, becoming the “queen” of the spectacle: the Renaissance and modern times. During the first period of its glory it enjoyed admiration as a discipline of art, whereas in the second one it has to actually demand that its rights be respected, although it governs the imagination of a large audience: the viewers of theater performances, the attendees of outdoor events, political party voters, the participants of rock concerts, the viewers of television programs and films, and even the fans of computer games. Some of the reasons for its long-time marginalization include the absence of a developed method of description, critical discourse, and methods of research, but most of all its inability to secure itself a place in the pantheon of the arts. This is another reason why it is a discipline linked to a greater extent with fine arts rather than theater. Even a cursory examination of the history of scenography gives an idea of its importance and a fairly significant marginalization of the study of its development.

The first era of its prominence is associated with the invention of convergent perspective. Decorators become the main arrangers of performances. Zbigniew Raszewski, theater historian, even went so far as to describe that mathematical-technical solution as a “cuckoo’s egg” that was planted in theater. Indeed, the domination of painted panoramas and wings became a fixture in theater for over 200 years. It is debatable whether the large canvases have always guaranteed the artistic mastery of their authors. Of course, some of them were important names, such as the Galli da Bibiena family, whose members worked for major theaters (mostly court) of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their work was characterized by extraordinary mastery of composition and attention to detail associated with the desire to preserve at all costs the illusion of perspective on stage. In the seventeenth century England, Inigo Jones perfected the art of painting on canvas, using the ancient system of painted *periaktos* for his stage designs. In the late eighteenth century, Philip James de Loutherbourg introduced three-dimensional stage decor closing the visual layout. Paradoxically, neither the history of theater, nor art history is party to the debate on the transformations of scenography, so we know very little about the entirety of the theatre aesthetics of that time. It should be expected that apart from a small number

of artists, the vast majority of the painted stage decor were produced by random craftsmen.

Another factor that certainly contributed to the marginalization of scenography as a discipline of art was not only the incompetence of the artists, but also the limited scope of the themes depicted on the large canvases, closely linked to the dramatic genre. One of those responsible for such state of affairs was Sebastian Serlio, who in 1545 published his work *Trattato de architettura*. Drawing on Vitruvius, his Roman predecessor, the author offers not only valuable advice on the shape of a theater building, but also guidelines for decorators, relevant for the issue discussed here. He introduced three kinds of painted canvases. The first one was *scena tragica*, or tragic background, whose purpose was to depict palatial architecture; it featured numerous columns, decorative façades, and all the accoutrements associated with a royal court. The second one was *scena comica*, intended for comedic performances; it featured a depiction of private houses with bay windows and visible window frames. The third type was dedicated to the so-called pastoral plays, known as *scena satirica* – it was to represent forest, caves, mountains, and other elements of rural landscape, based on the model of landscape painting.

The subject-matter of those canvases followed strictly defined rules, binding the dramatic genre with the mode of decoration. It was the overthrow of this system that started the revolution in scenography. In Paris, in the late seventeenth century, Molière was the first to challenge Serlio's rules by setting his farce plays in the space of a drawing room. Setting the play in an interior, and no longer just in the street or the square in front of a house, infused the intrigue with new possibilities of interpretation. For the first time in its history, scenography was considered not only in the context of the spectacle, but predominantly with respect to the effect the artist wanted to achieve in terms of the reception of the literary work. Decoration served to underscore the intrigue, and thus it had to provide adequate setting. Molière began to furnish his drawing rooms with real furniture, which also contributed to the emergence of a new catalogue of stage props. One of them in particular came to be associated with its owner. It was the armchair in which the playwright was seated on stage on 17 February 1673, during the world premiere of *The Imaginary Invalid*, a comedy which he also wrote. He fell off the chair as he was leaving the stage and died a few hours later. Today, the armchair is on display in the foyer of the Comédie Française building in Paris. It became not only an element of decoration, but also a national treasure. It is now even proudly brought on stage every 15 January to celebrate the anniversary of Molière's birth, thus becoming a permanent sign of the playwright's presence.

It is hard to believe that the rules of scenography in theater remained unchanged until the mid-nineteenth century. With the emergence of new dramatic genres in the Romantic era, the artists began to seek appropriate decorative solutions. It was then that some new categories of painted canvases were introduced: street and urban scenery was reserved for bourgeois drama. Melodrama was dominated by two types of setting: romantic and idyllic landscape. The former, otherwise known as *pittoresque* (i.e. picturesque), displayed poetic ruins of castles and mansions, wild mountains, forests, dangerous precipices, and windy moors. It was designed to emphasize the horror behind the events, lending the whole plot a subtly melancholy character. Also significant were the lighting effects and music. The latter category usually featured a farmhouse and fields of grain, with a church tower visible in the background. The entire setting had to be illuminated by sunlight or the bright rays of the full moon. The sentimental setting was supposed to express the charm of a happy life. It was a wonderful backdrop for the extremely complex vicissitudes experienced by the characters of the play. The stage decor of the Romantic period was closely related to the emotions of the characters/recipients, stretched between two opposing poles: terror and peace, which were then regarded as the only possible options.

It should be noted that the decorator had the technical support of carpenters and machine operators. Performances of the *à grand spectacle* variety required hundreds of such men. The scenography still consisted of a carefully painted panorama and rows of wings arranged to form a perspectival view. Pretty soon it turned out that painted decoration was not sufficient for the new drama. Thus, three-dimensional elements were introduced onto the picture-frame (proscenium) stage, with the results often rather different from those intended, and sometimes comical. A perfect example is the spectacle of *Kordian* by Juliusz Słowacki, staged in Kraków in 1899, with the main character climbing the “summit of Mont Blanc”, made of wooden racks, his hat touching the overhanging clouds.

The next stage of the revolution in scenography was the change in lighting. In the 1820s, gas lamps were introduced, replaced by electricity by the end of the nineteenth century. Certainly, the change of the light source was the factor that spurred a complete reconstruction of stage decoration. Brighter lighting revealed the whole aesthetic misery of the painted canvases. The reform of the theater initiated – on the one hand – by Richard Wagner and the theater in Bayreuth built for his operas (1876), and on the other – by the theater company called Meiningen Ensemble (1860-1908), a court group under the leadership of Prince George II of Sachsenhausen-Meiningen, focused primarily on transforming the aesthetic qualities of the spectacle.

The artists' notes from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries evidence the changes in the attention given to scenography. In Poland, this was clearly visible in the works of Stanisław Wyspiański, who experimented with light and sound (e.g. in his *Wedding*, 1901), props, colors, and their meanings (*The Wedding*, *Varsavian Anthem*, 1898; *Boleslaus the Bold*, 1903). Wyspiański was honored by having the entire Polish pavilion dedicated to him at the International Theatre Exhibition, held in 1926 in New York and curated by Frederick Kiesler, Austrian architect and stage designer, associated with the group *Der Stijl*. A similar trend can be observed in all avant-garde currents that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. The list of publications addressing this issue includes texts by Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz. Other artists that dabbled in scenography include Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Oskar Kokoschka, and Pablo Picasso. For these artists, scenography was just as important as their other activities.

Unfortunately, in the field of critical discourse over the past century, the pressure for change in theater shifted from the visual sphere towards the plot. As a consequence, it was much easier to interest the researchers working in the emerging theater studies in the literary aspect of theater. Of course, the studies did not ignore the important role of the director, who became the main artist responsible for the spectacle. Scenography, while still remembered by the avant-garde, quickly disappeared from the field of interest of academic researchers. This was probably due to the transience of the material, which exists only within the space of the spectacle, and once its run is finished, it goes to the storeroom, often becoming material for a completely different set of decorations. Another problem is the fact that since the late twentieth century, we have seen a gradual abstention of artists from writing manifestos and commentaries to their own activities. Some signs of a return to self-reflection can be seen today, as evidenced by the growing number of albums and books written by stage designers, to mention just two of them: Pamela Howard's *What is Scenography?* (2007), and the book by Allan Starski and Irena A. Stanisławska's *Scenografia* [Scenography], published in Warsaw in 2013. These publications are different in character from the avant-garde manifestos, as the latter focused on the description of new technical possibilities that emerged with the introduction of cinema or photography on stage, or the new approach to props or costumes lending sculptural form to the human body. Currently, scenographers do show their work, but the accompanying commentary takes the form of an academic lecture, addressing also the technical and administrative aspects of the profession.

The view of scenography adopted in such publications include mostly its theatrical aspect, connected with the spectacle performed on the proscenium

stage in a theater. Researchers have completely failed to notice that since the last century scenography has become an important part of spectacles played out in other media. The most important technical invention, namely cinema, was quickly followed by the emergent television shows. The twentieth century showed the power of visual setting in another dimension, that of politics. It became an important tool of propaganda in the totalitarian systems which shaped the history of societies in the era of two world wars. The experience gained by the creators of political spectacles is still used to design the settings of election campaigns by successive generations of activists representing different political groups. It is a paradox that the study of the socio-political function of the visual setting is conducted by sociologists and psychologists. After all, scenography calls for an academic discourse discussing its aesthetic aspect, not only analyzing the mental manipulation it may be used for. Perhaps the reason for the reluctance to conduct in-depth research in the former field is some creators' entanglement in building the background for the latter, in the complex political context of the twentieth century.

In 2009, an academic conference was held in Paris under the title *Qu'est-ce que la scénographie?*, inspired by Howard's book (discussed in "Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts" 2012, vol. XIV, p. 221–235). The seemingly trivial question is in fact quite justified, because currently there is no clear definition of the concept. The activity of the scenographers contributes to the continuous expansion of its range. The program of the French session yielded two volumes of papers¹. They present primarily the scenographers' perspective, pointing out the missionary nature of the profession, which involves familiarity with space as well as the ability to select objects present on stage and to build metaphors. The editors of those volumes introduced a clear dividing line, since they date the development of modern scenography to the 1960s. Thus, the earlier achievements of the avant-garde are located within the context of historical analysis. A valuable addition to the book is a map of scenography departments in France and the description of their teaching methods. The publication indicated some significant problems of scenography as a subject of research within the system of artistic education.

The question posed earlier by the British production designer and picked up by the French academics points to an obvious problem, namely the fact that the abandonment of the academic study of the visual setting of performances has created a gap, which has been filled by artists through their actions. At the same time, academic analysis serves as a method of structur-

¹ *Qu'est-ce que la scénographie?*, vol. I, *Processus et paroles de scénographes*, textes réunis par Daniel Lesage et Véronique Lemaire, "Études Théâtral", issue 53/2012; vol. II, *Pratiques et enseignements*, ouvrage dirigé par Luc Boucris, Marcel Freydefont, Véronique Lemaire, Raymoand Sarti, "Études Théâtral", issue 54-55/2012.

ing objectives and tasks – its absence creates chaos. Which brings us to the next question in this argument: what does it mean to study scenography? What kind of researcher is able to examine scenography in terms of both historical and contemporary documentation? Is he a theater scholar, an art historian, or just an archivist? In his book *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft* [The Introduction to Theatre Studies], Christopher Balme, German theater scholar, addresses this issue in rather ambiguous terms: “Since the design of the appearance of the stage is often, historically speaking, placed in the hands of established artists-painters, their works are the focus of both theater studies and art history. The exact division of tasks between the two disciplines of research would be difficult to establish. It is known, however, that theater decorations and costumes are not preferred areas of research within the history of art. Scenographers’ work used to be labelled as applied arts. The most important studies on scenography have been, therefore (with few exceptions) penned by theater scholars. The knowledge of the history of art, however, has always played an important role in these studies”². In her lecture on contemporary theater studies, Erika Fischer-Lichte notes, quoting Wolfgang Goethe, that theater studies should be free to use knowledge from other disciplines, such as literature studies, art history, etc., because theatrical works are a sum of various arts. At the same time she believes that the form of the setting determines how a spectacle will be recorded in memory. The researcher notes that the props and the costumes used in the spectacle are an important direct source in the study of the history of theater.

The sale of the costumes and elements of stage décor which took place at the Opera at the Castle in Szczecin in August 2013 can be seen as a digression illustrating a certain paradox. Everything was sold there for the same price of 7 PLN, regardless of its artistic value or the name of the costume designer. At the same time, one of the hundreds of jackets made for Harrison Ford for the role of Indiana Jones, was to be sold at an auction held to raise funds for the Poznan theatre *Scena na Piętrze* [Upstairs Theatre]. Probably neither the actor nor the filmmakers knew anything about that particular auction, as the Topsis foundation running the theater received the jacket from the clothing company that produced it for the film. This particular juxtaposition shows the problem which clearly eludes theater researchers. Scenography has entered the economic system governing culture. It is the material element of the spectacle which undergoes the process of commodification. This should spur a debate on the potential collectors value of such items, the character of the

² Ch. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, quoted from the Polish edition: *Wprowadzenie do nauki o teatrze*, transl. and ed. by W. Dudzik and M. Leyko, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2002, p. 209.

museums of scenography in Poland and in the world, etc. One specific illustration of this issue was the Stanley Kubrick exhibition, organized in 2014 at the National Museum in Krakow. It showcased the filmmaker and his work, and scenography was an essential part of the exhibition. Such individual objects as the famous knife or the typewriter from *Shining* (1980) together made up the dramatic setting of the whole presentation. The props originally used on the set created a new discourse about the artist and his work, which, due to the presence of real objects, has become more tangible for Kubrick's fans. Another valuable element was the documentary screened in Krakow. It addressed the history of the costumes and headwear made for *2001 – A Space Odyssey* (1968). The director entrusted the task of creating futuristic dresses to Hardy Amies, who had previously worked only for Queen Elizabeth II. The designer created a new style and boldly experimented with new fabrics. Freddie Fox, owner of a famous hat salon in London, designed the headwear for the stewardess in Kubrick's film, inspired by the shape of an egg. Both the headwear and the costumes went down in the history of scenography, even if the designers regarded their work on the film set as just an adventure, a challenge, and a temporary escape from their regular responsibilities. The director, famous for his pedantry, entrusted them with that task due to their perfectionism, which turned out to be an excellent choice for the film meant to show the future.

A researcher of scenography is therefore not only a theater scholar, not only an art historian, and not only an archivist. He must have extensive knowledge of the history of architecture, culture, etc. It becomes even more confusing when one considers film set design, which requires familiarity with film production. As the research field expands, more and more scientists begin to notice the problem of the lack of language to talk about the phenomena of scenography. In recent years, a number of authors have sought a method of describing visual settings. Particularly noteworthy is *Theater and Performance Design. A Reader in Scenography*, edited by Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet, which points to the links between the function and the form of scenography, and the theories of vision or rather perception of reality. It addresses the ideas of Plato, Bernard Russell, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Ernst Gombrich, and Walter Benjamin, along with the concepts proposed by the aforementioned Craig, Kantor, Jerzy Grotowski, Oskar Schlemmer, Robert Wilson, and Josef Svoboda. The eclecticism of thought and this particular – somewhat risky – selection of authors, makes the collection in question a worthy guidebook to the ideas in scenography. Their versatility and diversity has been treated as a challenge to solve the charade of the meanings engendered by the concept. An interesting approach to historical issues has been offered by Christin Essin in her book *Stage*

Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America. In the discussion on the scenographers active in the United States in the early twentieth century, the publication clearly differentiates between their individual functions of author, critic of culture, social activist, entrepreneur, and even global cartographer. The researcher focused mainly on the artists who were immigrants from different parts of the world. Multi-ethnicity has become the starting point for a more extensive reflection on scenography, which shaped America's idea of the outside world. It also contributed to the discourse of representation, and the presence of European culture in the United States, laying ground for its new myths. An interesting series of publications have recently been released by Palgrave MacMillan. Their purpose is to present scenography from several points of view: through the function of costume, light, the role of the director. The authors commissioned to edit the books are scholars who are also practitioners. Particularly noteworthy is Scott Palmer, British researcher and lighting designer, whose book *Light* is part of the series. The author presents this element of the spectacle in a historical perspective, but also discusses the contemporary situation. He also demonstrates how technical innovations that contributed to the growing importance of the role of artificial light in a spectacle changed the perceptions of not only the audience but also, and above all, theater artists themselves.

In all the examples discussed here (only briefly because of the spatial constraints), scenography is regarded as an extremely important part of the spectacle, and an essential key to changing the mentality of the public or expanding the aesthetics of the performance.

The history of Polish scenography owes the most not so much to theater scholars or art historians, but to a single production designer – Zenobiusz Strzelecki. In his books: *Polska Plastyka Teatralna* [Visual arts in Polish theatre] (1963); *Kierunki scenografii współczesnej* [Trends in contemporary scenography] (1970), and *Współczesna scenografia polska* [Polish contemporary scenography] (1984), he describes both the historical roots of Polish scenography, and the work of the eminent scenographers in the twentieth century, including Stanisław Wyspiański, Karol Frycz, Andrzej Pronaszko, Zofia Wierchowicz, Krystyna Zachwatowicz, Tadeusz Kantor, Józef Szajna, or Leszek Mądzik. The final result is an impressive work. I would venture to say that no other European country can boast of such excellent monographs prepared by a single author. What is impressive is both his descriptive style, reminiscent in its literary quality of the masters of traditional literature, and his attempts to categorize the artists, assigning them to the corresponding trends in art. Over the last fifty years, no one has managed to match Strzelecki's achievements. Theater scholars are more likely to focus their efforts on the development of extensive, extremely valuable, individual

monographs rather than a comprehensive look at the history of Polish scenography. However, since its publication, Strzelecki's work has become somewhat outdated, and the history of Polish scenography has become a white spot in theater studies in Poland.

This issue is extremely important because theater scholars have overlooked their native aesthetic thought, unlike theater artists. The last fifty years has seen a great triumph of the aesthetics of Polish theater. Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor have laid the foundations of modern European theater, yet Polish academics seem to have forgotten about all that. Theater scholars and critics are reluctant to examine scenography. They lack the research methodology and language to describe the phenomena taking place on stage. Despite the existing body of theoretical work, we still do not know how to evaluate the material objects in the spectacle, we cannot interpret the changes of meaning taking place on the stage. This illustrates perfectly the whole problem of misunderstanding Jerzy Grzegorzewski's endeavors. I am not referring here to his work as a director, but to the artistic vision of his spectacles. Some people still find it objectionable that he re-composed objects and constructed theater installations. This is in part due to the theater education which ignores the questions of scenography and aesthetics. This results in turn from combining theater studies with literary studies and philology. It is easier to investigate and analyze the literary aspect of a theatrical performance, as there is a specific reference in the form of a printed work.

Meanwhile, history of art has not provided methods of analyzing scenography, either. Turning to it was a natural reflex among the researchers, including Strzelecki. However, no appropriate methodology has developed in this field, as in most cases history of art is a descriptive, not an analytical discipline. Set design, which involves an ephemeral spectacle, non-existent in terms of history, seems to be calling for some separate methodology. As has been already demonstrated, scenography is a challenge because of its eclecticism. It seems that the most appropriate method of studying it is by presenting the changing forms, showing how scenographers evaluate space, objects, or costumes. Building a problem-based discourse gives a greater scope to demonstrate the changes in historical terms; it also shows the scenographers' choices being duplicated in other fields of art. In this context, the most useful research instrument is cultural anthropology, which examines the contexts of phenomena against the broad background of artistic and social activity. The methodology was used e.g. by Hans Belting to describe the problems of the existence of art in the modern world. This view is supported by the currently popular performativity, which, particularly in the version of Ian McKenzie, gives a researcher freedom to use cognitive tools to describe the phenomena that he wants to explore. It also states that objects should not be studied using

a single methodology, because it significantly limits their interpretation. In this context, another useful instrument can be found in the anthropology of things, which uses social knowledge to demonstrate the uniqueness of the phenomena taking place in modern society, as intended, inter alia, by Jean Baudrillard, who said that the age of the subject has given way to the age of the object. The deformation of objects and their existence in space is an excellent question which can be used to access the world of scenography.

The study of scenography has become both a problem and an extraordinary challenge for contemporary humanities. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, the visual setting of spectacles is one of the most important elements that have social, political, and artistic functions. It seems that scenography has begun to rule the imagination of the viewer to a far greater extent than the accompanying literary content. The evolution of the discipline, presented only briefly here due to limited space, shows its extraordinary ability to transform and redefine aesthetic value. Tadeusz Kantor called it a despised discipline of art. Although decidedly pejorative, the expression is not entirely unfounded. However, placing scenography in the margins of attention has not only failed to disrupt its development, but even contributed to its dynamic progress. The history of theater as the development of spatial forms has not been written as yet. Thus, the return of the academic scholars to the abandoned, once empty field of scenography studies can become the beginning of a new revolution both in terms of historical analysis and contemporary exegesis. Its unpredictable results may generate a new quality of spectacles and other artistic forms of expression.

*Translated by
Katarzyna Gucio*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balme Christopher (2002) *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, quoted from the Polish edition: *Wprowadzenie do nauki o teatrze*, transl. and edited by Wojciech Dudzik and Małgorzata Leyko, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Boucris Luc, et al. (2012) *Pratiques et enseignements*. “Études Théâtral”, vol. II.

Essin Christin (2012) *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America. Artists, Activists, Cultural Critics*, New York: Plagrave McMillan.

Howard Pamela (2007) *What is Scenography?*, London: Routledge.

Lesage Daniel, Véronique Lemaire (2012) *Qu'est-ce que la scénographie? Processus et paroles de scénographes*. "Études Théâtral", vol I, issue 53.

Łarionow Dominika (2012) *Let's make stage design, or performative aspects of art*, "Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts", vol. XIV (XXIII), pp. 221-235.

Palmer Scott (2013) *Light*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Starski Allan (2013) *Scenografia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec.

Strzelecki Zenobiusz (1963) *Polska plastyka teatralna*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

Strzelecki Zenobiusz (1970) *Kierunki scenografii współczesnej*, Warszawa: PWN.

Strzelecki Zenobiusz (1984) *Współczesna scenografia polska*, Warszawa: Arkady.

Theater and Performance Design. A Reader in Scenography (2010), J. Collins, A. Nisbet (eds.), London: Routledge.

BADANIE SCENOGRAFII – MARGINES HISTORII SZTUKI I TEATROLOGII (streszczenie)

Scenografia jako sfera działań artystycznych była i jest sztuką pogranicza. Sytuowano ją zawsze pomiędzy sztukami plastycznymi, a teatrem, traktowanym jako obszar głównie zajmowany przez literaturę. W dotychczasowej historii scenografii widoczne są dwa momenty, kiedy zaważadnęła ona widowiskiem, stając się „królową” przedstawienia: renesans i czasy współczesne. Artykuł poprzez skrótowe omówienie jej dziejów chce wykazać głównie przyczyny marginalizacji czy wręcz wyrzucenia scenografii ze sfery badań naukowych. Autorka odwołuje się do publikacji autorstwa zarówno praktyków, jak i naukowców, jakie ukazały się w ostatnim czasie na temat scenografii.

Słowa kluczowe: scenografia – historia teatru – teatr.

Ryszard W. Kluszczyński
University of Łódź

INTERACTIVE FILM WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF INSTITUTIONAL CINEMA

Abstract: In this article I am considering the situation of interactivity and interactive film in the institutional context of the cinema that is outlined by the rules of cinematographic industry. I draw attention to the fact that despite the ongoing digitalization in all cinematographic areas: production, distribution, presentation, and reception, interactivity is seen as a non-film feature and, as a consequence, it is marginalized.

Cinematography opens up to any digital technological innovations that do not violate a standard model of film experience. Interactivity is seen here as a feature of games and not of films. An interactive film that is thrown to the periphery of institutionalized cinema, becomes a phenomenon of audio-visual avant-garde that is a common part of both cinema and art.

Keywords: digital cinema – interactive film – computer game – participatory culture – hybridity.

1.

In the case of art, interactivity is understood as the opening of an artwork to the interference of the recipients that leads to the transformation of a traditional, objectively existing artefact, shaped *a priori*, to an event individualized in the experience of reception¹; it appeared noticeably² in the artistic climate of the 1950s and 1960s.³ The real boom was noted in the

¹ R.W. Kluszczyński, *Strategies of interactive art*, “Journal of Aesthetics & Culture”, vol. 2, 2010, www.aestheticsandculture.net/index.php/jac/article/view/5525.

² By this I understand not only the noticeable number of interactive works of art, but also their clarity and the reactions of artistic critique to their appearance. The name itself appeared later on.

³ The first individual examples of such works of art may be found much earlier; Eduardo Kac points to the works of Guyla Kosice and other artists from the circle of Movimento Madi operating in Buenos Aires, who in the 1940s created kinetic works open to the

subsequent decades due to the development of digital technology. Its increased presence in all areas of artistic practices had its consequences not only for the dynamics and the scale of the development of interactive art. It also gave interactivity a new dimension, new possibilities and qualities, and it ultimately made interactive art one of the most appreciated and widely discussed artistic phenomena of the last decades of the past century. Currently, the status of interactivity in art is slowly beginning to change; it is no longer desired just for its own sake or due to its specific features (e.g. concerning the construction of the interface, the structure of the communicative experience or the architecture of information), but it also begins to be subordinated to the undertaken issues, and used by artists for various new purposes, often as a mere tool for the activities that go beyond artistic creativity (e.g. ecological, political, cognitive-scientific). The results obtained in this way frequently obscure the interactivity of an artwork (or move it to the background), thus directing the recipient's attention to the undertaken issue (also that not necessarily emerging from interactivity). *Image Fulgurator* (2008) by Julius von Bismarck could serve as an example here; a device mounted in a photo camera smuggles visual elements absent from the actual foreground into the photographs taken with a flash at the same time and place by different people (projecting them onto the photographed object), thus taking up the issue of memory in the era of its media recorders and containers. However, despite this change in the attitude towards interactivity, despite its new strategies, aims, and a range of less spectacular activities, what remains unchanged is the fact that it is still an indispensable, extremely important aspect of the most recent art. Its half-transparency, remaining in the background of the structure of art pieces, also results from the social interiorization of its patterns which, in turn, stems from its increased popularization. This is because interactivity is a foundation for the ideas and practices of participatory culture, a basis for the concept of the recipients' participation in the process of creating art and other forms of culture, and these ideas are commonly acknowledged as the basic determinant of contemporary culture, omnipresent in its current practices.

2.

The transformations of contemporary culture pushed cinema in the same direction as had been taken more or less willingly by all other artistic disciplines (first of all visual arts, formerly known as fine arts, but also music,

interference of the recipients. See E. Kac, *Telepresence & Bio Art. Networking Humans, Rabbits & Robots*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2005, pp. 109-110.

literature, dance, architecture and theatre). To an even higher degree than the majority of the above-mentioned creative modes, cinema has undergone deep and comprehensive transformations that took place thanks to the advent of electronic and digital technologies (and this process is still continuing).⁴ They have resulted in the appearance of digital cinema that was initially seen solely as one current in the art of film, but that is identified today with cinema *per se*⁵ or viewed as an alternative to traditional cinematography.⁶ However, despite the spectacular success of digital technologies in the cinema, both in the sphere of the techniques and methods of the production, distribution and presentation of a filmic work of art and in the sphere of the social practices it involves and creates, interactivity seems to play a rather secondary role here, rather than a fundamental one.

There is a reason for such a conclusion, stemming from the analysis of both modern cinematographic industry (the state of the mainstream cinema, original and independent film), and appropriate literature. When talking about interactive film, we are faced with the issue of new, participative strategies of reception in the field of art.

3.

In the book *Cinema in the Digital Age* by Nicholas Rombes, aspiring to be a (small) monograph of digital cinema, the issue of interactivity was not addressed directly, and the notion of interactive cinema itself does not seem to appear there at all. In the chapter on the interfaces of cinema (the analysis of which, if carried out in the context of visual arts, would rather inevitably lead to the issue of interactivity⁷), the discussion did not go beyond the questions that had been raised before with the invention of video tape and the DVD player. It concentrated on taking images out of the context of the cinema halls and transferring them onto digital screens, where they would become the subject of individualized recontextualization; the mechanism of experiencing the film: slowing down the stream of images, omitting certain fragments, stopping, rewinding; or – through the mobility of the screen – involving film in relations with the changing environment⁸.

⁴ See also B. McKernan, *Digital Cinema. The Revolution in Cinematography, Postproduction, and Distribution*, McGraw-Hill, New York 2005.

⁵ See Ch. Tryon, *Reinventing Cinema. Movies in the Age of Media Convergence*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick – New Jersey – London 2009, pp. 5-9.

⁶ B. McKernan, *op. cit.*

⁷ Interface is one of the most important categories of the theory of interactivity.

⁸ N. Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, Wallflower Press, London & New York 2009, pp. 46-47.

In Rombes' analyses, there is no interactivity of a film work, but only media-conditioned freedom of its reception or, at best, cognitive interaction; the creator of the latter concept – Eric Zimmerman – does not however acknowledge such type of interaction as a property of interactive art, but as an attribute of cognitive processes in general⁹. Similar questions are also raised in the chapter on viewers' participation¹⁰, where the point of reference is the book; the characteristics of the medium bring yet another type of interactivity to Zimmerman's typology – functional interactivity¹¹ – which is also of little application in the context of the digital media. As Rombes presents it, it practically concerns the interaction of a viewer with a DVD or computer interface and not with film.

In another chapter of *Cinema in the Digital Age*, devoted to the problem of non-linearity, this issue, inherently related to interactivity, is reduced solely to the discussion on non-linear editing, omitting the non-linear aspects of reception.¹²

In the case of the already mentioned coursebook monograph by Brian McKernan, *Digital Cinema: The Revolution in Cinematography, Postproduction, and Distribution*, a book that is regarded as a broad and thorough analysis of the problem of digital cinema, we are also faced with a similar situation. Neither the index or the main text of the book makes use of the notions of *interactive cinema*, *interactive movie*, *interactive video* or *random access video*, and the *nonlinear* category that appears, sends us back to the problem of editing, as in Rombes' monograph. And even though McKernan notices the interactive features of digital technologies, by for example outlining their history and analysing the potential of such inventions as *Sketchpad* by Ivan Sutherland, these observations are related only to the questions of film production and not to the experience of digital film from the perspective of the recipient, which allows the author not to bring up the subject of interactivity. One could say that in the view of both authors, McKernan and Rombes, but also numerous others whose concepts I shall not discuss here, such as e.g. Frank Rose or James Hoberman¹³ – digital cinema means traditional films in digital form, with all their former basic attributes modified

⁹ E. Zimmerman, *Narrative, Interactivity, Play, and Games: Four Naughty Concepts in Need of Discipline*, in *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. – London, England 2004, pp. 158-159.

¹⁰ N. Rombes, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

¹¹ E. Zimmerman, *op. cit.*

¹² N. Rombes, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹³ F. Rose, *The Art of Immersion. How the digital generation is remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the way we tell stories*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York – London 2011; J. Hoberman, *Film After Film. Or, What Became of 21st-Century Cinema?*, Verso, London 2012.

or complemented, but not replaced by the properties of the new computer medium.

The foundations of the viewpoint on interactive cinema adopted by both film theoreticians quoted above, a viewpoint that could also be defined as institutional – representative of the already existing system of cinematography – was very clearly presented by Roger Ebert (d. 2013), an exceptionally influential American film critic, author of over twenty books on cinema and several collections of reviews. His article, entitled “Dim Future for Interactive Film”¹⁴, published in 1994 is a model one as well as expressive and unequivocal, since Ebert wrote is just to answer the question about the possibility of interactive cinema. His answer is a categorical one: interactive cinema has no future because it has no present. It is contradictory to the rules obtaining in the current world of film and accepted by the audience. “This notion [‘interactive film’ – RWK] is an oxymoron” – says Ebert¹⁵. Let us analyse his argument in greater detail.

According to Evert, a film is primarily directed at groups of viewers who watch it together at the same time and the movie-theatre is an appropriate place to present it; secondly, it subordinates the viewers to the screen world: by starting the processes of projection-identification it decides what they see, hear and feel; thirdly, it is linear, thanks to which the story can be told.

A film characterised by Ebert in this way is contrasted with an interactive computer game which is addressed to an individual recipient and makes him or her a central figure making all possible decisions, and which also has non-linear structure – it does not tell the story but creates a possibility of exploration or acting in the presented world. Ebert is of the opinion that these forms of art have so little in common that they promote two totally different types of experience. By stressing the fact that he values them both¹⁶, he also claims that “it is important not to mix the two”.¹⁷

Obviously, one argue, and quite successfully, with all the arguments of the American critic. Especially from today’s perspective of twenty years later,

¹⁴ www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/dim-future-for-interactive-film (10.07.2014).

¹⁵ *Ibidem*. Also Bernard Perron reaches out for this term, thus describing the category of interactive fiction, see B. Perron, *From Gamers to Players and Gameplayers: The Example of Interactive Movies*, in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by B. Perron, M.J.P. Wolf, Routledge, New York 2003, pp. 143-153.

¹⁶ Ebert will soon drop this conviction; on the one hand, he will always be opposed to the idea of interactive cinema, but he will part with the idea of a game being a kind of art, at the same time he will sustain the idea of a deep dissimilarity of both areas; see for example the article he published in 2010 entitled *Video Games Can Never Be Art*, www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/video-games-can-never-be-art (11.07.2014).

¹⁷ R. Ebert, *Dim Future for Interactive Film*, *op. cit.* (10.07.2014).

when certain tendencies that back then were hardly visible or marginal, have now gained strength and began to set the tone of the present times.

First of all, films are more and more frequently watched outside a movie theatre, individually or in small groups, using various systems of presentation and engaging various means. Whereas computer games today are becoming multi-player games, frequently experienced on these same screens on which films are watched.

Secondly, by treating the relationships that subordinate a viewer to the screen as permanent and never changing, Ebert reduces the broad spectre of cinematographic genres to the mainstream; however, if one considers the author cinema and the distancing strategies characteristic for example for Brecht's cinema, it might turn out that the relationships between the viewers and the world of the films by Jean-Luc Godard or Glauber Rocha involve certain activities that make this type of film a basis for an interactive experience. Moreover, the exemplary analysis of the film genre undertaken by Ebert, which aims at presenting the impossibility of transforming it into an interactive form and thus at discrediting the idea of interactivity in the cinema, was indeed rather pointless, if not ridiculous, because an interactive film takes on quite a different structure, formulates different expectations towards the recipients, and brings to them a different kind of satisfaction than the film work discussed by Ebert. Claiming that a film representing the conventions contradictory to the paradigm of interactivity cannot become a valuable piece of interactive art is at the same time obvious and useless in the context of the debate that is being carried out.

Thirdly, the linearity of the cinema is not its necessary attribute, but just a stylistic choice. It was Ebert himself who, in 2005, with an acceptance close to enthusiasm, adopted the notion and idea of *hyperlink cinema* proposed by Allisa Quart¹⁸, so that he would be able to analyse the multilinear film *Syriana* by Stephen Gaghan, and later the analogically created works of Alejandro Iñárritu (at the same time promoting the category of *hyperlink cinema*). Clearly, such films have no hypertext structure, nor do they include any real hyperlinks; their name is of purely metaphorical character. However, it was coined solely so as to suggest that the construction of such films has nothing to do with simple, linear narrative structure.

Having thus undermined all of Ebert's arguments, I have good ground to claim that the two types of experience that are discussed here: film and interactive activity, and also the two art genres connected with them – film and computer games – appear to have more in common than Roger Ebert would like to admit.

¹⁸ A. Quart, *Networked*, "Film Comment" July–August 2005, No. 4.

I have no intention of arguing with Ebert any more or debating with McKernan and Rombes. The task that I have set for myself here is just isolating and describing the research positions concerning the issue of interactive cinema, but not their verification and evaluation. The above analysis of Ebert's concept was mainly to show that the way of placing interactivity in the context of cinema or in relation to film is absolutely and totally dependent on the assumed concept of cinema and the idea of a filmic work in particular. The monolithic vision of cinema that I refer to as institutional, which is identical with the perspective of the film industry, is struggling to maintain the system of cinema within the frames of traditional parameters, thus it does not allow for the existence of interactive cinema within it because this would be destructive to the whole system; instead it relegates interactivity to the world of games. From among the possibilities offered by the digital technologies, the institutional theory of cinema accepts only those that do not ruin the basis of the traditional system.

Another aim of the above analysis was to draw attention to the fact that the once rigid borders between the various artistic (and cultural) areas that are systematically blurred, contrary to the assumptions of institutional theories, including the areas of film activities and computer games – and their deepening hybridization. More and more phenomena on the borderline present the features of two or more disciplines. This hybridisation as well as technological and media convergence, multi- and transmedialisation, are additional elements of the media world of today.

4.

The question of the relation between film and computer games that was brought up by Ebert, became back then, in the last decade of the 20th century, one of the most widely discussed issues also in the circles of the researchers on games (becoming the basis for a long and loud but also mythologized dispute between narratology and experts on ludics), as a result of the discovery and spread of the CD-ROM (later on DVD-ROM) technology, and later also the improvements in the definition and flow of film sequences that are introduced into the structure of games. Many researchers were not convinced that the opposition of watching and playing (a film vs. interactive experience) could be overcome, and some of the games or at least their fragments (cut scenes) were considered as examples of unjustified interferences of film into the realm of the games, inclusions that interfere with the

experience of playing¹⁹. Such a perspective – similarly to the analogical viewpoints in the world of cinematography that I have already discussed – attempts to maintain clear and impervious borders between film and game, between the experience of watching and playing²⁰.

However, contrary to the above concept and following Kevin Veale²¹, I will claim, as he did, that the opposition of cinema and computer games cannot be reduced to contrasting passive reception (watching) and active participation (playing); and that it is an opposition that arbitrarily separates these two worlds of audiovisual phenomena. Veale also draws attention to the fact that in both cases we are faced with the recipients' engagement, however, it is carried out differently in each case. Both the technological changes that take place in these two areas and the poetics, stylistics and concepts of the created works result in their reciprocal impact that allow common areas to emerge, where films and games converge and interpenetrate, as a result of which the category of interactive cinema is no longer an oxymoron, but becomes an appropriate notion describing the phenomena which emerge from this dialogue. Veale recalls a number of works which, in his understanding, are good representatives of the hybrid area in which **games become films**, without ceasing to engage the viewers in the activities that are relevant for the course of the events presented on screen and influencing their development, whereas **films take on the form of play** which engages the recipients in the activities that are part of the game, at the same time not ceasing to be "objects" designed to be watched. These works, as Veale stresses, promote experiences that cannot be adequately analysed and described within one research context: that of games or cinema. The way of telling a story which is characteristic for such works – certain order that involves elements of both cinema and game provokes transdisciplinary analysis and reflection. Thus, Veale's standpoint goes beyond the institutional perspective on games, focusing on the paradigm of the cinema-game, within which interactivity is

¹⁹ See C. Pearce, *Toward a Game Theory of Game*, in: *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. – London, England 2004, pp. 143-153.

²⁰ Hard contemporary version of concepts that contrast the world of cinema and computer games are more frequently met in the circles of cinema researchers, although they are often accompanied by the awareness of the irreversibility of the changes that touched the whole world of audiovisual culture than they are among the games researchers. The latter ones are generally more open to the processes of interpenetration of both the cinema and games, which is however often accompanied by the opinion that cinema is no longer the most important system of contemporary culture, giving way to games.

²¹ K. Veale, "Interactive Cinema" *Is an Oxymoron, but May Not Always Be*, „Game Studies. The International Journal of Computer Game Research” Volume 12 Issue 1, September 2012.

a real feature of the works that are created and experienced. However, in the context of the institutional paradigm of the cinema governed by the rules of the film industry, such works, like all other experiments with interactivity, are relegated to the margins of film practice. Marginalised and sent to the periphery, they only survive thanks to the deep and constantly advancing transformations of the cultural context in which interactivity becomes one of a few basic principles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ebert Roger, *Dim Future for Interactive Film*, www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/dim-future-for-interactive-film (10.07.2014).

Ebert Roger, *Video Games Can Never Be Art*, www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/video-games-can-never-be-art.

Perron Bernard (2003) *From Gamers to Players and Gameplayers: The Example of Interactive Movies*, in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. B. Perron, M.J.P. Wolf, New York: Routledge.

Hoberman James (2012) *Film after Film. Or, What Became of 21st-Century Cinema?*, London: Verso.

Kac Eduardo (2005) *Telepresence & Bio Art. Networking Humans, Rabbits & Robots*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Kluszczyński Ryszard W. (2010) *Strategies of interactive art*, "Journal of Aesthetics & Culture", vol. 2, www.aestheticsandculture.net/index.php/jac/article/view/5525.

McKernan Brian (2005) *Digital Cinema. The Revolution in Cinematography, Postproduction, and Distribution*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Quart Allisa (2005) *Networked*, „Film Comment” July-August, No. 4.

Pearce Celia (2004) *Toward a Game Theory of Game*, in *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, Cambridge Mass. – London, England: The MIT Press.

Rombes Nicolas (2009) *Cinema in the Digital Age*, London & New York: Wallflower Press.

Rose Frank (2011) *The Art of Immersion. How the digital generation is remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the way we tell stories*, New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Tryon Chuck (2009) *Reinventing Cinema. Movies in the Age of Media Convergence*, New Brunswick – New Jersey – London: Rutgers University Press.

Veale Kevin (2012) "Interactive Cinema" Is an Oxymoron, but May Not Always Be, „Game Studies. The International Journal of Computer Game Research", vol. 12, issue 1.

Zimmerman Eric (2004) *Narrative, Interactivity, Play, and Games: Four Naughty Concepts in Need of Discipline*, in *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, Cambridge Mass. – London, England: The MIT Press.

**FILM INTERAKTYWNY W INSTYTUCJONALNYM PARADYGMACIE KINA
(streszczenie)**

W artykule rozważam sytuację interaktywności i filmu interaktywnego w kontekście instytucjonalnym kina, wyznaczanym przez reguły przemysłu kinematograficznego. Zwracam uwagę na to, że pomimo postępującej cyfryzacji wszystkich obszarów produkcji, dystrybucji i odbioru filmów, interaktywność jest postrzegana jako właściwość niefilmowa i w konsekwencji marginalizowana. Kinematografia otwiera się szeroko na wszystkie innowacje technologiczne, które nie naruszają standardowego modelu doświadczenia filmowego. Interaktywność uznawana jest tu za właściwość gier a nie kina. Film interaktywny, wyrzucany na peryferie instytucjonalnego systemu kina, staje się częścią awangardy audiowizualnej, wspólnej części przestrzeni instytucjonalnych kina i sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: kino cyfrowe – film interaktywny – gra komputerowa – kultura partycypacyjna – hybrydyczność.

Grzegorz Dziamski

Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań
dziamski@amu.edu.pl

POLISH FILES IN THE LOMHOLT ARCHIVE OF MAIL ART

Abstract: This text is devoted to the archives of mail art compiled by the artists and the participants of the mail art network. Mail art was one the most representative artistic phenomena of the 1970s along with feminist art, performance, video art and land art. Today, all those phenomena find their place in the official art world except for mail art, which still remains outside the official institutions of the art world, in private collections. In recent years, most of those collections have been systematized and presented to the public. We should therefore attempt to establish the artistic significance and value of those private archives. This text seeks to contribute to this project, describing in details the Polish section of the archive compiled by the Danish artist Niels Lomholt.

Keywords: mail art – net – network – archive – art documentation – post-conceptual understanding of art – alternative scene – databases – computer culture – narratives.

In 2010, the Danish artist Niels Lomholt published a book in which he presented the documentation of his archive, compiled between 1971 and 1985.¹ Several years earlier, the Belgian artist Jan van Geluwe² donated part of his archive to the Osthaus-Museum in Hagen. Lomholt and Geluwe represent the second wave of artists creating mail art, which appeared in the early 1970s and developed a mail art network on the fringes of the art world. The art scene was not as globalized then as it is today. It was mail art that seemed to announce a transnational, planetary community of artists who would be able to communicate with each other without the mediation of

¹ *Lomholt Mail Art Archive, Fotowerke and Video Works* (eds. N. Lomholt, L. Aagaard Denhart), Denmark 2010.

² *Das Archive des Museum of Museums* (eds. J. van Geluwe, M. Fehr), Hagen 1999.

official artistic institutions, to undertake and implement joint projects, to organize exhibitions, to publish art magazines and books. The mail network created by artists was not subject to anyone's control. It resisted centralization and hierarchy. It was to remain open, ready to accept anyone who wanted to join in. It was transnational and except for a few conditions on mail art exhibitions (no jury, no fees, each received item should be exhibited, and each participant should get a catalogue) it was not subject to any restrictions. These rules were not new; they were rooted in the principles established by Ray Johnson (1927-1995) at the New York Correspondence School in the 1960s.

More than forty years have passed since then, and today we are faced with the question of what to do with the archives assembled over the years. Practically every mail artist has his own archive. These represent individual views on art, and personal histories of art inspired by home mailboxes. What do they contribute to our thinking about art and what is their importance? Matt Ferranto wanted to find the answers to these questions and he sent a letter with the list of questions to 150 owners of mail art archives. He received 31 responses. They show that the vast majority of the archive owners are artists or active participants in the art mail network. The archives were mostly started in the 1970s and 1980s; only a few are older and come from the 1960. They contain between five and twenty thousand objects (memorabilia, as they are called by Klaus Groh), though there are some which have sixty thousand (Vittore Barroni) or more items. The number of objects is growing rapidly, at a rate of 200-800 per year. Some archives are profiled as collections of art magazines, visual and sound poetry, collages, drawings, conceptual art of the 1960s, minimalist Fluxus art, but usually they contain everything from catalogues to posters. Many archives are only basically structured, based on the alphabetic order of the artists' names, or geographical and chronological order. The archives are stored in attics or cellars, in boxes or on shelves. They are usually not available for viewing, though sometimes one can get permission to see them following an appointment with the archive's owner. Many archive owners dream of selling or donating their archives to museums.³

Let us now move to the more important issue – the content of the archives. We have an excellent opportunity to explore it by looking at the documents gathered in the Polish section of Niels Lomholt's archive.

³ M. Ferranto, *International Mail Art. Archives*, The Museum in Mailbox, 2000.

KOSTOŁOWSKI AND THE NET

Niels Lomholt established contact with Polish artists in 1972. In the same year he received two small parcels from Poland, both from Łódź, from Adres Gallery founded and run by Ewa Partum. The first one contained a thin, Polish-English book by Andrzej Kostołowski "Theses on Art 1 – 17", and the other one a catalogue of the work performed by three artists – Włodzimierz Borowski, Jan Świdziński and Krzysztof Wodiczka.

The author of the theses on art, Andrzej Kostołowski, was a respected critic of the middle-aged generation who had supported modern art in Poland. In the early 1970s, he was fascinated with conceptual art and published several articles on it. In 1970, he began to write down his thoughts on art in the form of theses for discussion. In this way he crossed the thin line separating art from art criticism and came closer to the extreme pole of conceptual art, as it was understood at that time in Poland, to art as reflection on art. In one of his theses, (thesis XI), Kostołowski wonders whether it is possible to practise the art of art theory. He wonders whether his work, growing out of so much enthusiasm, can be considered art? Over the next few years Kostołowski added subsequent theses on art, ending up with 33 of them.

In 1971, Kostołowski teamed up with Jarosław Kozłowski to publish *The Net Manifesto*, laying down the principles of artists' cooperation. The Net, as the authors of the manifesto defined it, is "a) extra-institutional, b) it consists of private homes, artists' studios and other places where art proposals emerge, c) the proposals are intended for those interested, d) they are accompanied by publications of any form (manuscripts, typescripts, prints, tapes, films, slides, photographs, leaflets, etc), e) the Net has no central point and is not coordinated, f) the Net has nodes in various towns and countries, g) the nodes are in contact with one another through exchange of correspondence, projects, notations and other forms of expression, whose exchange enables their parallel presentation at all the nodes, h) the idea of the Net is not copyrighted; when the Net comes into being, the idea no longer has an author, i) the Net may be used and duplicated at will."⁴ The Net Manifesto was sent to 300 recipients from all over the world as an invitation to participate in the new network.

The manifesto laid the foundations for the functioning of all the independent galleries in Poland in the 1970s; all of them, including Adres gallery and Akumulatory 2 gallery, established in Poznań by Jarosław Kozłowski, inspired by the idea of the Net, wanted to function as active nodes of the international Net.

⁴ Typescript (1971). Quoted after: *Conceptual Reflection*, in: *Polish Art Experience of Discourse: 1965-1975* (eds. P. Polit, P. Woźniakiewicz), Warsaw 2000, p. 123.

The work of the three artists, Borowski, Świdziński, Wodiczko is a record of their common performance staged in Łódź in April 1972. It is one of the most interesting works of Polish conceptual art, in the style of Dan Graham, but rarely remembered – its documentation not even included in the exhibitions “Conceptual Reflection in the Polish Art (Warsaw 2000) and “Conceptualism. The photographic medium” (Łódź 2010). The work is untitled – it is a kind of rehearsal, as it comes from the period when many artists, not only in Poland, believed that there should be no artworks in conceptual art. The artists formed an equilateral triangle, each representing one of its vertices, and then photographed one another: Borowski took a photo of Wodiczko, Wodiczko of Świdziński and Świdziński of Borowski. Then they formed a slightly larger equilateral triangle and again took photos of one another. They repeated this seven times, each time increasing the distance between the vertices of the triangle until the photographed figures disappeared from the view of the cameras.

GAJEWSKI AND THE REMONT GALLERY

After that, Niels Lomholt received more mail from Poland, including a charming book by Henryk Gajewski entitled “Eliza Gajewski” and a publication from the Workshop of Film Form. Gajewski became father of Eliza in 1974, and on this occasion he published a book with marked spaces for the photos to be taken on the successive birthdays of his daughter until her adulthood, i.e. until 1992. The spaces designated for the photos were already captioned, all that needed to be done was to take the pictures at the right time and place, and send them to the holders of the book, asking them to paste the photos into the appropriate spaces. The book was to develop with the artist’s daughter growing up. Unfortunately, Gajewski’s family situation became unexpectedly complicated and the artist sent out only the first two photographs of his daughter. Gajewski was very active in the second half of the 1970s. He ran the Remont Gallery at the student club Riviera-Remont. He organized large international conferences on contextual art (*Art as Activity in the Context of Reality*, 1977), performance art (International Artists Meeting – *I am*, 1978), art books (*Another Book for Your Child*, 1979), alternative education (*Child as an Author*, 1981). Gajewski also organized concerts, produced cassettes with punk music and the fanzine “PostRemont” (1980) addressed to young audiences. Later, after he left Poland, he was active in networking, i.e. connecting people through disinterested exchange with the use of the mail art network.

The publication of the Workshop of Film Form contained information about the Polish independent cinema, i.e. the films by Wojciech Bruszewski, Józef Robakowski or Ryszard Waśko.

SOSNOWSKI AND THE WSPÓŁCZESNA GALLERY

In 1975, Zdzisław Sosnowski from the Współczesna gallery (Contemporary Art Gallery) based in Warsaw established contact with Lomholt. Sosnowski had been a co-founder of the Gallery of Current Art (Wrocław, 1972-1974), before he moved to Warsaw where he ran the Współczesna Gallery (1974-1977), and later the Studio Gallery (1978-1981). He was interested in exchanging information with Lomholt, as his gallery published a newspaper on contemporary art. Sosnowski and slightly younger Gajewski were fascinated with Klaus Groh, who in 1972 had initiated the IAC-Info – a cheap, photocopied information leaflet on artistic events edited by the International Artists' Cooperation, i.e. by artists themselves. Gajewski published *Art Texts*, a series of books on contemporary art and culture by well-known artists and critics: Jan Świdziński, Zbigniew Dłubak (in 1977), Jan S. Wojciechowski, Joseph Kosuth (in 1978), while Sosnowski published a magazine modeled on the early "Flash Art" of Giancarlo Politi.

The Współczesna Gallery promoted post-conceptual art making use of the means of mechanical recording, i.e. photography and film. In September 1975, the gallery organized the exhibition entitled "Aspects of Contemporary Polish Art", featuring the works of the artists collaborating with it: Jan Berdyszak, Wojciech Bruszewski, Zbigniew Dłubak, Janusz Haka, Andrzej Lachowicz, Natalia LL, Roman Opałka, Andrzej Partum, Józef Robakowski, Kajetan Sosnowski, Zdzisław Sosnowski, Ryszard Waśko, Ryszard Winiarski, and Jan S. Wojciechowski. It was a fairly extensive representation of Polish neo-avantgarde art. At this exhibition Sosnowski showed his first works from the "Goalkeeper" cycle (1975-1977). It was designed as a photo-film story about an idol of mass culture, combining the features of a football player, singer and actor. Sosnowski, as the goalkeeper, always wearing a white suit, dark hat, tinted glasses and with a cigar in his mouth, was shown defending a goal or desperately fighting for the ball with a young woman attacking him. The juxtaposition of the shots of the football pitch with the shots of the goalkeeper, women's legs, high heels ramming into the body of the man, made for a somewhat absurdly sexualized image of the football idol – absurd if we remember that Sosnowski's inspiration stemmed from the cult

surrounding the Polish national football team which won the third place in the world championship in Germany in 1974.

The “Goalkeeper” became the best-known work by Sosnowski. The artist returned to his hero some years later and the Poznań gallery Piekary published a beautiful book “Goalkeeper Forever” (2009). The artist once again played the role of the goalkeeper, fighting in the field and in his private life. This time, the photographs were accompanied by a quite complex and more personal story of a goalkeeper who left Poland in his thirties, like Sosnowski, to play in West European clubs.⁵

Anna Kutera, Romuald Kutera and Lech Mrożek, the young artists forming the Wrocław-based Gallery of Recent Art sent their catalogues to Lomholt in 1975. They also wanted to be a node of the international artistic exchange network.

PETASZ AND “COMMONPRESS”

The latter part of the 1970s saw intensive correspondence between Andrzej Partum, Andrzej Wielgosz, Paweł Petasz and Lomholt. Partum sent up his manifestos: “Criticosystem of Art”, “Art Pro/la”, “Animal Manifesto”, “Manifesto of Insolent Art”. These texts required contextualization, as e.g. “Animal Manifesto” was printed on the poster of the 18th Meeting of Artists, Scientists and Art Theorists held in Osieki in 1980. Another example of incisive contextualization was the banner hung over Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw, between the University and the Academy of Fine Arts, with the words “Milczenie awangardowe” (Vanguard Silence, 1974). Wielgosz promoted the idea of drawing activity, while Petasz specialized in rubber stamp art. In 1978, using rubber stamps and a toy printing press, he published the book “Ten Theses. Art Theory Series”. Petasz’s publication was the opposite of Kostołowski’s book featuring modern print design; it was a coarse, hand-made *samizdat* in 50 copies. The publications differed not only visually but also substantively – the time of meta-artistic reflection was slowly becoming a thing of the past. Petasz wrote in a similar tone, but with greater distance and irony: “If art is a crown of the intellect, any theory or reflection is only possible to formulate in the language of art” (thesis 0), and a few pages later: “An ideal situation: everyone is an artist, everyone is

⁵ In the 1970s, Polish football players were permitted to join West European clubs only in their thirties.

a receiver” (thesis 9). And finally: “The general purpose of art is the development of the human being” (thesis 10).

Petasz was viewed as one of the creators of the new genre – rubberstamp art.⁶ He showed his stamp works at the Stempelplaats gallery in Amsterdam in 1978, but undoubtedly his greatest achievement was “Commonpress” – a magazine on mail art. Petasz was the initiator and editor of the first (untitled) issue published in December 1977, containing the works of 17 contributors. The second issue (“Open & Closed”, March 1978) featured 34 artists⁷, and the fourth one (“From Poetry to Poesy”, April 1978) – 39. By the end of 1984, “Commonpress” had ca. 50 issues, each one edited in a different place and by a different author.⁸

PIOTROWSKI (UKIYO) AND BLACK MARKET

In 1981, Lomholt received a set of old Łódź Kaliska catalogues and in 1982 the first self-published books by Zygmunt Piotrowski, who also signs his works as Ukiyo: *Dialectics Project* and *Art as Cognition*. The activities of Łódź Kaliska were directed against the pomposity of analytical art, against the endless analysis of the photographic medium. Instead of the analysis, the group proposed fun, pranks, jokes, a return to the crazy spirit of the Dada. Łódź Kaliska heralded the artistic climate of the 1980s. Piotrowski-Ukiyo referred to the tradition of theater, the spiritual and bodily exercises of Jerzy Grotowski and the wisdom of the Far East – on “How to Touch Nothing”. Art should be a tool for cognition, searching for some deeper world order. “All our philosophy has its origin in poetry,” claimed Piotrowski and this means that philosophy is another version of poetry and, therefore, there is no essential difference between art and theory. “To guard the self-identity of the human being; isn’t it the hidden matter of art? “In 1986, Piotrowski formed an international group of performers Black Market, which traveled around Europe, performing in different cities.

⁶ G. Perneczky, *The New Genre: Rubber Stamp Art*, in: *The Magazine Network. The Trends of Alternative Art in the Light of Their Periodicals 1968-1988*, Köln 1993.

⁷ The most funny piece of the second issue of “Commonpress” was work by Giulia Niccolai: “Marcel Duchamp has proven that there is no difference between open and closed.”

⁸ In 1984, Guy Bleus prepared a retrospective exhibition of Commonpress (1977-1984) – C.P. 56, Museum het Toreke, Tienen 1984.

WRAP-UP

Niels Lomholt's archives contain three types of documents:

- a) private correspondence from Polish artists, critics and art theorists, usually concerning artistic issues, the planned exhibition of Polish artists in Aarhus, Lomholt's visit to Poland, thanks and requests for books, catalogues, borrowing films for exhibitions, etc.
- b) invitations, catalogues, books, information leaflets and other prints published by galleries,
- c) art pieces.

This division appears obvious; the categories are art (point c), documentation of art (point b), and the non-artistic activities supporting art (point a). In many cases, however, it is not sustainable. The envelopes themselves are often artistic; the postage stamps, stickers, rubber stamps are combined with the rubber stamps and stickers made by the artists, their drawings, play on language, slogans, thus creating more or less interesting collages. The visual attractiveness of an envelope is enhanced if the artist reuses the envelope used previously by someone else, as was practised by Paweł Petasz and Tomasz Schulz. They would cross out the name of the previous addressee, write a new one and add new stamps, drawings and slogans to the envelope. Schulz called this "a round trip" – the same envelope travels from a sender to an addressee and after some time, it returns to the sender.

Visual attractiveness, however, is not an absolute indicator of art. An envelope can attract attention, it can be artsy, but it does not have to be art. Conceptualism made us sensitive to this difference, and mail art deepened it even further. Lomholt observes that mail art is easy: "You produce something, post it, and get a response."⁹ For him, mail art was never a new artistic movement, new "-ism", nor a new form of art, like happening, but a relatively cheap and convenient mode of communication and thus in extreme cases (a phone call) could do without any material objects. Objects only document the communication process, and therefore they are less important than the process itself, says Guy Bleus.¹⁰ Hence, we can say that in a way, all mail art objects are documentation of someone's communicative activity.

"For those who devote themselves to the production of art documentation rather than of artworks, art is identical to life, because life is essentially a pure activity that does not lead to any end result.", writes Boris Groys, going on to state that "Art becomes a life form, whereas the artwork becomes

⁹ N. Lomholt, *Gravity Takes the Last Man*, in: *Lomholt Mail Art Archive, Fotowerke and Video Works* (eds. N. Lomholt, L. Aagaard Denhart), Denmark 2010, p. 5.

¹⁰ G. Bleus, *Exploring Mail Art*, in: *C.P. 56, op. cit.*, p. 41.

non-art, a mere documentation of this life form.”¹¹ As in the case of Waław Ropiecki, “Through art to life.” Seen from this perspective, all the items collected in the Lomholt’s archive can be regarded as the documentation of one’s activity, one’s life form.

Lev Manovich compiles databases, i.e. contemporary archives of narratives and asks about the place and the role of these two opposing ways of organizing data and assigning meanings to them in today’s computer culture.¹² Do databases replace the old, respected narratives and become an inexhaustible source of new narratives? What narratives can be built based on Lomholt’s archive? Lomholt organized his mail art archive using the national, or actually state, key (this brings to mind Ko de Jonge’s question: what is the key to your art?). The exception is the United States, where he applied the media criterion, and the division into books, magazines, postcards, envelopes.¹³ Thus, he encouraged us to build national narratives. One of them could be the story of the Polish alternative scene, which developed its own information network, tried to join in the international debate on art, and to work out a new post-conceptual understanding of art.

Translated by Maria Śpik-Dziamska

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bleus Guy (1984) *Exploring Mail Art*, in: *C.P. 56*, Museum Het Tienen, Tienen: Stedelijk Museum Het Toreke.

Das Archive des Museum of Museums (1999) J. van Geluwe, M. Fehr, eds., Hagen.

Ferranto Matt (2000) *International Mail Art. Archives*. The Museum in Mailbox, http://www.spareroom.org/mailart/arch_ess.html

Groys Boris (2002) *Art in the Age of Biopolitics. From Artwork to Art Documentation*, in: *Documenta 11*, O. Enwezor, ed., Kassel: OstfildernRuit, Hatje Cantz.

Lomholt Mail Art Archive, Fotowerke and Video Works (2010) N. Lomholt, L. Aagaard Denhart eds., Denmark: Lomholt Formular Press.

¹¹ B. Groys, *Art in the Age of Biopolitics. From Artwork to Art Documentation*, in: *Documenta 11* (ed. O. Enwezor), Kassel 2002, p. 108.

¹² L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge Mass. 2001, p. 225 and next.

¹³ Lomholt delimited European countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, East Germany, West Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia – from non-European countries – USA, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Venezuela, Japan. The lack of Czechoslovakia and Hungary is a surprise.

Manovich Lev (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.

Perneczky Géza (1993) *The Magazine Network. The Trends of Alternative Art in the Light of Their Periodicals 1968-1988*, Köln.

Polit Paweł, Woźniakiewicz Piotr, eds. (2000) *Conceptual Reflection in Polish Art. Experience of Discourse: 1965-1975*, Warsaw: Center for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle.

POLSKIE DOKUMENTY W ARCHIWUM NIELSA LOMHOLTA (streszczenie)

Tekst dotyczy archiwów gromadzonych przez artystów mail artu i uczestników mail artowskiej sieci w latach 70. Mail art był zjawiskiem charakterystycznym dla sztuki lat 70., obok sztuki feministycznej, performance, sztuki video czy sztuki ziemi. O ile jednak wszystkie te zjawiska znalazły dzisiaj swoje miejsce w świecie sztuki, to mail art pozostał poza instytucjami świata sztuki, w rozlicznych archiwach, które są dzisiaj porządkowane i opracowywane. Jakie jest znaczenie i artystyczna wartość tych archiwów? Na to pytanie stara się odpowiedzieć ten tekst, przyglądając się polskiej części archiwum duńskiego artysty Nielsa Lomholta.

Słowa kluczowe: mail art – sieć – archiwum – dokumentacja – pokonceptualne dzieło sztuki – scena alternatywna – bazy danych – kultura komputera – narracje.

Ewa Kubiak
University of Łódź
lalibela@tlen.pl

CULTURAL METISSAGE – THE DESCRIPTIVE CONCEPT OF HYBRID PHENOMENA ON THE PERIPHERIES OF CULTURES

Abstract: The term “metissage” in its original meaning had racial character. Later, the term *estilo mestizo* came into use, describing Latin American art in the period of Spanish domination, which appeared on the peripheries of the modern world, and whose features were acknowledged to be a mixture of European and Native American influences, particularly in reference to the architectural sculpture of the Peruvian highlands. I believe there are more phenomena within colonial art which can be described as “cultural metissage”, not necessarily due to their stylistic, formal features. One of them is the long-lasting tradition of creating objects decorated with feathers, which is probably echoed in the modern times. Finally, the concept of metissage has been adapted by experts on French culture and used to describe the phenomena which are typical of liminal zones, with hybrid features. Thus the notion of “cultural metissage”, separated from its originally racial connotations, began to describe marginal phenomena, mixtures which occur on the peripheries of cultures, regardless of their location. Finally, “cultural metissage” is a term denoting a kind of reflection and consideration, rather than the formal features of culture and art.

Keywords: cultural metissage, Andean Baroque, *mestizo* style, hybridity of culture, feather art.

The term “metissage” was used for the first time in the Spanish and Portuguese languages in the times of conquest and colonisation, and it functioned in its original meaning as a word with racial overtones. It was the period in which the biological makeup of the new societies took shape. Genetic blending resulted in phenotypes with characteristic physical features (such as the shape of the nose, eyes, mouth, body outline, hair structure) and chromatic ones (skin colour), which were perceived as stigmatizing. The term “mestizo” (derived, like “metissage”, from Latin *mixtum* “mixing”), was used to describe

a genetic cross¹, initially the descendant of the white and American Indian parents, then generally, the descendant of any parents of different races. The Latin American society, formed as a result of the conquest and colonisation, had a diverse social structure and a strong caste hierarchy. One division line ran along the race categorisation². The whites played a dominating role (their position supported by the Spanish Crown), the mestizo society developed more slowly³, the Native Americans and Africans were marginalized⁴. With time, the mestizos became the basis of the American “ethnic landscape”. Legally, they had the same position as the creoles, which was not, however, reflected in everyday life. Since the middle of the 16th century, their number grew significantly, but their reputation considerably worsened; they were commonly regarded as morally degenerate and inclined to commit offences.⁵ Various “ethnic types” became models for *casta* painting, which appeared in the early 18th century and became extremely popular during the reign of Charles III (1759-1788). Artists painted whole series of little genre scenes, depicting not only the skin colour, but also the typical elements of the outfit worn by the representatives of the particular castes as well as the character traits attributed to them. Although the paintings were usually anonymous, some of them were created by famous painters, such as Miguel Cabrera from

¹ F. Laplantine, A. Nauss, *Le Métissage. Una exposé pour comprendre. Un essai pour réfléchir*, [Ré]édition, Paris 2011, p. 7; the authors write about the “etymological fantasies” about the word of “métissage”, which are very interesting in the French language. The word “tissage” means weaving, thus intertwining and mixing. A kind of linguistic game consisted in placing “métissage” on the cover of their next book as two words: “métis” and “sage”. The words meant “mestizo” and “wise” (probably as a descendant of two races); this graphic form, a wordplay, aimed at changing the pejorative overtones of the term; F. Laplantine, A. Nauss, *Le Métissage. De Arcimboldo à Zombi*, Fayard, Paris 2001; see also: S. Gruzinski, *Planète métisse ou comment parler du métissage*, in: *Planète métisse*, ed. S. Gruzinski, Musée du quai Branly, Paris 2008, p. 17.

² The most important position belonged to those who came from Europe (*peninsulares*), then the whites who were born in America (*criollos*). Each blood mixture had its name; Mestizos, descendants of mixed Spanish and Native American relationships, became a more and more numerous group; another group worth mentioning was *zambos* – descendants of Native Americans and black slaves, C. Mesa Gisbert, J. de Mesa, T. Gisbert, *Historia de Bolivia*, Editorial Gisbert y Cia S.A., La Paz 2012, p. 130; even these days, a notion of *zambo* functions in the culture of Peru.

³ M. Hernández González, *La sociedad de América española*, in: *Historia de América*, ed. J.B. Amores Carredano, Editorial Planeta S.A., Barcelona 2012, pp. 373-389, 403-405; M.C. García Bernal, M.I. Romero Soto, *Evolución de la población indiana*, in: *Historia de...*, pp. 336-337.

⁴ M. Hernández González, *La sociedad ...*, pp. 389-403.

⁵ S. Sebastián, *El barroco iberoamericano. Mensaje iconográfico*, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2007, p. 47.

Mexico or Manuel Samani from Quito. Such works were also sent to Europe as examples of American “curiosities/curiosité”.⁶



Fig. 1. *Las castas*, detail, *Tente en el aire con Mulata, No te entiendo*, 18th century, Anonymous, oil on canvas, 148x104 cm, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico (phot. E. Kubiak 2009)

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 46; on the subject of *casta* painting see also: I. Katzew, *Casta Painting: The imaging of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004; M.C. García Sáiz, *Miguel Cabrera*, in: *The Arts in Latin America 1492-1820*, ed. B.A. Huseman, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006, pp. 402-409; C. Bernard, *Regards d'antropogogue sur l'ambiguïté des mélanges*, in: *Planète métisse ...*, pp. 32-49.

ANDEAN BAROQUE AND ESTILO MESTIZO

The term *estilo mestizo* is the most important notion used in the literature of the subject for characterizing the different stylistics of the baroque art of South America. It appears most frequently in the description of forms and motifs of church decorations and the description of the painting of the upland Andean areas in the territory of the former Viceroyalty of Peru. It is where the most expressive images, manifestations of merging cultures, can be found. The term *estilo mestizo* was used for the first time by Ángel Guido in an academic work from 1936, published in 1945⁷, titled *Redescubrimiento de América en el arte*⁸. The notion arouses a lot of controversy, and the discussion (more or less intense) on the rationality of its use is still unsettled. In the initial chapter of his book, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque*, Gauvin Alexander Bailey presented the history of this debate, characterized the views of the main opponents (Graziano Gasparini, Ilmar Luks⁹) and supporters (José de Mesa, Teresa Gisbert¹⁰) of the concept, and described certain positions situated between these extremities. The author divided the discussion on the topic into three stages: early studies on the *mestizo* style in architecture (1925-1938), the great debate (1958-1980) and the studies “after the debate” (1980-2010)¹¹. Bailey believes that the term “*mestizo* style” is not the most accurate one, particularly in relation to his research subject, i.e.

⁷ Á. Guido, *Redescubrimiento de América en el arte*, Imprenta de la Universidad del litoral, Rosario 1940.

⁸ The first chapter of the work was translated into English and published with the commentary in 2010 in Great Britain by Luis Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup: Á. Guido, *América's Relation to Europe in the Arts*, trans. P. Blane, in: *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*, ed. L.P. Zamora, M. Kaup, Duke University Press, Durham–London 2010, pp. 183-197. Although the term *estilo mestizo* appears literally in 1936, its concept can be found earlier, in the work by Ángel Guido from 1925 (Á. Guido, *Fusión hispano-indígena en la arquitectura colonial*, Editorial „La Casa del Libro”, Rosario 1925), according to the interpretation of both G.A. Bailey and Ramón Gutiérrez: G.A. Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque. Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru*, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana 2010, p. 16; R. Gutiérrez, *Mestizo*, in: *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Art*, ed. J. Turner, Macmillan Reference Limited-Grove's Dictionaries, Inc., London–New York 2000, p. 430.

⁹ G. Gasparini, *Análisis crítico de las definiciones de „arquitectura popular” y „arquitectura mestiza”*, „Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas e Estéticas”, 1965, no. 3, pp. 51-66; I. Luks, *Tipología de la escultura decorativa hispánica en la arquitectura andina del siglo XVIII*, *Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas 1980*.

¹⁰ J. de Mesa, T. Gisbert, *Determinantes del llamado estilo mestizo: Breves consideraciones sobre el termino*. „Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas e Estéticas”, 1968, no. 10, pp. 93-119.

¹¹ G.A. Bailey, *The Andean ...*, pp. 15-43.

architectural decoration in the region of Callao, in Arequipa, in Caylloma and Cotahuasi or in La Paz and Alto Perú. The author proposes his own term, namely “Andean hybrid baroque”, considering it to be more appropriate (as a tool of historical research) than wide-ranging *estilo mestizo*. The term specifies the time period (Baroque), geographical boundaries (the Andean region) and the character of the forms (hybrid)¹². However, I believe that it is not necessary to specify the style of each region (including this one) separately; the term has not gained a wide acceptance in the academic community. A similar repertoire of forms of hybrid character can be also found in other Latin American areas, e.g. in some regions of New Spain, the current Mexico.

At this point it should be remembered that the “hybrid” character of the American baroque art as a distinctive feature had already been noted by literary theorists¹³. Three researchers, José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier and Severo Sarduy, began to rehabilitate the Latin American baroque literature, which had been depreciated in the 1940s, mainly owing to Alfonso Reyes, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Maraiano Picón Salas¹⁴. The concept of diverse and hybrid baroque art of the

New World was rehabilitated between the late 1950s and the 1970s. Roberto González Echevarría wrote that the Baroque is an exceptional period in Latin America’s sensitivity; thanks to its cultural and geographical spreading it included America in its sphere of influence as one of its important and

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2. Bailey refers here to the concept presented by Pablo Macera in 1973 (rather in 1993, when his work on wall painting was published, although Macera declares in the introduction that he wrote it in 1973, mentioning further problems with its publication, “resistance, hostility, sabotage and blocking”/“resistencias, enemistades, sabotajes y bloques”./ P. Macera, *La pintura mural andina, siglos XVI-XIX*, Editorial Milla Batres, Lima 1993, p. 1. In the book, the author introduces a term “cultura andina colonial”, determined, to his mind, within the area and time limits; *ibid.*, p. 59.

¹³ An important article, summarising the issue: C.A. Salgado, *Hybridity in New World Baroque Theory*, „The Journal of American Folklore”, 1999, vol. 112, no. 445, pp. 316-331.

¹⁴ The authors should be counted among philologists (A. Reyes, *Letras de la Nueva España*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 1948; P. Henríquez Ureña, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-Massachusetts 1945; M. Picón-Salas, *De la conquista a la independencia*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 1944), contrary to defenders of artistic values of American baroque culture, who were mainly poets, writers and essayists, not having classical education, but rather “eclectic” one (C.A. Salgado, *Hybridity...*, p. 320); their most significant works associated with the topic: J. Lezama Lima, *La expresión americana*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México 1957; A. Carpentier, *Tientos, diferencias y otros ensayos*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México 1964; S. Sarduy, *Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires 1987.

original elements¹⁵. Interestingly, the uniqueness of the Latin American baroque was much sooner accepted in the fine arts, which appreciated individuality of forms, and literary theorists drew on the works by the art historians – Manuel Toussaint, George Kubler, and particularly Pál Kelemen. Both Lezama Lima and Carpentier are fascinated by the space of the colonial cities, which became the zone where European architecture encountered creole literature and mestizo craft, the sphere of multicolour public performance – bilingual religious arts, triumphal arches decorated with the motifs from Nahua, processions and masquerades with the use of traditional Native American or African musical instruments and dances – in the highly

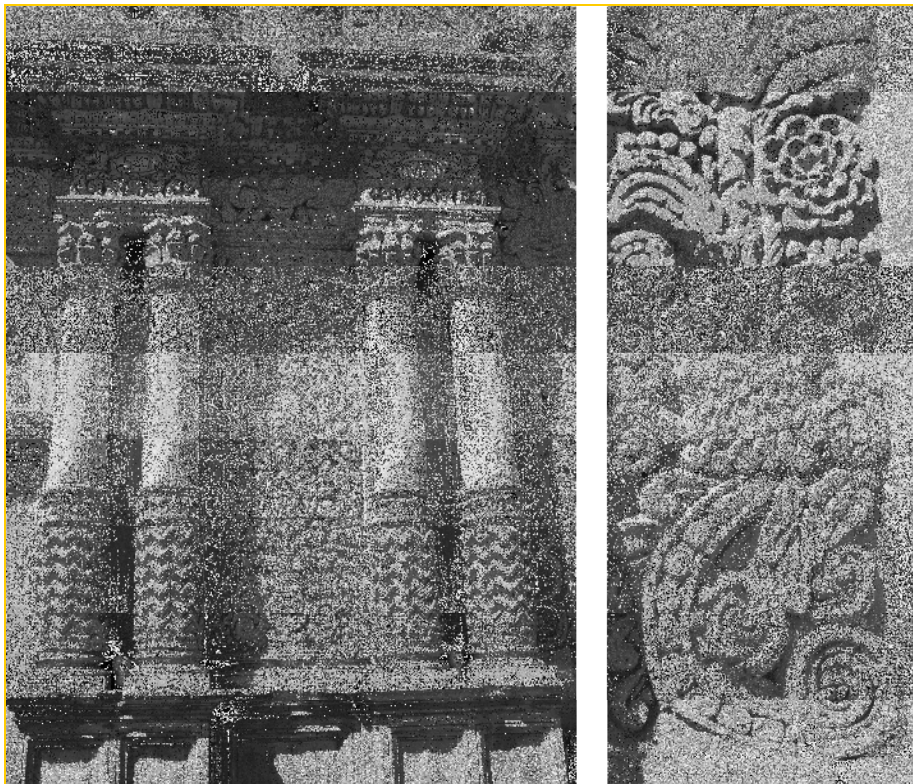


Fig. 2. *Jesuit Church of Arequipa*, detail of facade, 1698, Peru
(phot. E. Kubiak 2010)

¹⁵ R. González Echevarría, *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literature*, Duke University Press, Durham 1993, p. 198.

ceremonial society of the Viceroyalty¹⁶. Prominent examples of “estilo mestizo” are the decorations on the façade of the Jesuit church in Arequipa and Santo Domingo in La Paz or the cathedral church in Puno. The motifs on the church façades of the Peruvian *Altiplano* include maize, cactuses, *sanacciao* flowers; the portal of the Puno cathedral features stylized reed mace, *cantuta* flowers and local flowers known as *misicu*, *panti-panti* and *pinagua*.¹⁷

Even in the context of South American fine arts, the notion of the *mestizo* style begins to exceed the limits of literally understood metissage. The analyses of the sculptures by Aleijadinho (Antônio Francisco Lisboa, a Brazilian artist from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries) not only emphasizes the regional features of his art, which are considered by researchers to be unique and national, but also contend that they are a manifestation of the *mestizo* style. This opinion is represented, among others, by Lutuf Isaias Mucci, who attempted to use the term to define the specificity of Aleijadinho’s art in the context of the mixture of European and African arts set in the Brazilian reality¹⁸.

“FEATHER ART” AS A MANIFESTATION OF CULTURAL METISSAGE

One of the important techniques in Mexico, adapted from Aztec art, has been “feather art”. Creating feather mosaics was laborious and costly, and it required significant skill. Aztec royal houses had special aviaries with exotic birds, whose feathers were acquired for various artistic productions. The art of creating from feathers is described in the *nahua* language as *amanteca*, after Amantla (currently part of Mexico City), a settlement neighbouring Tenochtitlan, which was inhabited by numerous craftsmen-artists who practised this craft. In his work known as “Florentine Codex” (from the place where it is pre-served), the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún illustrated and de-scribed the work of the Mexican artists who specialized in feather art.¹⁹

¹⁶ C.A. Salgado, *Hybridity...*, p. 320.

¹⁷ S. Sebastián, *El barroco iberoamericano. Mensaje iconográfico*, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2007, p. 53.

¹⁸ Lutuf Isaias Mucci held a lecture on the issue, *O Aleijadinho, mestiço barroco*, during the congress in 2006 (IV Congreso Internacional de Barroco Iberoamericano), which took place in Brazil, in Ouro Preto in November 2006.

¹⁹ G.A. Bailey, *Art of Colonial America*, Phaidon, New York 2005, p. 102.

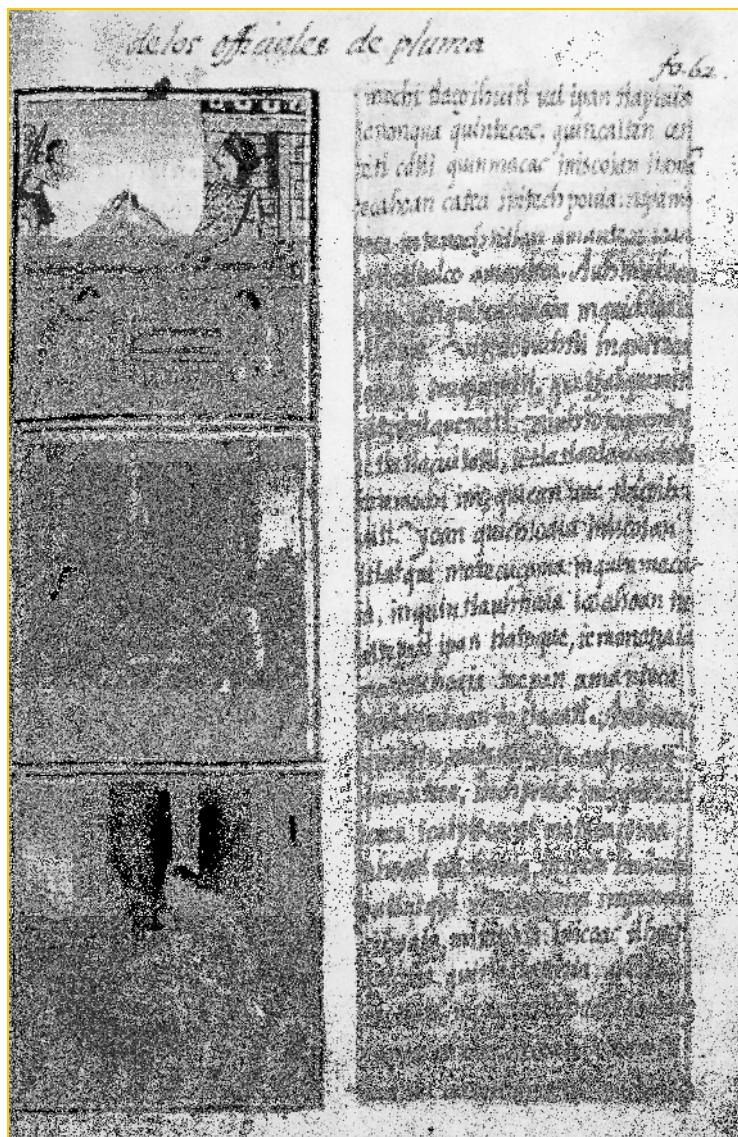


Fig. 3. Amantecas, „Codex Florentino”, IX-20, folio 62,
 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana

In the pre-Columbian period, feathers had great value; functioning as coins, they could be used for paying a ransom or sacrificed. Fifty four pages of *Matricula de Tributos* in “Codex Mendoza” from ca. 1540 contain a “de-

scription” of the payments, mostly in the form of feathers, made by 370 tribute-payers.²⁰

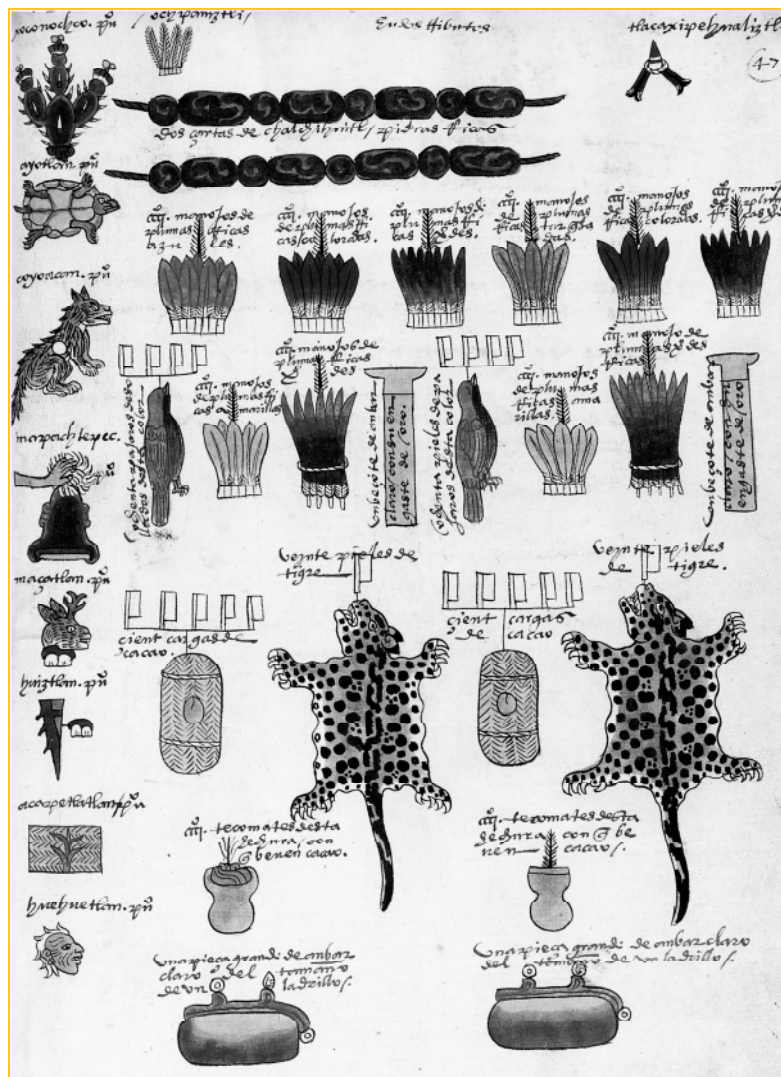


Fig. 4. Feathers as a part of tribute, „Codex Mendoza”, folio 47, ca. 1540, University of Oxford, Bodleian Library

²⁰ P. Mongne, *L’art de la plumasserie*, in: *Le triptyque aztèque de la Crucifixion*, ed. C. Bor, G. Rudolf, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris 2004, p. 59.

After the arrival of the Spaniards, works made of feathers entered the orbit of the European world. Gospel preachers made use of the skills of the feather artists (*amantecas*) and commissioned them to create religious representations, using European graphic works as models for their composition. Liturgical vestments were also decorated with feathers. In the colonial period, feather art centres developed in the areas where the tradition had existed before, i.e. in Mexico City, in Patzcuaro (Michoacán), in Puebla and in Tlaxcala. The mosaics were also admired by chroniclers; they were mentioned by Bernal Diez del Castillo, Pedro Martir de Angleria, Bartolome de las Casas, Francisco de Gomara.²¹ Some of these objects were sent as gifts to Europe; there, they were added to the collections belonging to famous families, such as the Medicis or the Habsburgs; today they can be admired at Palazzo Pitti in Florence or in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Even the Chinese Wanli Emperor, ruling at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, received a feather mosaic as a gift; according to Gauvin Alexander Bailey, he probably preferred “this delicate art to the crude oil painting”, which most of the Europeans brought to China.²² In Europe, the interest in feather products increased along with the fashion for creating Cabinets of Curiosities. Apart from ostrich eggs, corals and other natural wonders, they also contained feather mosaics. The objects brought from Mexico compelled the admiration of Renaissance collectors, including the popes and prelates of the Roman Catholic Church. Amateurs mistook them for paintings, deluded by the natural reflections on the feathers of tropical birds. In Rome, as in the whole of Italy, scholars and collectors remained delighted by this perfect manifestation of the natural world. Lorenzo de Anania devoted a great passage of his “*Fabrica del mondo overo kosmografia divisa In Quatro trattati*” (Venecia, 1576 and 1582) to feather mosaics.²³ A Mexican feather mosaic was also described by a Bologna naturalist, Ulises Aldrovandi, in his *Ornithologiae*, where he mentions that cardinal Paleotti had “a well-made Saint Jerome” in his collection in Bologna and he persisted in admiring the work.²⁴ In the 17th century, feather mosaics exerted greater fascination in Europe than in the New World itself. A New Spanish treaty on painting, which is actually (as established by Paula Mues Ortis) a translation of an Italian version of the work by the Jesuit Francesco Lana, “*L’Arte Maestra sopra l’arte della Pittura*.”

²¹ M. Martínez del Río de Redo, *La plumaria virreinal*, in: *El arte plumaria en México*, ed. T. Castelló Yturibe, Fomento Cultural Banamex, México 1993, pp. 104-110.

²² G.A. Bailey, *Art of ...*, p. 103.

²³ S. Gruzinski, *El pensamiento mestizo. Cultura amerindia y civilización del Renacimiento*, Barcelona-Buenos Aires-México 2007, p. 214.

²⁴ A. Russo, *Arte plumaria del Messico colonial del XVI secolo. L'incontro di due mondi artistic*, tesis doctoral, dact., Universidad de Bolonia 1996, pp. 131-132.



Fig. 5. *Cristo Salvador*, 16th century, feather mosaic, Museo del Virreinato, Tepotzotlan, Mexico (phot. E. Kubiak 2009)

Mostrando il modo di perfetterla, con varle inventioni, e regole pratiche appartenenti á questa materia” from 1670, only mentions “Pintura de Plumas de Nuestras Indias” among other techniques of painting,²⁵ while the Italian original devotes a whole paragraph to feather mosaics. Francesco Lana attributes the vividness of their colours to the physical structure of the feathers, which are a good “medium” for producing air and colour effects,

²⁵ *El arte Maestra – traducción novohispana de un tratado pictórico italiano*, ed. P. Mues Orts, Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Villa de Guadalupe 2006, p. 109.

while their own natural texture gives specific light reflections.²⁶ Iconographically and functionally, these objects were deeply embedded in the world of European Catholicism, yet the technique was thoroughly indigenous. The representation of “Salvador Mundi” from the Museo Nacional del Virreinato in Tepotzotlán, being one of the oldest known feather mosaics presenting a religious topic, dates back to the 16th century. It was probably based on a drawing. Interestingly, its border is decorated with letter-like forms, some of which can be identified as Cyrillic. The creator of the composition must have regarded these signs as senseless but decorative elements which he attempted to reproduce, apparently not very accurately.²⁷ Creating a mosaic took Native Americans about 5-6 months.

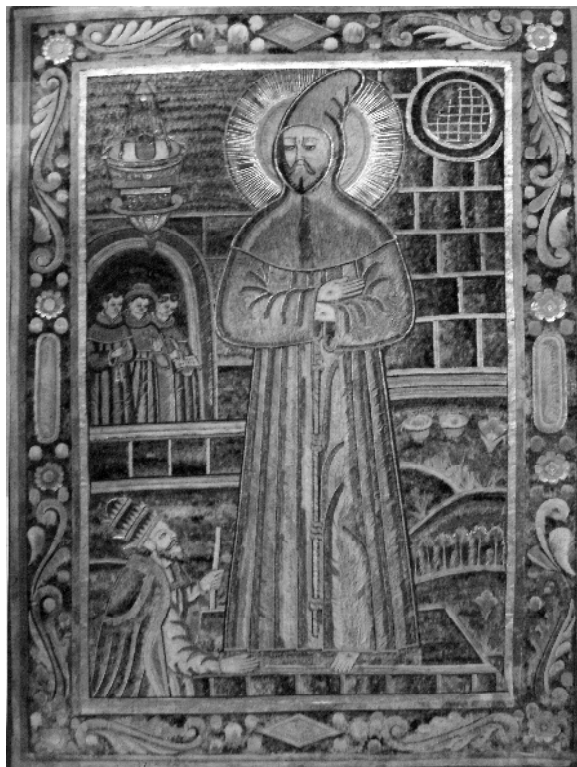


Fig. 6. *St. Francisco with the Pope Innocent 3^{ed}*, 17th century, feather mosaic on the copper sheet, Museo de Puebla, Mexico (phot. E. Kubiak, 2009)

²⁶ F. Lana, S.J., *L'Arte Maestra sopra l'arte della Pittura. Mostrando il modo di perfetterla, con varle inventioni, e regole pratiche appartenenti à questa materia*, in: *Prodromo Overo Saggio di alcune invention nuove premesso all'arte maestro*, Brescia, 1670, p. 164.

²⁷ M. Martínez del Río de Redo, *La plumaria...*, p. 125.



Fig. 7. *Virgen de Guadalupe*, Juan Carlos Ortiz Suárez, feather mosaic, 16x24 cm, Puebla (phot. E. Kubiak 2009)

Today, this technique has come back into favour. One of the people interested in “feather art” is Professor Juan Carlos Ortiz from Puebla in Mexico. At first, he created mainly theatre props, such as Montezuma’s Headdress, and other commercial objects made on request. However, since the beginning of the 1990s, he has been producing artistic items; calling on the colonial tradition, he has created the effigies of the Mother of God and of saints. Characteristically for feather mosaics from the 18th century, he paints the faces or cuts them out from lithographs and pastes them in. His works display high quality, they may be mistaken for having been created in the 18th or 19th centuries. In his work, the artist uses traditional *amate* paper, on which he draws a sketch. Then he pastes the feathers directly onto the paper using

hand-made glue. He uses only natural feathers acquired from tropical birds; “Following Aztec rulers”, he even has his own aviary.²⁸ Apart from J.C. Ortiz, there are about 50 *amantecas* in Mexico.²⁹ The story about the work of modern feather artists may be summed up with reference to examples from the world of fashion inspired by nature: the most spectacular instance is a bolero decorated with parrot feathers, presented in the Summer-Winter 1997 collection of Jean-Paul Gaultier.³⁰



Fig. 8. *The Bolero of parrot feathers*, Nelly Saunier, Jean-Paul Goutier, the collection spring-summer 1997, Paris (<http://e.toile.over-blog.com/35-index.html>)

²⁸ C. Mapelli Mozzi, *La plumaria en la época actual*, in: *El arte plumaria ...*, p. 226.

²⁹ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/03/24/cultura/a07n1cul>.

³⁰ S. Gruzinski, *Planète...*, p. 19.

CULTURAL METISSAGE AS A FORM OF REFLECTION

Both “hybridity of culture” and “cultural metissage” are terms which should not be treated literally or formally; these two concepts determine a way of thinking. The former appears most frequently in the context of modern art, referring to the enormous variety of the media allowing for its creation and existence. The methodology of its research has also changed: modern visual objects are studied not only from the traditional perspective of art history, but also in the context of cultural studies or post-colonial theories³¹. I believe that *mestizo* art is a method of establishing the mechanisms for creating forms which are typical of border zones, not the forms themselves. Cultural metissage may become a notion which will be understood in this way in other cultural zones, not only in Latin America. In French-language literature, the term *métissage* appears with increasing frequency in reference to the literature of the borderlands. Serge Gruzinski describes the process originally in the context of the Native culture in America, in relation to the globally viewed “renaissance civilization”³². However, he also understands the notion of “cultural metissage” much more widely. He was a curator of the exhibition titled “Planète métisse”, held at the Musée du quai Branly in 2008. The exhibition featured exhibits from the areas of various “cultural junctions”, and the topics of the essays included in the catalogue were impressively diverse: from the most obvious ones, discussing the Latin American culture, to those concerning modern European, American or Asian cinema.

In the introduction to their dictionary, *Métissages. De Arcimboldo à Zombi*³³, and through its wide and diverse choice of entries (which is evidenced by the title), François Laplantine and Alexis Nauss also confirm that the notion is perceived as something much wider than the phenomena resulting from the cultural Native and European mixture of Latin America. Other French publications on the topic include an earlier book by the authors, *Le Métissage*,³⁴ and two collections of articles – one edited by Dominique Berthet, and the other assembled by Roselyne de Villanova and Geneviève Vermès – in which some essays concern the notion in its cultural context, and others – the

³¹ S. Laube, *Hybridität*, in: *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begreifen*, ed. U. Pfisterer Verlag J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2011, p. 183. In its original sense, a term „hybris” meant violating divine or human order. Homer, for example, uses it in the meaning of “excess”; R. Rieks, *Hybris*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, Bd. 3, Schwabe & Co., Basel–Stuttgart 1974, p. 1234.

³² S. Gruzinski, *El pensamiento...*

³³ F. Laplantine, A. Nauss, *Le Métissage. De Arcimboldo...*

³⁴ One of numerous French publications on the topic is earlier book by both authors: F. Laplantine, A. Nauss, *Le Métissage. Una exposé...*

issues associated with art, architecture, aesthetics and art theory.³⁵ It is worth mentioning the notion of “creolisation”, which is used in similar context and appears in the abovementioned publications.³⁶

Today, we live in the reality of constant modifications, world junctions, exchanges. As Michel Foucault pointed out in his lecture from 1967, the crucial relationships in the near future (so in the early 21st century) would be spatial ones, since we live “in the times of simultaneity, the epoch of transfer and juxtaposition, the period of closeness and distance, approximation and dispersion”.³⁷ This mode of functioning favours interweaving, hybridisation, metissage. James Clifford claims that the presence of enormously diverse cultural forms as well as the great mobility of people, and consequently of the material world, has relativized the notion of exoticism. The phenomenon of hybridisation and metissage may be discussed in the context of the whole culture, not only the areas where different cultures and ethnic groups coexist.³⁸ It is particularly visible in the two spheres of culture and identity. We may observe the process of cultural metissage from the external perspective³⁹ and attempt to analyse the cultural forms – and the artistic ones as well – which undergo transformation. Dariusz Czaja, interpreting a vision of the world conjured by Clifford in his later book *Routes. Travel and*

³⁵ *Vers une esthétique du métissage?*, ed. D. Berthet L'Harmattan, Paris 2002; *Le métissage interculturel. Créativité dans les relations inégalitaires*, ed. R. de Villanova, G. Vermés, L'Harmattan, Paris 2005.

³⁶ On the topic see also: J. Bernabé, P. Chamoiseau, R. Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, Paris: Gallimard 1989; G. Sztabiński, *History, Contemporarism, Creolization*, „Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts”, 2002, no 4, pp. 72-76; a notion of “metissage” in “Dictionnaire des sciences humaines” (on-line edition) is treated as an equivalent of such terms as *hybridity* and *creolisation* used in English-language literature, [www.puf.com/Dictionnaire:Dictionnaire_des_sciences_humaines/M%C3%89TISSAGE].

³⁷ M. Foucault, *O innych przestrzeniach. Heterotopie*, transl. M. Żakowski, „Kultura Popularna” 2006, no. 2, p. 7.

³⁸ S. de Mojica, *Introducción. Cartografías culturales en debate: culturas híbridadas – no simultaneidad – modernidad periférica*, in: *Mapas culturales para América Latina. Culturas híbridadas – no simultaneidad – modernidad periférica*, ed. S. de Mojica, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá 2001, pp. 8-10, more about the notion itself: R.C.J. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge, London–New York 1995; N. Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2000, pp. 168-195; Hybridisation or hybridity appears also as an important notion in reflections on the post-colonialism: H. Bhabha, *Miejsca kultury*, transl. T. Dobrogoszcz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2010, pp. 48-51, 111-118; A. Loomba, *Kolonializm/postkolonializm*, transl. N. Bloch, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2011, pp. 183-193; R.C.J. Young, *Postkolonializm. Wprowadzenie*, transl. M. Król, Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2012, pp. 85-109.

³⁹ A. Hummel, A. Wądołowska, K. Wołoszczak, *Hybrydyzacja tożsamości i kultury*, in: *Dzieje kultury latynoamerykańskiej*, ed. M. F. Gawrycki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 460.

Translation in the Late Twentieth Century,⁴⁰ writes that the author “depicts the modern world in constant movement, in transfer, in permanent change of place, in never-ending oscillation of formerly alien worlds, in their collision and stumbling over each other, in their mutual distance and interweaving. He portrays modernity as a space of travelling and transferring cultural areas, travelling cultures”,⁴¹ in other words, he sees the world of omnipresent, constant metissage. It must be remembered, however, that not only the notion of space has been modified, but also the perception of time favours the phenomenon of metissage. It has nothing in common with modern or even contemporary understanding of time perceived as *continuitatem* (continuum); today we are dealing with permanent *simultatis* (simultaneity).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailey Gauvin Alexander (2005) *Art of Colonial America*, New York: Phaidon.
- Bailey Gauvin Alexander (2010) *The Andean Hybrid Baroque. Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Bernabé Jean, Chamoiseau Patrick, Confiant Raphaël (1989) *Éloge de la Créolité*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Bernard Carmen (2008) *Regards d'antropologue sur l'ambiguïté des mélanges*, in: S. Gruzinski ed., *Planète métisse*, Paris: Musée du quai Branly, pp. 32-49.
- Bhabha Homi (2010) *Miejsca kultury*, transl. T. Dobrogoszcz, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.
- Carpentier Alejo (1964) *Tientos, diferencias y otros ensayos*, México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Clifford James (1997) *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press.
- Czaja Dariusz (2013) *Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje*, in: D. Czaja ed., *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, pp. 7-26.
- El arte Maestra – traducción novohispana de un tratado pictórico italiano* (2006) ed. P. Mues Orts, Villa de Guadalupe: Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe.
- Faucault Michel (2006), *O innych przestrzeniach. Heterotopie*, transl. M. Żakowski, „Kultura Popularna”, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 7-14.
- García Bernal Manuela Cristina, Romero Soto María Isabel (2012) *Evolución de la población indiana*, in: J.B. Amores Carredano, ed., *Historia de América*, Barcelona: Editorial Planeta S.A., pp. 323-370.

⁴⁰ J. Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge–London 1997.

⁴¹ D. Czaja, *Nie-miejsca. Przybliżenia, rewizje*, in: *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2013, p. 9.

- García Sáiz María Concepción (2006) *Miguel Cabrera*, in: *The Arts in Latin America 1492-1820*, B. A. Huseman (ed.), Philadelphia Museum of Art, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 402-409.
- Gasparini Graziano (1965) *Análisis crítico de las definiciones de „arquitectura popular” y „arquitectura mestiza”*, „Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas e Estéticas”, no. 3, pp. 51-66.
- González Echevarría Roberto (1993) *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literature*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gruzinski Serge (2007) *El pensamiento mestizo. Cultura amerindia y civilización del Renacimiento*, Barcelona-Buenos Aires-México.
- Gruzinski Serge (2008) *Planète métisse ou comment parler du métissage*, in: *Planète métisse*, S. Gruzinski (ed), Musée du quai Branly, Paris 2008, pp. 16-25.
- Guido Ángel (1925) *Fusión hispano-indígena en la arquitectura colonial*, Rosario: Editorial „La Casa del Libro”.
- Guido Ángel (1940) *Redescubrimiento de América en el arte*, Rosario: Imprenta de la Universidad del litoral.
- Guido Ángel (2010) *America's Relation to Europe in the Arts*, in: L. Parkinson Zamora, M. Kaup, ed., *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*, transl. Patrick Blane, Durham-London: Duke University Press, pp. 183-197.
- Gutiérrez Ramón (2000) *Mestizo*, in: J. Turner, ed., *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Art*, London-New York: Macmillan Reference Limited-Grove's Dictionaries, Inc., p. 430.
- Henríquez Ureña Pedro (1945), *Literary Currents in Hispanic America*, Cambridge-Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hernández González Manuel (2012) *La sociedad de América española*, in: J.B. Amores Carredano, ed., *Historia de América*, Barcelona: Editorial Planeta S.A., pp. 371-412.
- Hummel Agata, Wądołowska Anna, Wołoszczak Katarzyna (2009) *Hybrydyzacja tożsamości i kultury*, in: M.F. Gawrycki, ed., *Dzieje kultury latynoamerykańskiej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 459-471.
- Katzew Ilona (2004) *Casta Painting: The imaging of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lana Francesco S.J. (1670) *L'Arte Maestra sopra l'arte della Pittura. Mostrando il modo di perfezionarla, con varle inventioni, e regole pratiche appartenenti á questa materia*, in: *Prodrómo Overo Saggio di alcune invention nuove premesso all'arte maestro*, Brescia, 1670.
- Laplantine François, Nauss Alexis (2001) *Le Métissage. De Arcimboldo à Zombi*, Paris: Fayard.
- Laplantine François, Nauss Alexis (2011) *Le Métissage. Una exposé pour comprendre. Un essai pour réfléchir*, Paris: Réédition.
- Laube Stefan (2011) *Hybridität*, in: U. Pfisterer (ed.), *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffen*, Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, pp. 183-186.
- Le métissage interculturel. Créativité dans les relations inégales* (2005) Villanova Roselyne de, Vermés Geneviève, ed., Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Lezama Lima José (1957) *La expresión americana*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

- Loomba Ania (2011) *Kolonializm/postkolonializm*, transl. N. Bloch, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.
- Luks Ilmar (19980) *Tipología de la escultura decorativa hispánica en la arquitectura andina del siglo XVIII*, Caracas: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central de Venezuela.
- Macera Pablo (1993) *La pintura mural andina, siglos XVI-XIX*, Lima: Editorial Milla Batres.
- Mapelli Mozzi Carlotta (1993) *La plumaria en la época actual*, in: T. Castelló Yturibe, ed., *El arte plumaria en México*, México: Fomento Cultural Banamex, pp. 221-229.
- Martínez del Río de Redo Marita (1993) *La plumaria virreinal*, in: T. Castelló Yturibe, ed., *El arte plumaria en México*, México: Fomento Cultural Banamex, pp. 103-139.
- Mesa Gisbert Carlos de, Mesa José de, Gisbert Teresa (2012) *Historia de Bolivia*, La Paz: Editorial Gisbert y Cia S.A.
- Mesa José de, Gisbert Teresa (1968) *Determinantes del llamado estilo mestizo: Breves consideraciones sobre el termino*. „Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas e Estéticas”, no. 10, pp. 93-119.
- Mojica Sarah de (2001) *Introducción. Cartografías culturales en debate: culturas híbridas – no simultaneidad - modernidad periférica*, in: S. de Mojica, ed., *Mapas culturales para América Latina. Culturas híbridas – no simultaneidad – modernidad periférica*, Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, pp. 2-16.
- Mongne Pascal (2004) *L'art de la plumasserie*, in: C. Bor, G. Rudolf, ed., *Le triptyque aztèque de la Crucifixion*, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, pp. 38-79.
- Papastergiadis Nikos (2000) *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Picón-Salas Mariano (1944) *De la conquista a la independencia*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Reyes Alfonso, *Letras de la Nueva España*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1948.
- Rieks Rudolf (1974) *Hybris*, in: J. Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 3, Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co., pp. 1234-1235.
- Russo Alessandra (1996) *Arte plumaria del Messico colonial del XVI secolo. L'incontro di due mondi artistic*, (Doctoral Thesis), Universidad de Bolonia.
- Salgado César Augusto (1999) *Hybridity in New World Baroque Theory*, „The Journal of American Folklore”, vol. 112, no 445, pp. 316-331.
- Sarduy Severo (1987) *Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco*, Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Sebastián Santiago (2007) *El barroco iberoamericano. Mensaje iconográfico*, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid.
- Sztabiński Grzegorz (2002) *History, Contemporarism, Creolization*, „Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts”, no. 4, pp. 57-76.
- Vers une esthétique du métissage?* (2002) Berthet Dominique, ed., Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Young Robert C.J. (1995) *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London–New York: Routledge.

Young Robert C.J. (2012) *Postkolonializm. Wprowadzenie*, transl. M. Król, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

Online references

<http://e.toile.over-blog.com/35-index.html> (25.08.2014).

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/03/24/cultura/a07n1cul> (24.06.2014).

http://www.puf.com/Dictionnaire:Dictionnaire_des_sciences_humaines/M%C3%89TISSAGE (24.06.2014).

METYSAŻ KULTUROWY – POJĘCIE DESKRYPTYWNE ZJAWISK HYBRYDYZYCHNYCH NA PERYFERIACH KULTUR (streszczenie)

Termin „metysaż” w pierwszym znaczeniu funkcjonował jako określenie o charakterze rasowym. Potem terminem *estilo mestizo* zaczęto opisywać sztukę Ameryki Łacińskiej w okresie dominacji hiszpańskiej, która pojawiła się na peryferiach nowożytnego świata, a jej cechy uznano za mieszankę wpływów europejskich i indiańskich, szczególnie rzeźbę architektoniczną peruwiańskich wyżyn. W moim przekonaniu w obrębie sztuki kolonialnej istnieje wiele więcej zjawisk, które można opisać jako „metysaż kulturowy”, nie koniecznie tylko ze względu na cechy stylistyczne, formalne. Jednym z nich jest długotrwała tradycja wywarzania obiektów ozdabianych piórami, która znajduje pewne echa i w dzisiejszych czasach. Wreszcie pojęcie metysażu zostało zaadaptowane przez francuskich kulturoznawców do określenia zjawisk typowych dla stref liminalnych o cechach hybrydycznych. I tak termin „metysaż kulturowy”, oderwany od swych pierwotnych rasowych konotacji, stał się deskryptywny w stosunku do zjawisk marginalnych, mieszanek obecnych na peryferiach kultur, bez względu na ich lokalizację. Finalnie „metysaż kulturowy” określa nie tyle cechy formalne kultury i sztuki, ale jest raczej pojęciem charakteryzującym rodzaj refleksji i namysłu.

Słowa kluczowe: metysaż kulturowy, barok andyjski, styl *mestizo*, hybrydyczność kultury, piórnictwo.

Aneta Pawłowska

Department of Art History, University of Łódź
aneta.pawlowska@uni.lodz.pl

THE AMBIVALENCE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN¹ CULTURE. THE NEW NEGRO ART IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Abstract: Reflecting on the issue of marginalization in art, it is difficult not to remember of the controversy which surrounds African-American Art. In the colonial period and during the formation of the American national identity this art was discarded along with the entire African cultural legacy and it has emerged as an important issue only at the dawn of the twentieth century, along with the European fashion for “Black Africa,” complemented by the fascination with jazz in the United States of America. The first time that African-American artists as a group became central to American visual art and literature was during what is now called the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Another name for the Harlem Renaissance was the New Negro Movement, adopting the term “New Negro”, coined in 1925 by Alain Leroy Locke. These terms conveyed the belief that African-Americans could now cast off their heritage of servitude and define for themselves what it meant to be an African-American. The Harlem Renaissance saw a veritable explosion of creative activity from the African-Americans in many fields, including art, literature, and philosophy. The leading black artists in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940 were Archibald Motley, Palmer Hayden, Aaron Douglas, Hale Aspacio Woodruff, and James Van Der Zee.

Keywords: African-American – “New Negro” – “Harlem Renaissance” – Photography – “African Art” – Murals – 20th century – Painting.

¹ The term “Afro-Americans” or “African Americans,” referred to Black Americans/Afro-Americans and is used to refer to people born in the Americas who have African ancestors.

Motto:

I believe, deep in my heart, that the dark tinge of my skin is the thing that has been my making. For, you see, I have had to work 100 per cent harder to realize my ambition.
Archibald Motley Jr., Artist²

Reflecting on the issue of marginalization in art, it is difficult not to remember of the controversy which surrounds African-American Art. In the colonial period and during the formation of the American national identity this art was discarded along with the entire African cultural legacy and it has emerged as an important issue only at the dawn of the twentieth century, along with the European fashion for “Black Africa”, complemented by the fascination with jazz music in the United States of America.

An important stage preceding the rise of the “New Black” Art was an attempt to search for mimetic African-American identity, deliberately ignoring the difference in skin pigmentation in an effort to find a common voice with a white center, read: the ethos and tradition of the American middle class. The consequence was the most strategic compromise to which artists consciously resigned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Robert Scott Duncanson (1821-1872), Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828-1901) and Grafton Tyler Brown (1841-1918), creator of the wonderful and highly valued landscapes – the heirs of European aesthetics.

The first time African-American artists as a group became central to American visual art and literature was during what is now called the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Another name for the Harlem Renaissance was the New Negro Movement, borrowing the term “New Negro,” coined in 1925 by Alain Leroy Locke (1886-1954). These terms conveyed the belief that African-Americans could now cast off their heritage of servitude and define for themselves what it meant to be an African-American. Both labels are appropriate and correct, as the Harlem Renaissance saw a veritable explosion of creative activity from the African-Americans in many fields, including art, literature, and philosophy. One reason why the Harlem Renaissance was possible was the fact that many African-Americans migrated from the rural South to the cities in the north, including New York City, during World War I, the 1920s, and the 1930s. The increased numbers of African-Americans living in geographically limited areas naturally fueled a sense of community. Furthermore, in the northern cities these internal migrants experienced the freedoms and opportunities that had not been available to them in the South. These two factors encouraged African-Americans to seek the ways to re-define themselves socially and politically.

² Richard Newman, *African American Quotations*, Oryx Press, Phoenix 1998, p. 96.

Although the interest in African-American culture has grown during the last two decades, this lack of visibility within the historical mainstream, and the failure of art criticism to come to terms with the complexity and range of black visual art, continues to annoy artists and critics, as well as the scholars looking for a more representative history of American art. To a degree, this problem can be understood as a function of neglect, but it also unmistakably reflects the priorities and interests of the scholars working in the field of early twentieth-century American art and culture. For example, while there is a fair amount of literature on the history of American art criticism and theory, it rarely addresses art or criticism produced by Afro-Americans. Thus the issues which preoccupied American critics and artists during these years have been clearly identified, but these have not been brought to bear on the analysis of Afro-American art. Also, while there is a large body of scholarship on the Harlem Renaissance, it often does not draw major distinctions between artistic activity in different media³. The accomplishments in poetry and music tend to be centralized as the most representative forms of artistic expression during the Harlem Renaissance; the products of the visual arts have been overlooked until quite recently. Similarly, the studies of American culture in the interwar decades, which deal extensively with cultural nationalism, tend to privilege written expression and popular culture, while the visual artists receive only cursory attention. The 1920s in the United States was a decade of continuing economic prosperity and rapid industrialization. There was a sense of optimism, a revolt against the traditional values, and an exploration of new ideas. However, the burgeoning middle-class prosperity only thinly camouflaged an increasing class stratification, and ethnic and racial tensions caused by population shifts in the cities. The urban ambience and cityscapes of Chicago and New York were transformed by new technology, with skyscrapers, elevated trains, and subways built to accommodate and transport the growing population swollen by the constant flood of the Europeans arriving at Ellis Island⁴, and thousands of African-Americans migrating from the South to the North.⁵ The Harlem Renaissance was one of the most significant developments in American art of that time⁶. The 1920s and 1930s saw a new

³ To read more: George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1995 and Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, New York 1973.

⁴ Ellis Island in Upper New York Bay, was the gateway for millions of immigrants to the United States as the nation's busiest immigrant inspection station from 1892 until 1954.

⁵ Hundreds of thousands of African Americans migrated from the rural, mostly agricultural South to the urban industrialized North from 1913 to 1946. Historians call this the Great Migration.

⁶ To see more: George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White...*, pp. 435-448.

generation of educated and politically wise African-American men and women, who sponsored literary societies and art and industrial exhibitions to combat racist stereotypes. The movement, which showcased the range of talents within African-American communities, included artists from across America, but was centered in Harlem. The work of the Harlem painter and graphic artist Aaron Douglas (1898-1979) and the photographer James Van Der Zee (1886-1983) became emblematic of the movement. Other visual artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance include Charles Alston (1907-1977), Augusta Savage (1892-1962), Archibald Motley (1891-1981), Lois Mailou Jones (1905-1998), Palmer Hayden (1890-1973), James Richmond Barthé (1901-1989), Sargent Johnson (1887-1967) and slightly younger Romare Bearden (1911-1988) and Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000)⁷. It is also worth mentioning the literature that inspired them, especially the books and novels written by such Black writers as Sterling Brown (1901-1989), Countee Porter Cullen (1903-1946), Langston Hughes (1902-1967), Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) Wallace Thurman (1902- 1934), Dorothy West (1907-1998) and the most prominent black writer Alain Leroy Locke.

THE “NEW NEGRO”

The term “New Negro” which was initially used at the end of the nineteenth century to denote social and economic improvements since slavery, between 1900 and the 1930s became attached to a renewed racial pride, expressed in economic independence, culture and political militancy⁸. Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), a black educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute, emphasized industrial training as a means of self-respect and economic independence. He edited an anthology of historical and sociological essays: *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900), which argued that economic self-reliance should precede demands for social equality. William Edward Burghard Du Bois (1868-1963), African-American scholar and civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, was passionately opposed to this. Du Bois sought political action and racial equality as due to the black people. By the 1920s Washington

⁷ Celeste-Marie Bernier, *African American Visual Arts, British Association for American Studies*, University Press, Edinburgh 2008, pp. 56-88.

⁸ Introduction, in: *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2007, pp. 1-20.

and Du Bois represented two opposing camps on the subject of the “New Negro.”⁹

The rising expectations and an economic boom created largely as a result of the United States’ involvement in both world wars, combined with the effects of obvious racism brought on by Jim Crow laws (the segregation sanctioned by law in the South in the 1890s, and practised in the North), encouraged African-Americans to leave their traditional agricultural base in the South. African-American newspapers, such as the “Chicago Defender,” urged the blacks to leave their places of social and economic repression for those representing economic opportunity and freedom¹⁰. The social displacement of the African-Americans mirrored that of all Americans. As noted by the cultural historian Eugene Metcalf,

In the cultural turmoil following World War I many white middle-class Americans, especially intellectuals and the young, were cast adrift from the institutional and ideological moorings of American society. Feeling betrayed by the war and the false hopes it had raised and enmeshed in a society undergoing technological and demographic change, they revolted against traditional values and behavior. Some left America entirely; others stayed. But the 1920s were for whites as well as blacks a time of dislocation and adjustment¹¹.

THE JAZZ AGE

In Europe the interest in American popular culture, in the form of jazz, movies, and comic books, began in the 1910s and peaked in the 1920s. The period known as the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties was the time of bootleg gin and “speakeasies” – establishments in which intoxicating liquor was sold illegally¹². Jazz was referenced in visual art and design in a variety of ways, from the figurative scenes of Harlem or dance halls, the depictions of instrumental forms or dancers, to the abstractions representing the polyphony, repetition or variation of jazz through color¹³. For example, the Surrealist artist Man Ray used the aesthetic of collage in his abstract painting *Jazz* (1919) to refer to harmonic syncopation, and included some mechanical

⁹ George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* ..., pp. 19-21 and 36-48.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹ Eugene W. Metcalf, *Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control*, “Winterthur Portfolio”, vol. 18, No. 4, Winter, 1983, pp. 271-289.

¹² US Congress had passed the Eighteenth Amendment which prohibited the sale of alcohol during the so-called Prohibition era between 1920-1933.

¹³ Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art*, Oxford University Press, New York 1998, p. 111.

references to timing, measurement and syncopated beat in his photographic abstract *Admiration of the Orchestrelle for the Cinematograph* (1919). Such African-American artists as Archibald Motley, Charles Alston and Aaron Douglas also explored the connection between art, music and national identity in their works throughout the 1920s. Jazz, which began in South America and spread to the North and West, took its harmonic, melodic and rhythmic elements mainly from African music. In both America and Europe life was lived in the cities, where the clubs vibrated to new sounds and rhythms: the music and form of dance rooted in African-American culture. In Harlem, Chicago, Kansas City and Europe the scene resembled that shown in the three well-known paintings of *Parisian night life* (1929) by Archibald Motley and Hale Woodruff. The celebration of African-American culture in dance and jazz was an antidote to what was perceived as the sterility of modern, technology dominated Western modernist society. As was observed by Brendan Gill, an influential critic for “The New Yorker”,

Black writers, artists, composers, and theater performers were thought to be opening the door to a promising future—one that could be shared with a white majority only just beginning to perceive black culture not as a form of failed white culture but as something that had its own complex nature¹⁴.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, white people made Africa and the Africans a symbol of personal freedom, which embodied modernism. As the African-American novelist Langston Hughes wrote in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), “It was a period when the Negro was in vogue.”¹⁵ Primitivism – the cultural melting pot for modernism, was available for the European and white American audiences in the American Negro culture, regarded as a subculture of mainstream America. Despite the fact that the African-Americans had lived in North America since the seventeenth century, there was a widespread belief that Africa pervaded the Negro culture. As a descendant of Africa, the American Negro was the modern primitive. This explains why the white society expected African-Americans artists to portray particular subjects. For example, in 1928, owner and director of The New Gallery, George Hellman, urged Archibald Motley to concentrate in his paintings on the more exotic aspects of the Negro life, the scenes which should include the “voo-doo element as well as the cabaret element for his solo show.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Brendon Gill, *On Astor Row*, “The New Yorker”, 2 November 1992, p. 52.

¹⁵ Theodore O. Francis, Ted Francis, *Realism in the Novels of the Harlem Renaissance*, iUniverse, Lincoln 2002, p. 45.

¹⁶ Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art...*, p. 111.

Several white American patrons, including the collector and philanthropist Albert C. Barnes (1892-1979), considered African art important for the development of a unique Negro art style. Ironically, so did many African-American cultural critics. The black middle class had accepted an identity refracted through the prism of the white American/European culture and society. Thus while they promoted the cultural standards derived from Europe, some of the Afro-American educated élite saw the opportunity to use the white people's interest in primitivism to promote the American Negro arts that reflected the dominant dual heritage of Europe and Africa. While they made an effort to become part of mainstream American society and culture, there was a desire amongst the American Negroes and many other Americans to preserve and sustain that exotic "otherness," the imprint of Africa on American culture, as a palliative for the rapid changes in society. The visual artists took advantage of the interest in the black culture to broaden the boundary of modern art, its aesthetics and imagery, to accommodate an African-American artistic vernacular.

"NEGROPHILIA"¹⁷ IN EUROPE

As in the previous centuries, artistic training and experience meant travel to Europe, but in the 19th and 20th century Paris, not Rome, was the art capital of the world. American artists, musicians, and writers flocked to the "city of lights," where they saw the new art at first hand. The reputation of Paris for racial tolerance provided an additional motive for many musicians from the American Expeditionary Force in 1917¹⁸. Following demobilization, a lot of African-American musicians chose to remain in Paris, where they did not have to endure racial segregation. A pioneering African-American visual artist in Paris was Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937), raised in Philadelphia. He settled in France in 1891 and enjoyed considerable success as a painter. He devoted 46 years of his life and career to France. Tanner often painted marine scenes that showed man's struggle with the sea, and after 1895 he was creating mostly religious works – a genre in which he gained his fame. In 1893 on a short return visit to the United States, Tanner painted his most

¹⁷ The word negrophilia is derived from the French *nérophilie* that literally means love of the negro. It was a term that avant-garde artists used amongst themselves to describe their passion for black culture. Petrine Archer-Straw, *Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, Thames and Hudson, London 2000.

¹⁸ Vincent Bouvet, Gérard Durozoi, *Paris Between the Wars Art, Style and Glamour in the Crazy Years*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London 2010, p. 370.

famous work, *The Banjo Lesson*, while in Philadelphia. The painting shows an elderly black man teaching a boy, assumed to be his grandson, how to play the banjo. This deceptively simple-looking work explores several important themes. Blacks had long been stereotyped as entertainers in American culture, and the image of a black man playing the banjo appears throughout the American art of the late 19th century.

By the 1920s there were enough black American artists in Paris to form what artist Hale Woodruff (1900-1980) termed a “Negro Colony”. Artists, sculptors, painters, and printmakers lived a bohemian life on the Left Bank or in the French countryside. They associated with expatriate writers and musicians, creating an informal network for learning about the latest ideas about styles and the leading artists. The artists studied either formally at art schools such as the École des Beaux-Arts or the Académie Julian, or informally by viewing and sketching works in the museums. They were constantly aware of the new art, abstract modernism, which used elements of African art.

The Negro Colony did not go unnoticed. The Parisians were fascinated with black arts and the culture of Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean. Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) one of the most multi-talented artists of the 20th century, describes the shock experienced by the audience when it first heard black musicians, “throwing out trumpet call the way one throws raw metal or fish to seals.”¹⁹ French critics and writers, such as Paul Morand and Cocteau²⁰ often lavishly praised African-American visual works. The salons, which were considered obvious exhibition venues for French and foreign artists exhibited their productions, for example the Société des Artistes Français, Galerie Bernheim-Jeune; Salon des Tuileries, the Société des Artistes Français and the American Artists Professional League²¹. Many French publications reproduced images of their art. American associations sponsored works and exhibitions of African-American art. This period of lively cultural activity was cut short by the economic depression in Europe and the United States, which made transatlantic travel difficult or impossible. However this Parisian love of new visual languages and subjects also spread to Amsterdam. Black writers, poets and musicians were as highly esteemed in the Netherlands during the 1930s as they had been in Paris in the 1920s. Their work was truly in vogue. Numerous books and poems by black American, Caribbean and African authors were translated and published. The Surinamese writers

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Bernard Gendro, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, University Of Chicago Press, London 2002, pp. 104-106.

²¹ Theresa Leininger-Miller, *New Negro Artists in Paris: African American Painters and Sculptors in the City of Light, 1922-1934*, Rutgers University Press 2001, p. 243.

and anti-colonialists Anton de Kom and Albert Helmon were taken extremely seriously. Independent Dutch weekly newsmagazines published in Amsterdam, *De Groene Amsterdammer* and *Links richten* produced a special “Negro edition” containing a broad spectrum of opinions, some of which now seem odd, on “the negro,” “the negro in art” and “negro art”.²² *Variétés*, the Surrealists’ Belgian journal, had already preceded them in 1928 with an issue on art in the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo)²³. Black music, black art, black dance, black history and black people were “hot” in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and other cities in Europe. Aspects of black culture were adopted by the western avant-garde, as European art and culture began to creolise.

THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT

During the interwar period African-Americans seized the opportunity to promote political, economic and social agendas that would benefit the black community nationally. Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)²⁴ and the National Urban League

²² *Black is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas. The Catalogue*, De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders Publishers, Amsterdam 2008, p. 121.

²³ *Ibid.* and Julia Kelly, *Discipline and indiscipline: the ethnographies of Documents*, “Papers of Surrealism. The Use-Value of Documents” 2007, vol. 7 <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal7/acrobat%20files/articles/Kellypdf.pdf>

²⁴ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, grew out of two events: the Niagara Movement, organized by W.E.B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter and 28 other African Americans in 1905, and the race riot in Springfield, Illinois in 1908. White Americans and a few black Americans were the core members. Their aim was to guarantee the reality of equality in the United States and elsewhere, and they focused on securing legal rights for African Americans and those of the African diaspora. The most prestigious award at the time was the NAACP’s Joel E. Spingarn Medal for Entrepreneurial Achievement. Another award, the Amy Spingarn Medal for the Arts, acknowledged the cultural importance of pan-Africanism. Du Bois was the editor of *Crisis*, which became the major intellectual publication among African Americans. The National Urban League, founded in New York City in 1911, was created by the merger of several organizations: the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes, the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, and the Committee on Urban Conditions among Negroes. The focus for the new organization was the development of economic opportunities and social welfare for African Americans in American cities. Charles S. Johnson was editor of the League’s magazine, *Opportunity*. The United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was established by Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey to promote pan-Africanism and economic self-reliance among ordinary African peoples throughout the world. It promoted unification between America and Africa, focusing on economic and political enterprises. It thrived in New York City from 1918

were instrumental in promoting the New Negro movement, also called the Negro or Harlem Renaissance, in their respective journals, "Crisis" (1910), and "Opportunity" (1922). The Negro Renaissance denoted a cultural revitalization in the cities. Its capital was Harlem (uptown Manhattan in New York), which had the largest African-American urban population. The Harlem Renaissance consequently represented most visibly what was also happening in other major American cities. The cultural historian Nathan Huggins noted that:

The Negro Renaissance was a struggle to show an African-American cultural "coming of age" that paralleled the same phenomena [sic] in American culture as it moved from under European cultural hegemony, and sought to reinvigorate itself. Literature, theatre, visual arts and, later, music were seen as a means to define and establish "membership in the African or black race," and simultaneously to enhance the reputation and self-esteem of African-Americans in America²⁵.

As was noted by the novelist James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) in *The Book of Negro Poetry* (1927), "No people that has ever produced great literature and art has ever been looked on by the world as distinctly inferior."²⁶ Achievement was not to be defined by that cultural production which only imitated European or white America, but by an art which expressed a distinctive African-American cultural identity, most strongly grounded in folk culture. This expressive and mature African-American was the New Negro. The ideology of the concept replaced that of the "race" of the men (and women) of the previous century. It was incumbent upon the black middle class, whom W.E.B. Du Bois called the "Talented Tenth" (approximately ten per cent were educated in the middle class), to lead the way, and consequently to prove their worthiness as American citizens, and provide role models for the less fortunate African-Americans²⁷.

until 1925. Garvey established the Black Star shipping line, and two publications: *The Negro World* and *Black Man*. Garvey felt that African peoples should proudly pro-claim Africa as their "motherland," because a people bereft of cultural and political heritage would always be regarded condescendingly by others.

²⁵ Molefi K. Asante, *A Note on Nathan Huggins' Report to The Ford Foundation on African-American Studies* "Journal of Black Studies", vol. 17, no. 2, 1986, p. 260.

²⁶ *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins, Oxford University Press, New York 1995, p. 281.

²⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth", in: *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day*, New York, 1903, <https://archive.org/details/negro-problemseri00washrich> (28.07.2014).

THE NEW NEGRO ARTIST

In 1924 during a dinner at the Civic Club, New York, organized by Charles S. Johnson, to promote the emerging black literati, W.E.B. Du Bois spoke to white editors and critics about the need for writers and artists to lead as the cultural vanguard of the Negro Renaissance. Upon hearing Du Bois, Paul Kellog, the editor of the literary journal "Survey Graphic," proposed and published a special edition entitled Harlem: *Mecca of the New Negro*, which was soon issued as a book, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925). It was a collection of political, sociological and historical essays focusing on Harlem as the stage for a "dramatic flowering of a new race spirit."²⁸

The leading strategist of the New Negro movement was Alain Locke. He was the first African-American who advocated for an identifiable racial art style and aesthetic. Locke graduated from Harvard University and was the first African-American to win a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. In 1918, he completed his dissertation, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Value* and graduated with a doctorate in Philosophy. Locke eventually obtained a position as chair of the school's Department of Philosophy at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He saw the younger generation as capable of establishing the artistic vanguard, not only in terms of style and technique but also as subject matter and evocation of a "black sensibility." In grappling with what constituted this New Negro art, Locke believed African art provided the solution. His essay *The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts* in the "Survey Graphic" (1925) dealt with cultural retrieval from Africa: African-American artists had to learn, along with white artists, to appreciate the value of African art and culture. It was not an intuitive endeavor but, as Locke (using illustrations of African art from Albert C. Barnes's collection) wrote:

*(...) there is the possibility that the sensitive artistic mind of the American Negro, stimulated by a cultural pride and interest, will receive from African art a profound and galvanizing influence. The legacy is there at least, with prospects of rich yield. In the first place, there is the mere knowledge of the skill and unique mastery of the arts of the ancestors, the valuable and stimulating realization that the Negro is not a cultural foundling without his own inheritance*²⁹.

It turned out that African art for the New Negro artist, was much more important and was to replace the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome, which was the foundation for Western art and art criticism.

²⁸ Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art...*, p. 115.

²⁹ Charles Molesworth, *The Works of Alain Locke*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 2012, p. 183.

Locke continued:

While we are speaking of the resources of racial art, it is well to take into account that the richest vein of it is not that of portraitistic idiom after all, but its' almost limitless wealth of decorative and purely symbolic material. It is for the development of this latter aspect of a racial art that the study and example of African art material is so important. The African spirit is at its best in abstract decorative forms. Design, and to a lesser degree, color, are its original fortes. It is this aspect of the folk tradition, this slumbering gift of the folk temperament that most needs re-achievement and re-expression. And if African art is capable of producing the ferment in modern art that it has, surely this is not too much to expect of its influence upon the culturally awakened Negro artist of the present generation³⁰.

The motivation was more complex. New Negro artists desired to find their racial tradition in Africa. Admittedly naïve and romantic, this project offered an alternative aesthetic source. As well as this, Locke's emphasis upon African arts as fundamental to the development of modernism was "in step" with avant-garde American art criticism and exhibitions in New York. Although not dictating one style, Locke saw a vital connection between this new artistic respect for African art and the natural ambition of Negro artists for a racial idiom in art. The fact that European modernists borrowed extensively from African art made the racial art enterprise of the New Negro acceptable and credible within the mainstream American art community, while satisfying a need for cultural links. Locke, however, reduced Africa to a cultural trope for the purpose of promoting racial authenticity. For the next ten years, Locke characterized Africa in simple formalist terms, ignoring the real complexity of its culture.

GRAPHIC ART

The Negro Renaissance was primarily a literary movement and African-American authors demanded from their publishers images of African Americans that befitted the new era. Some of the best examples of African-American graphic arts could be found in New York City, which was by now the centre for America's proliferating book, popular magazine, and journal publishing.

Aaron Douglas regularly read "Crisis," "Opportunity" and "Survey Graphic" while teaching art in Kansas City. Commenting on his days at the University

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

of Nebraska, where he won a prize for drawing, he recalled: "I was the only black student there. Because I was sturdy and friendly, I became popular with both faculty and students."³¹ So when the opportunity arose for him to travel to Harlem and pursue his art career, encouraged by Charles S. Johnson, he moved without hesitation. Upon his arrival in 1924 he immediately became friends with W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, African-American novelists and poets Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, and whites such as Albert C. Barnes and Carl Van Vechten, who belonged to the intimate circle of New Negro leaders. Under the tutelage of Bavarian graphic artist Winold Reiss (1886-1953), a close friend of Alain Locke who had illustrated the special "Harlem" issue of "Survey Graphic"³². According to Richard J. Powell Professor of African-American Studies from Duke University "It was ironic that Alain Locke and other promoters of the «New Negro» chose Winhold Reiss – a Caucasian artist of German nationality – to portray this modern, black persona."³³ On the other hand, Reiss became fascinated by Native Americans and studied them intently as part of his creative work. In New York, Reiss established himself as a distinguished portrait painter, graphic artist, and muralist. It was because of his skills as a graphic artist and his empathy and respect for the dignity of humanity that he became a mentor to Aaron Douglas³⁴. Reminiscing his apprenticeships, Douglas recalled that Reiss constantly urged him to explore 'that inner thing of blackness.'³⁵ Consequently Douglas discarded realism for a more abstract 'African' style. On the strength of his illustrations for *The New Negro* Locke, called him a "pioneering africanist."³⁶ Ten black and white drawings, as in *Rebirth*, displayed forms conforming to hard-edge abstract design similar to Art Deco paintings of the 1920s and 1930s. Human figures are stylized, and complement the schematic patterns, both flat shapes. Commissions soon followed: for the covers of "Crisis," "Opportunity," the arts magazine "Fire!!" (published once in 1926), Condé Nast's chic "Vanity Fair" magazine, and various play-bills, including that for Carl Van Vechten's play *Emperor Jones*, starring

³¹ Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 1995, p. 27.

³² Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art...*, p. 118.

³³ Richard J. Powell, *Black Art: A Cultural History*, Thames and Hudson, Ltd, London 2002, p. 43.

³⁴ Dele Jegede, *Encyclopedia of African American Artists*, Greenwood Press, Conn 2009, p. 69.

³⁵ Richard J. Powell, *op. cit.*, s. 44.

³⁶ Dele Jegede, *Encyclopedia of African American Artists...*, pp. 69-71 and Arnold Rampersad, *Introduction*, in: *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke, Oxford University Press, New York 1999, pp. IX-XXIII.

Paul Robeson³⁷. Douglas also illustrated thirteen books published by leading New Negro authors, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and James Weldon Johnson. Two assignments garnered Douglas the most attention, French journalist Paul Morand's *Black Magic* (1929)³⁸, and James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones* (1927)³⁹.

Each illustration for *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* is juxtaposed with text so that it functions as a preface to the individual sermon written as verse. The sixth sermon, the *Crucifixion*, does not show the traditional icon of Jesus on the Cross, but Simon, who carried the Cross when Jesus could carry it no longer. The standard hierarchic composition is inverted to show Simon, not Christ, as the dominant figure. Our attention is directed to the diminutive Christ figure by a diagonal beam of light, the guards' position, and the symbolic halo. African-American Baptist sermons accepted Simon as an African Jew, portraying him, as artist and art historian David C. Driskell noted, as "a black man who took upon himself the yoke of Jesus' cross in order to relieve him of one last earthly misery."⁴⁰ The *Crucifixion* becomes a metaphor for the African-American experience.

Douglas's signature styles were what he called "Egyptian form" figures, figures silhouetted in profile with the eye rendered from a frontal viewpoint as in ancient Egyptian tomb reliefs and frescoes, and his use of a single color, varying in value from light to dark⁴¹. The gradually enlarged circular shapes of color create a visual rhythm, evocative of music and spirituality. Historian Nathan Huggins felt that Douglas's attempts to "interpret what he understood to be the spiritual identity of the Negro people was a kind of soul of self that united all that the black man was in Africa and the New World."⁴²

PAINTING

Painters heeded Locke's and Du Bois' urgings to produce a new racial art. The discovery of African art and the rediscovery of black folk idioms caused dramatic style changes for some artists, Palmer Hayden among them. His picturesque seascapes became pseudo-naïve style genre paintings in the

³⁷ Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art...*, p. 119.

³⁸ Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas...*, pp. 64, 115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 125.

⁴⁰ *Sculptures, Drawings, Paintings And Mixed Media By David C. Driskellii*, 2002, <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/PressRelease/CreativeSpirit.php> (12.04.2014).

⁴¹ To see more: Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas...*, p. 72.

⁴² *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance...*, p. 20.

1930s. So too did the meticulous realism of Archibald Motley's academic portraits change to modernist genre paintings. The mid-1920s was a transitional period for these and others struggling with the challenge of representing the New Negro.

The most interesting painter Palmer Hayden was already mentioned above and he established his reputation first as a painter of landscapes and seascapes, later of genre. In 1926 Hayden won a prize worth USD 400 from the Harmon Arts Foundation⁴³ and he travelled to Paris, where he studied art until 1932. While in Paris, Hayden socialized with a coterie of African-American artists and writers. Some, like Countee Cullen and Hale Woodruff, were fellow Harmon award winners. They often met at the art studio of sculptor Augusta Savage (1892-1962), an important African-American artist and arts educator⁴⁴. They all teased him about making so many seascape paintings (watercolor *Concarneau-Andree de la Mer*, Hanks Gallery, Santa Monica or *Le Quai á Port Louis*). While Hayden was in France, he met Alain Locke. Locke showed him African art he obtained on a trip to Africa. This experience, along with Locke's call for artists to look to African art for inspiration and design ideas, led to *Fetiché et Fleurs* (1932-33, Collection Museum of African American Art, Los Angeles) a still life oil painting of an African mask and fabric. While Hayden admired African Art, he also said it had "no meaning to us Americans."⁴⁵ He was, however, attracted to other aspects of Africa. The work reflects the Negro Renaissance in that Hayden was one of an increasing number of African Americans deciding to make a career in fine arts, and striving to find a racial art idiom. However, it is not obviously 'African' in style, as Hayden avoided predictable abstract designs associated with African art. Instead, by assembling two African art objects – Fang reliquary statue and Kuba cloth (both from Central Africa) – within

⁴³ The Harmon Foundation was set up by William E. Harmon (1862-1928) in 1925 in New York. William E. Harmon was a real estate investor from Iowa who wanted to encourage excellence in a variety of professional endeavors through the William E. Harmon Awards for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes. Harmon hoped that the public recognition of such achievements would encourage others to excel. The Foundation, under the administration of Mary Beattie Brady, is best known for its awards in the visual arts, and for its juried exhibitions (1926, 1931, 1933) in New York City, under the direction of the Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of the Church of Christ in America. As part of its objective to familiarize Americans with Negro art, the Foundation also sponsored travelling exhibitions to major cities and colleges, primarily in the South, sometimes in collaboration with other organizations, such as the College Art Association. To see more: Mary Ann Calo, *African American Art and Critical Discourse between World Wars*, "American Quarterly", vol. 51, no. 3 (September) 1999, pp. 589-590.

⁴⁴ Dele Jegede, *Encyclopedia of African American Artists...*, pp. 140-141.

⁴⁵ Eric Hanks, *Journey From The Crossroads: Palmer Hayden's Right Turn*, "International Review Of African American Art" 1999, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 30-42.

a traditional still life, Hayden referred to Locke's New Negro artist (African art as a sign for ancestral legacy of African Americans) and Du Bois' Negro Renaissance (the cultured middle class) while retaining his interest in realism. Ironically, while Locke was stressing decorative art and abstract symbolism as an appropriate style, and downplaying portraiture as desirable subject matter, there was a portrait artist in the Midwest who became as great a representative of the Negro Renaissance in his region as was Aaron Douglas in New York. Palmer Hayden was known for his paintings of the African American scene. In a 1969 interview he described *The Janitor Who Paints*, created around 1930, as "a sort of protest painting" of his own economic and social standing as well as that of his fellow African Americans. Hayden said his friend Cloyd Boykin, an artist who, like Hayden, had supported himself as a janitor, inspired this piece: "I painted it because no one called Boykin the artist. They called him the janitor."⁴⁶ Details within the cramped apartment; the duster and the trashcan, for example; point to the janitor's profession; the figure's dapper clothes and beret, much like those Hayden himself wore, point to his artistic pursuits. Hayden's use of perspective was informed by modern art practices, which favored abstraction and simplified forms. He originally exaggerated the figure's facial features, which many of his contemporaries criticized as African American caricatures, but later altered the painting. He maintained the janitor as the protagonist as it represented larger civil rights issues within the African American community⁴⁷.

Another important painter who was already mentioned earlier, is Archibald J. Motley. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (he sat in on a class taught by George Bellows) in a curriculum embracing realism, portraiture, landscape, and genre painting. Motley painted professionally while still a student, and during that time won the Harmon Foundation Gold Medal for *The Octoroon Girl*⁴⁸, which he later considered, apart from *Mending Socks*, the best portrait he ever painted. It is one of several of his "scientific paintings" of mulatto women. They document a part of America's history of miscegenation, especially in Louisiana, his birthplace, and obsession with the biology of race. The preoccupation with skin color, linked inevitably to issues of class and slavery, was never far from Motley's work. He was not alone. For instance, Aaron Douglas illustrated a cover for "Opportunity" (October 1925), entitled *The Mulatto*, and another for "Crisis" (January 1930) which juxtaposed a light colored woman with a darker one. The image in "Crisis" was similar to one titled *Mother and Daughter* (1925)

⁴⁶ John Ott, *Labored Stereotypes: Palmer Hayden's "The Janitor Who Paints,"* "American Art" 2008, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 102-115.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Octoroon – a person having one-eighth black ancestry.

by African-American portrait painter, Laura Wheeler Waring (1887-1948)⁴⁹. Aside from the politics of race, these images by Motley of fair-skinned women in middleclass settings denoting affluence, education and cosmopolitanism, were a visual rebuttal to the popular media images of the “mammy” or the “jezebel” of black American women which continued to hold a place in the minds of the majority of Americans⁵⁰.

Motley’s many portraits, dating between 1919 and 1931, were mostly of women. Lacking commissions early in his career, he portrayed his family and friends. In *Mending Socks*, considered to be his finest painting, he portrayed his paternal grandmother, Emily Motley. Exhibited at the prestigious “Chicago and Vicinity” show at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1923, it earned him the reputation of an up-and-coming portrait painter. This closely modeled study is at once a portrait and a genre scene of African-American middle-class life. In 1929 he won the prestigious grant from the Guggenheim Fellowship which allowed him to travel to Paris. He spent a critical year of study in France, where he painted memorable pictures of Paris. The most interesting work from this period was *Blues* (1929), which depicts well-dressed, handsome men and women dancing in the Petite Cafe in Paris to tunes played by musicians seated in the foreground, would seem to reinforce Motley’s point: paint transcribes the gradations of skin pigment incarnated by the various African, West Indian, and perhaps even African-American patrons of this nightspot. The color of skin, transmuted into the color of paint, identifies and catalogs race. The time Motley spent in Paris influenced him to paint black nightlife when he returned to Chicago.

Although he never lived in Harlem, his depiction of contemporary African American social life identified him with the Harlem Renaissance. He painted in his own modern style, and chose African-Americans for his cardinal subjects. According to his own words:

For years many artists have depicted the Negro as the ignorant Southern “darky,” to be portrayed on canvas as something humorous; an old Southern black Negro gulping a large piece of watermelon; one with a banjo on his knee; possibly a “crapshooter” or a cotton picker or a chicken thief. This material is obsolete, and I sincerely hope with the progress the Negro has made, he is deserving to be represented in his true perspective, with dignity, honesty, integrity, intelligence and understanding⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas...*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Cécile Whiting, *More Than Meets the Eye: Archibald Motley and Debates on Race in Art*, “Prospects,” 2001, vol. 26, October, pp. 449-476.

⁵¹ Steven Otfinoski, *African Americans in the Visual Arts*, Infobase Publishing, New York 2003, p. 246.

Motley's famous *Bronzeville Series* of paintings in the 1930s depicted black urban life in the Bronzeville section of Chicago in such memorable canvases as *Barbecue*, *The Picnic*, and *Saturday Night*. To capture his scenes, he used a modern post-Impressionist technique with vivid colors, often thick application of paint, with a strong inclination to emphasize geometric forms, to distort form for expressive effect, and to use unnatural or arbitrary color. The people in *Barbecue* (1934) do not have distinct features. Motley makes the painting's main idea – black people who were like everyone else, moving on and enjoying life. One does not get a sense of oppression, but then realizes that there are no white people in the painting, either. Without discrimination, these black Americans are free to enjoy life like everyone else in America⁵². Motley showed black people as they were; fun-loving, laughing, and unpretentious. He explained in the Interview from 1950s, that:

In order to study them (African-Americans in Chicago) I made a habit to go to places where they gathered a lot, like churches, movie houses, dance halls, skating rinks, sporting houses, sometimes not only sporting houses, but gambling houses⁵³.

Motley on occasion depicted rural, southern working class African-Americans, as in *The Old Snuff Dipper*. Here, as before, painterly technique creates a softly modeled form but now the figure is positioned before a plain backdrop, which makes for a shallow picture space, drawing the viewer's attention to the realistic face. Comparisons with his middleclass portraits reveal the same care in painting the face, and the frontal position and direct gaze of the sitter which command our attention and convey dignity. Motley's interest in portraiture as a way of exploring issues of class and race was able to develop freely because he lived in Chicago, beyond the scrutiny of Northeastern art critics, such as Locke, and far from the avant-garde centre of New York City. Motley and another Midwesterner, William E. Scott (1884-1969), painted more portraits than any other American artist of their time. A great many of these were images of the educated middle class, who had commissioned them, clear evidence that the "Talented Tenth" were conservative, still preferring portraiture, as in the nineteenth century. Locke would have been pleased with Motley's paintings of the 1930s. However, understandably Du Bois, whose notion of culture was class oriented, praised Motley in "Crisis" (1926) as a credit to the race. Conversely, Motley criticized African-American artists for their lack of vision:

⁵² Steve Moyer, *Party. Archibald Motley painted African American having a good time*, "Humanities" 2014, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 28-32, 5 p.

⁵³ Cécile Whiting, *More Than Meets the Eye...*, pp. 466-470.

*What a pity so many of our artists going for pretty landscapes and pictures which have no bearing whatsoever on our group. The Negro poet portrays our group in poems, the Negro musician portrays our group in jazz, the Negro actor portrays our group. All of these aforementioned portrayals are serious, original interpretations of the Negro. There is nothing borrowed, nothing copied, just an unraveling of the Negro soul. So why should the Negro painter, the Negro sculptor mimic that which the white man is doing, when he has such an enormous colossal field practically all his own; portraying his people, historically, dramatically, hilariously, but honestly. And who know the Negro Race, the Negro Soul, the Negro Heart, better than himself?*⁵⁴

Archibald Motley canvases dramatize African-Americans dancing, drinking, singing, working, praying, dreaming and loving in impoverished and opulent urban settings. His life's mission was to "instill an appreciation of art" into black audiences by putting "them in the paintings themselves, making them part of my own work so that they could see themselves as they are."⁵⁵

One painter surpassed the first generation of New Negro painters in being adept in exploiting abstract art to convey an image and aesthetic derived from black culture: Hale Aspacio Woodruff (1900-1980). He was one of the foremost representatives of African-American modernist art in the twentieth century. During his youth, he too met DuBois, Charles S. Johnson and Countee Cullen, and like several African-American artists of his generation, began his career as an editorial cartoonist and graphic artist for "Crisis" magazine. In 1927 he travelled to Paris where he studied art for four years, and met Henry Ossawa Tanner and members of the "Negro Colony."⁵⁶ In the 1920s abstraction for many American artists meant imitating early Cubism and the Post-Impressionist style of Cézanne. Form and space were converted into areas of color that emphasized the two dimensional surface of the painting, as in Woodruff's *The Card Players*. The elongated figures echo African sculpture which he had studied earlier in art books and observed during his forays with Alain Locke in the Parisian ethnographic markets. Woodruff later recalled:

On seeing the work of Paul Cézanne I got the connection. Then I saw the work of Picasso and I saw how Cézanne, Picasso, and the African had a terrific sense of form. The master I chiefly admired at that time was Paul Cézanne; then Picasso, who was certainly bolder and more courageous in his cubist work. Then when I saw his painting called "Les Demoiselles

⁵⁴ Jontyle Theresa Robinson, Wendy Greenhouse, *The Art of Archibald J. Motley, Jr.*, Sewall Co, Chicago 1991, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Celeste-Marie Bernier, *African American Visual Arts...*, p. 70.

⁵⁶ Steven Otfinoski, *African Americans...*, p. 232.

d'Avignon" – cubist-like girls with black masks on – the whole thing was clarified for me⁵⁷.

The Card Players acknowledged in style an indebtedness to Cézanne, Picasso, and African art, and paid homage to his time in Paris, where he spent many evenings playing cards with his friends, among them poet Countee Cullen and artist Palmer Hayden.

After his return to the United States in 1931, Woodruff applied his understanding of Post-Impressionism and Cubism to painting for social advocacy. A Cubistic painting of an Atlanta shanty town from 1933-1934 is one result; a more rural but nonetheless charged landscape indebted to van Gogh is another. In 1936, Woodruff spent time in Mexico, working as an apprentice to Diego Rivera, the leader of the Mexican mural movement, who taught him the basics of fresco painting. Although it was a medium he would never use, its high-keyed colors clearly influenced the palette of his later murals⁵⁸.

Among Woodruff's well-known works from this period is the three-panel *Amistad Mutiny* murals (1938), held at Talladega College in Talladega County in Alabama. The murals, commissioned and painted during the Great Depression, are entitled: *The Revolt*, *The Court Scene*, and *Back to Africa*, portraying events related to the 19th-century slave revolt on the *Amistad*. Located in Savery Library, they depict events on the ship, the U.S. Supreme Court trial, and the Mende people's return to Africa. The library has an image of the ship that is embedded in its lobby floor. College tradition prohibits walking "on" the ship, despite its central location. In addition, the library has other Woodruff murals exploring other events from African-American history, including freedmen enrolling at the college after the American Civil War. Subjects of Woodruff's murals worked perfectly with his strong conviction that art should be democratized. He claims that "Art has been for the few, but it should be for the many. Great periods of art have been those in which some great purpose motivated all the artists."⁵⁹

It is necessary to emphasize that murals were a very important part of the Federal Arts Project (FAP)⁶⁰ during the Great Depression-era as they enabled

⁵⁷ Albert Murry, *An Interview with Hale A. Woodruff*, in: *Hale A. Woodruff: 50 Years of his Art* New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem 1979, pp. 77-78.

⁵⁸ Roberta Smith, *In Electric Moments, History Transfigured – Hale Woodruff's Talladega Murals*, "New York Times" 2013, 13 August, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Dele Jegede, *Encyclopedia of African American ...*, p. 267.

⁶⁰ The Federal Art Project (FAP) was the visual arts arm of the Great Depression-era New Deal Works Progress Administration Federal One program in the United States. It operated from 1935 to 1943. Reputed to have created more than 200,000 separate works, FAP artists created posters, murals and paintings. Some works still stand among the most-significant pieces of public art in the United States. To see more: Martin R. Kalfatovic, *The New Deal*

ordinary citizens to see the best of American art, an art that reflected nationalist ideals and values. Murals could, according to artist George Biddle (1885-1973), show that “these younger artists of America are conscious of the social revolution that our country and civilization are going through.”⁶¹ African-American artists appreciated the pedagogical value as well as popular appeal of mural painting. They looked, as did Hale Woodruff and many American artists at the time, to the Mexican muralists for inspiration. African-American artists like Charles White (1918-79), and very prominent illustrator Aaron Douglas, used the Mexican muralists’ strategy, but tailored it to the context of Afro-American life, to convey their social concerns to the public, especially the African-American public. During the last phase of the Negro Renaissance, and sponsored by the FAP, Douglas completed *Aspects of Negro Life*, a group of four mural paintings, his most impressive response to Alain Locke’s directive to use African art and African-American folk culture as an inspiration. It also reflected W.E.B. DuBois’ conviction that any art of value must be morally responsible and instructive. In a 1926 issue of “Crisis,” Du Bois had asserted, “I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped silent.”⁶²

The cycle known as *Aspects of Negro Life* was installed at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. The historical narrative, on Africa and African descendants in the United States, is shown in two horizontal and two vertical compositional formats, featuring African ritual and ceremony, and African-Americans, first in the South and finally in the North. As in his earlier works, Douglas restricted his palette, ranging from light mauve-browns to dark blue-purples, interweaving his silhouetted figures of abstract geometrical design. More clearly than in any of his previous works, one senses what literary historian Houston Baker termed ‘soundings’, the performative aspects of African culture. Africa’s musical progeny, jazz, is rendered in the color tones, concentric circles, and the unfolding of figural groups; the viewer’s eye transforms visual rhythms into sound⁶³. Douglas studied African art in the collections of Albert C. Barnes and of Alain Locke, but though this gave him a greater appreciation of African art, it had little effect on his representation and depiction of Africa. In the first painting of the series, *The Negro in an African Setting*, Douglas employs the popular tropes of primit-

fine arts projects: a bibliography, 1933-1992, Scarecrow Press, Metuchen – New York 1994 <https://archive.org/details/newdealfineartsp00kalf> (12.04.2014).

⁶¹ Karal Ann Marling, *Wall To Wall America: Post Office Murals in the Great Depression*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2000, p. 31.

⁶² W.E.B. Du Bois, *Criteria of Negro Art*, “The Crisis,” 1926, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 290-297.

⁶³ Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas...*, p. 121.

ivism such as dancing figures, standing figures holding spears, drummers, and a highlighted fetish statue. The figures are painted in his elongated “Egyptian style.” The only ethnographically accurate image is of the dancing woman, whose profiled hairstyle is that of the *Mangbetu Woman* whom Douglas portrayed for the cover of “Opportunity” magazine (May 1927).

In the last painting, *Song of the Towers*, the Statue of Liberty has replaced the African fetish; the saxophone player the dancer. The first and last paintings represent the quintessential symbols of African and African-American culture. However, *Song of the Towers* also carries a social realist message, a critical comment on the forward march of science and technology, which has had little effect in improving the economic and social lot of Afro-Americans⁶⁴. The icons of American secular society modernism – industrialization and urbanism – are represented by skyscraper buildings, smokestacks, wheel cogs, belching smoke, the jazz musician, and the worker. The tilting perspective presses toward the viewer, virtually obliterating the sky and overshadowing the figures. Through such compositional devices, Douglas reveals his socialist and labour union sympathies. Socialist organizations attracted many African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s because of their credo of social and economic equality, and anti-racism. Artists’ organizations, such as the left-wing Artists’ Union (est. 1934), functioned like any other labour union, fighting for occupational solidarity, better working conditions and economic benefits⁶⁵. Another, the American Artists’ Congress, whose members included Douglas, strove to make a “politically cogent artistic intervention” and were concerned with international and national political issues, such as the Popular Front Against Fascism in 1935. Douglas also belonged to the Harlem Artists Guild, an African-American alternative to the Artists’ Union⁶⁶, whose members desired the visibility and economic opportunities which were denied to most of them. Aaron Douglas wrote in 1936 in his pessimistic essay entitled *The Negro in American Culture*:

Our chief concern has been to establish and maintain recognition of our essential humanity, in other words, complete social and political equality. This has been a difficult fight as we have been the constant object of attack by all manner of propaganda from nursery rhymes to false scientific racial

⁶⁴ Ken Johnson, *Black in America, Painted Euphoric and Heroic*, “The New York Times” 2008, September 12, p. 59.

⁶⁵ Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art...*, p. 121.

⁶⁶ Other Negro Art Organizations in Harlem in 1930 and 1940 were: Savage Studio of Arts and Craft opened; Harlem Community Art Center (1937-1942), Harlem Artists Guild (1935-1941) Harlem Art Workshop (1933-1937). To see more: <https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/from-the-new-era-to-the-great-depression-1920-1933/the-culture-of-change/the-harlem-renaissance/> (29.07.2014).

theories. In this struggle the rest of the proletariat almost invariably has been arrayed against us. Some of us understand why this is so. But the Negro artist, unlike the white artist, has never known the big house. He is essentially a product of the masses and can never take a position above or beyond their level. This simple fact is often overlooked by the Negro artist and almost always by those who in the past have offered what they sincerely considered to be help and friendship⁶⁷.

PHOTOGRAPHY

From the very beginning black photographers used the camera to reclaim their people's experiences and lives, giving their people both humanity and individuality, resisting all the pressure on and stereotypes about African-Americans. From the 1920s to the 1940s, African-American photographers took pictures of prominent Harlem figures and documented the lives of the urban middle class. Skilled photographers felt a responsibility to portray emerging African-American leaders, communities and their lives. Typical such photographer was Addison N. Scurlock (1883-1964), who opened his first business in 1911, in Washington and maintained it there until 1964⁶⁸. The city had a sizeable African-American middle class society, which ensured him a substantial clientele. James Van Der Zee was largely self-taught and maintained a studio in Harlem for almost 50 years. Aside from the artistic merits of his work, Van Der Zee produced the most comprehensive documentation of the period. Among his most famous subjects during this time were Marcus Garvey, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Countee Cullen. By using props in his studio, including architectural elements, backdrops, and costumes, to achieve stylized tableaux vivants in keeping with late Victorian and Edwardian visual traditions, he denoted economic prosperity and education, and, like Addison Scurlock, reworking the photograph to emphasize its pictorial effect. Van Der Zee helped create the period, and not merely document it. When he photographed out-of-doors scenes in Harlem, Van Der Zee selected images which reflected the New Negro, such as: war veterans, funerals, parades, Sunday strollers on Lenox Avenue or in the middle-class neighborhood, Striver's Row on 135th Street as in *Couple with a Cadillac*. He was rediscovered as a documentary photographer and artist in 1968, in the *Harlem On My Mind* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum.

⁶⁷ Aaron Douglas, *The Negro in American Culture*, cited after Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art, ...*, p. 147.

⁶⁸ *The Scurlock Studio and Black Washington: Picturing the Promise*, (ed.) Michelle Delaney, Washington Smithsonian Books 2009, pp. 40-69.

CONCLUSION

Certain aspects of the Harlem Renaissance were accepted without debate, and without scrutiny. One of these was the future of the “New Negro.” Artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance echoed American progressivism in its faith in democratic reform, in its belief in art and literature as agents of change, and in its almost naive belief in itself and its future. This progressive worldview rendered black intellectuals – just like their White counterparts – unprepared for the rude shock of the Great Depression, and the Harlem Renaissance ended abruptly because of naive assumptions about the centrality of culture, unrelated to economic and social realities. And after years of black pride, assimilation and dreams between 1940 and 1963 (this is the year of a public speech “I Have a Dream” delivered by American civil rights activist Martin Luther King) the image of black culture underwent several major transformations. Today in the 21st century, after European artistic dominance and the Negro’s struggle for civil rights, a black cultural consciousness is particularly strong in American visual arts as well as in politics. Since 2009 Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States, and the first African-American to hold this highest office. Strangely enough, one could say that the words of the Black poet Langston Hughes, who wrote in his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926), have finally materialized:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves⁶⁹.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer-Straw Petrine (2000) *Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Asante Molefi K. (1986) *A Note on Nathan Huggins' Report to The Ford Foundation on African-American Studies*, “Journal of Black Studies,” vol. 17, no. 2, 1986, pp. 252-263.

Bernier Celeste-Marie (2008), *African American Visual Arts, British Association for American Studies*, Edinburgh: University Press.

⁶⁹ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I: 1902-1941, I, Too, Sing America*, Oxford University Press: Oxford–New York 2002, p. 131.

Black is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas. The Catalogue (2008), Amsterdam: De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders Publishers.

Bois W.E.B. Du (1903) *The Talented Tenth*, in: *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day*, New York, <https://archive.org/details/negroproblemseri00washrich> (28.07.2014).

Bois W.E.B. Du (1926) *Criteria of Negro Art*, "The Crisis," vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 290-297.

Bouvet Vincent, Durozoi Gérard (2010) *Paris Between the Wars Art, Style and Glamour in the Crazy Years*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Francis Theodore O., Francis Ted (2002) *Realism in the Novels of the Harlem Renaissance*, Lincoln: iUniverse.

Henry Louis Gates *Introduction* (2007) in: *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-20.

Gendro Bernard (2002) *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, London: University Of Chicago Press.

Gill Brendon (1992) *On Astor Row*, "The New Yorker", 2 November.

Hanks Eric, *Journey From The Crossroads: Palmer Hayden's Right Turn*, "International Review of African American Art" 1999, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 30-42.

Huggins Nathan Irvin (1973) *Harlem Renaissance*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Hutchinson George (1995), *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jegede Dele, *Encyclopedia of African American Artists*, Greenwood Press, Conn 2009.

Johnson Ken (2008) *Black in America, Painted Euphoric and Heroic*, "The New York Times", September 12.

Kalfatovic Martin R. (1994) *The New Deal fine arts projects: a bibliography, 1933-1992*, Metuchen – New York: Scarecrow Press <https://archive.org/details/newdealfineartsp00kalf> (12.04.2014).

Karal Ann Marling (2000) *Wall To Wall America: Post Office Murals in the Great Depression*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kelly Julia (2007) *Discipline and indiscipline: the ethnographies of Documents*, "Papers of Surrealism. The Use-Value of Documents", vol. 7. <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papers/ofsurrealism/journal7/acrobat%20files/articles/Kellypdf.pdf>.

Kirschke Amy Helene, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 1995.

Leininger-Miller Theresa, *New Negro Artists in Paris: African American Painters and Sculptors in the City of Light, 1922-1934*, Rutgers University Press 2001.

Metcalf Eugene W. (1983) *Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control*, "Winterthur Portfolio," vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 271-289.

- Molesworth Charles (2012) *The Works of Alain Locke*, New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moyer Steve (2014) *Party: Archibald Motley painted African American having a good time*, "Humanities", vol. 35, no. 3.
- Murry Albert (1979) *An Interview with Hale A. Woodruff*, in: *Hale A. Woodruff: 50 Years of His Art*, New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem.
- Newman Richard (1998) *African American Quotations*, Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Otfinoski Steven (2003) *African Americans in the Visual Arts.*, New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Ott John (2008) *Labored Stereotypes: Palmer Hayden's "The Janitor Who Paints."* "American Art", vol. 22, no.1, pp. 102-115.
- Patton Sharon F. (1998) *African-American Art*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Powell Richard J.(2002) *Black Art: A Cultural History*, London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd.
- Rampersad Arnold (1999) *Introduction*, in: *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. IX-XXIII.
- Rampersad Arnold (2002) *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I: 1902-1941, I, Too, Sing America*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson Jontyle Theresa, Greenhouse Wendy (1991) *The Art of Archibald J. Motley, Jr.*, Chicago: Sewall Co.
- Sculptures, Drawings, Paintings And Mixed Media By David C. Driskell* (2002) <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/PressRelease/CreativeSpirit.php> (12.04.2014).
- Smith Roberta (2013) *In Electric Moments, History Transfigured – Hale Woodruff's Talladega Murals*, "New York Times", 13 August.
- The Scurlock Studio and Black Washington: Picturing The Promise* (2009) ed. Michelle Delaney, Smithsonian Books: Washington.
- Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (1995) ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whiting Cécile (2001) *More Than Meets the Eye: Archibald Motley and Debates on Race in Art*, "Prospects", vol. 26, pp. 449-476.

**AMBIWALENCJA KULTURY AFROAMERYKAŃSKIEJ.
SZTUKA „NOWYCH MURZYŃÓW” W OKRESIE MIĘDZYWOJENNYM
(streszczenie)**

Odnosząc się do kwestii marginalizacji w sztuce trudno nie wspomnieć o kontrowersjach otaczających sztukę Afroamerykanów. W okresie kolonialnym, a także podczas krystalizacji amerykańskiej tożsamości narodowej, sztuka ta została odrzucona wraz z całością afrykańskiego dziedzictwa kulturowego. Uznanie znaczenia tej kultury i sztuki pojawiło się jako istotna kwestia dopiero u zarania XX wieku wraz z europejską modą na Czarną Afrykę uzupełnioną

o jazzowe fascynacje z USA. Ważnym etapem poprzedzającym powstanie sztuki „Nowych Czarnych” były próby poszukiwania wyrazu dla afroamerykańskiej tożsamości, świadomie ignorujące różnicę w pigmentacji skóry. Były to wyraźne dążenia do znalezienia wspólnego głosu z białym etosem i tradycją amerykańskiej klasy średniej.

Po raz pierwszy afroamerykańscy artyści jak grupa stali się dominującym elementem amerykańskiej sztuki wizualnej i literatury jako ruch “Renesansu z Harlemu” (*Harlem Renaissance*) w latach 1920 i 1930. Inną nazwą tego nurtu było określenie “Nowi Murzyni” (*New Negro*) ukuty w 1925 roku przez Alain Leroy Locke’a. Twórczości Afroamerykanów w tym okresie przeżywa prawdziwą eksplozję talentów w wielu dziedzinach, w tym sztuki, literatury i filozofii. Czołowi czarni artyści z lat 1920–1940 to: Archibald Motley, Palmer Hayden, Aaron Douglas, Hale Aspacio Woodruff, James Van Der Zee.

Słowa kluczowe: Afroamerykanie – “Nowi Murzyni” – “Renesans z Harlemu” – fotografia – “sztuka afrykańska” – murale – XX wiek – malarstwo.

Roman Kubicki

*Institute of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań
rokub@amu.edu.pl*

THE DISCREET CHARM OF MARGINS. A CONSIDERED ATTEMPT TO MAKE A TIMID INTRODUCTION TO THE RATHER NON-EXISTENT AESTHETICS OF BLAISE PASCAL

Abstract: The article is an attempt to show how in the so-called Pascal's Wager, the great French philosopher and physicist conducts a process of aestheticization of basic religious concepts and categories, which leads to their gradual marginalization. Thus, he falls into the trap of aestheticization, against which he warns us in his entire philosophy. As a result, the choice of eternal life ceases to be the only possible conclusion of the Wager. The affirmation of the principle "as though" by God leads to his aestheticization. In the world of the aesthetic God's love, eternal damnation turns out to be not only unlikely, but even impossible.

Keywords: man – "as though" – marginalization – love – eternity.

INTRODUCTION

This is presumably the question that has accompanied man since the dawn of history. It refers either to man alone or to the world, in which he must be necessarily located. Outside the world, man is nothing, and does not match any network of concepts; and conversely, the world free from the scrutiny of the human mind and eye is also the same nothingness.

Men are formed by their deeds and failures, thoughts, dreams, memories, hopes and fears, remorse and ambitions. They are also formed by their experiences, emotions, joys and sorrows, desires and resentment. I mention the many factors that constitute humanity in a slightly chaotic manner, to

meet the wisdom of the paradoxes creating the reality of every life, rather than the certainty of the logic entangled in the need for a dead order. The proposed, methodologically extremely loose definition of man should be complemented by one very important word. Then it will sound as follows: Men are formed by all their deeds, all their thoughts, all their dreams and all their failures, all their memories, all their hopes and all their fears, all their remorse and all their ambitions. They are a sum of all their experiences, all their emotions, all their joys and all their sorrows, all their desires and all their resentment. And then there is this ages-old question: do all these aforementioned, active elements of life create life and therefore men themselves equally intensely and effectively?

Every culture celebrates only some events in the history of man, thus stressing their greater importance in its shaping and formation. Every culture has its own hierarchies, favourites and preferences. Although each one is different, it would be inappropriate not to recognize similarities even between very different and distant cultural projects of humanity. One can be human in a number of ways, but each of them is always about man. By emphasizing some values and events, we diminish the importance of other values and events at the same time. The marginalization of its different moments and aspects is an important part of every life. By stigmatizing them, we create more space for other aspects of our lives. The values we cultivate are never the values we despise.

Plato was one of the first philosophers who denied ontological autonomy and independence to the world accessible to the senses. The world of ideas, with whose shadows we co-exist in this world, which is only a margin of real existence, has turned up to be more real. Real existence, actual existence, is opposed to the existence which does not meet all the conditions of truth and reality. This world, whose existence cannot be doubted by common sense, nevertheless exists incompletely, marginally, partially, or it possibly exists only in a special sense. Plato performs the complex process of the marginalization of the world, stigmatizes its existence and denies it the right to truth, beauty and goodness.

EVANGELICAL MARGINS

Christianity continues the process of the marginalization of the world. Although man, who inhabits it, was created in the image and likeness of God, he gets closer to Him only when he moves away from this world. The approach to life of the early Christians was an essential part of their belief in

the impending end of the world. Saint Peter claimed that “The end of all things is near”¹ Elsewhere he writes: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of person ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”² Not only do good Christians wait for the end of the world, but they try to make it come sooner by being pious. It is difficult to decide how pious human behaviour can affect the date of the heralded day of God. Perhaps the point is that there are fewer and fewer pious people in the world every day and so it inevitably approaches its ultimate immersion in nothingness; or perhaps every prayer of a pious man is basically asking God to end this world as soon as possible. The more of such prayers are said, the greater the hope that they will be finally heard.

If this world is soon to end, it will be better for people if it is never important and essential for them. The world marked by the stigma of the end is not worth our attachment to it. It is difficult to part with the important and essential world to which we are used, and in which we have settled and found ourselves. That is why St. John has no doubt – the world is terrible and does not deserve our commitment: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”³ The world is strongly associated with “the lust of the flesh,” called today a rich and satisfying sexual life; “the lust of the eyes” brings to mind the broadly-defined aesthetic sphere, the centre of which is generally identified with art, and “the pride of life,” which is expressed by three sinful and blind desires (the desire to exercise power over people – politics, the desire to rule the world – science, and the desire to possess the things of this world – wealth) and two sturdy beliefs, which are deaf to the arguments of life (the belief of young people in their own youth and the belief of healthy people in their own

¹ *The Bible, New International Version*, 1 Peter 4:7, www.biblegateway.com, accessed on 04.09.2014.

² 2 Peter 3: 10-14.

³ 1 John 2: 15-17.

health). It is difficult not to agree with St. John. Those who ask God to end this world are neither those who are satisfied with their sexual life, nor those who daily contemplate the beauty of images and the resulting beauty of the world, nor those who are eternally young kings or presidents or who are going to pick up another Nobel Prize in physics, nor yet those who are young, healthy and filthy rich.

If this world is soon to end, the inevitable thing to ask is what it should be like to benefit people who will soon undergo the test (sometimes referred to as the Last Judgment), on the basis of which they will be resettled: some people will go to heaven, others – to hell. The already quoted St. Peter has no doubts: “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”⁴ If suffering in their bodies makes people break with sin, the world in which it is at least possible to experience this kind of suffering seems to be the best from the point of view of the hope for eternal life. It is not surprising that the early Christians did not fight “this world” because they believed, and perhaps even knew that its end was near, and they did not try to change it, improve it or make it more bearable. Because, as I have already noted, if the world is bearable, one can get used to it and even genuinely like it. The world in which martyrdom in the name of God is possible is ethically safer than the world which seduces us with the beauty of its temptations. Isn’t it said that the worse it is, the better? It must be admitted that the Roman world of the first two centuries of the Common Era fulfilled these conditions. Only courageous people who were able to combine concern for their constantly endangered daily lives with the constant necessity of referring to the eschata could be Christians.

The braver people are, the simpler the world in which and with which they live. The world of spiritually advanced and courageous people is either dominated by the climate of two-valued logic, or it is a bit different world. In the logical climate, some grow up to be good and some to be bad. A good man is recognized by his good deeds and an evil man – by his bad deeds. Heaven awaits the former, while hell – the latter. There are no intermediate states and values where the spirit of irony and dialectics would prevail – i.e. such states and values which are neither only good nor only bad. The climate of bivalent logic seems to be the closest to the Spirit of the New Testament. “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am

⁴ 1 Peter 4:1-2.

about to spit you out of my mouth.”⁵ – we read in the Revelation. “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one”⁶ – says Christ.

PASCAL’S MARGINS

The dilemmas were discussed by the French philosopher Blaise Pascal at the threshold of modernity. This was an uncommon and tragic figure. He was a great physicist⁷ and an equally important philosopher. As a brilliant physicist, he was one of the fathers of modern Europe, and – sticking to the family nomenclature – an evident grandfather of the Enlightenment. As a philosopher, he could not accept the gradual abandonment of the cognitive and axiological habits characteristic of the religious society that he had to witness. Pascal the philosopher was notoriously vacillating. He was a man of great and deep faith, but he could only see the people of small and shallow faith around him. The protagonists of his philosophy are the people who are no longer able to believe God, even if they still believe in God. Their faith in God does not make them strong and open to the future. He described the “condition of man” as “inconstancy, weariness, unrest.”⁸ (127) Inaction is the worst condition, because it condemns human society to the company of their own thoughts, which do not thrive with the words of prayer that would get them closer to God, but evolve into a curse thrown on every life: “Nothing is so insufferable to man as to be completely at rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without study. He then feels his nothingness, his forlornness, his insufficiency, his dependence, his weakness, his emptiness. There will immediately arise from the depth of his heart weariness, gloom, sadness, fretfulness, vexation, despair”⁹ (131) Therefore, people either try to be constantly active (“We never seek things for themselves, but for the search. {135}¹⁰”), or if they are social idlers (e.g. kings of little faith), they fill their free time with entertainment, which more or less effectively frees them from the unfortunate company of their own thoughts.¹¹

⁵ Revelation 3:15-16.

⁶ Matthew 5:37.

⁷ According to the nomenclature of that time, Pascal saw himself only as a philosopher.

⁸ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, transl. W. F. Trotter, Courier Dover Publications, New York 2003, p. 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹ “Consider this. What is it to be superintendent, chancellor, first president, but to be in a condition wherein from early morning a large number of people come from all quarters to see them, so as not to leave them an hour in the day in which they can think of

Naturally, Pascal himself is not afraid of thinking. He stresses that “Man is obviously made to think. It is his whole dignity and his whole merit; and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now, the order of thought is to begin with self, and with its Author and its end.” So we should engage in serious thought, but unfortunately, we rarely do. “Now, of what does the world think? Never of this, but of dancing, playing the lute, singing, making verses, running at the ring, etc., fighting, making oneself king, without thinking what it is to be a king and what to be a man.”¹² (146) There is good thinking and bad thinking. Most often we do not think of what exists, but of what does not exist any longer or does not exist yet. Thus, the object of our thinking is non-existence, because existence seems not to be inspiring enough: “Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so.”¹³ (172) Although there is only the present, it does not preoccupy us. We marginalize it – suggests Pascal – to expose the past and the future. The hope for life is seen as more important than life itself.

Contemporary consumer society, which focuses on enjoying the moment, is rather free from the cult of the past and the future. They both spoil the taste of life because it is always happening here and now. Consumers build monuments only to the heroes of the modern times, the stars of the ongoing present; they revere only those who teach the sophisticated art of collecting experiences and as many flavours of life as possible, rather than the difficult art of dying for a worthy and true life. Pascal observes that “Anyone who does not see the vanity of the world is very vain himself. So who does not see it, apart from young people whose lives are all noise, diversions, and thoughts for the future? But take away their diversion and you will see them bored to extinction. Then they feel their nullity without recognizing it, for nothing could be more wretched than to be intolerably depressed as soon as one is reduced to introspection with no means of diversion.”¹⁴ (164) He does not explain how one can be devoted to tumult, entertainment and thoughts of the

themselves? And when they are in disgrace and sent back to their country houses, where they lack neither wealth nor servants to help them on occasion, they do not fail to be wretched and desolate, because no one prevents them from thinking of themselves.” (139),

ibid., p. 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

future at the same time. After all, entertainment is an activity in the present, which can only herald more entertainment. Whoever puts on the shoes of the future must move beyond the limits of the present. Pascal, who warns against thinking about the past and the future, is probably a bit inconsistent. This becomes particularly evident in the famous “Pascal’s Wager.” After all, it is especially the knowledge of the past that tells us what will surely be our future. It is only in the past that we can find people who are no longer alive; more precisely – it is only in the past that we cannot find other people, i.e. people who are still alive. Only the past is inhabited by dead people who, no matter how long they once lived, now are still only dead. When we think about the past, we have to think about death. There is no place for life even on the margins of such thinking. The present is more chaotic, heterogeneous and somehow misleading in this respect. It is true that it is still made up of people who are continually dying somewhere or other. The present knows death very well, but no matter how well it knows it, it is not thanks to the people who are dying, but thanks to those who are still alive. The present experience of death is always an experience of life. It is death, not life, that is a noble plant of the present; life is a weed that needs to be able to bloom in any conditions, even in the desert. No matter how much death there is in the present, there is always more of life. As Zbigniew Herbert puts it beautifully:

cemeteries grow larger the number of defenders is smaller
yet the defence continues it will continue to the end
and if the City falls but a single man escapes
he will carry the City within himself on the roads of exile
he will be the City.”¹⁵

It is not the present but the past that is a living proof of the omnipresence and omnipotence of death. Pascal wants man to live in the dark light of death. In the consumer society, man lives, even though he will die; Pascal’s man lives in order to die. For the “vain men” death is a probably inevitable error of life, a frivolous freak of nature, an obvious mistake of God; for Pascal it is death that defines the meaning of the earthly life, because only death can transform it into eternal life. Life is worth living as long as death is a sign of hope, not fear. The present is still fascinated with those who are alive; only the past is made of those who have passed the mysterious portals of death. As always, Pascal does not avoid meanders and paradoxes. In passage 211, he writes: “We are fools to depend upon the society of our fellow-men. Wretched as we are, powerless as we are, they will not aid us; we shall die alone. We should therefore act as if we were alone, and in that case should

¹⁵ Z. Herbert, *Report from the Besieged City*, transl. John Carpenter and Bogdan Carpenter, The Ecco Press, New York 1985.

we build fine houses, etc.? We should seek the truth without hesitation; and, if we refuse it, we show that we value the esteem of men more than the search for truth.”¹⁶

Let us repeat, “We shall die alone. We should therefore act as if we were alone.” Death cannot be a shared experience; even the most mass and anonymous death always takes only specific people from the realm of life; every death sentences man to remain in a cocoon of increasing loneliness. Pascal is right. Man dies alone and should therefore behave as if he were alone: the conclusion is painfully logically correct and valid. However, passage 216 states: “Sudden death alone is feared; hence confessors stay with lords.”¹⁷ Does man’s chance for eternal life depend on the possibility of employing a number of full-time priests? Admittedly, the financial aspect makes this eschatological reflection somewhat comical.

If we avoid loneliness, if we do not remove other people from our lives, but, on the contrary, we do everything to have as many of them around us as possible, that would mean – warns Pascal – that we value the esteem of men more than the search for truth. On the one hand, there is the esteem of men, on the other hand – the search for truth. We will not understand the meaning of this opposition unless we find a common semantic denominator for these concepts. Perhaps the concept of love is the denominator? Then it turns out that if we do not marginalize other people in our lives, but, on the contrary, we do our best to make them occupy as much space in it as possible, it means that we value men’s love and our love for men higher than the love of God and our love for God.

The Great Commandment which is fundamental to the Christian religion – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (...) Love your neighbour as yourself”¹⁸ – has always raised many doubts. I do not mean the biting comments made by the people of little or no faith, who argue that we often have negative feelings for our neighbours – even jealousy, envy, pride, contempt, disdain or hatred – rather than love in any sense. I mean the confessions of the saints, i.e. men of undoubtedly great and deep faith. These dilemmas were known to the Desert Fathers, among others, who co-created the tradition of Christian spirituality. St. Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 330-390) wrote that he wished he could be like a broad-winged pigeon, or a swallow, to escape the life of people and to live in some desert.¹⁹ Also, when asked why he shunned people, the monk Arsenius

¹⁶ B. Pascal, *Pensées...*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁸ Matthew 22: 36-39.

¹⁹ See: W. N. Losski, *Teologia mistyczna Kościoła Wschodniego*, transl. Maria Szczaniecka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2007, p. 105.

(ca. 354-449) answered, “God knows that I love you, but I cannot live with God and with men. (...) So I cannot leave God to be with men.”²⁰ When the monk goes to meet God, he does not need anyone but himself. It turns out that the possibility of experiencing God is inversely proportional to the possibility of experiencing a particular person. The more we focus on a particular person, the less space for God is left in our hearts; the more of God in our hearts, the less specific the person we love. Those who love all the children of the world rarely wake up hearing a particular child cry at night. Or rather, those who love (want to love?!) all the children of this world, are most bothered by a particular cry of one of them. We either lose ourselves in the love for God, humanity and all people, or we are absorbed by the love for specific people, each of whom has a face and represents only his or her particular history. In contrast to a particular person, who cannot be appropriated by any idea, mankind perfectly fits its concept. At the end of the 18th century, Kant’s philosophical rival, Johann Georg Hamann, claimed that only the particular is real, i.e. what something is due to its uniqueness, difference, and not to the traits it has in common with other things, events or thoughts. It is precisely these common features that the generalizing sciences try to capture. “Passion alone gives to abstractions and hypotheses hands, feet, wings.”²¹

Certainly, the presence of another human being is most extremely experienced in a sexual act, when the whole world is reduced to his or her factuality. Bliss knows only itself: there is neither the world nor God. St. Augustine writes that “This lust triumphs not only over the whole body, and not only outwardly, but inwardly also. When the emotion of the mind is united with the craving of the flesh, it convulses the whole man, so that there follows a pleasure greater than any other: a bodily pleasure so great that, at that moment of time when he achieves his climax, the alertness and, so to speak, vigilance of a man’s mind is almost entirely overwhelmed.”²² In this description, the effects of sexual fulfilment become similar to the effects of death. There is, of course, a significant difference between them. Namely, death “overwhelms” not “almost entire” but the entire alertness and the entire vigilance of a man’s mind. Death, which frees man from this world, opens him to eternal life; orgasm, on the contrary, anchors man in this earthly

²⁰ B. Ward, transl. *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo 1975, p. 11.

²¹ Quoted in: Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North: J.G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York 1993, p. 61.

²² Saint Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, transl. R.W. Dyson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, Book XIV, Chapter 16.

life. “You would soon have faith, if you renounced pleasure” (240)²³ – Pascal assures us.

Pascal thinks of death in order to marginalize life. The less greed for earthly life, the greater the likelihood of achieving eternal life. We either choose God or we choose the world. “‘God is, or He is not’. But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separates us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.”²⁴ (233) Reason is helpless as it is unable to definitely indicate which choice is good and which is bad. Pascal uses strong language in noting that “It is incomprehensible that God should exist, and it is incomprehensible that He should not exist; that the soul should be joined to the body, and that we should have no soul; that the world should be created, and that it should not be created, etc.; that original sin should be, and that it should not be.” (230)²⁵ Although reason gives man the awareness of having to choose, it also presents itself as dominated by it. The necessity of reason to make the choice turns out to be infinitely weaker than the capacities of reason itself. The choice must be made, even though it cannot be made. Contrary to logic, the inability to make a choice does not exempt us from its necessity. Pascal introduces the concept of risk, due to which the choice is not only necessary, but also becomes possible. We remember the old story of Buridan’s ass, starving to death between two equidistant and equally tempting bales of hay. The donkey died because it failed to be an absolutely and infinitely rational being: it was unable to make a choice, even though it was a necessary condition of its survival. Had the unfortunate animal enriched its language with the concept of risk to describe its dramatic existential situation, it would have survived because then its existence would depend on the cold wisdom of chance, rather than necessity: it is not certainty but uncertainty which is the fundamental category in the world described in the language of risk. The need for absolute certainty paves the way for death, not life. The opposite of the need for absolute certainty is not absolute uncertainty, but human certainty, which is imperfect and flawed, and every now and then stumbles over its imperfection. The donkey died, because it did not fear death so much as it feared risk, which is one of many concepts relevant for every life.

²³ B. Pascal, *Pensées...*, p. 70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Although Pascal's reason cannot formulate clearly and definitely true statements concerning the eschata, it can compare gain and potential loss resulting from certain choices. First, Pascal assumes that God exists. "Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing: if you win, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing." (233) The gain is "an infinity of life and happiness" (233), while the loss is "poisonous pleasures, glory and luxury" (233). Pascal asks: "Now, what harm will befall you in taking this side?" He replies: "You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful" (233). In addition, he promises: "I will tell you that you will thereby gain in this life, and that, at each step you take on this road, you will see so great certainty of gain, so much nothingness in what you risk, that you will at last recognise that you have wagered for something certain and infinite, for which you have given nothing"²⁶ (233). Although reason was able to make a choice only after associating the reality of the choice with risk, it turned out after choosing God and eternity that the memory of uncertainty, initially present in the situation of choice, was suppressed by the deepening awareness of the certainty of the gain waiting for man after his death. At the very beginning of the wager, the existence of infinite eternal happiness was not certain; it became so only in the light of the choice. The more strongly we choose eternal life, the more it becomes real. Resignation from worldly pleasures that separate us from eternal life is most justified and correct, and even obvious and necessary.

DOUBTS

Pascal's reasoning, however, raises at least two questions. The first is whether man is able to take the side of God and eternity, whose condition is giving up earthly pleasures. The second is whether God can condemn man to eternal suffering.

THE FIRST DOUBT: TO BE AS THOUGH

As regards the first question, Pascal addresses this issue in his conversation with a man, probably a sceptic, who, convinced by the philosopher, would like to choose God, but cannot do it. How can he choose God, if he does not believe in Him? How can he get on the road to God, if he does not know

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

where God is and he neither sees nor hears Him? The sceptic agrees with Pascal's reasoning: "I confess it, I admit it. But, still, is there no means of seeing the faces of the cards?" (233) Pascal replies: "Yes, Scripture and the rest, etc." (233) The Sceptic observes: "Yes; but I have my hands tied, and my mouth closed; I am forced to wager, and am not free. I am not released, and am so made that I cannot believe. What, then, would you have me do?" (233) Pascal patiently explains: "True. But at least learn your inability to believe, since reason brings you to this, and yet you cannot believe. Endeavour then to convince yourself, not by increase of proofs of God, but by the abatement of your passions." (233) The source of "the inability to believe" is not reason, but the passions that bind man to other people or himself too intensively. Although reason wants to choose God, passions still take man away from Him, because – I repeat – they bind them too much to this world.

Therefore, Pascal writes, "Endeavour then to convince yourself, not by increase of proofs of God, but by the abatement of your passions" (233). It makes no sense for the man who is unable to believe in God to look for Him by seeking the direct signs of His presence in his heart or in the world. He will not find Him as long as he is looking for God alone. The man is like a wanderer who will never reach the horizon of the landscape he admires, because at every step he takes to get closer to the line, the final judgment of death is passed. Pascal suggests: "You would like to attain faith, and do not know the way; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now stake all their possessions. These are people who know the way which you would follow, and who are cured of an ill of which you would be cured." (233) Not only does he not tell the Sceptic where to look for the people who would be the example to follow, but he also takes it for granted that they enjoy eternal happiness after death. We know (or more precisely: we know or we do not know) that they quelled their passions – that, in particular, they managed to avoid the sin of the orgasm, the delight of tasting pork knuckle and the need for glory. This is what we know (or not). But do we know anything about their eternal life when we encounter their remains in our mundane world? We do know (or we do not know) what they have given up. We do not know, however, what they have earned. The desire for eternal happiness still turns out to be the only reliable evidence for its existence. Pascal advises: "Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc." (233) This advice raises doubts and concern. The man who does not believe in God, and does not love God, is told to behave as though he believed in God and as though he loved God. Pascal writes only about the faith in God, he does not mention the love for God. He is right! In contrast to the language of the world

of faith, the language of love does not accept the phrase “as though”. The sentence: “I do not love you, but I will behave as though I loved you” does not make sense in the world of love. As Kierkegaard puts it beautifully, “the only way he (man) could satisfy the claim implied by the other’s love was by loving in return.”²⁷ The one who loves, desires and needs only love. While God loves man, man can give God only his love. If man gives God only manifestations of love, such as words of prayer and good deeds, but does not have love, he gives Him nothing. Pascal, however, believes otherwise: “Even this will naturally make you believe, and deaden your acuteness.” (233) The Sceptic does not hide his consternation: “But this is what I am afraid of.”²⁸ (233) For the Sceptic, the lack of acuteness is the greatest threat to this variant of humanity, whose history, not by accident, begins with picking the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Pascal, however, chooses a different variant: “And why? What have you to lose?” If reason is an obstacle on the path to eternal salvation, it should be removed from it. The most important thing is – as Pascal tells the Sceptic – that even the most fake faith is able to tame the passions of man, which most effectively keep people away from God.

Passions – I repeat again – keep man away from God, because the person who succumbs to them forgets about Him. Passions are not familiar with the problem of God. The less of Him, the better for the passions – it is best if God simply does not exist. God that exists can only disturb the passions. Therefore, those who follow the path of passions are not followed by the shadow of God. The situation of those who follow the path of reason is quite different. Even when they argue His non-existence, they have to talk about Him. The shadow of God – even of a non-existent God – still accompanies them on their path of disbelief. Let us put this straight: even the God who lives only in the language which still undermines His existence is not a weak God.²⁹ When reason works, i.e. when man becomes a hostage of the claims and expectations of reason, God somehow exists, even if He surely does not exist in the light of reason. When man becomes a slave to passions even for a moment, God is absent in his life at least within this time, even if He exists. In the world of reason, God exists at least in the rudimentary form of the name of a problem; there is simply no place for God in the world of moments which are faithful only to passions. In contrast to reason, which can find the

²⁷ S.A. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, transl. D.F. Swenson, L.M. Swenson, W. Lowrie, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1974, vol. 2, p. 112.

²⁸ B. Pascal, *Pensées...*, p. 68.

²⁹ It is true that God, sometimes represented by Mary or Jesus, also appears in the language in which actors in sexual intercourse make a linguistically intersubjectively communicable account on it. It is, however, a significantly different presence.

source of positive inspiration even in the God that does not exist, passions can only be disturbed by God. I do not argue with Pascal's radicalism regarding the ethically fatal status of the passions. I am just interested in the image of man who suppresses his own passions, not because he believes in God, but because he wants to believe in God and therefore he imitates all the other people who have previously managed to quell their passions and thus got on the road leading to God. I do not question the credibility of the information. I accept, therefore, that all those other people who have inspired our hero to take this very heroic decision, have overcome their passions not only in terms of their deeds (human sexual activity is the subject of intersubjectively communicable and controllable knowledge³⁰), but also of their thoughts and desires (even though this sphere rather escapes such decent knowledge). But how can I be sure that they have managed to get on the road to God, if even they cannot have such certainty? The fact that one does not care about the passions does not necessarily mean that they bow down to God at the same time. The fact that one rejects the world does not logically assume that they choose God or that God will imminently dwell in their life. Allowing the attitude "as though"³¹ and placing one's hope in it can make the community of believers consist mainly of people who indeed behave as though they believed in God, although in reality they do not believe in Him. They are both those who already know that they need to live as though they believed in God, because one day this attitude may lead them to Him, and those – numerous siblings of Pascal's Sceptic – who have only recently begun to imitate them. A broad picture of the history of the world is thus created, developed by people behaving in accordance with the principles of faith, including those who do not yet believe in God, and those who think they have already chosen Him, because they have given up the charms of the temporary. Pascal seems not to take this variant into account.

The proposed principle of "as though" was to attract as many people as possible to the religious aspect of life. What counts are not means, but religious goals. Therefore, Pascal, a determined critic of art and aesthetics, does not hesitate to give the road to God a uniquely aesthetic character. He was so long and so intensely at war with art that his philosophical project inevitably came to resemble art itself. Why is it that "all great amusements

³⁰ Those who have a hidden sexual life, even though they claim in public that they have managed to control their sexual needs, are philosophically uninteresting. Only those are inspiring who actually suppressed them despite the fact they did not believe in God yet, and just wanted to believe in Him.

³¹ Let me remind you that the acting formula was repeated by Hobbes. The man who is by nature a wolf to their neighbour, behaves as though they were a good man or, in other words, they play the role of a good man on the stage of life.

are dangerous to the Christian life”? And why is it that “among those which the world has invented there is none more to be feared than the theatre”? (10, II). Pascal’s reply is obvious: theatre represents even the most hideous passions as though they were “chaste and virtuous” in the light of love (10, II). “So we depart from the theatre with our hearts so filled with all the beauty and tenderness of love, the soul and the mind so persuaded of its innocence, that we are quite ready to receive its first impressions, or rather to seek an opportunity of awakening them in the heart of another, in order that we may receive the same pleasures and the same sacrifices which we have seen so well represented in the theatre.”³² (10, II) Things that are as though they were good in the world of art are clearly bad from the religious point of view. “Two faces which resemble each other, make us laugh, when together, by their resemblance, though neither of them by itself makes us laugh.” (133) They make us laugh, because even though they are two faces, they are as though they were one face. “How useless is painting, which attracts admiration by the resemblance of things, the originals of which we do not admire.”³³ (134) The “as though” principle violates the objective criteria of existence. That which exists turns out to be less important than that which only looks as though it existed.

The aesthetic principle of “as though” is not applicable only within the domain of art. It occurs wherever there is inflation of credibility, integrity and truth. Pascal notes: “If the physicians had not their cassocks and their mules, if the doctors had not their square caps and their robes four times too wide, they would never have duped the world, which cannot resist so original an appearance.” (82) Thanks to the aesthetic tricks, doctors present themselves as though they “had true justice” and physicians – as though they “had the true art of healing.” Because they have “only imaginary knowledge, they must employ those silly tools that strike the imagination with which they have to deal; and thereby in fact they inspire respect.”³⁴ (82) However, the quest for truth should not be the answer to the lack thereof: “When we do not know the truth (...), it is of advantage that there should exist a common error which determines the mind of man (...) For the chief malady of man is restless curiosity about things which he cannot understand; and it is not so bad for him to be in error as to be curious to no purpose.”³⁵ (18) Does it mean that those who are in error behave as though they knew? Soldiers are not subject to this aesthetic principle. They cannot behave as though they have

³² B. Pascal, *Pensées...*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

killed; as opposed to actors who play their roles, they always and everywhere have to kill in reality.

Pascal gives plenty of examples of the bad effects of the aestheticization of life and the world. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to extend it to the faith in God. He forgets that the once-triggered principle of “as though” “is infinitely multiplied” (121) and thus creates a new “kind of infinity and eternity.”³⁶ (121)

Imagine the death of a person who abandoned the consumption of all beauty of the mundane world and on this basis he was convinced he already found God in his heart. He learns from God, who exists, that it is unfortunately the other way round. Or it turns out that he behaves “as though” he has abandoned the world, or that the motives for this abandonment are not commendable. While it is true that he has given up the world, it is not true that he has done so in order to worship and love God. “You did so” – he can hear – “because you were obedient to the promptings of your pride, which protected you effectively from the sinful charms of other people. You loved yourself too much to be able to desire or love other people. Be damned forever.”

THE SECOND DOUBT: MAN IN THE MAZE OF ETERNITY

The first doubt deprives those who have turned away from the mundane world of the certainty of achieving eternal happiness. The second doubt restores this certainty.

This doubt is well illustrated in a particular scene of the novel *Blessed are the Meek: a Novel about St. Francis of Assisi* by the Polish writer Zofia Kossak. St. Francis is the main protagonist of the book. He is looking at the Sphinx in the company of his former confrere. The confrere is a man of little faith, who had once even betrayed Francis. His view of the world is a lot different than that of the saint. He says to Francis: “the Moslems say that demons made him and he himself is a demon...” Francis replies: “A blue clad feminine figure with the Child in her arms passed over these sands many centuries ago. Maybe it was her return that the stone face awaited? For was she not to beg and obtain salvation for all?³⁷ Salvation for all!... Nature

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁷ In the original Polish version of the book, between the words “salvation for all...?” and “Nature,” there is an additional excerpt, absent in the English version. In my opinion, it is important and therefore I include its possibly literal (non-literary) translation: “He closed his eyes under the pressure of images. He recalled the old, well-known adage that the devil

would once more become sacred and pure even as it was before the fall. Nature... Was it not Nature that smiled with the lips of stone, gazing into the space over the desert? And did it not smile just because it knew of its future liberation and was awaiting it? Only a pagan could call the Sphinx a demon or the work of a demon. Demon meant nothing but struggle and unrest, and the Sphinx breathed peace. ... No, he was no demon but the core of the Earth, Nature itself, defiled by the sin of man, abused, enslaved, yet smiling in the sense of its inherent, immortal sacredness. And the mystery of the Sphinx – why, it was the conviction of ultimate salvation!”³⁸

Since man is a finite being, each time his existence is entangled in some possible kind of infinity and eternity, it is doomed to a paradox. When travelling on the finite road that connects Berlin and Warsaw, we will either arrive at the German capital, or we will enjoy the views of the Polish capital. However, no matter how quickly we run along the path of infinity, in reality we remain in the same place. The drama of all thinking about God is that it is always carried on in some impure language. The language is impure because it consists of the concepts that are also used in thinking about the mundane world. We are much more unhygienic in the sphere of language than in the sphere of the vessels and devices that satisfy the numerous and very different needs of our bodies. Perhaps this accounts for the tradition of using spells or secret words in certain unusual situations. The word “abracadabra” does not mean anything and thus it is not polluted by any ordinary concerns. The

never asks the man who sells his soul to him to renounce the Blessed Virgin, because he hopes that someday she will intercede for him and obtain a pardon for him. And his thoughts soared with frightening speed across the times. He had a wonderful dream. Though he knew it was only a dream, he could not get away from it. Here the world is coming to an end. The stars have already lived their lives and gone out. The terrible Judgement is taking place. And once the Judgement is made, Mary covers the damned, the hell and the devils with Her mantle and asks:

– Forgive them, forgive! I carried you in my womb, so you cannot refuse it!

– They are cursed – replies Christ. – They have denied me, God, and so I have denied them too!

And Mary said,

– They have never denied me, and the one who believes in the Mother, believes in the Son. And Christ will graciously nod his head and hell will get empty, while heaven will get full. And Evil will cease to exist ... There will be no Evil! ...

The thought excited him. He was overcome with the desire to quickly get out of the valley, where they were lying, and dance, and sing. He honestly wanted to come face to face with the devil, and speak to him, using St. Martin’s words:

– Brother satan, even you can be saved!

...There will be no evil... Z. Kossak, *Bez oręza*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 2003, p. 281, (my translation).

³⁸ Z. Kossak, *Blessed are the Meek: a Novel about St. Francis of Assisi*, transl. Rulka Langer, Roy Publishers, New York 1944, pp. 315-316.

words that mean something always bear traces of the mundane world, even if we try to use them to think and talk about completely different worlds.³⁹ Also when we think about God's love and justice, we perceive the concepts through our semantic habits, which we need to use to resolve the always complex and difficult dilemmas of human life. Pascal rightly says that "The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite, and becomes a pure nothing. So our spirit before God; so our justice before divine justice." How does he know, however, that "There is not so great a disproportion between our justice and that of God, as between unity and infinity"? (233) After all, unity confronted with infinity is not – as Pascal suggests – a pure nothing, but it still remains unity, even though infinity "adds nothing to it" (233). Using Pascal's favourite phrase, we should rather say that in the presence of infinity, unity becomes a quasi-nothing. When man begins to talk about Divine Justice, its imperfect picture always resembles human justice. If human justice is annihilated in the presence of divine justice, and human love – in the presence of divine love, it is impossible to rationalize divine justice (love) in the language of human justice (love). Pascal is extremely cunning when he writes that "The justice of God must be vast like His compassion. Now justice to the outcast is less vast, and ought less to offend our feelings than mercy towards the elect."⁴⁰ (233) Therefore divine justice meted against those who are to be punished for their sins ought to offend our feelings less than divine mercy towards those who can expect a reward. What does it mean that God, who is just to sinners offends people's feelings less than God who is merciful to noble people? Presumably, the mysterious phrase "people's feelings" expresses our need for justice, and our ability to be merciful. It is not the place here to make an in-depth analysis of the history of human justice. One thing seems certain: the changes in its concept mainly involve the gradual reduction of the range of the crimes for which the human idea of justice would demand the death penalty. Today, in most of the countries of the so-called Western world, an offender can no longer be legally deprived of life, no matter what crime he has committed. However, when Pascal proposed his wager to people of weak faith, or even to the faithless, as an effective way of finding the road that would lead them to God, the repertoire of the crimes punishable by death was extremely rich. Therefore, we are probably no longer able to read Pascal's words in accordance with his interpretive intentions!

What is thus the condition of contemporary man who recognizes himself in the eternal light of God's infinite love? When he chooses temporality, he

³⁹ This does not apply, of course, to the language of these theoretical sciences that have reached the stage of axiomatization.

⁴⁰ B. Pascal, *Pensées...*, p. 65.

loses nothing – both if God exists, and if He does not. God who does not exist can only deprive us of our hope for eternity, which, after all, none of us, considering the finite nature of human existence, deserves. But if God exists, this God can only love people. God's love knows no end; the evil committed by mortal man is, however, always limited, finite, and relative: after all, every bad deed will sooner or later bring good effects. Love is not blind – love sees in a different way; and eternal love is even more obviously not blind, and sees things differently. Eternal suffering cannot be God's answer to the evil done by mortal men, because God is eternal love, and He is limited only by His love for people. Man is not able to mortally offend God, because He can only love humans. Man is capable of hatred, which can be fed by the need for justice. God is not capable of any hatred. This weakness does not make Him worse than man, but infinitely and unimaginably greater. Therefore, anyone who cultivates some love can count on eternal life – e.g. Caligula, because he loved his three sisters; Hitler, because he loved Eva Braun, and renounced his share of a pension in favour of his younger sister Paula; and finally Stalin, who loved his daughter Svetlana.

CONCLUSION

The great vision of St. Francis begins to blossom aesthetically with a fully philosophical meaning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berlin, Isaiah (1993) *The Magus of the North: J.G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Bible, The New International Version (2011) Colorado Springs: Biblica, BibleGateway.com.

Herbert Zbigniew (1985) *Report from the Besieged City*, transl. John Carpenter and Bogdan Carpenter, New York: The Ecco Press.

Kierkegaard Søren A. (1974) *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, transl. D.F. Swenson, L.M. Swenson, W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kossak Zofia (2003) *Bez oręza*, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX.

Kossak Zofia (1944) *Blessed are the Meek: a Novel about St. Francis of Assisi*, transl. Rulka Langer, New York: Roy Publishers.

Łosski Włodzimierz N. (2007) *Teologia mistyczna Kościoła Wschodniego*, transl. Maria Szczaniecka, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

Pascal Blaise (2003) *Pensées*, transl. W.F. Trotter, New York: Courier Dover Publications.

Saint Augustine (1998) *The City of God against the Pagans*, transl. R.W. Dyson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ward Benedicta, transl. (1975) *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications.

**DYSKRETNY UROK MARGINESÓW. PRZEMYŚLANA PRÓBA NIEŚMIAŁEGO
WSTĘPU DO NIEISTNIEJĄCEJ RACZEJ ESTETYKI BŁAŻEJA PASCALA
(streszczenie)**

W artykule próbuję wykazać, że w tzw. Zakładzie Pascala przeprowadzony jest proces estetyzacji podstawowych pojęć i kategorii religijnych, która prowadzi do ich stopniowej marginalizacji. W ten sposób wielki francuski filozof i fizyk sam wpada w pułapkę estetyzacji, przed którą ostrzega w całej swojej filozofii. W efekcie wybór życia wiecznego przestaje być jedyną możliwą konkluzją Zakładu. Afirmacja przez Boga zasady „jak gdyby” prowadzi do jego estetyzacji. W świecie miłości Boga estetycznego wieczne potępienie okazuje się nie tylko mało prawdopodobne, lecz wręcz niemożliwe.

Słowa kluczowe: człowiek – „jak gdyby” – marginalizacja – miłość – wieczność.

Kazimierz Piotrowski
Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź
kazimierz.piotrowski@neostrada.pl

THE TAMING OF IRRELIGION. ESSAY ON THE ABUSE OF THE NON-SACRED IDEA

Abstract: I am going to outline the problem of the disintegration of the Latin hierarchical opposition *religio/irreligio*, showing the taming process of irreligion in the (post)modern culture. This marginal phenomenon – situated by ancient Romans in the domain of negativity – is a reactive cultural trend perceptible only in context. According to modern sociology, irreligion is an attitude towards religion which is not a complete rejection of belief (disbelief), but rather a selective lack of belief – unbelief. How did it come about, is it possible today to consider the hypothesis that the above-mentioned opposition functions as an operational unit, generating contemporary sociomorphism – often unconsciously, within the framework of antagonistic cooperation? In this view irreligion is not only a contamination of the source of the Latin tradition (*religio*), but it is subject to demarginalization and adopted as a tool of controlling religion – as its negative or its undesired, unwanted assistant in the realization of its soteriological mission. I would argue that the increasingly numerous and less and less surprising micro-provocations of the *irregulares* – some of which were presented during the Brussels exhibition of *Irreligia/ Irreligion* (2001/2002) – although often intended to be iconoclastic (lately in a soft version), have targeted only the idolatrous and imperial dimension of religion. Therefore, they cannot desecrate the revealed faith.

Keywords: blasphemy – irreligion – religion without religion – offending religious feelings – unbelief.

Religion is accompanied by irreligion as rationalism is by irrationalism. This does not mean that religion should be hastily identified with rationalism and irreligion with irrationalism. It is rather a question of the tension that the Latin prefix *ir-* introduces into our life. With its negative connotations, it may signal confrontation (as in the case of Przemysław Kwiek, creating a painting from the series *The Vanguard paints lilacs* in his garden in Łomianki during

the Corpus Christi procession in 2000 in remembrance of the irreligious Francesco Goya and his *Village Procession*). It is the fundamental tension between the center religion aspires to be, and a margin that it must produce, e.g. in the form of irreligious art, especially from the time of Goya, Füssli, or Blake. The prefix *ir-* can also bring to mind Derrida's attitude to religion, rooted in Emmanuel Levinas' concept of "a relation without relation". In deconstructivism we cannot speak about a rigid distinction between the center and margins, because this opposition was reversed and turned into an optical figure (an op-position). According to this heretical hermeneutics, irreligion – as a dangerous supplement of religion – cannot be removed from its religious source. Irreligion – which naturally presupposes religion – is a richer concept, at least in its sense of non-sacral creation (as when Hubert Czerepok requested a holy mass in the intention of the success of his 2000 exhibition, and then he filmed this mass and exhibited the film in a gallery in order to create an ironic margin of the Catholic belief¹). This provocative and embarrassing richness of *ir-/religion* may originate merely from its secondary nature – as only a linguistic and historical corollary of religion. While the older idea of religion seems to function independently over centuries in language and social practice – as a word coming from the mouth of God, determining the meaning of life, *irreligion* cannot function in this way, because it is a syncategorematic term and a relative concept. Irreligion is a reactive phenomenon, a trend of culture perceptible only in context. However, and this is a spectacular evidence of the thaumaturgic power of modern philosophy, irreligion – although perceived negatively – attempts to establish itself in the domain of positivity as a sociomorphic ideal.

THE OPPOSITION *RELIGIO* / *IRRELIGIO*

If someone demands a clear concept of irreligion, let him first give a precise definition of religion. Even if he provides a definition, based on the official dogmas or – worse – on his own convictions, it would be impossible to draw the clear boundaries of the concept, because the number of possible irreligious aberrations is as large as in the case of any other non-prototypical behaviours. *Error immensus est* – and the irreligious act, with all its erratic ways, and its culmination in blasphemy as the supreme manifestation of the non-sacred idea seems to be a most enigmatic, incomprehensible phenomenon.

¹ K. Piotrowski, *The Promises of Unism, Zonism, Contextualism, and (Dia)Critical Art. Some Aspects of Performativity in Polish Art (1923-2008)*, "Art Inquiry" 2012, no. 14, p. 140.

It does not have to be equated with impiety – a total negation or a hostility towards religion, but it can be an arrogance of spirit – some hidden diversion, sometimes a perverse tendency for disobedience or defiance. It can also involve all the ailments mentioned by Clement of Alexandria as sources of heresy: *agnoia* or *amathia* (lack of knowledge), *oiesis* (basing oneself on suppositions), *doxosophia* (apparent wisdom) and *pseudonymos gnosis* (presumptive gnosis). In our times, postmodernism – promoting various marginalia – has created its own specific version of irreligion, which takes the form of the denigration of religion, which supposedly has always been a contaminated source.

Thus before we define irreligion, let us consider the nature of religion. It is necessary to go back to the Latin word *religio*: “Rome and religion” – wrote Tadeusz Zieliński “have been bound together for centuries in a mysterious affinity. It was not without reason that the same word *religio*, adopted in all civilized languages and irreplaceable by an expression of indigenous origin, was created in Rome. Religion is not synonymous with faith, conviction, or piety, it is a mysterious chain ‘binding’ us (*religans*) to something above us, whatever it might be”². *Religio* originated as a contract – a template for the future rules of international co-existence. The cities later forming the Roman empire reached an agreement not to wage wars, and to recognize each other’s gods; they would subsequently also adopt other deities, including the Hellenic and the Oriental ones. This contractual bond was modeled on the one within a family. *Religio* gravitated towards familial affinities, developing by an adoption, within the framework of the imperial conquest, of this chain binding the *religans* of the Roman Empire (the Latin term *imperium* denoting the authority of the highest military, civil, and religious officials in the country: dictators, consuls and praetors, and later Caesars). Therefore, *religio* is associated with the power of the *imperium* and of the authorities commanding and setting rules. According to Cicero, *religio* is attention to customs and laws. How should one understand it in a country without an empire, that is without power, order (*imperium*)? The Latin word *religio* is also related to *pietas*, which means a sense of duty, piety, fear of God, and respect for power, parents, family, or for something above us. *Pietas* also means love, especially familial love, and all its variants, such as paternal or filial. Later *pietas* would also denote attachment, friendship, and even patriotism. These correspond with other meanings of *pietas*, such as submissiveness and respect, piety, justice, goodness, mercy, and grace.

² T. Zieliński, *Rzym i jego religia. Studium z cyklu: Współzawodnicy chrześcijaństwa*, Wyd. Z. Pomarański i S-ka, Zamość 1920, p. 3.

By contrast, in the Latin vocabulary the term *irreligio* denoted godlessness and unscrupulousness. To behave in an irreligious way means to commit sacrilege, to utter blasphemy or to act without due respect, i.e. to break the bond. Maurillo Adriani³ thus pointed out that *irreligio* is related to *impietas*: disrespect, lese-majeste, impiety, iniquity, knavery, roguery, and even crime. In others words, irreligion is neglect of religion (as in the ancient Rome, described by Ortega y Gasset), which – paradoxically – may co-exist with the state of institutional hypertrophy (Ludwig Feuerbach noted in his historiography of religious beliefs that the ancient Romans even had a god of fertilizer). This allows us to understand the crisis of religion at the time when people tried to deify all acts of nature, balancing between personification (the Hellenes) and desubstantialization (multiplying divine attributes) – as described by Tadeusz Zieliński, who studied the agrarian origins of the Roman religion. A further consequence of this process was the deification of humans – for example of Caesar Augustus. Such faith is easy to abandon, especially when his successors turned out to be cruel or crazy. Isn't it better and safer to honor some abstract concepts – Pietas or Fortune – or to become a stoic?

In its literal and original sense, irreligion refers in the Latin vocabulary to all kinds of anti-social activities stemming from wildness, haughtiness or perversion (the love of cunning, sin, error, and revolt). It has been situated in the domain of negativity. With the expansion of Christian civilization that disseminated the understanding of *vera religio* doctrine (St. Augustine), and thus the term of *irreligio*, the concept gained universality, becoming a descriptive tool in the analysis of other beliefs and cults in the world.

Any new definition of the opposition religion/irreligion cannot disregard those Roman origins. Irreligion is thus understood as – as Adriani has it – as pre-religion, anti-religion, para-religion or de-religion etc. This shows how difficult it is to grasp its historical variables, its many contextual meanings. All these terms attempt to explain irreligion (more or less explicitly) as a kind of transgression against the binding religion. The explanation of its genesis and its functioning always refers to the rules of the dominant religion, flouted by the *irregulares*. The manifestations of irreligion include not only the explicitly hostile attitudes to religion or the open declarations of refusal to serve God, but also the negligence of religious practices. The Roman Catholic Church has inherited this imperial tradition of the Latin *religio*, for centuries producing irreligious margins.

³ M. Adriani, *L'irreligione. Note sulla morfologia del non-sacro*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 1958.

THE OPPOSITION OF *REGULARITAS*/IRREGULARITAS

In the Roman Catholic Church, culturally the closest to us, the duality of religion and irreligion is easy to pin down. It is worth mentioning here the opposition of *regularitas* and *irregularitas*, which is fundamental for the history of this Church, because these categories regulate the conditions of the accession to priesthood⁴. Religion – which has to function efficiently as an institution – must inevitably assume irreligion and recognize it, excluding the *irregulares*. The Church as a *regularitas* thus systematically deals with the *irregularitas*. In the canon law the term *irregularitas* refers to the inability to take the holy orders. Since the beginning of the Church, councils and synods have been carefully specifying the ideal of the *regularitas*. *Irregularitas* – a legal term coined as late as the 12th century by Pope Innocent III – defines the features that exclude a given individual from priesthood by natural or divine law. In Poland it was rendered as *bezkapłaństwo* (priesthood-lessness), *niezrządność* (non-orderliness), and *nieprawidłowość* (irregularity). It is a term containing the meaning of Latin *incapucitas*, referring to those unable to receive the holy orders. In those times the Church included in that category all those whose occupation did not deserve respect: mountebanks, clowns, innkeepers, butchers, tormentors, usurers, and suchlike – all the ignoble people branded with the *defectus famae* (apparently it was forgotten that Matthew was called by Jesus of Nazareth to be one of the Twelve Disciples despite the fact that the profession of a publican was perhaps the most hated and despised by the Jews). One can easily point out the types and oddities characteristic of that specific group which could not hope for the respect of the ecclesiastical and secular powers, offering entertainment to the potentates, but more often causing trouble. The awareness of those facts belonged to the canon of the encyclopaedic education which for centuries manifested its revolutionary and anticlerical bias. The common people were aware – Waław Berent wrote in *The Living Stones: The Minstrel's Story* [*Żywe kamienie: opowieści rybalt*], 1918] that the mountebanks could be controlled neither by the King, nor by the Church. Many groups of the *irregulares* can be enumerated here. It is enough to realize that they are all those committing the crime of apostasy from faith (“apostasy proper”), bringing obstacles upon the faithful and leading them to a schism connected with heresy. Many of the mentioned defects disappear or can be removed, and some of them require the dispensation of the Head of the Church who is guided by its good.

⁴ *Irregularitas*, in: *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana*, ed. J. Alexandrowicz, J. Banzemer, S. Sikorski, Warszawa 1903, vol. 31-32, pp. 136-138.

Although religion provides many benefits and has played a special creative role in the history of mankind, in the social practice it has also produced a number of negative effects – some margins that seem to be strange and incomprehensible in a temporal perspective. Today, although there are no slaves and other categories of *irregulares*, and it is possible e.g. for an educated actor-comedian to become a priest, some groups may still regard themselves as victims of the oppressive *regularitas*. Currently, the Church is grappling with the problem of homosexuality. One of the many questions arising in this context is whether homosexual (wo)men can be ordained to the priesthood, or whether, for the good of the institution, the Church should rather refuse to grant this privilege to them, especially when they are not passive homosexuals? (This type of clerical transgression was suggested in the film by Jacek Markiewicz, with Paweł Althamer as the camera operator, in which a naked man adored the figure of Christ on a Gothic crucifix, fraudulently used in the National Museum in Warsaw. This was possible because the old lady – the custodian who watched over the filmmakers – dropped off to sleep).

Just as in the case of *irregularitas*, the modern times have also brought a change in the interpretation of blasphemy as the most serious manifestation of irreligion. Many contemporary behaviours would be considered blasphemous in the original understanding of this term. Blasphemers included those who had lost their faith, except those who believed otherwise. Blasphemy resulted in a dismissal from offices, an exclusion from the clerical state or excommunication. Pope Gregory IX included blasphemy among the crimes against the church and introduced various penalties and public penances. A blasphemer had to stand for seven Sundays during the Holy Mass at the gate of the temple, to fast on bread and water for seven Fridays; moreover, he had to feed the poorest during the period of penance or to carry out other tasks ordered by the bishop. In the case of opposition, the penalty of interdict was applied and the law deprived the offender of an ecclesiastical funeral.

The secular authority – upon the request by the affected Church – also imposed penalties on the blasphemers. In the 14th and 15th centuries these penalties were stringent and varied. Thus the punished man lost his nobility, and the plebeians were disciplined by imprisonment or by ridicule (e.g. by *mitra infamiae* – the pointed hats we can still see in the paintings of Goya), and in the case of reoffending, by life imprisonment or being sent to the galleys. The blasphemers might have been also deprived of offices, benefits, and dignity. Every witness of blasphemy was obliged to report this type of crime within three days. Strict corporal and financial penalties were extended to those who did not fulfill this obligation. In 1566 Pope Pius V introduced

the penalty of exile for the representatives of the higher classes, and the punishment of flogging and tongue puncturing for the plebeians. Clerics were less cruelly punished – they were disrobed or sent to the galleys. The civil authorities – protecting their own interests and the public status of the ecclesiastical authority – was particularly cruel. The canon law stamped its own imprint on the secular law until the 18th century. Many corporal punishments for blasphemy – originating in the ecclesiastical law – proliferated in the secular jurisdiction: apart from the death penalty, the most popular included the piercing or cutting out the tongue and/or lips, public flogging, pillory, prison, galleys, exile, and the derogatory penalties, sometimes financial punishments or others – depending on the inventiveness of the judge.

Learning about the formation of the Freemasonry since 1717, and its diversity in terms of social, professional, national, religious or ideological status, one can better understand the motives of the blasphemers' rebellion against the restrictions imposed on people by the dogmatic militant Church and the monarchy. Freemasonry, with its rites, somewhat resembles religion, but in its free thinking, its constant testing of reason against the mysterious (hermetic) tradition and the constantly changing political scene, the Masonry – especially the fairly secularized and irregular Grand Orient de France – was a vanguard of the cultural process that the Church condemns as irreligion. The Vatican maintains this stance despite some attempts at a dialogue with the Freemasonry in the 1980s. Currently the prohibition on belonging to the Masonry, confirmed by Pope John Paul II after the unproductive talks, is still in force. It is mainly due to the Freemasonry that religion and irreligion entered a new phase of development after the French Revolution, which ultimately undercut the previous feudal power of the Church, and rejected completely the spectre of the religious tribunal. It was possible for the American Constitution to refer to God as a guarantor of men's equality and their unconditional rights. But God had already to function in the secular culture as the Supreme Being without the Church, and – as postulated by Kant – within the limits of reason alone.

Today, an increasing number of people are regarded as irreligious (even in the Church, as for example in Poland the famous priest Wojciech Lemański, who contests the official bioethics of the Catholic Church), or simply neglect their religious practices, and the theists have to begin a dialogue with the atheists instead of murdering or stigmatizing them. This is a sign of wisdom, but also of real powerlessness and the aporia of the ecclesiastical power which the Church is now reluctant to use. During the 20th century many priests suffered terrible persecution at the hands of godless men, especially in the Soviet Union, in Mexico, and in Spain, as every action has to cause a reaction. We have also witnessed at least two centuries of the development

of new global, irreligious status quo that continues to erupt in various tensions and conflicts. Irreligion has been probably permanently built into the axiological system and into the economy of the western civilization, and it is difficult to understand this culture without it. The hierarchical Church also has its own internal problems, arguing about the meaning of the third secret of Fatima, or the peculiar credo of some theologians. They recommend acting in the public sphere as if God did not exist, because any manifestation of faith endangers the social consensus. This regulative impiety – in the style of Kantian perpetual peace – is even more visible if we will compare our lazy, obese, conciliatory civilization of the West – where offending religious beliefs and feelings is hardly ever punished – with the Islamic civilization that hasn't yet interiorized irreligion to such an extent, and which does not tolerate irreligious disbelief (or non-belief), excluding it from its restrictive system of Sharia law. This undemocratic civilization is hostile to the hypothesis that irreligion can be tamed, as it now is in Europe – “an old people's home” (to quote Peter Sloterdijk's ironic term), free from religious anger.

How did it come to this? Is it possible to consider the hypothesis that the opposition of religion and irreligion functions currently as an operational unit generating contemporary sociomorphism – often unconsciously, within the framework of antagonistic cooperation?

THE MODERNIZATION OF IRRELIGION

However, under the influence of the Enlightenment and the positivist critique of religion, irreligion was also occasionally regarded as a positive force. Undoubtedly, positive irreligion is a 19th century invention that resulted from the Darwinian or Spencerian doctrine of evolution and Comte's sociology, used to explain the phenomenon of religion. Later, under the pressure of criticism from – inter alia – mechanistic materialism, it came to be viewed as an outlook on life, almost a new absolute. Modern life dictated a new form of social organization. Irreligion – especially irreligious philosophy and art – would be in some of its manifestations a “mole's work” (to mention the favorite phrase of Nietzsche) for an intensification of the plasticity of life, just the same as it was in his criticism of Christianity. Nietzsche was a singer of the irreligious teaching of Zarathustra. At the end of his conscious life he identified with Christ-Dionysus before he succumbed to madness and numbness. This figure is an extremely suggestive personification of what is rational and irrational in religion. But it can also be seen as a figure of what is static and ecstatic, passive and active, conservative or reproductive (ritual),

and what is destructive-orgiastic in religion, until its radical privatization and individualization, and ultimately annihilation. According to Hegel, who initiated the modern belief in the unification of the different aspects of the Spirit, the development of our self-consciousness will lead in time to the demise of specific religions in the liberal society. That would be a realization of its moral and practical potential. The various religions, including the Christian denominations, respecting each other (today the main condition for interreligious dialogue and ecumenism), will be subject to disorganization and will ultimately disappear into a new, pure religion – an irreligion, as Jean-Marie Guyau proclaimed in his book *L'irreligion de l'avenir* (1887)⁵. He belonged to the group of modern irreligious philosophers and poets. Guyau was one of the first to consider religion from the point of view of the discipline which was later to become sociology. The sociologism of Guyau, who did not disregard the previous – especially psychological – theories, identified religion with the tendency to associate, stretched over the whole of existence – *supernatural vinculum* must be, in fact, one of the conditions of *vinculi naturalis*⁶. This need for association and for solidarity, for a bond between all reasonable and unreasonable, terrestrial and extraterrestrial, bodily and spiritual beings, is the most important source of Guyau's socio-morphism and a purpose of ir-/religion. A man – by nature – bears this need in himself. Guyau saw it even in dogs that are also religious in this sense, if they show signs of submission and friendship to their masters. The fully developed, evolutionarily advanced, and complete religions must respect each other and seek opportunities for the further integration of humanity – with nature, animals, and extraterrestrial beings, if they exist.

According to this idea of necessary progress, therefore, all dogmatic religions would be gradually marginalized, because they will eventually fall into the state of anomy, that is, nefariousness or lawlessness. Anomy (the Greek term *anomos* – lawless) was considered by the Judeo-Christian tradition as one of the synonyms of sin – refusal to obey the law or a state of mind caused by the violation of the divine law (*hamartia*). Guyau, who understood irreligion in a new way, saw the evidence of progress also in anomy. Gradually sliding into anomy, i.e. neglecting or attenuating the dogmas which introduced ritual differences and barriers between people in favor of their renewed status of hypotheses or ideas, religions evolve toward the full realization of their general economy. According to that approach which foregrounds the elements of will and evolution, religions are more or less

⁵ J.M. Guyau, *L'Irreligion de l'avenir: étude sociologique*, Félix Alcan, Paris 1887.

⁶ A. Fouillée, *Moralność, sztuka i religia podług M. Guyau*, transl. J. K. Potocki, Nakładem redakcji "Głosu", Warszawa 1894, pp. 146-172.

irresistibly driven by the will to associate under the pressure of spontaneous life, with no restraints of religious phantasms. Regarded for centuries by all kinds of tribunals as a subversive orientation and prosecuted as a crime, in Guyau's view irreligion started to acquire new meaning as the goal of the sociomorphic evolution of all religions. Religion frees itself from its dogmas after a passage through various stages of consciousness, whose manifestations are pantheism, metaphysics, science, ethics, and modern social thought. The aim of the religious economy would be – paradoxically – a conversion of dogmatic religion into one new, clean and non-dogmatic religion – in an irreligion of the future that will finally allow the fulfillment of the ideal of love and solidarity on earth. Various hypotheses would arise in place of previously central dogmas, and faith will be replaced by the constructive doubts of science that would make possible new irreligious miracles.

According to Guyau – the French Nietzsche – we will be able to develop spiritually and at the same time to overcome the religious anomie by distancing ourselves from the prevailing religions, in particular by means of art. He recognized the awareness of intensive and expansive life, of sympathy and cosmic love which repeals the primacy of law, as a common element of religion, morality (without sanctions) and art. In his thought these areas interpenetrate each other, though art has obtained a supreme position: “What will remain some day of our various religious beliefs? Perhaps not a lot. But when we ask, what will remain of the fine arts, music, painting, and especially of that art uniting all the others – of poetry, it will be possible to answer clearly: everything, at least everything that is best in them, deep and – let's say it again – serious”⁷. Art has obtained such a high rank, because like any other human activity it would be free from all dogmas or juridical sanctions. Thus art would be able to enhance sympathetic solidarity between people. Guyau talked about “a holy stigma of beauty”. This independence of art allows it to bind closely with the only true morality and religion – with irreligion. If art is able to free itself from the egoism of creative individuals, it will serve a higher art – that of social life, extending its love onto the whole of nature and in this way constituting as if a new religion. According to Guyau, the still prevailing – although weakening – religions are a necessary link in the development of irreligious life. An echo of this view, namely the ideas of the secularization of culture, the disappearance of religion, and the formation of some economic, moral or scientific alternative can be found in the writings of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim – the fathers of the sociology of religion.

So much for the modern project of irreligion – optimistic, and almost already realized, at least in some areas of the postmodern Europe. Mean-

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

while, it should be noted that although irreligion liberates us from the stagnant and burdensome religious practice, which has become antisocial and life-threatening, sometimes it engages in too far-reaching and blind criticism, thus walking in the footsteps of the slowly weakened or combated religion. Irreligion can show a strong tendency for re-restrictive ritualization and institutionalization, trying to re-socialize people and create an irreligious or atheistic society – equally dogmatic and hostile to any innovation. The ritual behavior inherited from religion cannot simply disappear, but may be reproduced in the form of a new empire, such as that created by the *irregulares* in the Soviet Union and the Third Reich (Zofia Kulik has gone so far in her criticism, comparing the Church with the totalitarian ideologies, that she found a symmetry of their symbolic structures). This also applies to the irreligious behavior of the avant-garde – to the blasphemy of the Futurists, the Dadaists, and the Surrealists. Their attacks on Christianity were eagerly repeated, and thus this anticlerical art became a substitute for religious ritual. Guyau warned us not only of religious bigotry, but also of anti-religious fanaticism. Unfortunately, in the 20th century many artists succumbed to the temptation of Christianophobia (for example, El Lissitzky wanted to destroy the Eastern Orthodox Church because it served the Russian tsars). However, Guyau was not militantly anticlerical. He mentioned a monk encountered in the street, who seemed like a missionary communicating with almost the whole world. The French philosopher recognized him as his primary helper in spreading irreligion since it assumes a prior religious stage of consciousness. In the modern sense irreligion is primarily an apogee of a self-conscious, full, and unrestricted life, overpowered by the unrestrained Eros. Although in this life – interpreted as irreligious – one can encounter manifestations of both commonly understood good and evil, these categories are already a different kind of poetic concepts, forming an inscrutable blend within the all-encompassing cosmic love (in the sculpture of Zbigniew Libera – *Christus ist mein Leben* from 1990, he has quoted the famous sentence *Arbeit macht frei*). As Odo Marquard puts it, we can talk here about the “de-evilization” of evil (*Malitätsboniesierung, Entübelung der Übel, Gutmachung der Übel* – in Polish *bonizacja zła*)⁸. Evil is no longer considered theologically and personified as Satan or presented as sin, but in the new irreligious way it is dissolved in the whole of nature and in all of Being, that is as such completely justified in its structural injustice (Christian antisemitism as irreligious, nihilistic antisemitism in Libera’s work). This is the result of the modern drive towards radical unification (to recall the well-known German ambivalent word *Versöhnung*) and its postmodern deconstruction.

⁸ Fr. J. Babiński, *Irreligia*, p. 37.

THE PROJECT OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF IRRELIGION

Thus far, no one has written a full history of irreligion or properly systematized the structure of this phenomenon. It was only in the late 1960s when the weakening of faith and the institutionalized religion in the West gave rise to the development of the new field of the sociology of irreligion, venturing a claim that the sociology of religion neglects irreligion as an important aspect of social life. Academic research on irreligion can help us better understand religion in general⁹.

Irreligion cannot be ignored, because it is a permanent element of culture, manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity, always remaining in contact with religion, to which it reacts. Thus in the sociological perspective these categories cannot be recognized as two poles of a dichotomous division. Irreligion has been defined as an attitude which does not so much deny the object of faith (God), but rather puts into doubt the foundations of the religious doctrine (dogmas) to which individuals are culturally related. Therefore N. Jay Demerath defines irreligion as unbelief¹⁰. It is an attitude towards religion which is not a complete rejection of belief (a disbelief), but rather a selective lack of belief. Irreligion is an unbelief in the selected components of an elementary religious doctrine (in some commandments, dogmas, rituals, mores or moral precepts), i.e. more or less – in the essential components of the religious doctrine specific to the person who remains culturally bound with it. This condition must be met to talk about irreligion; we do not exhibit an irreligious attitude when we criticize any dogmas of a foreign religion from the point of view of our doctrine. Irreligious attitude – as a reactive act – is a contextual phenomenon, very dynamic and difficult to measure, since it may be hidden in the religious environment (even among the clergy), and amplified in the groups of ostentatious unbelievers. Therefore, it can be interpreted as atheism or the basis of irreligion¹¹. In both cases we are dealing with a masquerade that impedes the adequate comprehension of the phenomenon.

An interesting complement to these considerations are the proposals of Colin Campbell, who has accepted the methodology of Demerath and has

⁹ *Socjologia religii. Wybór tekstów*, ed. Fr. Adamski, Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, Kraków 1983, pp. 353-373.

¹⁰ J.N. Demerath, *Program and Prologomena for a Sociology of Irreligion*, in: *Actes de la Xe Conférence Internationale. Types, dimensions et mesure de la religiosité*. Rome 11-20 VIII 1969, Conference Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse, Rome 1969, pp. 157-175; idem, *Program i prologomena socjologii irreligii*, in: *Socjologia religii*, ed. Fr. Adamski, transl. B. Leś, pp. 362-373.

¹¹ Fr. J. Babiński, *Irreligia*, Wydawnictwo "Bernardinum" Sp. z o. o., Pelplin 2010, p. 11.

rejected the attempts to construct an ahistorical, abstract definition of irreligion made by Charles Glock, inferring the origins of modern irreligiosity from the European and American subculture of the secularist movements in the 19th and the 20th centuries, born out of the opposition to authoritarianism and the lack of humanism of the prevailing religion¹². Campbell has presented the whole range of this reactive current, including irreligion in an extreme (ideal) form which wants to get rid of religion (irreligious eliminationism) or to replace it with something else (irreligious substitutionism). In the present essay irreligion, not necessarily identical with atheism, is understood in such a sociological manner.

It is worth using this sociological concept of irreligion, because it conceals in itself the ancient intuition, focusing on the Latin prefix *ir-*, neither reducing irreligiosity to the domain of negativity nor essentializing it, but rather considering it historically as a dynamic process, inspired also by the concept of *l'irreligion de l'avenir* of Guyau. Thus constructed, the concept of irreligion allows us to test this non-sacral sphere of culture. This forms the theoretical background of the so-called "affair" of *Irreligia /Irreligion*, i.e. the reception of the exhibition I prepared in 2001.

THE CASE OF *IRRELIGION* – ON THE MARGIN OF POLISH CULTURE

The exhibition *Irreligion. The morphology of the non-sacred in 20th century Polish art* (Atelier 340 Museum in Brussels, 2001/2002) provoked many violent reactions (see the selected bibliography). Many people decided to air their views about this irreligious act of the Polish artists – not only artists and critics, but also journalists, the highest dignitaries of the Polish and Belgian Church, the influential right-wing and left-wing politicians in the Polish parliament and government. Finally, the office of the public prosecutor began to study the case to establish whether the exhibition offended religious feelings (however, the charge was dismissed). But I was forced by the director of the National Museum in Warsaw to resign from the post of curator of Ksawery Dunikowski's Museum of Sculpture (a department of the National Museum)

¹² C. Campbell, *An Approach to the Conceptualisation of Irreligion and Irreligiosity*, in: *Religion et religiosité, athéisme et non croyance dans les sociétés industrielles et urbanisées. Actes de la XIe Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse*, Opatija, 20-24 September 1971, Lille: Edition CISR, Lille 1971, pp. 486-501; *idem*, *Propozycja konceptualizacji pojęcia 'irreligia' i 'irreligijności'*, in: *Socjologia religii*, ed. Fr. Adamski, transl. W. Kurdziel, pp. 353-361.

because – though a graduate of the Catholic University of Lublin and a practising Catholic – I was the “blasphemous curator” of this scandalous exhibition and the “irresponsible collaborator” of Wodek Majewski – the director of the Atelier 340 Museum.

Nearly two years earlier, in 2000, I had received – from Majewski – a proposal to prepare an exhibition which would show the most important trends in Polish contemporary art. During its preparation we found that many of the artists were highly interested in the issues of religion. This interest itself was not striking, but what surprised us was their critical attitude towards the Church. The exhibition – shown at the Atelier 340 Museum, inside the functioning temple of Notre Dame de Lourdes and the desecralized church of Saint Nicolas, and in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville in Brussels between October 2001 to January 2002, presented the works of over forty Polish artists working in the 20th century.

The exhibition, entitled *Irreligion* – after the title of the above-mentioned dissertation of Adriani – was part of the Polish contribution to the Brussels event called *EUROPALIA* (2001/2002). During the press conference at the Hôtel de Ville de Bruxelles in October 2001, I emphasized specially in relation to Demerath and Campbell that irreligion does not necessarily mean atheism or radical hostility towards religion. This reservation was not gladly accepted by some militant artists (especially Joanna Rajkowska, who – although she showed a montage of self-portrait in the disguise of Pope John Paul II blessing Andy Warhol at the St. Peter's Square in Rome – did not want to be connected in any way with religion). Those artists fulfilled the definition of pure antireligious irreligiosity. However, most of the artists participating in this sociological test seemed areligious, that is they did not openly manifest their hostility to religion, simply accepting its relativistic, contextual definition by sociologists. Moreover, the event was open not only to the *irregulares*, but also to such artists as Zbigniew Warpechowski, who have declared a deep attachment to the Catholic orthodoxy. Although this artist had created some non-canonical works, he did not direct the sting of his criticism against religion, but just towards irreligion. His attitude is similar to mine. Warpechowski took part in the exhibition, selected – like the others – in an arduous process, and after we obtained his agreement (not all the artists we approached were willing to give it – Jerzy Bereś, also a non-canonical artist, but a strong believer – simply refused to take part in the godless undertaking). Anyway, it would be impossible to make a precise measurement of the religious piety or irreligious impiety of the artists who took the challenge. It would be difficult to test their consciences, to measure the intensity of their legitimate or pathological anger, to claim that it was hateful hostility, ignorance, cynicism, or mental carelessness that manifested itself in

their disrespect towards religion – for example, in the style of the absurdist parodies of the Łódź Kaliska group. This was not about buffoonery, but about the thaumaturgical effect of naming and rediscovering a strong current in Polish art – hitherto overlooked or marginalized by mainstream researchers – rooted in the great heterodoxy of the Romantics, though associated today with the nihilistic game of blasphemy. I had hoped then that this exhibition would be balanced and non-militant, and that it would revive religious experience in art and would allow for the better understanding of this margin of art in the historical perspective, showing the transformation of irreligious symbolic aggression, as well as the systemic non-artistic roots of irreligion in the Communist, Fascist, nationalist, and humanist ideologies.

The exhibition evidenced the worldview transformation in the most important current of historical and contemporary Polish art. Let me only mention here the Poznań group Bunt [Rebellion]¹³, the neo-pagan drawings and sculptures of Stanisław Szukalski, Leon Chwistek's novel *Pałace Boga* [*The Palaces of God*], the prints and paintings of Wojciech Linke from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1950s, the irreligious pop-surrealism of Władysław Hasior, the so-called expression of the 1980s and the paintings of the Warsaw Grupa (including Paweł Kowalewski, Jarosław Modzelewski, Marek Sobczyk, and Ryszard Wozniak), followed by the postmodern turn and the birth of democracy after 1989, and the appearance of the so called critical (or diacritical) art. *Irreligion* was received – especially in the leftist media – as a manifestation of the weakening of the institutional forms of religiosity. It was certainly a symptom of the birth in Poland of the occidental phenomenon of “new tribalism” (the term of Michel Maffesoli). Leszek Knaflewski described the collision of these trends as *The Catholic-Cola* (2001). On the other hand, the exhibition revealed the main problem of the European project, which basically promotes secular values, if not irreligion, and the displacement of the Church from the public sphere. The message of *Irreligion* was a big shock and provoked violent reactions. In any case, nobody ignored its importance, whether in Belgium, or especially in Poland.

Within a couple of weeks after its opening, the exhibition was presented in the media as a great scandal, originally in the newspaper *Nasza Polska* [Our Poland]¹⁴. This interpretation was the result of an alarming letter from the Polish diaspora in Brussels to the media representing the views of the Polish Catholic right, especially Liga Polskich Rodzin [The League of Polish Families] – a nationalist conservative political party. A letter from Poland to

¹³ K. Piotrowski, *Irreligia Buntu. Geneza i morfologia poznańskiej apostazji*, in: *BUNT. Ekspresjonizm poznański 1917-1925*, ed. G. Hałasa, A. Salamon, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Poznań 2004, pp. 119-139.

¹⁴ A. Echolette, *Bluźnierczy 'artyści'*, “Nasza Polska” 2001, no. 44, p. 3.

the Polish diaspora in Belgium urged it to send the irreligious works to Poland, where they will be “shown in our Parliament, and dealt with as they deserve”. The negative reactions were inspired in Poland by the Paulinian monks from Jasna Góra¹⁵. The monks objected especially to Adam Rzepecki’s work *The Black Madonna of Częstochowa with moustache* (à la Duchamp) – after an alarmist article illustrated with the copy of Rzepecki’s work in the above mentioned newspaper *Nasza Polska*. It was a very superficial critique. The Paulinian monks prepared an official protest and sent it to President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the Minister of Culture Andrzej Celiński, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, and to Cardinal Józef Glemp – the Primate of Poland.

The exhibition was commented upon not only by artists and art critics, but also by journalists, by the highest dignitaries of Polish and Belgian Church (for example, Cardinal Józef Glemp, who condemned it¹⁶, and more Cardinal Godfried Danneels – the Primate of Belgium, who showed more understanding, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, resigning from all possible involvement of the Church authority in people’s religious beliefs, i.e. from any repression against the blasphemers¹⁷). Some Catholic groups sent many protests to Ferdynand Ruszczyc – director of the National Museum in Warsaw, to me, and also to the public prosecutor’s office. Those hysterical reactions and accusations were dangerous for me, because I was an employee of the National Museum, an institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. In response to that criticism I received moral support from people and groups including, among others, some Walloon Masons.

In Poland, the domain of religious or irreligious pathology, showed by the artists of *Irreligion*, is vast and diverse. We must remember, considering some of the above-mentioned facts, that after the collapse of the irreligious Communism, since the beginning of the 1990s the Church has gained considerable political power in Poland. This spurred Polish critical art to propose a revisionist history of Christianity. The privileged position of the Church in our society began to be questioned in that period of democracy. Many people resented the “dirty dance” or “crazy orgy” between the Polish politicians and the Church, and the fact that a Catholic bishop is still a general of the Polish army (Polish artists have a special parson too). This situation generates a fundamental conflict, and the attempts of the Catholic

¹⁵ Fr. M. Lubelski, *Profanacja w Brukseli*, “Niedziela” 2001, no. 46, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Prymas Polski w stolicy Unii Europejskiej. Niech nie będzie unią manekinów!*, “Nasz Dziennik” 2001, 20 XI, p. 7; *Prymas potępił ‘Irreligię’*. *Kultura w skrócie*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2001, 19 XI.

¹⁷ G. Danneels, *‘De Kerk is geen democratie. Daar moet ik toch geen tekeningetje bij maken?’ Humo sprak met kardinaal Danneels*, “Humo – Brussel” 2002, no 3206/08, pp. 17-18.

Church to regain its influence over the Polish society (and the official institutions of art), provokes the transgression of critical art, and highlights the opposition between the traditional mainstream view of the Church as the foundation of Polish independence (combated especially by Robert Rumas in his critique of the patriotic slogan God – Honour – Homeland) and the creative innovations of the margin. Thus irreligious art loosens and weakens the social bond, which can have positive consequences, according to Nietzsche's perverse or subversive aphorism *Veredelung durch Entartung* [Ennoblement through degeneration].

The negative reactions (I cannot quote all the reviews here) showed that our exhibition did give people an opportunity to express their hostile attitude to Catholicism, in the political climate of the outgoing right-wing government. Therefore, many politicians and officials spoke out and the prosecutors got an additional job of examining the possibility of our offending the religious feelings of the believers¹⁸. I was summoned to the prosecutor's office in autumn 2001 in order to give an explanation (though not to be formally interrogated), due to the numerous accusations that I had committed an offence as a curator, and to the intervention of the members of the The League of Polish Families, monitoring our case from the start. During that (rather unofficial) conversation with the prosecutor, I learned that today the public prosecutor's office has a much greater problem with the citizens who feel offended by some work of art than with those who are accused of offending religious feelings. It is due to the former that paragraph 196 in the Polish Penal Code still exists. The paragraph did not quite fit the above-mentioned conflict between irreligious art and religious convictions, as it referred to the people who – for example – broke into temples or disturbed order there. However, the Flemish Catholics, offended by being reminded of their war collaboration with Hitler by the work *Black Box* (2000) by Kijewski and Kocur, associating the cross with a swastika, which was shown in the porch of the Notre Dame de Lourdes – brought their case before the Court against the Brussels parson Marc Scheerens, who hosted in his church the irreligious art from Poland¹⁹; it made his life unpleasant to such an extent that he had to leave this parish.

The exhibition was even discussed in parliament, involving the highest authorities of the state, the minister of foreign affairs, and – as has been already mentioned – the Polish ambassador in Brussels, who was forced to

¹⁸ JD [D. Jarecka], *Zadzwonili z prokuratury. Losy kontrowersyjnej wystawy 'Irreligia' w Brukseli*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2001, 22 XI.

¹⁹ J. Soetemans, *'In Romeinse kerken hangt ook nankt'. Pastoor stelt kerk open voor expo en schaarsgekleed modedefilé*, "Het Nieuwsblad – Groot-Bijgaarden" 2002, 30 I; "De Standaard – Groot-Bijgaarden" 2002, 30 I.

intervene. He demanded the removal of the scandalous works from the exhibition. This resembles to some extent the case of Cubism, discussed a century ago in the French parliament. Thus, that exhibition was regarded, in accordance with the tradition of the official Church, as blasphemy – as devilish arrogance of pride (*pompa diaboli*), and not just a cultural fact that tackled the various weaknesses of Polish religiosity.

During the exhibition, I tried to defend my idea of *Irreligion* as a research project in the mass media not only against many attacks from the Church and the Catholic right, but also against the jealousy and incompetence of some Polish art historians. Ultimately, the exhibition, which ended on 3 February 2002, was very successful, and the Belgian (*Le Soir* and others), and especially the Polish liberal press had reacted massively, sometimes very positively.

At that time, after the judgment in the trial of Dorota Nieznalska, I wrote a critical essay published on her website – *Irreligion before and after Nieznalska's trial*, in which I criticized the conservatism of the Polish Church and the opportunism or conformism of the politicians, journalists, and art historians. I also did that in my other texts and the many lectures I gave about *Irreligia*. It was my act of parrhesia (if my defense or defiance were truly parrhesiastic reactions). However, in the current democratic, radically irreligious milieu, the parrhesiastic ethos seems more and more without content and serious consequence, since the freedom of speech is ensured by the law rather than having to be fought for in a dangerous struggle. The highly juridicalized world leads to a safe global system – to the paradoxical state of parrhesia without parrhesia.

THE TAMING OF IRRELIGION

The philosopher Zbigniew Kazmierczak has noted that “offending religious feelings” does not only consist in the actions of the blasphemers, but is facilitated by the identity crisis of the insulted believers, who – in the face of a difference in views – do not feel confident in their faith and react emotionally or aggressively to the perceived danger²⁰. His diagnosis does not seem fully to explain the phenomenon, because its psychological mechanism does not apply to fanatical reactions, for example in Islam, where it is difficult to observe this type of crisis of faith, more typical of the pluralistic European identity, weakened by skepticism. Strong faith, sincere and natural,

²⁰ Z. Kaźmierczak, *Dwa główne powody nietolerancji*, “Zeszyty Politologiczne” 2002, no. 4, pp. 96-109.

immunized to irreligious diaphoresis, is more determined to take oppressive action that requires sacrificing oneself, and above all, gives one an alibi in the form of a sense of moral righteousness and expected reward. The difference here springs not from a different cultural context, but rather from a universal mechanism in which religion – identifying itself through the dogmas founded on revelation or as an institution based on canon law – must perceive, recognize, and exclude irreligion as its opposite. This is a result of the concretization of every act of will, even when it happens to be good. As poststructuralists have demonstrated, each performative act of the formalization of power is a diacritical, self-differentiating system generating system anomalies or margins. Therefore, it goes beyond the Nietzschean view on the genealogy of resentment.

The modern liberation from religion may be combined with the postmodern radicalization of the irreligious motif in Derrida's displacement of nominal *religio*. The limits of deconstruction are visible in Derrida's reflections on religion, whose discourse – self-resistant and disunited – is based on the belief in the existence of pure, saintly, peaceful life, and the conviction that religion, in its messianic hope, but also its boldness, wants to appropriate this life and subject it to regulating control or oppression by its institutions. Religion is a mechanism that prevents the sedimentation and kenosis of life, while – as we know from history – using cruel repression, causing suffering and death, paradoxically to protect life in the name of justice and love. Deconstruction cannot prevent this, and it locates each return of religion or social need for discipline in the open structure of Vattimo's "trace of the trace". However, Derrida had to quote Genet: "One of the questions that I will not avoid is the question of religion"²¹.

Why was the question of religion in the mid-1990s so important for Derrida? Perhaps because religion wanted to regain what it had lost during the period of modernity, not only in the Communist countries. Religion and theology – as Stefan Morawski has pointed out, mainly in relation to the theology of Hans Kung – are trying to exploit postmodernism²². What would religion gain due to that poisoning of its source by deconstruction – due to its dissection, taking apart, stratification or transgression, which would however never amount to its abolition (overcoming), if not its breath, some necessary periodic aphasia, preceding any voice? Is deconstruction – which does not want to be a word or a concept in the traditional sense, that denies all positivity and orthodoxy – able to jeopardize the religion we know intimately

²¹ J. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge". In J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (eds.), *Religion*. Transl. D. Webb. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 1-78.

²² St. Morawski, *Niewdzięczne rysowanie mapy... O postmodernie(izmie) i kryzysie kultury*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Toruń 1999, pp. 90.

from faith or from reason? Or can deconstruction only re-duplicate religion, drag themselves behind it with their irreligion – “a religion without religion”, as John Caputo has interpreted the thought of Derrida?²³

“We are not far from Rome, but we are no longer in Rome” – he said with some relief, but perhaps looking over his shoulder in that direction, towards one of the main sources of violence. He made an attempt to make up for any overpowering religions known by name, especially Christianity, with his morality rooted in the Kantian practical philosophy and with his project of perpetual peace, and thus his program of life without religious violence – as if God did not exist. Still, he does not ignore the messianic voice, only demanding justice, and proposing to replace religion by “messianism without messiah”. That liberation – which can be related to Derrida’s replacement of specific *religio* by abstraction, by the “desert of deserts” and “place of places”, i.e. the nameless Platonic *chora* which “will never have entered religion and will never permit itself to be sacralized, sanctified, humanized, theologized, cultivated, historicized”²⁴ – should above all be spiritual, but, if necessary, should not hesitate to take recourse in physical violence. Caputo has commented rightly that deconstruction must assume as possibility what is “undeconstructible”, because it is not given, it is not known, and it is not predictable²⁵. Such “religion without religion”, which emphasizes *diákrisis* vs. *synagogé*, contests Heidegger’s interpretation of the Greek words *dike* and *adikia* by privileging the German word *Versammlung* or *versammeln*; but faith in or desire for justice, sacrifice, hospitality, and a completely different future cannot be deconstructed, even if we were to break up with religion, to suspend for a moment our religious affiliation, which might be regarded as the very cradle of the most authentic faith and the most original sacredness. According to Derrida, “One must in any case take into account, if possible in an areligious or even irreligious manner, what religion at present might *be*, as well as what is *said* and *done*, what *is happening* at this very moment, in the world, in history, *in its name*”²⁶. In this proposal irreligion is not only perceived as an indelible, imperial contamination of its source – the Latin tradition (*religio*), but is subjected to demarginalization and given the task of controlling religion – as if it were its negative condition or an undesired, unwanted assistant in the realization of its soteriological mission.

²³ J.D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1997.

²⁴ J. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, p. 58.

²⁵ *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. J.D. Caputo, Fordham University Press, New York 1997, p. 128.

²⁶ J. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”.

* * *

I would like to end this text about the taming of irreligion with a personal axiological reflection. It was an interesting experience – as if an opening up of religion to irreligion – for me to be invited in 2012 by the members of the Institute of Cultural Knowledge of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw to cooperate on the research project *Locus Theologicus in Visual Culture*. That adventure resulted in two articles. One of them was published²⁷, while the other – though it was well received during the oral presentation was ultimately not included in the publication, as probably too controversial for the Catholic University and the diocesan publishing house. I have shown in it, among other issues, the long historical process of the taming of irreligion, whose direct, tangible evidence is e.g. the Enlightenment dichotomy of the canon law and secular law, and the distinction between blasphemy and the so-called “offending of religious feelings”, whose penalization is becoming increasingly rare. Not only are the punishments milder, but there are also some demands for the right to public blasphemy as a response to the claims of religion and its attempts to return to the status quo from before the Enlightenment²⁸. The Church – with its message of ecumenism and its dialogic openness to other voices, including the recognition of the ambivalent role of “God’s men of violence”, postulated by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical on the Redeemer of Men (*Redemptor Hominis*, 1979) – seems to view irreligion not only as a sin, but also as an inevitable shadow of an earthly institution. The Church must listen to the voice of its opponents, without losing its own identity. However, that openness is not obvious to some priests, who would not be ready yet to accept the process of taming irreligion. Particularly when it is suggested to them that they are also responsible for this process as the participants of a research project involving a presentation on irreligion in the context of discussing visual theology.

On the basis of my experience as a philosopher and curator of art, I now believe that many contemporary artists do not fully understand the seriousness of the provocations in which they are taking part²⁹. They seem to be repeating recklessly Francis Picabia’s concept of “Jesus Christus als Hoch-

²⁷ K. Piotrowski, *O rozkwicie i upadku kultu gracji. Śmiałość vs świętość – tymotejski motyw rzeźby*, ed. K. Flader, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasso, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J.S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrześniak, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu, Warszawa 2013, pp. 217-251.

²⁸ *Blasphèmes et libertés*, ed. P. Darteville, P. Denis, J. Robyn, ed., Les Éditions du Cerf, Espace de Libertés, Paris 1993.

²⁹ K. Piotrowski, *Prawda prowokacji (o dziejowej misji irreligii)*, in: *Artystów gry z kulturą*, ed. A. Kisielewski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2008, pp. 91-109.

stapler” (1920), while that provocative title hides nothing significant in the religious (biblical, exegetical, theological or historical) sense. They usually use this type of challenging provocations to irritate rather than asking about their existential context, reading them through the prism of limited, *ad hoc* ideologies, if not just marketing strategies and carefree nihilism. Their aesthetic, momentary life serves – instrumentally – as a generator of symbolic aggression against religion. While they have no shortage of wit, the provocateurs suffer most often from a dwarfism of *ingenium argutans*, being unable to properly compose a broader-reaching provocation. The pragmatic bias of their irreligious acts cannot be excused even by the most humanistic and moral intent that they sometimes declare. And it is not difficult phenomenologically to demonstrate that the super-provocations – the miraculous manifestations of religious thaumaturgy available to the believers – exceed the modern or postmodern horizon of the irreligious culture described above. The ever more numerous but increasingly more banal micro-provocations of the *irregulares* – such as the images presented at the Brussels exhibition, which, although they are often intended to be iconoclastic (lately in a soft version) – attack only the idolatrous and imperial dimension of religion. Just as Johannes Baader’s attack on the mercantile dimension of religion – to recall his crazy idea of *Christus GMBH* (1917) – they cannot profane the iconic aspect of religious faith. I am thinking about the distinction between idol and icon made by Jean-Luc Marion, and about his concept of the saturated phenomenon (*le phénomène saturé*). The *irregulares* are not able to destroy the seductive potential of revealed religion. These relatively poor in their aesthetic endowment and offering defiant provocations of irreligious art make it difficult for the propagators of irreligion – the group in which I also include myself – to break out of this idolatrous circle towards the deep thaumaturgy of the icon. Therefore, our provocations occur as if not always in sync with the much more powerful, radical provocations of saturated phenomena, experienced daily by the contemporary world. We are completely helpless in the face of the thaumatic experience of religion and its irreligious shadow: the miraculous and crazy love of God for man, powering not only religion, but also irreligion as an ambivalent evil.

It would be some sort of contradiction if we could come to know evil (or Evil) as such, if it (or It) did not put marginal irreligion perversely in the place of religion, if it allowed for the dilution of the concept of evil in handy, multilingual terms of misguidance (*šegāgāh*), defilement (*miasma*), impurity (*tume’āh*), wickedness (*’āwōn*), negligence (*’āwel, hātā’āh, parabasis*), fornication (*zenūt*), disobedience (*masija*), rebellion (*pešā’*), sin (*hatit, saghira, kabira, paraptoma, peccatum originale* or *naturale*), anomy and lawlessness (*hamartia*), in a coherent interpretation of disbelief (*kufir*) or infidelity

(*ma'al*), of idolatry (*szrak*), godlessness (*reše'*, *asebeia*, *irreligio*, *impietas*) or injustice (*adikia*). It would be strange if evil (or Evil) did not proliferate in this terminological excess, if it yielded to condensation in the artful metaphor of the "flowers of evil"³⁰, allowing one to look upon it, contemplate it, and experience it with delight (just to mention the show of the fashion designer Arkadius in the Brussels church of Notre Dame de Lourdes in 2002 during the finissage of *Irreligia*). If it could be deconstructed and deferred, and, in the process, prevented from causing more evil. It is an undeniable fact that a lack of knowledge, not to say ignorance, about such fundamental concept as evil is yet another evil. Is this not what evil (or Evil) is all about? From a different perspective, this seems to be a sophistic multiplication of evil (or Evil), providing the illusion of hope that we have gained even partial control over it.

This is similar to the situation of irreligion in the 19th century, when it enjoyed positive interpretation as a result of the historical process of progressive social anomie. Irreligion has begun to lose its ancient negative qualification as a sinister, sociomorphic ideal, and it must be conceived as a hypothetical operational element in the process of salvation (if Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled some conditions of the sociological definition of irreligion), or just as a secular tool that controls and checks the totalitarian tendencies of religion (a "messianism without messiah" and a "religion without religion"). And finally, isn't irreligion a difficult gift of God? Or to put it in another way, aren't some particular strategies of taming irreligion, some abuses of the concept of the non-sacred, present in western thought for more than two centuries, also a sign of the search for intimacy with evil (or Evil) in its most intelligent forms? Isn't this question a taming of irreligion?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamski Fr., ed. (1983) *Socjologia religii. Wybór tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy.

Adriani Maurilio (1958) *L'irreligione. Note sulla morfologia del non-sacro*, Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina.

Babiński Jarosław, Fr. (2010) *Irreligia*, Pelplin: Wydawnictwo "Bernardinum" Sp. z o. o.

Bainbridge William S. (2007) *New Age Religion and Irreligion*, in: J.A. Beckford, N.J. Deemerath, ed., *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, London, pp. 246-264, <http://>

³⁰ K. Piotrowski, Złorzeczenie sztuki / The Cursing of Art, in: Marek Wasilewski, Hubert Czerepok – Kwiaty zła / The Flowers of Evil, Galeria Miejska „Arsenal”, Poznań 2010.

www.sagepub.com/chamblissintro/study/materials/handbook_encyclo/ref_12newage.pdf, 31 VII 2014.

Blasphèmes et libertés (1993), P. Darteville, P. Denis, J. Robyn, ed., Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, Espace de Libertés.

Campbell Colin (1971) *An Approach to the Conceptualisation of Irreligion and Irreligiosity*, in: *Religion et religiosité, atheisme et non croyance dans les sociétés industrielles et urbanisées. Actes de la XIe Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse*, Opatija, 20-24 September 1971, Lille: Edition CISR, pp. 486-501; *idem* (1983) *Propozycja konceptualizacji pojęcia 'irreligia' i 'irreligijności'*, in: Fr. Adamski, ed., *Socjologia religii Wybór tekstów*, transl. W. Kurdziel, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, pp. 353-361.

Campbell C. (1977) *Analyzing the Rejection of Irreligion*, "Social Compass", vol. 24, pp. 339-346.

Caputo John D. (1997) *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Caputo J. D. (1997) *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Celiński Andrzej (2001) *Odpowiedź ministra kultury na oświadczenie senatora Jana Szafrāńca złożone na 3 posiedzeniu Senatu*, "Diariusz Senatu RP", no 3, 5 XII 2001, <http://www.senat.gov.pl>, 31 VII 2014.

Cimoszewicz Włodzimierz (2002) *Odpowiedź na oświadczenie senatora Jana Szafrāńca z dn. 30 stycznia 2002 r. (7 posiedzenie Senatu RP), ministra spraw zagranicznych Włodzimierza Cimoszewicza*, <http://ww2.senat.pl/k5/dok/sten/oswiad/szafrani/0704o.htm>, 31 VII 2014.

Danneels Godfried (2002) *'De Kerk is geen democratie. Daar moet ik toch geen tekeningetje bij maken?'* *Humo sprak met kardinaal Danneels*, "Humo-Brussel", no. 3206/08, pp. 17-18.

Demerath Jay N. (1969) *Program and Prologomena for a Sociology of Irreligion*, in: *Actes de la Xe Conférence Internationale. Types, dimensions et mesure de la religiosité*. Rome 11-20 VIII 1969: Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse, pp. 157-175; *idem* (1983) *Program i prologomena socjologii irreligii*, in: Fr. Adamski, ed., *Socjologia religii Wybór tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, transl. B. Leś, pp. 362-373.

Demerath J. D. (1969) *Irreligion, A-religion, and the Rise of the Religion-Less Church: Two Case Studies in Organizational Convergence*, "Sociology of Religion", no. 30, pp. 191-203.

Derrida, Jacques "Faith and Knowledge". In J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (eds.), *Religion*. Transl. D. Webb. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 1-78.

Echolette Andrzej (2001) *Bluźnierczy 'artyści'*, "Nasza Polska", no. 44.

Fouillée Alfred (1894) *Moralność, sztuka i religia podług M. Guyau*, transl. J.K. Potocki, Warszawa: Nakładem redakcji "Głosu".

Gillemon Danièle (2001) *Le diable et le bon Dieu dans l'art polonais*, "Le Soir – Bruxelles", 27-28 X, p. 24.

Guyau Jean-Marie (1887) *L'Irréligion de l'avenir: étude sociologique*, Paris: Félix Alcan.

- Irregularitas* (1903) in: *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna iustrowana*, J. Alexandrowicz, J. Banzemer, ed., Warszawa: Nakład i druk S. Sikorski, vol. 31-32, pp. 136-138.
- Irreligia i wyzwania wolności* (2002) *O wystawie 'Irreligia', prezentowanej w Atelier 340 w Brukseli (X 2001-II 2002), rozmawiają: Izabela Kowalczyk, Piotr Piotrowski, Sergiusz Wachowiak (prowadzący dyskusję) i Tadeusz Żukowski*, "Gazeta Malarzy i Poetów", no. 1 (49), pp. 5-9.
- JD [Jarecka Dorota] (2001) *Zadzwonili z prokuratury. Losy kontrowersyjnej wystawy 'Irreligia' w Brukseli*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 22 XI.
- Każmierczak Zbigniew (2002) *Dwa główne powody nietolerancji*, "Zeszyty Politologiczne", no 4, pp. 96-109.
- Lubelski Marian, Fr. (2001) *Profanacja w Brukseli*, "Niedziela", no. 46, p. 1.
- Małkowska Monika (2001) *Dwugłós w sztuce współczesnej. Oburzenie zamiast zrozumienia*, "Rzeczpospolita", 19 XII, <http://archiwum.rp.pl/artukul/366060-Dwuglos-o-sztuce-wspolczesnej.html>, 31 VII 2014.
- M.M [Małkowska Monika] (2001) *Królikarnia bez szefa. Po kontrowersjach wobec 'Irreligii'*, "Rzeczpospolita", no. 272 (21 XI).
- Mazurek Maciej (2002) *Irreligia w areligii*, "Arteon", no. 2, p. 29.
- Michalski Jan (2002) *Sztuka, która daje do myślenia*, "Rzeczpospolita", 4 I, p. 7.
- Motoła Roman (2002) *Promowanie bluźnierców. Dyskusja o 'Irreligii' odbędzie się wśród protestów*, "Nasz Dziennik", 9 I, p. 2.
- Morawski Stefan (1999) *Niewdzięczne rysowanie mapy... O postmodernie(izmie) i kryzysie kultury*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Musiał Stanisław, Fr. SJ (2002) *Nie o 'cenzurki' chodzi! Dyskusja o wystawie 'Irreligia'*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", no. 3.
- Oseka Andrzej (2001) *Pokusy irreligii*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 8-9 XII, p. 8.
- Piotrowski Kazimierz (1991) *Sztuka podziwu – restytucja artystycznej autonomii*, in.: *Ryszard Woźniak*, Białystok: Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych – Arsenal.
- Piotrowski K. (1995) *Sztuka somatycznego społeczeństwa*, "Magazyn Sztuki", no. 6, pp. 17-30.
- Piotrowski K. (2001) *Sacrum jest wspólną wartością*, interview by M. Pietras, "Dziennik Łódzki", 24-25 XI, p. 2.
- Piotrowski K. (2002) *Irreligia – refugium irracjonalności*, "Gazeta Malarzy i Poetów", no. 2, pp. 27-29.
- Piotrowski K. (2003) *Woźniak obraża uczucia religijne?*, "Art & Business", vol. 5.
- Piotrowski K. (2003) *Irreligia Neuropy*, "Arteon", no. 2 (34), p. 28.
- Piotrowski K. (2003) *Irreligia przed i po procesie Nieznalskiej*, <http://www.nieznalska.art.pl/piotrowski.html>, 31 VII 2014.
- Piotrowski K. (2004) *Irreligijne rekolekcje*, "Exit", no. 1, s. 3332-3335.

- Piotrowski K. (2004) *Irreligia Buntu. Geneza i morfologia poznańskiej apostazji*, in: G. Hałasa, A. Salamon, ed., *BUNT. Ekspresjonizm poznański 1917-1925*, Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, pp. 119-139.
- Piotrowski K. (2004) *Przemysłać granice sztuki w granicach (filozofii) religii*, "A.S.P. – Zeszyty", no. 16-17, pp. 8-12.
- Piotrowski K. (2004) *Inc. Sztuka wobec korporacyjnego przejmowania miejsc publicznej ekspresji (w Polsce)*, Warszawa: Galeria XX1 – Michel – Studio Reklamowe – Galeria Program.
- Piotrowski K. (2004) *Coca-Cola to nie to*, z dr. Kazimierzem Piotrowskim, kuratorem wystawy 'INC. Sztuka wobec korporacyjnego przejmowania miejsc publicznej ekspresji (w Polsce)', rozmawia Przemysław Wielgosz, „Trybuna – Aneks”, 26 XI 2004, pp. a-c.
- Piotrowski K. (2005) *O Madonnie Górnej*, in: *Happy Birthday. Katarzyna Górna 1994-2004*, Kraków: Bunkier Sztuki, pp. 38-41.
- Piotrowski K. (2006) *Zagadnienie anomii w religii i w sztuce*, in: *Sztuka w przestrzeni duchowej*, Rocznik „Rzeźba Polska”, Orońsko: Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej w Orońsku, vol. 12, pp. 83-87.
- Piotrowski K. (2006) *Killing me softly*, "Exit", no. 1, pp. 4008-4011.
- Piotrowski K. (2006) *Sztuka krytyczna wobec Kościoła wojującego – Leszka Knafliewskiego przyczynek do tzw. polityki historycznej*, "Pro Libris", no. 1, pp. 113-115.
- Piotrowski K. (2006) *Skandalon (lekcja „Hippiasza mniejszego”)*, <http://www.obieg.pl/teksty/5878>, 31 VII 2014.
- Piotrowski K. (2006) *Religia, muzeum i uzupełnienie – historia sztuki bez historii sztuki (w Polsce)*, in: L. Kiepuszewski, ed., *Historia sztuki po Derridzie. Materiały seminarium z zakresu teorii historii sztuki, Rogalin, kwiecień 2004 r.*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, pp. 213-226.
- Piotrowski K. (2007) *Soft-religia w sztuce*, "Format", no. 1 (51), pp. 78-79.
- Piotrowski K. (2008) *Dethaumatyzacja judeo-chrześcijaństwa według Ryszarda Woźniaka*, <http://www.obieg.pl/recenzje/4215>, 31 VII 2014.
- Piotrowski K. (2008) *Prawda prowokacji (o dziejowej misji irreligii)*, in: A. Kisielewski, ed., *Artystów gry z kulturą*, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, pp. 91-109.
- Piotrowski K. (2010) *Wstrętna prostytutka duszy. O apostazji Stanisława Przybyszewskiego*, "Czas Kultury", no. 2, pp. 62-68.
- Piotrowski K. (2010) *Złorzeczenie sztuki / The Cursing of Art*, in: Marek Wasilewski, Hubert Czerepok – *Kwiaty zła / The Flowers of Evil*, Poznań: Galeria Miejska „Arsenal”.
- Piotrowski K. (2012) *Soft-religia (w twórczości Mateusza Pęka) / Soft-Religious (in Art of Mateusz Pęk)*, in: *Mateusz Pęk / box nr 33*, Gdańsk: Państwowa Galeria Miejska, pp. 72-86.
- Piotrowski K. (2012) *The Promises of Unism, Zonism, Contextualism, and (Dia)Critical Art. Some Aspects of Performativity in Polish Art (1923-2008)*, "Art Inquiry", no. 14, pp. 119-146.
- Piotrowski K. (2013) *O rozkwicie i upadku kultu gracji. Śmiałość vs świętość – tymotejski motyw rzeźby*, K. Flader, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasso, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J.S.

Prymas Polski w stolicy Unii Europejskiej. Niech nie będzie unią manekinów! (2001), "Nasz Dziennik", 20 XI, p. 7.

Prymas potępił 'Irreligię'. Kultura w skrócie (2001), PAP, CES, ed., "Gazeta Wyborcza", 19 XI.

Ruszczyc Ferdynand (2001) *'Stworzono kontekst budzący zastrzeżenia'. Z Ferdynandem Ruszczycem, dyrektorem Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, rozmawia Jerzy Biernacki*, "Nasza Polska", no 48, p. 8.

Rybiński Maciej (2001) *Dwugłos w sztuce współczesnej. Sztuka z nominacji, czyli cywilizacyjne odchody. Najpierw awantura, potem niepamięć*, "Rzeczpospolita", 19 XII, <http://archiwum.rp.pl/artukul/366060-Dwuglos-o-sztuce-wspolczesnej.html>, 31 VII 2014.

Safuta Jacek (2001) *Uwolnić Madonnę! Jak polscy artyści zdemoralizowali Belgów*, "Polityka", no 47, pp. 60-62.

SJ. El (2001) *Protest Jasnej Góry. Nie można milczeć!*, "Nasz Dziennik", no 260, p. 1.

Soetemans Johan (2002) *'In Romeinse kerken hangt ook nankt'. Pastoor stelt kerk open voor expo en schaarsgekleed modedefilé*, "Het Nieuwsblad – Groot-Bijgaarden", 30 I.

Swierstra Thea (2002) *'Een Maria die geld weent, stemt tot nadenken'. Reportage / kunsttentoonstelling 'Irreligia' in kerk is omstreden*, "De Morgen – Brussel", 24 I.

Swysen Didier, Jacquemart Benoit (2001) *L'expo qui fait scandale*, "La Lanterne", 6-7 X.

Szafraniec Jan (2001) *Oświadczenie złożone przez senatora Jana Szafrança skierowane do ministra kultury Andrzeja Celińskiego*; "Diariusz Senatu RP", no 3, <http://ww2.senat.pl/k5/dok/sten/oswiad/szafrani/0301.htm>, 31 VII 2014; "Nasz Dziennik", 20 XI, p. 4.

Szyłak Aneta (2001) *Święci buntownicy. Relacja z Brukseli*, <http://raster.art.pl/prezentacje/irreligia/irreligia.htm>, 31 VII 2014.

Truszkowski Jerzy (2001) *... gdy krzyżem już nie chciał leżeć daremnie*, <http://raster.art.pl/prezentacje/irreligia/irreligia.htm>, 31 VII 2014.

Une procession intégriste contre l'expo Irreligia (2001), "Le Soir – Bruxelles", 26 XI.

Verhoeven Karel (2001) *Kunst maken met Jezus. (Ir)religia blijft pools protest uitlokken*, "De Standaard – Groot-Bijgaarden", 15-16 XII.

Wiszniewska Irena (2001) *Artyści u spowiedzi. Katolik antyklerykalny musi się czuć w Polsce cudzoziemcem*, "Wprost", 9 XII, pp. 110-113.

Wiszniewska I. (2002) *Panu Bogu świeczkę i diabłu ogarek*, "Przekrój", no. 7, p. 35.

Wiszniewska (Wisniewska) I. (2001) *Les artistes polonais face à l'Eglise*, "Le Soir – Bruxelles", 27-28 X, p. 24.

Zieliński Tadeusz (1920) *Rzym i jego religia. Studjum z cyklu: Współzawodnicy chrześcijaństwa*, Zamość: Wyd. Z. Pomarański i S-ka.

**OSWAJANIE IRRELIGII. ESEJ O NADUŻYCIU IDEI NIE-SACRUM
(streszczenie)**

Zamierzam zarysować problem dezintegracji łacińskiej, hierarchicznej opozycji *religio/irreligio*, ukazując proces osławiania irreligii w (post)modernistycznej kulturze. To marginalne zjawisko – lokalizowane dotychczas w domenie negatywności bytu – jest reaktywnym i pojmowalnym tylko kontekstualnie dążeniem kultury. Zgodnie z modernistyczną socjologią, irreligia jest taką postawą wobec religii, która nie jest pełnym odrzuceniem wiary (*disbelief*), lecz okazuje się raczej selektywną niewiarą (*unbelief*). Jak to się stało, że jest dziś możliwe rozpatrywanie hipotezy, iż wspomniana wyżej opozycja funkcjonuje obecnie jako operacyjna całość, generując razem – często nieświadomie, w ramach antagonistycznej kooperacji – współczesny socjomorfizm? W tej propozycji irreligia jest poskramiana nie tylko jako nieusuwalne, imperialne skażenie łacińskiej tradycji (*religio*), lecz jest poddana demarginalizacji i postrzegana jako sposób kontroli religii – jakby negatywny warunek czy niezasłużona, nieoczekiwana pomoc w realizacji jej soteriologicznej misji. Uważam, że coraz liczniejsze i mniej zaskakujące mikroprovokacje *irregulares* – częściowo zaprezentowane na brukselskiej wystawie *Irreligia* (2001/2002) – chociaż często chcą być ikonoklastyczne (ostatnio w wersji *soft*), uderzają tylko w idola-tryczny wymiar religii. Dlatego nie mogą one zbecześcić ikonicznego sensu objawionej wiary.

Słowa kluczowe: bluźnierstwo – bonizacja zła – brak wiary, – irreligia – obraza uczuć religijnych – religia bez religii.

Maja Piotrowska-Tryzno

Department of Aesthetics, Institute of Philosophy
University of Warsaw
maja.p.to.ja@gmail.com

THE LIVING DEATH: 'TRICK OR TREAT!' THE VIVID PRESENCE OF DEATH SYMBOLISM IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF ITS EXISTENTIAL ROLE

Abstract: The paper covers the symbolism of death, which seems to be largely overlooked, trivialized or narrowly read both by the public and by some authors of texts on contemporary aesthetics. Numerous artists of the 20th and 21st century, including those widely known and commented on, try to restore the theme of mortality to the culture of the West, often showing it in the form of intercultural symbols, present in art from the beginning of its documented existence. The aim of this essay is to summon some meanings of such symbols, which are in a comprehensive way traditional, but invariably attractive for contemporary artists and thus freely transformed, and to sketch the possibility of their potential existential impact. The exploration of the possible causes of these meanings has been conducted on the basis of the selected proposals of interpretation in visual anthropology and depth psychology. The symbolism of death and its alleged role in contemporary art and contemporary Western culture have been also confronted with the selected proposals of the philosophy of life.

Keywords: contemporary aesthetics – philosophy of life – visual anthropology – depth psychology – art; symbols of death – intercultural symbolism.

“A rare occurrence in the art of the last one and a half century of paintings and sculptures depicting death is surprising”¹ – wrote Arnold Berleant in his essay *Death in Image, Word and Idea* in 2004.² I am going to focus here on

¹ A. Berleant, *Śmierć w obrazie, słowie i idei*, in: *Przemysłość estetykę: Niepokorne eseje o estetyce i sztuce*, transl. M. Korusiewicz, T. Markiewka, Universitas, Kraków 2007, p. 179.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 175-192. First edition in: *Re-thinking Aesthetics, Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2004.

the creative aspects of human activity mentioned in the above quotation – paintings and sculptures, which, I think, fall in the category of so-called high art, despite the fact that the category itself is nowadays rather fuzzy. Having followed the author's line of thinking, one can come to the conclusion that when he writes about art, he means the kind of art that can be considered high – also in the case of photography – often using iconographic schemes, sublime (Anselm Kiefer, Matthew Brady), or aestheticizing the phenomenon of death (Robert Capa), the art through which we can see our death more clearly than in the very moment of death itself (when we can be anaesthetized, ignorant, or asleep, etc.). In this context, it is necessary to consider whether it is in fact legitimate to say that paintings and sculptures of death are not so rare within the specified time period.

Having gone through quite an extensive iconographic material, I have chosen a few themes that struck me as distinctive and simultaneously characterized by certain continuity, and therefore possible to be treated as still alive in the European culture. In this way, I came to the conclusion that the majority of the artists valued today whose works we reproduce in numerous publications and who fall within the time limit set by Berleant, tackled the representation of death in different ways.

Trying to mention only the most vivid examples of the world's best art works, one should take into account at least such names as Marina Abramović, Francis Bacon, Salvador Dali, Giorgio de Chirico, James Ensor, Damien Hirst, Kate Kollwitz, Gustav Klimt, René Magritte, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, Egon Schiele and Odilon Redon. At this point an important question arises: Why does the author of the *Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* seem to ignore spectacular representations of death within the time and the areas of his interest? The answer seems initially hidden in the following: "Death is not a kind of an object, but a sophisticated set of dramatically ordered events leading to a climax, followed by the end. Works of art depict each of these stages, and a lot can be understood by comparing various methods of handling of its individual phases (...)"³ This statement (and other statements contained herein) seems to imply that Berleant regards only the visible process of dying, or – preferably – the moment of dying, or the image of a dead human body as an adequate contemporary presentation of death in art. However, even with such a selection of topics, he omits many vivid examples. Additionally, the presented examples do not always meet the requirements of the formulated definition (for example, we rarely find human figures in Kiefer's paintings, but they are full of symbolic elements). It is still puzzling why Arnold Berleant ignores some types of representations of death

³ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

as old as human iconographic tradition, such as symbolic and allegorical representations or personifications. To solve this riddle, I will try to clarify his possible hidden assumptions, discussing them in the context of some selected proposals of the philosophy of life and of depth psychology. But first, I would like to point out the spectacular richness of the iconographic tradition not taken into account by Berleant.

Some art historians happen to derive whole periods of artists' creative activity from deeply experienced encounters with death. This path is followed by Matilde Battistini, writing about the Blue and Pink Periods in the art of Picasso⁴. A friend of Picasso, Casagemas, committed suicide in 1901. The artist first painted his corpse twice on a bier, and then the theme of death turned into the figure of a Harlequin. The Harlequin character can be interpreted as a psychopomp, a guide. During his artistic career, Picasso painted many characters of such type. Compared with the first two images, created probably still in shock after his friend's suicide, *Death of Harlequin* of 1905 shows perfectly the evolution of this theme: the recumbent figure is similarly composed, but dressed in a diamond-patterned costume. We can no longer see the dignity of the corpse; on the contrary, the figure seems to be merry and – what is most significant here – lively. A psychopomp in religions and mythologies is a creature whose task is to escort the soul of the deceased to the afterlife. Such characters in art have made the viewers conscious of the inevitability of death. Although Battistini is writing about Picasso, the following may also refer to other contemporary painters and sculptors, such as Kiefer or Francis Bacon, mentioned by Berleant: “the phantom of death from which the artist tries to break free defines the relationship between his life and work. Painting images with magical features meant for him finding the original meaning of the creative act (...). This (...) concept of life and art evokes his fascination with Harlequin, Minotaur, Hermes and Dionysus.”⁵ Today, the symbolism of the psychopomp remains largely unnoticed (a notable exception in this regard is the Jungian school) although it is still present in some manifestations of the visual culture: in carnival performances, the forms of Major Arcana in tarot cards and in popular culture. Finally, it is very clearly visible in the fascination of art with the circus, magic and shamanism. The role of the psychopomp in the most recent art can be played by Damien Hirst's diamond skulls or by the genuine *Blue Morpho* butterflies used as the material for his “stained glass” windows and mandalas⁶.

⁴ M. Battistini, *Klasyki sztuki: Picasso*, transl. D. Łąkowska, „Rzeczpospolita”, Warszawa 2006, pp. 28-60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶ This subject is developed in one of my published articles; M. Piotrowska-Tryzno, *W stronę drzwi percepcji. Filozoficzna problematyka autentyczności a praktyka artystyczna Damiana*

In his essay *Image and Death*⁷, Hans Belting tries to interpret the meaning of the presence of the skull in human culture as an image reaching back to Neolithic sources: “Mankind has only a few images older than the skulls of Jericho. They are images, as they are coated with a layer of limestone and painted. They are an image of death, they could not be an image of life even with the coat of paint. The right question to ask here should be: what is the purpose of these images?”⁸ Further on, Belting formulates the hypothesis: “The new face, which has the social signs of a living body, is nevertheless the face of a stranger, because it deposes the incomprehensible transformation caused by death.”⁹ He concludes strongly: “The Neolithic cult of the skulls secured a ritual communion between the living and their ancestors.”¹⁰ Belting’s argument results in the assumption that the artistic material of the skull-object, crafted to preserve life, became itself a vehicle of the active imagination that created another form of existence projected on the object which was once a man – we had to fail in our attempt to preserve life in its ‘living form’, but we have succeeded in preserving the sense of the presence of life while looking at the image of “life after death”. A similar phenomenon – the projection of strange mental life leading to communication can be also observed in the case of contemporary kids playing with dolls, as it is described in the lyrics of Suzanne Vega's popular song: “As a child / You have a doll / You see this doll / Sitting in her chair / You watch her face / Her knees apart / Her eyes of glass / In a secretive stare / She seems to (...) / Have a life.”¹¹ I do not attempt to arbitrate what seems to be more primordial: the human ability to animate inanimate objects in inner conversation, or one’s acceptance of the view that it results from the experience of death and the awareness of our own and all living creatures’ mortality, as this issue reaches far beyond the confines of this essay.

However one attempts to answer this question, it may be observed that aside from the type of image based on the perception of human dead body or the imaginative ability to animate objects, one of the most primal forms of the psychopomp, which also appears in contemporary painting and sculpture, is the form of an animal. Shamans used to come into contact with the spirit or consciousness of such a psychopomp when in a trance. They wore ritual

Hirsta, in: *Między autentycznością a udawaniem: Postawy twórcze w kulturze współczesnej*, ed. A. Kawalec, W. Daszkiewicz, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2013, pp. 173-185.

⁷ H. Belting, *Obraz i śmierć*, in: *Antropologia kultury wizualnej*, transl. M. Bryl, ed. I. Kurz, P. Kwiatkowska, Ł. Zaremba, WUW, Warszawa 2012, p. 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ S. Vega, “As a Child” [lyrics], in: *99.9 F°* Album, A&M Records, NYC, LA 1992, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/as-a-child-lyrics-suzanne-vega.html> (10.07.2013).

animal masks to unite with the life that was “already dead” (which meant for them that it had changed its form of existence) or with the one that had eternally resided in a different form. Such relationships can be easily found in folk stories about local gods and various animalistic spirits. A bird mask or a birdman’s head have been present in human culture since the times of the Lascaux cave.

However, one could ask here whether Berleant was right after all, narrowing (in the majority of cases) the range of the manifestations of death to those that are considered to be close to the realism of common intuition? This kind of realism seems to be very close to the Heideggerian reality of *das Man*, which, of course, does not deprive the representations preferred by Arnold Berleant of any formal, artistic and historical value or a dose of emotional impact. One can call into question the relevance of the symbolism of the “Living Death”, the items with a potential to be “animated”, such as a diamond skull with a third eye in the middle of its forehead (Hirst), affecting us like Egyptian sculptures and masks with their eyes of shiny stones, as the signs of “projection”. Do our eyes need to meet with theirs, and if so, what for?

Berleant is trying to approach death quietly. According to the claim of Epicurus, quoted by him and highly valued in his text despite of some reservations (the most important of which is that we experience death through art), death does not apply to the living (for whom the sensation is impossible) nor the dead (who no longer exist). Berleant’s attitude seems to be symptomatically modern: it emphasizes the presence of death in art as a model of its experience for the living. But the purpose of this model is to reduce death in a certain sense to non-existence. It seems that according to Berleant, death remains valid for us living to make us “able to show our support and assistance. It is death that we embrace in revery”.¹² Judging from the degree of his emotional involvement in his description of *Pieta* by Michelangelo, experiencing death in art is considered by the author to be the most constructive. Yet, this approach risks the exclusion of the dying (leaving no space for their potential fear, horror, objection). As a common phenomenon of the Euro-Atlantic culture and regardless of the ontological assumptions, it seems very alarming. Philippe Ariès describes it accurately: “When the last means of defence against death and sex disappeared, medicine was able to take over their role in the community. (...) Feelings were to be banished. Under these conditions, it was better to silently agree to the mutual conspiracy of lies. Thus we see that the sense of separation between an individual and his or her identity, what we mean by talking today about the

¹² A. Berleant, *Przemyśleć estetykę...*, p. 182.

right to one's own death, was suppressed by the care for the family."¹³ The French writer points to specific contemporary expectations for the dying, who above all are not supposed to cause trouble to their families and/or medical services, must be calm and should experience their feelings about death in silence and solitude to satisfy the demand for participation in a unique game – the game of pretending that they do not know what is happening – without any protest. Thus death can ultimately be converted into an abstraction for the living, thanks to its medicalisation and to pretending that death is “only” a not too important incident of the failure of medical art. The great drama of the dying is often ignored, which is the symptom of the tendency to displace anything personal, authentic, deeply experienced and unique for an individual (who should become, especially in the case of death, the centre of attention) by a hypocritical, pseudo-collective show. Thinking of death as something that does not apply to us may also result from the tacit consent of the majority of the living to the negative ontological assumption of the possibility to continue one's conscious existence after crossing the border of life. But we should not forget that such social practices affect everyone, regardless of their beliefs. Fortunately, art has been playing a critical role for some time and one of its important tasks is to tackle cultural taboos. Regardless of the assumptions concerning death promoted by medical experts, personifications of death and their symbolic and allegorical images crop up in contemporary art, affecting the viewers with some intensity, which is evidenced most clearly by the work of such well-known artists as Damien Hirst, Marina Abramović or Bill Viola. Performances rooted in the centuries-old iconographic tradition, bringing in the awareness of the necessity of personal death do not have to be visually explicit. Death can be represented symbolically both in a subtle and shocking way equally convincingly – we are dealing here with a range of possibilities, but we should consider the individualization of the message stemming out of the deep introspection of the artist.

Let us get back to art for a moment to look closer again at some selected traditional motifs. In *commedia dell'arte*, the already mentioned Harlequin is a clown in a black mask, dressed in a chequered costume; he plays one of the main male roles – the comic one. His role is to flee the characters, who make great efforts to catch him. It seems no coincidence that we meet a tightrope walker in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. The Harlequin, a tightrope walker, an acrobat and a clown co-occur in the images of Picasso and are related in meaning in our iconographic tradition. The Harlequin used to be a beggar, a ragamuffin with a purse for unfair income and a wooden sword – he was presented in this way until the end of the sixteenth century. Later he acquired

¹³ P. Ariès, *Człowiek i śmierć*, transl. E. Bąkowska, Aletheia, Warszawa 2011, p. 609.

the chequered costume in which we know him today. The Harlequin is false and unpredictable. He is believed to originate from Hermes or Hellequin, King of Hell, ruling a band of corpses in the forests of Northern Europe. "... the answer [to the question of the nature of these figures – M. P.-T.] can be given only in the form of an image, a comparison, a metaphor. The essence of death lies in the fact that it cannot be seen or comprehended. The name of the Greek god of the dead, Hades, comes from *aides* and means 'Invisible', which is also marked by the cap of invisibility in his possession. In Old Irish, death is called *cel* and it is derived from the Indo-European root *kel* meaning 'to conceal, to hide', which found its reflection in Old Norse *hel*. Hel is the kingdom (...) into which people who died of old age and disease fall; in literature this name is also used for the queen of the kingdom 'and the House of the Dead', 'concealed' and 'hiding' in the depths of the earth."¹⁴ The Harlequin's costume is meant to symbolize the dual nature of death-life, the combination of opposites (as in the yin-yang symbol) – in this case the symbolism of the chequered pattern is, as it seems, above all a combination of presence and absence, the alternation of the states of life and death as the image of the universal rule.

In one of the famous paintings of Picasso, an acrobat is balancing on a ball – this is also the motif easily and frequently found in the art of the first half of the twentieth century, inspired perhaps by the representations of the wheel of fortune, symbolizing the volatility of fate, the inevitability and the unpredictability of change, periodicity – in other words: death and transience, but also consecutive and equally inevitable renewal of life. Also in one of Dürer's engravings Cupid is trying stunts – he attempts to get on a ball on stilts. His performance refers i.a. to the symbolism of the famous *Melancholy I*. The theme of melancholy is linked¹⁵ to the figure of Saturn, who is often identified with Cronus, which also means the temperament marked by the awareness of passing. Dürer's melancholic is perhaps a scientist – a philosopher and an alchemist; the scene with Cupid would mean then the inability to discover the ideal laws of both the cosmos and the human world, but one of its meanings may be also the inability to stop time – the whole scene is very dynamic.

Saturn was often depicted with a scythe or a sickle, as the patron of ancient harvesters – it is one of the well-known prefigurations of death as a skeleton with a scythe. The complex meaning of "Living Death" can be connected with the importance of such manifestations of the psychopomp as

¹⁴ M. Lurker, *Przesłanie symboli w mitach, kulturach i religiach*, transl. R. Wojnakowski, Aletheia, Warszawa 2011, p. 375.

¹⁵ R. Kilbansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn i melancholia: Studia z historii, filozofii, przyrody, medycyny, religii oraz sztuki*, transl. A. Kryczyńska, Universitas, Kraków 2009, pp. 297-309.

Minotaur and Dionysus. In the case of Dionysus we can speak about ancient harvest feasts, the death of the god of vegetation or of grain and his rebirth as a symbol of the revival of the world due to the natural annual cycle (similar interpretation is proposed by J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*). The story of the Minotaur can be traced back to the idea of the sacrificial bull of Mithraic Mysteries or to Egyptian Apis associated with the death and resurrection of Osiris. M. Lurker sees the labyrinth as the symbol of the underworld, from which one cannot escape. Let me add – not unaided...

There is no need to interpret in details the multiplicity of the possible links among these symbols. What should be pointed out from the point of view of the history of images is that Dionysus was replaced in the role of a psychopomp in art by Christ – the iconographic shift is clearly visible in the early Christian catacomb art. The idea of circular time, the transition of life into death and death into life are replaced in Christianity with the soteriology of salvation “once and forever”. Death has been set in opposition to life, symbolically separated. Still, Christ can be also read as one who is “born again”, especially rising brightly on the wing of the Isenheim altar, mentioned by Berleant in his essay. We still have here a representation of death balanced with the visually spectacular revival. However, at this stage life and death are already contrasted with each other, presented separately, though we should note that they still represent on the two sides of the altar the two sides of the same existence.

However, the symbol of the bull in art has preserved the ancient ambivalence of death-life, so to speak, in one body. The images of bullfighting by Goya and Picasso show the vitality of the animal on the one hand, and the theme of sacrifice, death on the other; the bull is ritually killed instead of a man, as in the Mysteries of Mitra. It is interesting that when it seems that the artist is shocked, thrilled, deeply moved by the personal aspect of death, representation of the sacrificial death of an animal seems to be no longer sufficient. When death begins to affect the artist himself, there appears a representation of the death of a man in addition to or instead of the death of an animal, or we are dealing with a hybrid – animal-human death, in the form of masks, costumes, images of fantastic creatures, partly humans – partly animals.

A psychopomp can be sought among different species of animals; it seems that when we see an unusual representation of an animal (by which, as you might have guessed, I do not mean only bodies bathed in blood, images of dead animals and bodies decaying plus other such obvious images), we can assume initially, that it relates to our individual death. In Western iconography animals symbolizing the proximity of death (besides bull) are a dog, a cat and a horse – black and white, black and white birds (although the white

birds have been largely symbolically and allegorically assigned to some fixed Christian meanings), also a snake and a deer. In this category we can include the animals accompanying witches: "...widespread is the theme of witches, accompanied by (...) especially black birds or birds of prey. About those animals one had to speak with the utmost caution, as uttering their names was attracting their attention. They were not supposed to be killed by other means than ritual (...), otherwise they were taking a revenge."¹⁶ An animal of magic killed in an improper way was gaining, as it was believed, large freedom of movement among worlds. One should reflect again on our modern tabooing of death as associated in a way with this kind of archaic, unconscious attitudes. They seem to be especially explicit in situations, in which we try not to see death and not to talk about it too much in order not to 'make it return' for us or not to 'get infected' with its excessive proximity. The inevitability of death of an individual, when we are forced to see it, or rather when we are forced to note the inevitability of our own death as a result of the death of the other, is being hidden in different ways – for example as 'deserved punishment' – we often hear 'arguments explaining' somebody's death by 'too much eating, drinking, smoking, getting nervous', etc. – as if death could be avoided by appropriate behaviour. This type of pseudo-obviousness of the world of *das Man* is a spectacular confirmation of the actuality of warnings contained in the thought of Martin Heidegger. Berleant rightly states at the beginning of his text, that the media have created the 'mega-death'; theatricality caused anaesthetic effect which has already gone so far that death has become unrealistic and turned into entertainment. By all means we try to downplay and deindividualize death. This tendency is accompanied by the disappearance of funeral rituals and care for the dying, which is constantly condensing itself as the shadow of the anxiety in the unconsciousness of the living. This way the mechanism of repression and fear is being set in motion over and over again.

Carl Gustav Jung called symbols that can be traced down to their archaic roots natural (opposing them to cultural) and considered them a non-negotiable component of the human subconsciousness. He saw the attempts to remove them or to cover them up as not only potentially, but historically dangerous: "Such tendencies form an ever-present and potentially destructive «shadow» to our conscious mind. Even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed. This is why many well-meaning people are understandably afraid of the unconscious, and incidentally of psychology.

¹⁶ J.C. Cooper, *Zwierzęta symboliczne i mityczne*, transl. A. Kozłowska-Ryś, L. Ryś, Rebis, Poznań 1998, pp. 316-317.

Our times have demonstrated what it means for the gates of the underworld to be opened. (...) Not only has civilized Germany disgorged its terrible primitivity, but Russia is also ruled by it, and Africa has been set on fire. No wonder that the Western world feels uneasy.”¹⁷ This opinion seems to be still valid; problems caused by dehumanized rationalization not taking into account the vital needs of the individual still grow on the global scene, caused also by the current form of globalization.

Shouldn't we therefore assume that the best way to restore the image of individual death in Western culture in this situation is to draw attention to the diversity still present in the symbolism of death in art? Although even if contemporary artists still use the images of 'Living Death' rooted in the iconographic tradition, their meaning has become blurred for the viewer. However, perhaps exactly because of the uncommonness of consciousness of their traditional meanings, those images are able to hit us – to surprise, move or shock. Natural symbols of individual death still manifest themselves in new, vivid openings. For an author as uncompromising in every aspect of his creative strategy as Damien Hirst, serving cow's head with flies in a closed box or shark in formaldehyde has most likely become insufficient at a certain point of his creative path; he finally reached the 'natural symbolism' of representations of life-death and death-life, drawn up from different cultures. Of course, one has to make an effort of interpretation to discern the symbolism of death-life mandala created from real butterflies of specific meaning in one of the world's local traditions. However, doesn't the widespread presence of scenes with people losing their lives in every possible way – especially in movies, TV broadcasts and computer games – indicate the legitimacy of the assumption that the artistic strategies of the path Berleant tries to follow has already expired? Is it possible that also for this reason the author is unable or doesn't want to see continually being renewed symbols of life-death and death-life?

'The natural symbolism' is still in play in art of the last one and a half century. One of the particularly distinctive themes – death and the girl, especially in the art of German Expressionists (after all death is the 'master from Germany' and masculine in German language), is a satisfactory representation of the inseparability of life-death and death-life. This symbol almost immediately puts on the border of our awareness the simple fact that there is no physical or mental hygienic strategy, which could prevent us from dying. This kind of image is also seductive – the grip of death arouses ambivalent feelings, perhaps even perverse – at the same time one can feel the

¹⁷ C.G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, in: *Man and His Symbols*, Picador, London 1980, pp. 83-84.

thrill of a delight and horror or disgust. The head of *Medusa* by Caravaggio is similarly seductive in an ambivalent way – the more seductive, the more one responds to her gaze – we are drawn to her because she still has a life, when at the same time she semantically must be placed unambiguously on the side of a death. To look into the eyes of this creature is to look into the eyes of one's own death itself; we look in the mirror and the force of shock of this surprising self-identification actually opens us to confront the prospect of our own death in the wholeness of its ambivalent reality. The shock is possible and does not turn into trauma and displacement due to the fact that there is maintained intensive contact with life and death at the same time. Death in art needs 'to be looked in the eyes' in order to regain the experience; just assisting the death of someone else who is able to leave politely is not enough. A. Berleant would eventually like to find in performances of art a way to escape from the chill of death into a humanitarian gentleness of community¹⁸, but unfortunately – it is only the community of the living, the ones located unambiguously on the side of life. Imagine this kind of reaction at a deathbed as the response to panic – it resembles the attitude of a medical worker. But death is not a disease. The only kind of reaction that seems to be promising enough is the intense compassion in the face of the horizon of existence in anticipation of one's own death, even if it means (though not necessarily it must) a thrill of horror. The other – the dying, becomes the head of Medusa, a dancing skeleton – he or she is still alive, but we've placed him or her already onto the death's side. If we sometimes can bear this truth and the truth of our own finiteness, it may be possible thanks to art. Individualized, diverse and reaching the deep-rooted symbolism art opens us up to experience our limits mainly due to the presence of vivid aspect of life in the symbols of death, regardless of what at the other side of the final border we unknowingly design. Showing us our horrors art pre-tames them. Consistently displaced they can suddenly turn us into stone. Is it not what by surprise the mythical Medusa does?

“Being in general cannot dominate the relationship with the Other. The latter relationship commands the first. I cannot disentangle myself from society with the Other, even when I consider the Being of the existent he is. Already the comprehension of Being is said to the existent, who again arises behind the theme in which he is presented. This «saying to the Other» – this relationship with the Other as interlocutor, this relation with an existent – precedes all ontology; it is the ultimate relation in Being.”¹⁹ writes Levinas

¹⁸ For this thought I'd like to thank Professor I. Lorenc.

¹⁹ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 1991, pp. 47-48.

and adds: "History would not be the privileged plane where Being disengaged from the particularism of points of view (...) is manifested."²⁰ Isn't a 'community fashion' in recent political philosophy to ignore – sometimes in the name of Heideggerian careful inhabiting the world – the dimensions of life both individual and metaphysical? Doesn't it seem in the light of the foregoing at least short-sighted? Heidegger meant uncompromising personal experience – the only one being able to awaken a genuine concern of what surrounds us. It is safe to assume that not only poetry, but also visual art – if you look at it from the Jungian perspective – is able to trigger such an experience. When it comes to direct contact with another person, Levinas seems also to be thinking especially about language – bestowing the Other by one's world set in words. But language is also the body language and facial expressions showing our actual experience; during the authentic experience of the death of the Other, we can consciously see and feel the death of ourselves – accommodating this experience is a prerequisite of participation in the experience of the Other. The symbolism of life-death and death-life, especially new symbolism of death-life in art (Hirst, Abramović) has a chance to become training of empathy, staying in fact all the time 'in action'. Only identifying our own death we have a chance to find a trace of inner truth about it, and to share it, in due time, with another individual. We can and should 'die together', be able to be a good company for the dying person, but this cannot be done when we stick to a false position of the survivor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ariès Philippe (2011) *Człowiek i śmierć*, transl. E. Bąkowska, Warszawa: Aletheia.

Battistini Matilde (2006) *Klasyki sztuki: Picasso*, transl. D. Łąkowska, Warszawa: „Rzeczpospolita”, pp. 28-60.

Belting Hans (2012) *Obraz i śmierć*, transl. M. Bryl, in: I. Kurz, P. Kwiatkowska, Ł. Zaremba, ed., *Antropologia kultury wizualnej*, Warszawa: WUW, pp. 73-83.

Berleant Arnold (2007) *Śmierć w obrazie, słowie i idei*, in: *Przemysłać estetykę: Niepokorne eseje o estetyce i sztuce*, transl. M. Korusiewicz, T. Markiewka, Kraków: Universitas, pp. 175-192.

Cooper Jean Campbell (1998) *Zwierzęta symboliczne i mityczne*, transl. A. Kozłowska-Ryś, L. Ryś, Poznań: Rebis.

Crowley Alister (1981) *The Book of Thoth: A Short Essay on the Tarot of the Egyptians*, New York: Weiser Books.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Frazer James George (2002) *Złota gałąź: studia z magii i religii*, transl. H. Krzeczkowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR.

Gutowska Magdalena (2010) *Taniec Śmierci*, Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie.

Jung Carl Gustav (1980) *Approaching the Unconscious*, in: *Man and His Symbols*, London: Picador.

Kilbansky Raymond, Panofsky Erwin, Saxl Fritz (2009) *Saturn i melancholia: Studia z historii, filozofii, przyrody, medycyny, religii oraz sztuki*, transl. A. Kryczyńska, Kraków: Universitas, pp. 297-309.

Kramer Kenneth Paul (2007) *Śmierć w różnych religiach świata*, transl. M. Chojnacki, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.

Levinas Emmanuel (1991) *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Lurker Manfred (2011) *Przesłanie symboli w mitach, kulturach i religiach*, transl. R. Wojnakowski, Warszawa: Aletheia.

Piotrowska-Tryzno Maja (2013) *W stronę drzwi percepcji. Filozoficzna problematyka autentyczności a praktyka artystyczna Damiena Hirsta*, in: A. Kawalec, W. Daszkiewicz, ed., *Między autentycznością a udawaniem: Postawy twórcze w kulturze współczesnej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, pp. 173-185.

Vega Suzanne, "As a Child" [lyrics], in: 99.9 F° Album, A&M Records, NYC, LA 1992, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/as-a-child-lyrics-suzanne-vega.html> (10.07.2013).

**ŻYWA ŚMIERĆ: 'CUKIEREK ALBO PSIKUS!'
WYRAZISTA OBECNOŚĆ SYMBOLIKI ŚMIERCI W SZTUCE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ –
PRÓBA FILOZOFICZNEJ INTERPRETACJI JEJ EGZYSTENCJALNEJ ROLI
(streszczenie)**

Artykuł dotyczy symboliki śmierci, która wydaje się w dużej mierze niezauważana, banalizowana lub wąsko odczytywana zarówno przez współczesnych odbiorców sztuki, jak i przez estetykę współczesną. Autorka zakłada, że artyści XX i XXI wieku, również ci szeroko znani i komentowani, starają się przywrócić kulturze Zachodu tematykę skończoności życia, podając nam ją często „do widzenia” w postaci zestawień międzykulturowych symboli obecnych w sztuce od początku jej udokumentowanego istnienia. Celem pracy jest ukazanie niektórych znaczeń symboliki śmierci (nieodmiennie atrakcyjnej dla twórców, w sposób szeroko pojęty tradycyjnej, choć swobodnie współcześnie trawestowanej) oraz możliwości jej potencjalnego oddziaływania. Eksploracja możliwych przyczyn aktualności tych znaczeń przeprowadzona została w oparciu o wybrane propozycje interpretacyjne antropologii kultury wizualnej i psychologii głębi. Symbolika śmierci i jej domniemana rola w sztuce współczesnej i współczesnej kulturze zachodniej zostały także skonfrontowane z wybranymi propozycjami filozofii życia.

Słowa kluczowe: estetyka współczesna – filozofia życia – antropologia kultury wizualnej – psychologia głębi – sztuka – symbolika śmierci – symbolika międzykulturowa.

Eleonora Jedlińska

Department of Art History, University of Łódź
eleonora.jedlinska@uni.lodz.pl

ART ON THE BRINK, ERGO THE MARGIN OF LIFE: MAREK CHLANDA'S *THE TANGO OF DEATH*

Abstract: Marek Chlanda's sketch *Cosmos – Tango of Death* was created as a picture of the artist's yearning for sense. This sketch and the triptych are based on the photo from 1942 taken at the extermination camp in Janowska Street in Lvov. The photo shows a circle of musicians-prisoners, who play the *Tango of Death* on the SS-men's order. The sketch quite accurately repeats the 'composition' of the photo. Here an artist puts the viewers in the face of the literal and metaphorical understanding of the marginal: the group of musicians is situated in the center of the drawing, but the margins of this work are filled with the artist's notes. My reflections do not concern marginalization in general, but the marginalization of the artist and art on the brink of life, indirectly and probably briefly involved in the machinery of extermination. I want to reflect on the incredibility of the existence of art during the Holocaust. I analyze how contemporary artist tries to penetrate into that special event, through the thought and premonition of future, provoked by William Blake's poems and drawings. The black and white photograph, which presents a group of musicians playing the *Tango of Death* is literally a representation of a segment of the circle of the camp orchestra, whose remaining fragment, invisible in the photograph, is located off the frame. On the other hand – it is symbolic because it documents the existence of this odd orchestra in the death camp and factually depicts its membership.

Keywords: Chlanda – Tango of Death – sketch/triptych – photography – music – death camp – margin of Life – Shoah – William Blake.

And all the arts of life they changed into the arts of death.
William Blake, *Night*¹

This paper is an attempt to examine one of the issues which have preoccupied me for many years. How can art exist in a dark time? How can a contemporary artist reflect on both the experience of the Shoah and the special role of the artists during that period?

¹ In *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. D.V. Erdman, New York 1988, p. 374.

My reflections do not focus on the issue of marginalization in general, but on the artist and his/her art on the brink of life, indirectly and probably briefly involved in the machinery of extermination. I want to reflect on the incredibility of the existence of art during the war, in an extreme situation – when it was forced into existence. Art which is highly transient, yet persists on the margin of life. I will examine how a contemporary artist tries to penetrate into that special time, through the thought and the premonition of the future contained in William Blake's poems and drawings.

This paper concerns the life and oeuvre of the contemporary Polish artist Marek Chlanda (born 1954), the oeuvre being exceptionally complex, constantly searching for its own roots, getting to the heart of the matter. Ten sketches or exercises – drawings and notes, form together a visual letter-biography of the artist. I will focus on one sketch from the group of panels by Chlanda. It is titled *Cosmos – Tango of Death – in Relation to William Blake* (2004), and is a sketch for the triptych *Study of Soundlessness* (2005). This sketch and triptych are based on the photo from 1942 taken at the extermination camp in the city of Lvov occupied by the Nazis.



Photo 1. Phot. anonym.
Orchestra from Janowska Street, an extermination camp in Lwów, ca. 1942

The above-mentioned single war-time photograph, one sketch and one picture (triptych) will be the basis for my reflections on how art and an artist existed on the brink of life and death, and what was their fate.

As the author wrote in his message to me, the ten preliminary sketches, drawings, and notes constitute, so to speak, a visual letter, “suggesting a linear sequence, which illustrated with other examples would still remain similar [...]. This sequence is a metaphor of my autobiography.”² The parcel consisted of a set of Bristol boards, ca. 32×29 cm (12.6×11.4 in), created between 1973 and 2008: 1) *A study – Wróblewski’s atelier* (winter 1973); 2) *After Brzezinka, anthropological optimism* (1976); 3 and 4) *Last space with introspector* (1991); 5) A ‘dreamy and prayerful’ drawing (1994); 6) *The Cosmos – Blake’s³ aphorisms* (2004); 7) *The Cosmos – a complete copy of Blake’s Laocoön*; 8) *The Cosmos – Tango of Death – in relation to Blake* (2004); 9) *The Cosmos – a rational drawing with a quotation from an interview with Piotr Rawicz*; 10) two notebook pages from 2008. A fragment of the series *After The Rift in Time* (‘this is my reply to eight paintings entitled *The Rift in Time* by Kupferman⁴. His only reference to the Holocaust’)⁵.

I have decided to focus on one of those ten works: number 8, entitled *The Cosmos – Tango of Death – in relation to Blake* from 2004. The drawing is a sketch, a note for the triptych *A study of soundlessness* from 2005 [acrylic on canvas 55×38 cm/ (21,6×15 in – each of 3 plates)], presented during the exhibition *Marek Chlanda. Porządek [Marek Chlanda. Order]*, which was organised in November and December 2005 in Poznań⁶. It originated from a famous photograph taken probably in the winter of 1942 in Lvov at the extermination camp (KZ Janowska) situated at 134, Janowska Street.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

The photograph shows a circle of men – musicians-prisoners, who play the *Tango of Death* on the order of SS-men. The black and white photograph depicts the musicians standing in a big circle and playing different instruments: the violins, clarinets, flutes and saxophones. It is literally a representation of a segment of the circle made up by the members of the camp orchestra;

² A letter from Marek Chlanda to the author from 28 March 2009.

³ William Blake (1757-1827).

⁴ Moshe Kupferman (1926-2003).

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Porządek: Marek Chlanda. Studia, Listy do Williama*, a catalogue of the exhibition “Marek Chlanda. Porządek”, November–December 2005, Muzalewska Gallery, Poznań, page unnumbered.

its remaining fragment, invisible in the photograph, is located off its frame. On the other hand – it is symbolic because it documents the existence of this odd orchestra in the death camp and factually depicts its membership. We do not know how long the members of the orchestra will survive and when they will be killed. Their collective being / existence remains on the margin of life and simultaneously on the brink of death. Two men standing inside the circle are playing the accordions. A conductor, wearing a light coat⁷, is standing opposite the playing men, also inside the circle. The musicians have stands with scores in front of them. In the bottom right-hand corner, we can see a group of six uniformed SS-men of various ranks: officers and ordinary soldiers. Engaged in conversation, they seem to pay no attention to the playing men. Only one of them, dressed in a black uniform and a forage cap, is facing the orchestra.

The group of SS-members and functionaries is situated next to the circle of the musicians, to some extent outside the experience of the group of musicians-prisoners in a German death camp and on the margin of the frame of the photograph. We know that the musicians will be killed, and the SS-men will survive. Near the group, a little to the side, away from the talking men, is a dachshund. The photograph, which shows ca. ¼ of the circle of the musicians standing in the camp square, is very dynamic, the picture is ‘hasty’, diagonal, yet not accidental; it was taken by a ‘confident’ hand – with no hiding, no fear. It seems ‘aesthetically’ arranged according to the perspective rules of a bird’s eye view. The uniformed men visible in the bottom right-hand corner alarmingly resemble the inscrutable group of three people from the painting *Flagellation of Christ* by Piero della Francesca (ca. 1415-1492), placed ‘outside’ the scene of the Torment, away from the pain and suffering of the flagellated Man, and away from the torturers.

The photo was probably taken by an SS-man, the scene was presumably snapped from the building whose windows looked out on the camp square. From this window, the photographer and music lover may have seen the full circle of the camp orchestra. The picture is clear enough to distinguish the playing men’s faces, their bodies characteristically leaned over the instruments, their eyes directed at the stands with the scores, a hand holding a bow, streaks of grey at the temples, the glasses... .

⁷ The camp at 134 Janowska Street was a temporary one; the prisoners did not have their heads shaved, nor were they tattooed or had to wear camp striped uniforms. Comp.: E. Kessler, *Przeżyć Holocaust we Lwowie*, ŻIH, Warszawa 2007, p. 19; D. Kahane, *Dziennik getta lwowskiego* [n.p. and n.d.].

A SHORT HISTORICAL SKETCH – LVOV, 1930s/1940s

In the 1930s, Lvov was inhabited by 312 thousand people, including some 157 thousand Poles, 109 thousand Jews and 50 thousand Ukrainians⁸. According to the official census data from 9 December 1933, Lvov was inhabited by ca. 99,595 Jews. However, Stefan Szende gives the number as ca. 180 thousand.⁹ On 22 December 1939, Red Army troops entered Lvov. Since that December, mass arrests and deportations into the USSR were carried out in the area, involving mainly Polish and Jewish intelligentsia. The last troop of the Soviet army left Lvov on the night of 28/29 June 1941, and on 30 June, at around 11:00 a.m., the Germans entered the city together with the Ukrainian battalion Nachtigall. Between 30 June and 3 July, Lvov witnessed exceptionally bloody and cruel fighting, which resulted in the killing of ca. three thousand people, mainly Poles and Jews.¹⁰

Two camps

The Germans established two camps in Lvov. One of them was situated in Czwartaki Street: it was a side street in the quarter inhabited by the SS (between Potocki Street and Listopad Street). It was closed down in November 1943. The other camp was located at 134 Janowska street and it operated until the Germans left Lvov. In this camp alone, almost 200 thousand people, almost all of whom were Jews, lost their lives.¹¹ The camp at 134 Janowska Street served as a temporary camp (*Durchgangslager*), and an extermination camp for the Jews from Lvov and those from the local cities and towns of the so-called District of Galicia.

The camp at 134 Janowska street in Lvov

Before the war, the area behind the tollbooth in Lvov at 134 Janowska Street was occupied by a mill machinery plant, which belonged to the Jewish entrepreneur Steinhaus. After their entry into Lvov, the Germans established

⁸ *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna*, vol. 3., Warszawa 1997, p. 834.

⁹ S. Szende, *The Promise Hitler Kept*, London 1945, p. 124.

¹⁰ F. Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich*, Łódź 1945 [The Publishing House of the Central Jewish Historical Commission attached to the Central Committee of Polish Jews, vol. 4) and *The Holocaust Chronicle*, Lincolnwood 2001 http://www.jhi.pl/uploads/archive_record/file/125/C_KH_303_XX.pdf (17.06.2014).

¹¹ The main places of mass murder were situated c. half a kilometre from the camp, between a Jewish cemetery and so-called Mount of Executions at the foot of Kortumowa Mountain.

an armament plant (Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke – D.A.W. for short) there. It was administered by the SS organization. The commandant of the camp in the first period of its operation was SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritz Gebauer. Since the document confirming the fact of employment at the plant was considered to be a good one, i.e. it protected its owner from street round-ups, Jews initially volunteered to work in the D.A.W. In time, some Jewish workers were sent to the factory by the Arbeitsamt; also the Jews caught by the Nazis in the streets of Lvov joined the factory's workforce. As early as in September 1939, the number of the Jewish workers reached 350 people. At the end of September 1941, new barracks were built and surrounded with barbed wire. On the 1st of October 1941, the D.A.W. commandant Fritz Gebauer ordered the workers not to leave the premises of the plant. A few days later, the area was surrounded with barbed wire. A few SS- men with machine guns remained on duty in a newly built guard box. "It was how the 'Janowski' camp was established", recalls Filip Friedman¹². From November 1941, it became a forced labour camp. The prisoners were strictly guarded, any contact with the outside world was prohibited. The administration was taken over from Gebauer by Obersturmführer Wilhelm Rokita and from 2 March 1942 also by Gustav Willhaus: "A former café busker is an 'aesthete' fond of inflicting physical and moral torture."¹³

The stable group of some thousand labourers working at the Janowski camp before extermination was accompanied by hundreds of thousands of people passing through the place on the transport to Bełżec. These were both Jews from Lvov and the inhabitants of the local towns. Only the chosen ones were left alive. It is hard to estimate the number of the Jews staying at the camp in particular periods of its existence. The only "official" figure comes from the note kept in the statistical office of Lvov, made by the German city governor. It says that on the 1st of March 1943 (the day when Germans carried out a makeshift census), there were 15 thousand Jews in the camp. Originally, the camp was earmarked only for men. Repeatedly expanded and converted, it served as a place of the "selection" of young and healthy men, while other people were transported to the extermination camp in Bełżec or shot dead at the execution sites in the local forests ("Piaski"). The first extension was made in March 1942, the time of the "March campaign", when 15 thousand people were driven to Bełżec. The extension of the camp was managed by the famous Lvov architect, professor Griffel DSc, the inventor of a special type of steel for concrete constructions. With the advent of the so-called "great campaigns" (1943), a female section was created in strict separation from the

¹² F. Friedman, *op. cit.*

¹³ *Ibidem.*

male zone. It was opened with the arrival of the first transport of 70 women coming from Żółkiew, who were directed to work at the D.A.W. in a newly established “tricot plant”.¹⁴ As reported by the witnesses, the Janowski camp was the scene of particular cruelty: “regular assemblies, frequently held in the middle of the night, used to be the orgies of sadism of depraved and drunk Germans and Ukrainians.”¹⁵

THE ORCHESTRA

The Lvov camp at 134 Janowska Street had an orchestra consisting of prisoners. It was conducted by Leon Striks and, according to Filip Friedman, some of its members were outstanding musicians, such as the well-known composer and musicologist Jakob Mund, the conductors Marcell Horowitz, Alfred Stadler, the musicians Leon Zak, Edward Steinberg, Leon Eber, Józef Herman, Marek Bajer, Artur Hermelin (ca. 1898- ca. 1944), the opera singer Albert Feller, the pianist and Chopin performer prof. Leopold Münzer (ca. 1900 - ca. 1944)¹⁶.

The orchestra was established on the initiative of Obersturmführer Wilhelm Rokita; it was also him who made the musicians compose the melody for *Tango fun toyt* (Yiddish – *Tango of death*). “Since then – Friedman recalls – each group sent to death was accompanied by this macabre composition played by the orchestra.”¹⁷

Music was an integral part of the camp life in almost all Nazi camps. Almost every camp prisoner inevitably encountered some form of music during their imprisonment. It was usually part of the officially organized everyday life in the camp: singing was obligatory, there were camp orchestras... What is more, prisoners-musicians were made to perform music for SS-men after working hours.¹⁸

The camp orchestras provided musical setting for punishments and executions; in Birkenau, the orchestra played during the selections. Shirli Gilbert writes that violinists Lili Mathé, Louis Bannet and Schmel Gogol

¹⁴ Comp. E. Kessler, *op. cit.*; J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich (1941-1944)*, Warszawa 2007; D. Kahane, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ F. Friedman, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ S. Dybowski, *Słownik pianistów polskich*, Warszawa 2003.

¹⁷ F. Freideman, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ G. Fackler, *Muzyka w obozach koncentracyjnych 1933-1945*, “Muzykalia VI. Judaica 1”, http://www.demusica.pl/cmsimple/images/file/fackler_muzykalia_6_judaica1.pdf (14.06.2014).

were forced to play near the crematorium.¹⁹ The camp orchestra in Treblinka consisted only of a “provisional” trio with a mandolin, a violin and a wind instrument, while Auschwitz had an 80-people symphonic orchestra. The repertoire was varied: marches, songs, camp anthems, light music, film music, popular songs, melodies from operettas, classical music, excerpts from operas. As evidenced by the archival records stored at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, the camp orchestra in Auschwitz played Beethoven's Fifth symphony. The scores, instruments, stands usually belonged to the camp victims and prisoners and were brought by them from “the outside world”.

Szymon Laks (born in 1901 in Warsaw – died in 1983 in Paris), a pianist, violinist, composer and conductor, graduated from the Warsaw Conservatory and subsequently lived in Vienna and Paris. He was apprehended in Paris in 1941, and detained in Beaune, Drancy, Auschwitz, Kaufering, and Dachau. Shortly after being freed on the 3rd of May 1945, he returned to Paris. He wanted to preserve the memory of the death and suffering of all those who had been killed in the camps and to think over the role that music had played in the extermination. In 1948 he co-authored a book with René Coudy titled *Musiques d'un autre monde*. The first Polish version of the work based on documents and testimonies was titled *Gry oświęcimskie* [Playing in Auschwitz]; it was published in 1979 by the Poets' and Painters' Press in London.²⁰ In Auschwitz, Szymon Laks was a violinist, then a copyist (*Notenschreiberem*), and finally a conductor. He wrote: “Music hastened the end”.²¹ Primo Levi stated that “In labour camps, music brought people down.”²² Music, this “noblest expression of the human spirit” had to work for hatred and crime, which were born of the same spirit. Music inflicted pain²³. Pascal Quignard writes about the “hatred of music”: it became “hateful to the person who loved it with all his heart. (...) Music is a bait, which lures the souls and brings them to death. It caused pain to the deported, whose bodies swung against their will. In no way was it possible to listen to it without shaking: the naked bodies entered the gas chambers accompanied by music.”²⁴

¹⁹ Sh. Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust. Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*, Oxford 2005, pp. 177-178.

²⁰ In Poland, the book was published in 1998 by PMO Publishing House.

²¹ P. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, transl. S. Woolf, New York 1961, p. 19 (foreign quotations in author's translation).

²² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²³ J. Glazowska, *W negatywie świata. Losy – Szymona Laks*, http://www.polish-jewish-heritage.org/Pol/sierpien_03_losy-Szymon_Laks.htm (11.06.2014).

²⁴ P. Quignard, *Nienawiść do muzyki*, transl. E. Wieleżyńska, „Literatura na Świecie” 2004, no. 1-2, pp. 184-185.

THE PHOTOGRAPH, CTD.

Let us come back to the photograph depicting the camp orchestra in the Lvov extermination camp, playing the *Tango of Death*²⁵. We do not know its author. From the 2nd of March 1942, the camp administration was divided between Wilhelm Rokita and Gustav Willhaus from Saarbrücken²⁶. Filip Friedman recalls:

Some torturers had their favourite punishments: Willhaus's passion was shooting at a living target; he used to shoot for fun or for sport at a crowd of prisoners standing at a washbasin or at a kitchen pot; he organized 'festive' hunts for prisoners from the balcony of his villa, accompanied by his wife Otylia; their nine-year-old daughter Heike admired her parents' shooting accuracy.²⁷

The villa where Willhaus lived with his wife and daughter was situated almost at the camp: in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the dwelling houses of the factory owners were built in the close neighbourhood of their factories. The villa probably used to belong to a citizen of Lvov, a pre-war owner of the mill machinery plant. It could have been Gustav Willhaus, a "music lover", that took the photo of the scene. Today the photograph – one of those taken by the murderers – duplicated, enlarged, accompanied with more or less detailed comments, is the object of reflection, attempts at interpretation, emotions, anxiety, and thought. "For me, the photograph," writes Giorgio Agamben, "is somehow a place of the Last Judgement, it depicts the world as it will be on the Day of Wrath."²⁸

In his fundamental study published in Chicago in 1961²⁹, Raul Hilberg researched multiple sources evidencing the total prohibition on taking photos of serious abuses perpetrated by the members of the Einsatzgruppen. The American historian writes about the boards placed at the camp boundaries, forbidding anyone to take photos. In his document of 2 February 1943, the Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss announces: "I stress once again that taking photos inside the camp is forbidden. I will definitely punish all those who do not obey this order."³⁰ However, photos crop up everywhere – both those taken by the murderers, the members of the Einsatzgruppen, recording

²⁵ The photography is presently stored in Yad Vashem's collection in Jerusalem.

²⁶ F. Friedman, *op. cit.*

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

²⁸ G. Agamben, *Profanacje*, transl. M. Kwaterko, Warszawa 2006, p. 35.

²⁹ R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago 1961, p. 276.

³⁰ R. Bogusławska-Świebocka, T. Cegłowska, *Auschwitz: A History of Photographs*, in: *KL Auschwitz. Fotografie dokumentalne*, ed. T. Cegłowska, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim 1999, p. 51.

the massacres of the Jews, and those taken for documentation purposes or to record events. Despite his own ban on taking photos, Höss gave the Minister of Justice Otto Thierack an album with the photos taken in Auschwitz³¹. The photos of executions, tortures, charred corpses were taken and duplicated by the SS-men themselves. Hilberg writes about the German soldiers who kept them in their wallets together with the photos of their relatives; also those which depicted them participating in committing crimes. These photos were passed from hand to hand; they were shown around, sometimes sent with letters to the families in Germany. Many of them were preserved, stored in the Holocaust archives, despite the SS-men's attempts to completely destroy evidence of their crimes at the end of the war: documents about the prisoners, library files, death protocols, indictments, archives and even human remains. "As well as the *tools of extermination, the archives, the memory of extermination* should have been destroyed. It was another way of preserving it in the state of unimaginability."³²

The photograph from the camp in Janowska Street may be one of a few pictures of the degraded reality of the Holocaust world which immortalised an indescribable, yet *imaginable* moment. It is hard to give meaning to this scene happening as if before our eyes; being somehow the essence of *imaginable* cruelty. "We must imagine," wrote Filip Müller, one of the surviving members of the Sonderkommando³³. "*Imagine despite everything*, and to do this we must accept the difficult ethics of a picture. I would say – remarks Didi-Huberman – that the picture is in this case *the eye of history*, its unremitting vocation to 'make things visible'."³⁴

MAREK CHLANDA – *COSMOS / THE TANGO OF DEATH / A STUDY OF SOUNDLESSNESS*, 2005

Marek Chlanda's sketch *Cosmos – The Tango of Death*, which preceded the triptych titled *A Study of Soundlessness*, was created as an image of a thought which persistently searched for order in the chaos of the world, a thought yearning for an embodiment in which it could find space for contemplation, simply for life. The sketch originated from a reproduction of the photograph

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

³² G. Didi-Huberman, *Obrazy mimo wszystko*, transl. M. Kubiak Ho-Chi, Universitas Kraków 2008, p. 28.

³³ F. Müller, *Trois ans dans une chambre de gaz à Auschwitz*, French transl. P. Desolneux, Paris 1980, p. 227.

³⁴ G. Didi-Huberman, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

accompanying the article by Ernest Wichner and Herbert Wiesner on Rose Ausländer (1901–1988) and Paul Celan (1920-1970), published in the ninth issue of the magazine “Krasnogruda” (1998, p. 82). It is a technically poor and blurred reproduction of the photo depicting an orchestra playing *The Tango of Death* at the camp in Lvov: one can see only the dark, unintelligible, “painted” figures of the musicians. Chlanda’s sketch, made in pen, quite accurately repeats the “composition” of the photo. Here the artist himself

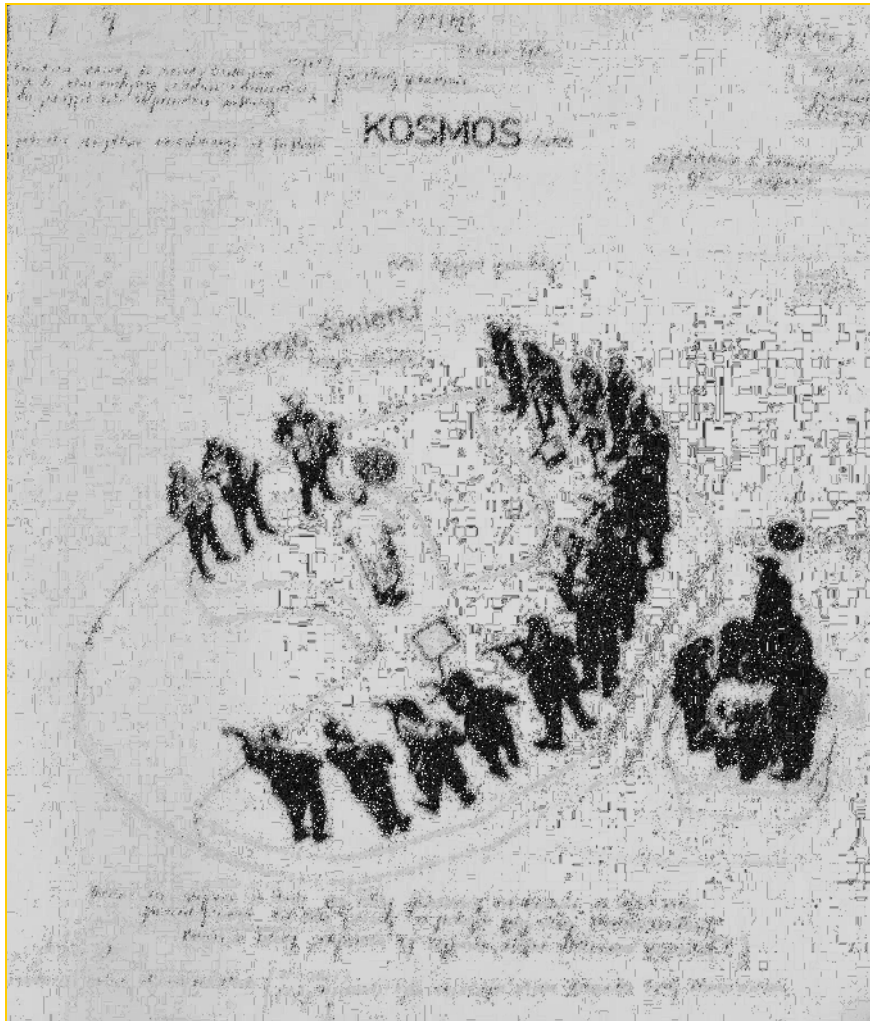


Photo 2. Marek Chlanda, *Cosmos – Tango of Death – in Relation to William Blake*, 2004, pencil drawing, ink, paper, 42 x 30 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

confronts the viewer with the literal and the metaphorical understanding of the marginal: now the group of musicians is situated in the centre of the drawing, but the margins of the work are filled with the artist's notes, remarks, traces of thoughts recorded during the creation of the drawing. The notes, written down by the artist, to some extent "complete and structure" this composition:

Cosmos. history of fear. War. 'Real nations are historical nations, so those which...' (Hegel), let everyone participate in history. Exclusions and deceptions... one real conductor. Five false conductors. Tango of death. Good and evil played in the camp in Janowska Street in Lvov in 1942 redrafted 62 years later in a room in Nadwiślańska Street [the then address of Marek Chlanda's Cracow studio – E.J.]. Art was humiliated, Imagination was denied, War Ruled Nations (?)... . LVOV 1942.

Chlanda sketches in a dashed line the borders separating the SS-men, who are the perpetrators of the death of the musicians and numerous other people, from the victims – the members of the camp orchestra. This dashed line separates life from death.

The musicians are standing in a semicircle, around the conductor (?) wearing a light coat. In Chlanda's picture, the three accordionists are placed on an island/stage cut out of the Cosmos – on an irregular, egg-shaped stripe of land, drifting in the sea of emptiness. The group of SS-men is placed on a similar, yet much more "cramped" island, separated from the musicians' island by an empty space. The artist's line attempts to reconstruct or recall order, separate the good from evil, but at the same time to delineate the boundaries between the chaos of emptiness and the order. The sketch is a picture of thought attempting to protect the good/art, to separate it from the darkness of chaos. The figures of the musicians, so intensely recognisable in the photo stored in the archives of Yad Vashem, in Chlanda's sketch have become shadows, silhouettes, and only the patient hand of the artist, its precise drawing skill distinguished the gestures, postures, body positions characteristic of the people playing particular instruments. The order of things, the association between the body and the instrument, between place and time (1942/2004), let us follow the artist's thought and fix our eyes on the two black points: one placed over the conductor and the other over one of the SS-men – the one whose eyes are directed towards the orchestra.

"While I was working on *A Study of Soundlessness*, I spent hours talking to Blake's Laocoön,"³⁵ writes Chlanda. Beneath, I quote an extract from his letter addressed to William Blake:

³⁵ Marek Chlanda's letter...

Winter 1942, in the camp in Janowska Street there are two groups standing next to each other: six German soldiers and twenty or so Jewish musicians. The former are standing in a small circle, the latter in a wide circle, with a conductor and a soloist inside. The conductor is wearing a light coat. Both the German and the Jewish people like music. But then, in those years, they were associated with something different. Some of the Germans (the exact number is unknown) had an idea to exclude all Jews from the kingdom of sound and convert their minds into a cloud of dust. This idea was called the Final Solution.

Best regards,
M.³⁶

The letter sent by Marek Chlanda from his then Cracow studio in Nadwiślańska Street to William Blake should be understood as part of a conversation between artists; the one living in the 20th and the 21st century already knows that the world was the actual scene of the events which the one living two centuries earlier saw in his mind, in one of his amazingly penetrating visions: "All futurity/ Seems teeming with Endless Destruction never to be repelled."³⁷

Chlanda reads a version of the *Vision of the Last Judgement* by William Blake, written in 1810, with unusual concentration, following the Master's thought, hand and line: he attempts to discern, to penetrate the principle of reasoning which moved Blake's hand; he tries to conceive what made him express himself, what organized his excessive sensitivity and awareness. The Last Judgement or the Final Solution – *The Tango of Death* played by the exquisite Lvov musicians in the Janowski camp for those who were going to die.

The time of William Blake's *Vision of the Last Judgment* and the time of the Final Solution, the time of meeting someone and of saying goodbye, of condemnation and of salvation, of life and of death, of sound and of soundlessness are recorded in Chlanda's letter to Blake, in his sketch *The Cosmos – The Tango of Death* and in the triptych *A Study of Soundlessness* (2005).

The left wing of the triptych [watercolour on canvas, 55 × 38 cm (21.6 × 15 in)] depicts the Jewish musicians standing in a wide circle. Although the photo does not explicitly indicate the time of the year, Chlanda has painted snow – white, grey, blue, footprints on the snow; the grey hour of the early wintry dusk. The figures of the musicians are connected by means of red and black drops/beads (of a rosary, a chain?) – visible traces of an eye/a thought moving from one person to another, from one instrument to another. A black dot, a red dot, a black dot, a red one..., no one is omitted. The artist's thought

³⁶ *Porządek...*

³⁷ P. Ackroyd, *William Blake*, transl. E. Kraskowska, Poznań 2001, p. 328.

binds this group of musicians playing “soundlessness”, freezes their life filled with music to the end, their body alignment, their postures, their way of holding the instrument fixed thanks to a long practice.

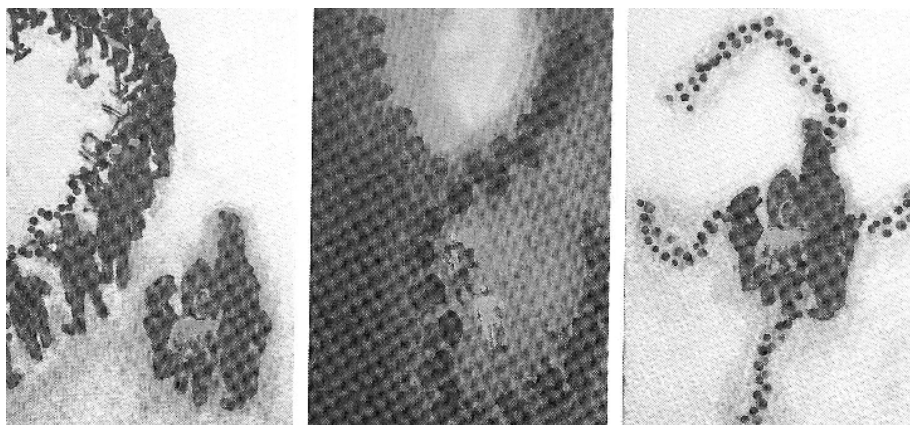


Photo 3. Marek Chlanda, *Study of Soundlessness*, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 55 x 38 cm (x 3 – triptych). Image courtesy of the artist

The middle section of the triptych depicts the same orchestra, conductor and accordionist. The black and navy blue beads (or heavy drops – of tears?) outline an upward movement, towards the Ultimate; yet moving a hand from the first musician on the right, then downwards and upwards, describing a small circle, we may recognize that the arrangement of the beads reproduces an unfinished sign of the treble clef. “As part of hierarchical choreography” – writes Chlanda in his letter to Blake – “your pencil conjures small events.”³⁸

The left wing is a sort of artistic magnification of the group of SS-men situated outside the musicians’ circle in the photograph. The heavy drops of thoughts (red and navy blue ones) thicken, concentrating on each of the Nazis, seem to move away and come back again; they fall into three strings looking like torn strings of beads – here, a thought is not supported with understanding; it gets broken, it disappears, comes back, searches for order, sense, yet cannot find it.

³⁸ *Porządek...*

MUSIC

As pointed out by Pascal Quignard,

Music as a domain of art participated in the extermination of the Jews by the Germans between 1933 and 1945. It was the only domain of art which was especially appointed for this purpose by the administrators of the Konzentrationslager. To its disadvantage, it must be stressed that it is the only domain of art which could be involved in the camp order, the order of hunger, misery, work, pain, humiliation and death.³⁹

In the extermination camps, music did not ease the victims' pain, nor did it give them comfort; the German soldiers used it to increase the prisoners' subordination – it connected everyone with an impersonal bond deprived of intimacy. “They did it for pleasure, for the aesthetic pleasure and sadistic delight taken from listening to their favourite arias and looking at the performance of humiliation danced by a group of people who took the sins of their own oppressors. It was ritual music.”⁴⁰

In his book *If This Is a Man?*, Primo Levi wrote that “music in Auschwitz was like geometrical madness. It became the hypnosis of the interminable rhythm, which kills thought and deadens pain.”⁴¹

Karel Fröhlich, a violinist who survived Auschwitz, confessed during the conversation with Joze Kavas on 2 December 1973 in New York that art was the only thing in the camp that could survive: “the experience of time was the experience of absolutely infinite and absolutely empty time. In fact, we did not have our audience, as its members continuously disappeared.”⁴²

THE PRINCIPLE OF MAXIMUM ENTROPY

The basic principle of thermodynamics, the so-called principle of maximum entropy states that everything, the whole Universe, undergoes entropy: the passage of time inevitably leads to the degradation of everything; yet at the same time life is permanent, it is a process capable not only of sustaining entropy, but of stopping it. Similar processes occur in memory: it organizes the Universe; awareness creates images. A mind/thought cannot reconcile itself with entropy – thus it strives to organize the degraded reality created by

³⁹ P. Quignard, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

⁴¹ P. Levi, *Czy to jest człowiek?*, transl. H. Wiśniowska, Kraków 1978, p. 48.

⁴² After: P. Quignard, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

wars and cataclysms, i.e. to put the broken elements back together. “Marek Chlanda is looking for order in the world of entropy”, writes Jaromir Jedliński, or rather “he is attempting to restore it.”⁴³

The Cosmos – The Tango of Death – an “intermediary drawing” on the path leading to the creation of *A study of soundlessness* is a sort of explicit, revealed visualization of the training of his thought and of his hand holding the pencil; we can see the process of image creation – we can watch it step by step, line by line, and we can follow the workings of the mind making a choice, concentrating on it, looking for references, maybe also for the understanding of those who have already gone this way. This search for experience has been described in the letters written to William Blake. The degraded reality of the Holocaust is concentrated, as in a lens, in one photographic frame depicting the orchestra from the camp in Lvov; in Chlanda’s works it is presented in the form of a triptych. An image/thought, like a glimmer of reflection of a long-forgotten catastrophe, has received the form of an altar painting: a picture-prayer – a triptych of the Final Solution. The artist’s choice has elevated the photograph, taken by a criminal, to the status of art. The degraded world of the Shoah – the photograph has become one of its images, a photo taken for scoffers’ amusement – makes us face, by the artist’s will, the tragedy of a *human image* itself, and its tripartite form establishes a kind of religious order.

An artist who creates an “image of death” – to recall the famous words of Theodor W. Adorno referring to Arnold Schönberg’s composition *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947), “no matter how strict and uncompromising he is, hurts our sense of shame towards the victims. After all, their suffering is used for the preparation of this kind of works, which are thrown at the mercy of the world which had killed them.”⁴⁴ The artist’s thought, sorrow, seriousness and concentration, solemn, crypto-religious⁴⁵ form of the triptych of *A Study of Soundlessness* create the impression that this inconceivable crime was not meaningless. According to Adorno, aesthetization in art gives meaning to the Shoah. It brings a sort of artistic salvation.

⁴³ J. Jedliński, *Obcowanie – współnictwo*, in: catal. *Porządek...*

⁴⁴ T.W. Adorno, *Dialektyka negatywna*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 1986, p. 506–509.

⁴⁵ A notion introduced by I. Kania, comp.: *Jabès, czyli o składaniu rozsypanego tekstu*, in: E. Jabès, *Księga Pytań*, vol. III – *Powrót do Księgi*, transl. A. Wodnicki, Austeria, Kraków 2005, p. 124.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno W. Theodor (1986) *Dialektyka negatywna*, transl. Krystyna Krzemieniowa, Warszawa: PWN.
- Agamben Giorgio (2006) *Profanacje*, transl. Mateusz Kwaterko, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Ackroyd Peter (2001) *William Blake*, transl. Ewa Kraskowska, Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo.
- Bogusławska-Świebocka Renata, Ceglowska Teresa (1999) in: *Auschwitz: A History in Photographs*, Teresa Świebocka, ed., *KL Auschwitz. Fotografie dokumentalne*. Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Didi-Huberman Georges (2008) *Obrazy mimo wszystko*, transl. Mai Kubiak Ho-Chi, Kraków: Universitas.
- Dybowski Stanisław (2003) *Słownik pianistów polskich*. Warszawa: Selene.
- Fackler Guido, *Muzyka w obozach koncentracyjnych 1933-1945*, "Muzykalia VI. Judaica 1", "Muzykalia VI. Judaica1 http://www.demusica.pl/cmsimple/images/file/fackler_muzykalia_6_judaica1.pdf (14.06.2014).
- Friedman Filip (1945/2001) *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich*, Łódź: The Publishing House of the Central Jewish Historical Commission attached to the Central Committee of Polish Jews, vol. 4, (2001) and *The Holocaust Chronicle*, Lincolnwood: http://www.jhi.pl/uploads/archive_record/file/125/C_KH_303_XX.pdf p. 38. (5.07.2014).
- Gilbert Shirli (2005) *Music in the Holocaust. Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps*, Oxford: Historical Monographs.
- Glazowska Joanna (2003) *W negatywie świata. Losy – Szymona Laks*, in: „Rzeczpospolita” 6 sierpnia, http://www.polish-jewish-heritage.org/Pol/sierpien_03_losy-Szymon_Laks.htm (11.06.2014).
- Hilberg Raul (1961) *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago: University Press.
- Honigsman Jakub (2007) *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich (1941-1944)*, transl. Adam Redzik, Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.
- Jabès Edmund (2005) *Księga Pytań*, vol. III – *Powrót do Księgi*, transl. Adam Wodnicki, Kraków: Austeria.
- Jedliński Jaromir (2005) *Obcowanie – współnictwo*, in: *Porządek: Marek Chlanda. Studia, Listy do Williama*, a catalogue of the exhibition "Marek Chlanda. Porządek", November–December, Muzalewska Gallery, Poznań, page unnumbered.
- Kahane David *Dziennik getta lwowskiego* [n.p. and n.d.].
- Kessler Edmund (2007) *Przeżyć Holocaust we Lwowie*, ŻIH, Warszawa.
- Levi Primo (1961) *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, transl. S. Woolf, New York.
- Levi Primo (1978) *Czy to jest człowiek?*, transl. Halina Wiśniowska, Kraków.

Müller Filip (1980) *Trois ans dans une chambre de gaz à Auschwitz*, French transl. Pierre Desolneux, Paris: Pygmalion/Gérard Watelet.

Nowa encyklopedia powszechna, vol. 3. (1997) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Porządek: Marek Chlanda. Studia, Listy do Williama, a catalogue of the exhibition "Marek Chlanda. Porządek", November-December 2005, Muzalewska Gallery, Poznan.

Quignard Pascal (2004) *Nienawiść do muzyki*, transl. Ewa Wieleżyńska, „Literatura na Świecie” no. 1-2, pp. 184-185.

Szende Stefan (1945) *The Promise Hitler Kept*, London.

SZTUKA NA MARGINESIE ŻYCIA. TANGO ŚMIERCI WEDŁUG MARKA CHLANDY (streszczenie)

Szkic Marka Chlandy *Kosmos*. W 2005 roku, na podstawie zdjęcia wykonanego przez anonimowego fotografa w obozie zagłady we Lwowie (1942) oraz szkicu (*Kosmos*), Chlanda namalował tryptyk *Studium bezdźwięczności*. Dziesięć rysunków to 'wizualny list', linia metaforyzująca biografię twórcy. Spośród dziesięciu szkiców skupiam się na jednym. To ósmy rysunek *Kosmos – Tango śmierci – w powiązaniu z Williamem Blakiem*. Na przykładzie fotografii, jednego szkicu i jednego obrazu przedstawiam, w jaki sposób na marginesie życia i śmierci istniała sztuka i jej twórcy. Fotografia przedstawia grupę muzyków grających *Tango śmierci*, jest ona dosłownym wyobrażeniem – z jednej strony – wycinka kręgu obozowej orkiestry, której pozostała, niewidoczna na fotografii, część 'znalazła' się poza kadrem, na marginesie tej sceny; z drugiej – symbolicznym ukazaniem ich egzystencji **poza** marginesem życia, a jednocześnie **na** marginesie śmierci. Odbiorca staje wobec dosłownego i metaforycznego rozumienia marginesu: grupa muzyków mieści się w centrum rysunku, ale marginesy tej pracy wypełnione są licznymi notatkami artysty. Te zapiski 'organizują' kompozycję. Tekst ten dotyczy artysty i sztuki, które znalazły się na marginesie, na krawędzi istnienia, pośrednio wprężone w maszynę Zagłady. Zasadniczą treścią tekstu jest namysł nad nieprawdopodobieństwem istnienia sztuki i funkcjonującej na marginesie życia oraz wskazanie tego, jak współczesny artysta stara się wniknąć w tamto szczególne doświadczenie, poprzez myśl Williama Blake'a.

Słowa kluczowe: Chlanda – *Tango śmierci* – szkic/tryptyk – fotografia – muzyka – obóz zagłady – margines życia – Zagłada.

Magdalena Samborska

Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź
m.samba@poczta.onet.pl

THE ART OF WOMEN – FORM THE MARGIN TO THE MAINSTREAM

Abstract: Confronting the second wave of feminism with postfeminism allows us to show the change in the perception of art and the position of women in the art world. The activists of the 1970s aroused extreme emotions in the public, and attempts were made to downplay the value of their work. At the end of the 20th century, however, when ambiguity and controversy have become the desired quality of art, feminist ideas are sometimes a necessary ornament of the careers of celebrities. In this article I present the history of the difficulties that artists who debuted on the art scene in the 1970s had to overcome. I use the example of Judy Chicago and her iconic work *Dinner Party*. Other heroines of the pioneering times are Marina Abramovic, Carolee Schneemann, and Valie Export, whose attitude I compare to that of the star of the younger generation, Vanessa Beecroft. Beecroft leaves her attractive installations without any comment, she does not settle any controversies, which fits the characteristics of the post-modern game on the art market.

Keywords: feminism – postfeminism – *herstory* – Judy Chicago – feminine aesthetic – women’s art – Vanessa Beecroft – Toxic Tittes.

Herstory is a neologism that entered the English language in the late 1960s. Replacing *his* with *her* means approaching knowledge from the female, feminist perspective. *Herstory* applies to various spheres of human activity, including the arts. The *history* of art denied women the ability to make significant contribution to art, abstract thinking skills, and deeper understanding of the sublime. Women were not allowed at art academies and therefore had no way of receiving professional education. The only role available to them was that of amateurs engaged in craft in the comfort of their own homes. The second wave of feminism united artists and instigated the process of change. “In museums and art academies women artists protested for equal

rights. They organised their own exhibitions, operated their own galleries, and held their own autonomous art classes. They also sought political means to break through male-dominated structures,”¹ Uta Grosenick wrote. It was in the struggle for a common cause that the idea of sisterhood was born. Starting from a peripheral position, the feminist art of the 1970s was often vociferous, aggressive, politically engaged, thus challenging the stereotypical beliefs about women’s innate passivity and sweet nature. Today, it is believed that women’s contribution to the art world is undeniable. Therefore, the situation of the female artists in the Euro-American cultural circle has changed.

Contemporary artists who are referred to as “daughters of feminists” want to fully benefit from the achievements won by the previous generation. At the same time they do not need or want to take an aggressive attitude or act for the common feminine purpose. Their behaviour is not of missionary character but individualistic and pleasure-seeking. They have no need to fight for recognition in the field of art because political correctness forces gallery owners, critics, media and so on to be interested in the artistic activities of the fairer sex.

In this article I will try to trace the process of transformation that the art of women has undergone. How did it happen that the figures of once secondary importance found themselves in the spotlight at the turn of the century? It is also interesting to compare the attitudes of both generations.

Herstory

In 1976, Sylvia Bovenshen, German essayist and literary critic, wrote: “though she is the great theme of art, woman as empirical being is acceptable only by virtue of her supposed inspirational power.”² Already in ancient times inspiration took the form of a muse that visited the artist. The personification of the creative forces as a woman, however, paradoxically meant pushing the actual women to the margins of artistic creativity. Feminists saw the causes of this situation in the existing, somewhat universal, and in fact men’s standards of evaluation. In 1971, Linda Nochlin, American art historian, provocatively asked in her famous essay why there never have been any female artists as great as Michelangelo³. In her view, the category of greatness is associated with the myth of the outsider artist, a divine genius, and no one ever imagined women in that role. Carolyn Korsmeyer, American philosopher,

¹ *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, ed. by U. Grosenick. Köln 2001, p. 13.

² S. Bovenshen, *Is There a Feminine Aesthetic?*, “New German Critique”, no. 10 (Winter 1977) Duke University Press, p. 114.

³ Essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* By Linda Nochlin was published for the first time in the magazine “Art News” and is now considered to be the seminal text for the feminist history of art.

adds that genius has a mind “that rises above the quotidian concerns that shape ordinary activities (...) [A]ny person who is largely defined by domestic roles will be precluded from the concept of a genius.”⁴ Femininity was therefore identified with the private sphere and reproductive responsibilities, which is why the categories of woman and artist were mutually exclusive in popular opinion.

Of course, there have been female artists in the history of art. They had been active even before the second wave of feminism, but Bovenschen calls that past “the dark side of the cultural history”⁵ in which “women artists waft through history as mere shadows, separated from each other.”⁶ Feminists decided that one of the key issues is heritage to which female artists could refer and build their own identity on its foundations. Thus, they began theoretical research on *herstory*. They analysed the work of their foremothers that art history overlooked or pushed to the margins.

Judy Chicago, American artist and writer, made an attempt to recover the “forgotten” heritage of women, both at the level of theoretical research, and artistic practice. In the early 1970s, she decided to devote herself to teaching. The first group she worked with was comprised of both male and female students. Chicago, however, noticed that the male students quickly took a dominant position in the group, while female students remain passive. As a feminist, she understood that learned gender-specific attitudes reproduced in the course of education (male activity / female passivity) are continued in independent artistic work after graduating from college. Thus, she decided to teach classes consisting only of female students for whom she developed a feminist curriculum. She implemented it at California State University in Fresno and then at the California Institute of Arts in Valencia. The program consisted in the study of history of women’s art and reading of contemporary feminist theory. Consciousness-raising techniques used in feminist education taught female students how to stop being “the second sex”, “reject the male point of view that confined women, and unleash true emotions and feelings.”⁷ The result of the class taught by Chicago was the giant environment *Womenhouse* in an abandoned house in Los Angeles.

The study of female heritage found its artistic expression in the installation *Dinner Party* implemented by Judy Chicago and her team of assistants in the years 1974-1979. For two years, her co-workers gathered materials on the achievements of women. *Dinner Party* is a tribute to women – historical and mythical characters, for whom the artist and her assistants prepared a festive

⁴ C. Korsmeyer, *Gender and aesthetics*, New York 2004, p. 29.

⁵ S. Bovenschen, p. 133.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ G. Dziamski, *Sztuka feministyczna (I)*, „Miesięcznik Literacki” 1988, nr 2-3, p. 113.

meal. For each of the female “guests” a plate was set, consisting of china tableware and runners. Chicago used in these project handicraft techniques traditionally used by women (painting on porcelain, embroidery, crocheting), thus referring to the roles played by women in history. Ornaments on china plates were based on “butterfly-vagina” imagery. They are painted on porcelain or three-dimensional. Even before the described work, Chicago had developed interest in vaginal iconography. In abstract paintings, she made references to butterflies as ancient symbols of liberation and resurrection. She sought symbols of feminine activity and strength, focusing on the rehabilitation of femininity. Like many fighting feminists of the 1970s, she treated the female sexual organ as a flag of the liberation movement. In *Dinner Party*, references to vaginal forms are also clear, however there is no anatomical literalism. Far-reaching transformations make use of abstract forms.

Today, *Dinner Party* is considered the flagship work of feminist art. Since 2007, it has been in the permanent collection of the Brooklyn Museum in New York. The beginnings of this work in the art world, however, were difficult. In 1979, it was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, where it was seen by a hundred thousand visitors. Other museums withdrew from planned exhibitions. “To prevent it from getting stuck in the storeroom, *Dinner Party* was exhibited in alternative spaces – in community centres, old theatres, abandoned train stations, anywhere where there was enough space. (...) Between 1980 and 1982, despite the risk of damaging the fragile and delicate items, the work toured the great American cities.”⁸ It was also shown in Europe and Australia.

In 1990, Chicago had planned to donate the installation of the University of the District of Columbia, where it would be on permanent exhibition. *Washington Times* erroneously reported that the University intended to purchase the indecent work. The news sparked a public debate on the use of government funds for the arts. Chicago’s work was met with harsh criticism from congressmen who had not even seen it. Congressman Robert K. Dornan called it “ceramic 3-D pornography”⁹, Republican Dana Rohrabacher – “wired sexual art”¹⁰. The work was also attacked by feminist critics for essentialism. It was pointed out that the attempt to reevaluate female biology may well be interpreted stereotypically. It is easy to discredit women’s art by reducing it to corporeality, gender, and nature. Vaginal iconography propagated by Judy Chicago did not break the symbolic order in which the feminine element was the antithesis of reason and culture. Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker

⁸ M. Poprzęcka, *Uczta bogiń. Kobiety, sztuka i życie*, Warsaw 2012, p. 205.

⁹ J.F. Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007*, Georgia 2013, p. 252.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

argued, “because meanings in art depend on how they are seen and from which ideological position they are received, such images have a very limited effectivity. They are easily retrieved and co-opted by a male culture because they do not rapture radically meanings and connotations of woman in art as body, as sexual, as nature, as object of male possession.”¹¹

With the development of feminism and women's conscious art new questions arose: what makes women's art different from men's? Is reducing women's art to biology the right way to liberate it from negative male definitions? Is identification with women's art not a voluntary return to the holding cell?

Fearing being enclosed within the women's ghetto and re-marginalised, some female artists firmly distanced themselves from feminism. In the 1940s and 1950s, artists such as Lee Krasner and Helen Frankenthaler refused to present their work at exhibitions separately as women's painting. They wanted to be identified as artists and not separated as women. Feminist criticism sought a parallel between painting technique used by Frankenthaler and menstruation, even though the artist “has not endorsed any type of feminist interpretation of her work; she does not associate her work or herself either with feminist art or with feminism.”¹²

Chicago's attitude was also perceived as insensitivity to ethnic differences. “Feminism, establishing the entity in whose name it speaks in theory and in practice, fell into the trap of exclusion”¹³. Hence the subsequent questions posed by feminist criticism: Is there a universal feminine aesthetics that would include works of nineteenth-century England and contemporary China? Does women's art share certain characteristics beyond time and place?

Contemporary feminism has become a phenomenon difficult to define precisely because the representatives of this movement are trying to avoid exclusion and marginalization of Others. Therefore we have different varieties of feminist theory: black feminism, lesbian feminism, cyber-feminism, Jewish feminism, Latin feminism, ecofeminism, multicultural feminism and so on.

POSTFEMINISM – AMNESIAC CELEBRITIES

So far, questions concerning the aesthetics of the feminine posed by feminists of the second wave have not been answered. For post-feminist this issue is not important. The demands of feminists are considered to have been fulfilled.

¹¹ R. Parker, G. Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, London 2013, p. 130.

¹² M. Schor, *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life*, Duke University Press 2009, p. 94.

¹³ J. Miezielińska, *De-konstruje kobiecości*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 8.

They have been absorbed by mass culture, which transformed them into depoliticised slogans used to sell goods.

Referring to feminism, post-feminist art transforms it into an aesthetic product, ready to be consumed by mass audience.

In the 1990s a new generation of artists debuted on the art scene, known as postfeminists. One of the representatives of this generation is the Los Angeles-based Vanessa Beecroft. The artist creates her works using living women who are partially or completely nude. Standing or seated, in accordance with the artist's instructions they do not make any sudden movements, do not smile, do not talk to each other, do not establish eye contact with the audience. These performances evoke questions raised by feminists in the 1970s concerning female nudity in art, female passivity, women serving as an object of visual consumption and enjoyment of the male recipient. These are feminist themes, but in Beecroft's project, they are only an echo of old dilemmas presented in a sexy version. Models hired by the artist are scantily clad, often wear high-heeled shoes and wigs, which enhances the erotic appeal of these actions. On one of the first exhibitions – *Blond Dream* in 1994 – thirty young girls were gathered in a room inaccessible to the audience. They can only be observed through a small window, which evoked associations with erotic peep-show. Sometimes models featured in Beecroft's shows are completely naked. Their elegantly trimmed or completely shaved pubic hair suggest a closer link with pornography rather than with art. In the installation *VB46*¹⁴, models are painted white and placed in a room with white walls and floor. The artist's plan to approximate abstract art failed. The whiteness of the models was not flawless. The unforeseen rosiness of their shaved wombs attracted glances.

This is how the artist presents her idea: "I thought that if everything was white, the group would disappear, or look like minimal painting. But it didn't. The white looked fetishist, because the body parts rubbed against each other and turned pink. It looked as if I wanted to emphasise them. The idea was to make them disappear, but all you could see was their sex"¹⁵. Regardless of the intentions of the artist, viewers were attracted by the opportunity to watch nudity with impunity. Under the pretext of partaking in high art, they are hoping to fulfil their very base desires.

The visual pleasure offered by Beecroft is a luxury. The artist sometimes partially dresses her models. Probably in accordance with the principle that total nudity is not exciting, she covers girls with underwear. These garments

¹⁴ The artist signs her works with her initials and consecutive numbers.

¹⁵ Thomas Kellein, interview in the exhibition catalogue "Vanessa Beecroft: Photographs, Films, Drawings", Kunsthalle 2004, p. 143.

are loaned or specially designed by famous fashion designers such as Tom Ford, Miuccia Prada, Helmut Lang, or Gucci. Collaboration with the fashion world took on a peculiar form in the case of collaboration with Louis Vuitton. In 2005, Beecroft carried out a performance for the opening of the company's store on the Champs Elysees in Paris. Models were arranged on shelves next to leather goods, like merchandise for sale. Thus, the artist located her action on the border between art and marketing, or diagnosed the situation of the art market.

Beecroft carries out her performances in well-known prestigious galleries (Gagosian Gallery in London) and major museums of the world (such as Whitey Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, or the Kunsthall in Vienna). She has participated in many important international exhibitions, including the Biennale in Venice (1997) and Sao Paulo (2002). Her career is reported and commented upon not only by trade press – “Artforum” and “Flash Art”, but also by magazines reproducing models of femininity criticised by feminists, for example “Vogue”. Actions implemented by Beecroft attract huge audiences. Unlike artists who debuted in the 1960s and 1970s, she is a celebrity. She has not experienced gender discrimination in the art world, but she also feels no gratitude or obligation to her female predecessors whom she owes her privileged position.

Beecroft's artistic activity provokes a variety of controversies even among feminists. Jennifer Doyle sees the ambivalence of the artist's message. On the one hand, her work can be read as a critique of the objectification of women, very literal image of a woman as an object in the world of consumption. On the other hand, the artist's flirtation with luxury fashion brands undermines the feminist message. Doyle points out the positive aspects of Beecroft's artistic activity. She confronts viewers with their desire and shame, which is cathartic. “Citizens of the art world can exorcise their guilt – they can bump against their limits, stew in their own complicity in the subjection of women.”¹⁶ But are Doyle's assumptions justified? Interesting information is found in the text written by women who decided to take a job as models in the action *VB46* organised in 2001 in Beverly Hills. They are members of a group of artists called *Toxic Titties*, who describe themselves as feminists and through their work have described the unknown side of Beecroft's actions, inaccessible to viewers. In the course of the performance they heard the art connoisseurs commenting not the artistic activity, but the qualities of the models' bodies: “there was an air of scrutiny, assessment. Some people of audience openly discussed our individual bodies, postures and appearance

¹⁶ J. Doyle, *Sex Objects: Art and Dialectics of Desire*, Minneapolis 2006, p. 129.

with one another as if we couldn't hear them"¹⁷. The models were therefore treated as objects or goods, insentient and unhearing. This was half-jokingly commented on by a man who upon entering the gallery and taking a look at the models asked, "Can I see a price list?"¹⁸ Thus, there is no trace of exorcising the guilt or catharsis suggested by Jennifer Doyle.

For the models-artists, the confrontation with the celebrity artist and the staff working for success was undoubtedly traumatic. However, viewers of the action are confronted only with aesthetic images. They are not aware of the fact that each three-hour show is preceded by hours of preparation, depilation, make-up and posing for pictures. A number of procedures were performed on models participating in the *VB46* action in order to make women look uniformly alike. They were subjected to depilation. To the surprise of the participants, all their body hair was removed by waxing, including pubic hair, which was painful. Their bodies were painted with white paint and they were instructed how to use the toilet (do not sit down, just squat over the toilet bowl) so as to not to remove the pigment. In the application survey, models gave their shoe size. Despite this, all of them were provided with footwear in the same size. Straps of their shoes were too tight on their ankles which caused their legs to swell. It was decided to cut the straps but it is not pictured in the photographs documenting the action. A graphics software was used to touch up any imperfections. This is exactly what photographers employed in magazines and commercials criticised by feminists do.

By volunteering for the performance, the artists from the *Toxic Titties* group originally intended to perform a subversive action, but the atmosphere in Beecroft's team prevented these plans. The girls surrendered to the regime. They were informed that the lack of subordination of even one of the participants of the performance (such as absence or resignation) would lead to termination of all contracts and none of them would receive any money for their work. Forced solidarity and financial needs proved to be an effective instrument of discipline. "Not unlike sorority hazing rituals or military training, the production process of *VB46* seemed designed to strip these women of their individuality, break down their defences, and install a disciplined group ethic"¹⁹.

The *Toxic Titties* artists decided to expose Beecroft by describing their experiences and subjecting her artistic activity to a critical analysis. According to Julia Steinmetz, Beecroft reinforces the patriarchal conceptions of feminine beauty instead of criticizing them. To prove it, she confronted

¹⁷ J. Steinmetz, H.Cassils, C.Leary, *Behind Enemy Lines: Toxic Titties Infiltrate Vanessa Beecroft*, <http://engenderedspeciesart.com/signsproof.pdf> (4.09.2014).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Beecroft's actions with those by Marina Abramovic, Carolee Schneemann, and Valie Export – the leading performers of the 1970s and 1980s. Balancing on the borderline of being a subject and object of art, exposing their own bodies to the activities of spectators, and even to danger, these artists, “were able to comment on the position of women who are often stripped of their subjectivity and only viewed as passive recipient of men's action.”²⁰ Beecroft does not take part in her actions, even though, paradoxically, she believes that they are a kind of self-portrait. She is not exposed to the glances and comments of viewers. Heroines of her performances, although they spend many hours standing naked in high heels, do not seem to be suffering. Beecroft “puts her models in an exploitative position. Moreover, Beecroft tries to conceal that position. Typically Beecroft's models work long hours two or three days before the actual performance, undergoing emotional and to a certain degree physical violence in the process of transformation into object to be viewed. However, Beecroft's final product comes to the viewer as a glossy, glamorous picture which does not reveal the hardships and humiliation that the models experience”²¹.

Describing the meeting of different generations of artists that took place during the feminist conference in 2007 in New York City, Mira Schor – American artist and writer – anxiously noted that the young artists dissociate themselves from associations with feminism. They want to be in the center, and “feminism is seen as by definition speaking from the margin, for the margin.”²²

Translated by Katarzyna Gucio

BIBLIOGRAFIA

Bovenschen Silvia (1977) *Is there a Feminine Aesthetic?*, “New German Critique”, Duke University Press, no. 10.

Doyle Jennifer (2006) *Sex Objects: Art and Dialectics of Desire*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dziamski Grzegorz (1988) *Sztuka feministyczna (I)*, „Miesięcznik Literacki”, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Prasowe RSW “Prasa”, no. 2-3, pp. 104-116.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² M. Schor, pp. 30-31.

Gerhard Jane F. (2013) *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007*, University of Georgia Press.

Grosenick Uta, Becker Ilka (2001) *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, Köln: Taschen (introduction).

Korsmeyer Carolyn (2004) *Gender and aesthetics*, New York: Routledge.

Miezielińska Joanna (2004) *De-konstrukcje kobiecości*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria.

Poprzęcka Maria (2012) *Uczta bogiń. Kobiety, sztuka i życie*, Warszawa: Agora.

Parker Rozsika, Pollock Griselda (2013) *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.

Schor Mira (2009) *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life*, Duke University Press Books.

Thomas Kellein (2004) *Vanessa Beecroft: Photographs, Films, Drawings*, Bielefeld Städt Kunsthalle (exhibition catalogue).

Steinmetz Julia, Cassils Heather, Leary Clover, *Behind Enemy Lines: Toxic Titties Infiltrate Vanessa Beecroft*, <http://engenderedspeciesart.com/signsproof.pdf> (4.09.2014).

SZTUKA KOBIECA – OD MARGINESU DO MAINSTREAMU (streszczenie)

Konfrontacja drugiej fali feminizmu z postfeminizmem pozwala ukazać zmianę w percepcji sztuki i pozycji kobiet w świecie sztuki. Aktywistki lat 70. budziły skrajne emocje odbiorców, próbowano bagatelizować wartość realizowanych przez nie prac. U schyłku XX wieku jednak, gdy pożądaną jakością sztuki stała się niejednoznaczność, kontrowersyjność, idee feminizmu stają się czasem niezbędną dekoracją dla karier celebrytek. W artykule przedstawiam historię trudności, jakie musiały pokonać artystki startujące na scenie sztuki w latach 70. Jako przykład występuje tu Judy Chicago i jej sztandarowa praca *Dinner Party*. Inne bohaterki pionierskich czasów to Marina Abramowic, Carolee Schneemann, Valie Export, których postawę porównuję z gwiazdą młodego pokolenia Vanessa Beecroft. Beecroft pozostawia swoje atrakcyjne instalacje bez komentarza, nie rozstrzyga kontrowersji, czym wpisuje się w znamienne dla postmodernizmu grę na rynku sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: feminizm – postfeminizm – *herstory* – Judy Chicago – estetyka kobieca – sztuka kobiet – Vanessa Beecroft – *Toxic Titties*.

Agnieszka Ługowska
Wyższa Szkoła Gospodarki w Bydgoszczy
agnieszka.lugowska@byd.pl

THE ART AND CRAFT DIVIDE – ON THE EXIGENCY OF MARGINS

Abstract: The subject of the art/craft distinction continues to occupy a marginalized position in the history of modern and contemporary art and remains almost invisible as an object of critical inquiry. The marginalization of craft will be pointed out here, yet the article does not aim at a unilateral defense of craft as art, since reversing the hierarchy of art and craft or dismissing it outright seems to be a mistake. Rather, it will focus on the changing dynamics of the hierarchy of art and craft and will present the marginalization of craft as an illuminating example of power and authority at work in the art world. The article aims to show how craft – typically marginalized or even invisible as a force shaping the art scene under modernism – was implicitly central to modernism’s constitution and has explicitly become one of the most prolific spheres of artistic activity today. The article primarily aims to present the moment of the emergence and perpetuation of the historical distinction between art and craft. Then, it goes on to shed some critical light on one particular medium that was traditionally associated with craft, namely fiber and the way this material was showcased in American art in the 1960s and 1970s. The article demonstrates how three different groups of artists negotiated the boundaries between art and craft. Finally, it goes on to present how contemporary artists embrace craft and how craft continues to act as a touchstone of what is designated as art, aesthetics, their centers and margins.

Keywords: art – craft – modernism – fiber.

Despite the efforts undertaken by artists, writers and curators working in the field of craft to draw attention to the prejudices of the hierarchy of media and the ensuing subordination of craft, the subject of the art/craft distinction in the history of modern and contemporary art has continued to occupy a marginalized position and has not become central as an object of critical inquiry. The present lack of focus on the evolution, history and effects of this

hierarchy is especially striking at the time when exploration of the distinction between high and popular visual culture, including design, advertising and other forms of mass-produced imagery is considered an important and prolific area of investigations. The paucity of thinking and writing on craft has led to a void in both debate and standards. Bruce Metcalf notes that it would be elucidative to have an advanced theory of the meaning of handmade objects in the late industrial era. This endeavor can be commenced with a brief overview of the theory that has infiltrated contemporary art, with some special heed paid to modernism.¹

The emergence of the hierarchy of art and craft and the subsequent marginalization of the latter originated in the Renaissance when first claims were made for painting and sculpture as “liberal” rather than “mechanical” arts. Although the modern classification of the arts, which grouped together painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry was contested, by mid-eighteenth century the separation of the fine arts from the mechanical arts was fully established. By the nineteenth century, the associations of the latter with the notions of usefulness, skill, the use of “lesser” media, as well as adherence to traditional form, were commonly accepted as marking the division between craft and art. The institutionalization of the art/craft divide on the basis of these characteristics remains evident and has found its embodiment in the relegation of crafted objects to the category of decorative arts and in their general exclusion from the history of art and aesthetics.²

Additionally, the attempts to present the art/craft distinction in the aesthetic and philosophical framework have contributed to and consolidated the belief in craft’s lower cultural status. The term “aesthetic”, first used in a distinctly philosophical context in the eighteenth century by Alexander Baumgartner, defined it as “the science of sensitive knowing”. Unfortunately for craft and other functional objects, Immanuel Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* 1781, shifted the meaning of “aesthetic” toward the transcendental study of the objective preconditions of the judgment of taste concerning the beautiful.³ The best-known statement by Kant on the distinction between art and craft related to their different relations to purpose and therefore aesthetic pleasure. According to the philosopher, fine arts, or the beautiful, are characterized by self-sufficiency or “purposiveness without a purpose”, whereas craft (Handwerk) is a rule-governed construction distinguished by a connection to an

¹ B. Metcalf, *Replacing the Myth of Modernism*, in: *Neocraft, Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alfoldy, Press of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, Halifax 2007, p. 7.

² E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread, The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*, University of Minnesota Press, London 2010, p. 15.

³ H. Risatti, *A Theory of Craft, Function, and Aesthetic Expression*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2007, p. 71.

interest or purpose. To Kant, fine art is the product of radical originality and thus defined as a free form of creation oriented towards an object devoid of utility. Conversely, craft is hampered by its utility and cannot be appreciated aesthetically. In a similar vein, Collingwood perceives art as the outcome of an imaginative process of creation and discovery and opposes it to craft, which takes recourse in technical procedures to obtain a preconceived result. More contemporarily, Danto sees art as a self-referential embodiment of ideas whereas craft as merely well made. It seems that the history of craft/art relations bears a great resemblance to the long standing history of marginalization between aesthetics and philosophy, where the former played a subservient role to realize the objectives of the latter. It should be borne in mind that none of these thinkers was particularly interested and focused on examining crafts for crafts' sake, but used them primarily as a convenient foil for refining various definitions of art.⁴

Throughout the 20th century, the basic assumptions about the inadequacies and marginal position of craft's *vis-à-vis* fine art were maintained and reinforced explicitly through classification, as well as implicitly through such critical categories as "decorative", among others.⁵ According to Greenberg, decorative was associated with surface embellishment, skilled labor and precision in a mechanical rather than "felt out manner" of working. As the critic maintained this physical finish and skillfulness relating to the decorative were in stark contrast with such terms of art as conception, inspiration and they all clashed with the formalists' conviction that each art must pursue the essence of its medium. Additionally, another relevant issue in analyzing art/craft division ensues from Greenberg's assessment of Georgia O'Keeffe's painting. According to him, O'Keeffe was deficient due to the precision of her brush and her works were linked with the terms decorative and the crafts rather than art, which in a wider perspective pointed to a deeply gendered character of the decorative. Greenberg's criticism of O'Keeffe work as detailed draws on the historical association of "women" and the "particular"⁶. From a wider perspective, these distinctions can be drawn from hierarchical relations between form and matter central to Western philosophy and the history of art.⁷ Matter or "nature" is given a significant form by the artist, and is associated with the mind and idea, implicitly referring to the masculine, while craft, associated with materials as ends in themselves and the tactile rather than the cognitive realm, implicitly refers to the feminine.

⁴ L. Shiner, *The Fate of Craft*, in: *Neocraft, Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alfoldy, Press of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, Halifax 2007, p. 39.

⁵ E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread...*, p. 13.

⁶ C. Greenberg, *Review of an Exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe*, "CG, vol. 2" 1946, p. 87.

⁷ E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread...*, p. 63.

This centrality of the particular clashed with the cornerstone of modernist ideology, namely the idea of an autonomous art object which is self-contained and exists without reference to anything else. Such an object was supposed to perform one function – to support an aesthetic experience that could be brought about solely by art. Kant declared that aesthetic experience could occur only when the observer had a disinterested attitude. That is, a person in a state of disinterestedness operates in a free state of cognition that does not vary from person to person. Most modernists accepted Kant's logic at face value. Yet this concept proved problematic for contemporary aesthetics and the proponents of a more encompassing and engaged notions of aesthetics; for example Arnold Berleant or Wolfgang Iser have been trying to overcome it. Kant also rejected sensory pleasure and emotional appeal from the realm of aesthetics. This is the logic that has led to the exclusion of craft from the realm of art, the logic premised on the conviction that every true judgment of beauty contains an implicit claim to universal validity.

In modernist ideology, only one kind of visual phenomena supports the aesthetic experience – the formal elements of art. Only the formal elements of art call for universality. For this reason abstraction – color and form disconnected from content – became the most significant mode of art-making by the mid-twentieth century. Art devoid of content, utilizing only formal elements, was said to be “autonomous” with no intrusion of use and the external world. Therefore, the crafts had to face the fact that any object embedded in tradition or made for physical use could be classified as art only to the degree in which tradition and use could overshadow the formal attributes of the work. Additionally, it was maintained that these formal qualities, by stimulating an aesthetic experience, could cause the viewer to “transcend” immediate material existence. Modernism redefined art, whereas craft, which has always been geared at the social and psychological uses of objects as well as the meanings people project upon the things they handle, love, and cherish, was automatically relegated to some marginal position.⁸

FIBER ART AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LEGITIMACY

In the mid-1960s, the American artists working in traditional craft media and the curators interested in legitimating craft as art had begun to challenge craft's marginal status in the art world. This article will shed critical light on one medium in particular that was traditionally associated with craft, namely

⁸ B. Metcalf, *The Fate of Craft...*, p. 13.

– fiber (a broad category including, but not limited to, string-based materials from thread, rope, felted substances and woven textiles) – and the way this distinction was complicated in American art in the 1960s and 1970s. Over that period people interested in craft and aspiring to enter the art world idolized the theory of autonomy, accepting its claim to authority uncritically and failing to examine its supporting logic. The two fundamentals of modernity – the autonomous art object and the language of formalism – were perceived as basic elements of fine arts and craft adopted them for the sake of its credibility. In attempting to assert equal status by following slavishly modernist artistic prescriptions, craft showed its implicit sense of inferiority about its traditional roles. The numerous social implications of craft, in which the value of many pieces of contemporary art reside, were quickly eliminated. Elements of design, material and technology were attended to visually without concern for their inherent, wide-ranging social meanings.

Studies like *Beyond Craft*, such exhibitions as *Woven Forms*, *Eccentric Abstractions* and *String and Rope*, such work in fiber as Saret's and Adam's sculptures are representative of the projects and works of the 1960s and 1970s that signaled the arrival of fiber as a new medium of "high art". Collectively, these projects and objects reveal that the adoption and elevation of fiber in the American art world came from multiple sources, each with a very different definition of art at that time. In each case, craft – typically dismissed as a force shaping the art world in this period – was central to the meaning generated by such projects. *Beyond Craft and Woven Forms* attempted to elevate fiber from the realm of craft to that of art and were undertaken by individuals and institutions to legitimize the work in materials traditional to craft. The above-mentioned projects all challenged fiber's long-standing association with utility or craft. Questioning the subordination of fiber as a craft medium of primarily utilitarian value, Adam's and Saret's works exemplify the significant role fiber played in probing the aesthetic boundaries in the art world in the 1960s and 1970s and the diversity of positions these explorations arose from.

The efforts to abolish fiber works' associations with craft and enter the brave new world of modernism without the burden of crippling tradition, culminated in a paradoxical situation where these works were viewed as neither art nor craft and were relegated to some ontological limbo. Although such objects had the potential to undermine the real and symbolic boundaries between art and craft, at that time the reluctance to accept hybrid categories that had the potential to bridge the divide, could not be subdued and therefore their power to redraw the boundaries that excluded them from the world of high art was circumscribed.

The above is borne out by the fact that nominally, the term “fiber art” enjoyed the widest applications throughout the art world, yet Auther observes that it was used with anxiety, for it continually rendered suspect the artistic identity of the makers by marking them with the aspect of their work (here the medium) defined as outside of the norms of art. Auther notes that the term “fiber artist” at first sight looks similar to “pop artist”, but when used to exclude the artists from the mainstream, a more apt parallel would be with the term “woman artists”, which, in a similar vein, particularizes the maker outside the legitimate definition of art. This term more clearly demarcates the mechanisms of boundary maintenance and entrenchment of margins between art and non-art, affecting the wider reception of fiber.⁹

It is worth noting that fiber gained new recognition in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s, outside the world of high art in a variety of social and artistic contexts that championed the revival of traditional crafts of hand-weaving, quilting or embroidery. They included the hippie self-fashioning, interest in folk art, personalization of clothing, revival of the traditions of minority communities and the feminist recuperation of craft traditions as well as the craze for macramé.¹⁰ This backdrop demonstrates both the richness of the major craft revival in the USA and at the same time the mounting difficulty of fiber artists to distinguish their work from this nebulous, all-encompassing conglomeration of individuals dabbling in the crafts. The frequent connection made between fiber art and macramé, the association prompted by the craft revival, provides a good example of why fiber artists strove to distinguish their work from popular craft. Auther suggests that both the craft revival and more specifically the macramé craze were problematic for fiber artists, because they reinforced the assumptions about fiber as a woman’s medium of low artistic status. Macramé had become a cultural phenomenon that impinged on the fiber movement’s struggle for its status as art. Fiber artists dedicated to transforming the genre into an autonomous aesthetic activity faced a significant obstacle in the heterogeneity of the field of textiles composed of amateurs and professionals. The urge to distinguish fiber art from the cultural definition of textiles as a craft – construed as a commercial profession, ethnic tradition, pastime, women’s work that resulted in a useful object – was essential to the transformation. As Auther points out, curators, artists, critics and fiber artists committed to elevating the status of textiles as an art form focused on under-scoring art-oriented, concept based practice rather than craft-oriented technique.¹¹ This move marked a turn towards non-utilitarianism or the anesthetization of

⁹ E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread...*, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-42.

historic fiber techniques as well as a conviction that the critical discourse of formalism should approach fiber neutrally, paying heed to its form and yet overlooking its multiple uses in culture outside the world of high art.

Additionally, there existed a pressing need for the authorization of the artistic status of fiber artists. This authority was vested in the curators who discerned artistic quality in objects, pronounced judgments on what is fine art and what is mere craft, what is high, and what is low. Over that period the museum strategies of acquisition and display elided the issues of context, technique and utility in favor of disinterested contemplation of an object divorced from its social realm. Finally, fiber was presented and theorized as concept-driven and at long last included into the realm of art. Yet this happened at the expense of the questions of skill, technique and material, and the overall aesthetic content of fiber was impoverished.

PROCESS ART, POSTMINIMALISM AND MATERIALITY

The *String and Rope* exhibitions represented a very different sphere of practice in the art world in the 1960s. The artists presented were positioned within the avant-garde circles and loosely categorized as process or postminimalist artists. Those participating in *String and Rope* included Robert Morris, Eva Hesse or Barry Flanagan whose works, although executed in string or felt, did not have to go to great lengths to have the status of artworks bestowed on them. Quite the contrary, their work in fiber was regarded as furthering the reach of sculpture and as a practical realization of the theoretical considerations on sculpture expounded by Rosalind Krauss. Additionally, the most striking difference between them and fiber artists was the fact that they had no prior background in weaving and debuted in galleries endorsing the avant-garde and their shows were regularly reviewed by major art periodicals. These artists enjoyed personal and professional relationship with each other as well as with New York based artists and curators.¹² The critical, institutional and associational factors contributed to the dominance of this sphere of practice in the art world over other using fiber.

The art world within which they practiced contributed to a great degree to craft marginalization. Strikingly, Auther points out that the exhibition reviews did not focus on the fact of reevaluating the marginality of fiber, but presented the event as the outcome of fifty years of experimentation with new media in the art world. By insisting on the concept or idea over the inclusion of new

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

media, critics looked for such artistic antecedents as Duchamp, Arp or Pollock. The emphasis was put on the literal properties of the material culminating in the production of finished, purely optical form with the omission of personal and physical engagement. Thus, the reception of the felt works was advantageous not only thanks to Morris's efforts to contextualize them as idea-based but also thanks to his professional and personal connections in the art world. The critics lauded the works in felt for both ability to concentrate the attention on materials, their visceral and tactile properties essential to process aesthetics as well as rhetorical ability to rescue the works from the realm of the feminine or the decorative.

Author states that fiber was a key element presaging the collapse of the modernist understanding of medium. Both fiber, process or postminimalist artists strived to dismantle the norms of their respective fields. Ultimately, the two spheres embraced objectives that worked at cross-purposes, making their practices difficult to reconcile. Process or minimalist artists did not strive to legitimize fiber as an autonomous medium of high art, as it was the case for fiber artists. On the contrary, within process art circles fiber's non artistic properties constituted its power to act as a catalyst in the dissolution of sculptural norms and conceptions of quality in art. In that case craft functioned as a conceptual limit essential to the evolution of art, as Glenn Adamson's claimed it constituted "a border that can never be reached, but is nonetheless intrinsic to any sense of position."¹³ Process artists used fiber as a non-precious material with connections to the abject – a conception of the craft that fiber artists did not want to subscribe to. Acknowledging the different orientations of these two spheres of practice towards the category of art (positive in the case of fiber artists, negative in the case of process artists) does not only demonstrate the way the distinctions between them were asserted but also leads to the third possible stance on fiber role in vacillating the established arts and crafts categories.

FEMINIST POLITICIZATION OF THE ART AND CRAFT DIVISION

In the early 1970s, within the context of women art movement, the hierarchy of art and craft and its links to women's exclusion from the art world, came under review. Feminist artists undertook a larger project to expand the category of art to include the experiences of women, everyday materials, as well as women's traditional art forms. The once negative associations of fiber with

¹³ G. Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2007, p. 2.

femininity and the domestic were recast positively this time as distinctive and culturally valuable features. The artists included Faith Ringgold, Harmony Hammond, Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago. They initiated a critique of the marginalization of craft by elevating disdained practices and materials to the level of high art.

This new body of knowledge about women's exclusion from high culture was extended to the analysis of craft/art relations and women's place in this discourse. The marginalization of craft to art gave rise to other marginalizations, namely these between the genius artist vs. an anonymous maker, the uniqueness of an individually made object vs. the collective production, intellectual vs. nonintellectual, non-utilitarian vs. decoration. For the first time in history, the marginalization of craft became the site of political struggle.¹⁴

As the article demonstrates, the works of the feminist artists of the 1970s set off a compelling critique of the hierarchy of art and craft with an ameliorative impact on today's artistic practice. Undoubtedly, women's art movement differed aesthetically and politically not only from fiber art but also from process and postminimalist art. First and foremost, the women's movement revealed the hierarchy of media as an arbitrary construct that confined the definition of art. Feminist artists refused to accept the division of art and craft since its inception.¹⁵ They criticized the vast set of negative cultural associations relating to craft media and elevated fiber through the legitimization of women's everyday experience as a source of art. This strategy allowed them to tap into fiber's aesthetic properties as well as its social and cultural meanings. Steering away from a formalist, self-referential approach to materials led to an unprecedented expansion of artistic forms and practices. Yet, the movement did not dissolve the hierarchy, on some occasions it even strengthened the very divisions the works seemed to renounce. Each of the artists mentioned above working in the so-called high art world, benefited from the same boundaries separating them from the realm of craft that their work referred to.¹⁶ Despite this, they undoubtedly managed to bring to harsher light the ethical dimension of the system of classification that resulted in the marginalization of the work of women labeled as craft and legitimized everyday experience as a subject of art, allowing feminists artists to tap into wider cultural and social meanings. This could have happened since the agenda and audience of the women's movement significantly exceeded the provincial borders of the art world to which fiber and postminimalist artists were confined. In contrast to women's movement, the above strategies adopted by fiber

¹⁴ E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread...*, p. 99.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

artists and process and postminimalists aiming at reevaluating the marginalization of craft proved less effective and more restricted to the internal history and politics of the art world.

Nowadays it seems that fiber has made a stable presence in contemporary art world. Even a cursory glance at contemporary artists working in fiber and needlecraft techniques reveals a whole array of diverse artists applying fiber. Elaine Reichek's embroidery, Anna Wilson's creation and dissection of black lace, Charles Le Dray's exploration of the self and masculinity through the manipulation of clothing, Hu Xiaoyuan's embroideries of body fragments sewn with her own hair in traditional Chinese technique or Darrel Morris's embroidered explorations of class relations in the USA, could serve as a case in point. The works of these artists and many others show how craft not only continues to be used to address issues of gender, race and personal experience, originating in the feminist appropriation of the material, but have widened its scope to incorporate issues of hybridity, sexual identity, activism, tradition, cultural collision, globalization and many other themes.¹⁷ In view of so many artists reverting to craft in their artistic practice, it seems plausible to reflect upon the message these works contain concerning the hierarchy of art and craft today. Author does not imply that the marginalization of craft was dismantled by the artists using fiber in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet it seems apt to suggest that the works from that period set the stage for the present conditions under which many contemporary artist are able to overcome the historically negative repercussions of this divide. Apart from their contribution, the rise of installation art, relying on extra aesthetic associations in the production of meaning, also gave some impetus to the forthcoming transitions. The move from pictorial representation to installation, as Danto contends, has significantly expanded the ability of quotidian materials and objects to become part of the art world. The installation approach to art on numerous occasions does not require special skills. Keeping this in mind, it may be jocularly ventured that artists who still make objects and work in a single medium should be wary so as not to be mistaken for craftspeople. This rising status of crafts is also accompanied by the internalization of the contemporary art world and a change in curatorial practice that has propelled the dissolution of aesthetic hierarchies and the boundaries of the art world. Many artist from Korea, Nigeria, China bring to the fore the traditions of their home countries, historically excluded from the Western canon of high art and this process is accelerated by the work of curators willing to expand the art world beyond the borders of North American and Western Europe. Finally, the presence of fiber in contem-

¹⁷ See *Extra/Ordinary, Craft and Contemporary Art*, edited by Maria Elena Buszek, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2011.

porary art, to some degree, has been fueled by the renaissance of popular fiber craft in American culture. The revival of knotting, crochet, embroidery are connected with various social forces associated with third wave feminism's ironic embrace of women's traditional craft as well as with Do-It-Yourself lifestyle and other sites of alternative culture. These are intertwined with the propagation of the environmental movement and activism surrounding globalization, where handmade objects stand for anti-consumerist, ecological, sustainable, even ethical practice and where craft transforms into craftivism.¹⁸ The connections to counter cultural or popular craft have opened up new vistas for a growing number of artists willing to embrace this context. The alignment rather than disjuncture of art and craft practices has transformed the validity and reception of fiber and materials used in contemporary art. The line demarcating the center from the margins, the divide between art and craft proved permeable, partaking of aspects of both and ultimately demonstrating and performing that permeability.

Yet the total effacement of the position of craft as marginal has not occurred. The continued presence, good or bad, of boundaries, centers, margins and hierarchies within the art world is a fact. However, the pivotal difference between the operation of artists back in the 1960s and 1970s and today is that the association of the artists with these more marginal spheres does not necessarily delegate them to a craft ghetto. On the contrary, because of the ubiquity of technology, the role of crafts in a material environment teeming with consumer debris and increasingly divorced from direct experience, has been on the increase. Works that emphasize "the real", favoring viewer participation and other physical experiences found in either the process of fabrication or encounter also reflect our disorientation. These works represent our physical ways of working through the uncertainty that we live with, in the self-conscious act of touching, marking, assembling, repeating, stitching or mediating, the gap between the physical and sensory, between theoretical and cognitive is bridged. It seems that crafts have been at the heart of this re-orientation and may have forever changed what we expect from art.¹⁹ Certainly, it is more viable to perceive the divide between crafts and arts as a certain continuum that has not been constructed along a single line, but is woven from multiple strands of thoughts, assumptions and practices. Over this continuum, as Shiner suggests, art, craft and design today designate an increasingly overlapping set rather than distinct areas of practice.²⁰

¹⁸ E. Auther, *String, Felt, Thread...*, p. 183.

¹⁹ P. Owen, *Fabrication and Encounter*, in: M.E. Buszek, *Extra/Ordinary, Craft and Contemporary Art*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2011, p. 95.

²⁰ L. Shiner, *The Fate of Craft...*, p. 41.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auther Elissa (2010) *String, Felt, Thread, The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Chicago Judy (1975) *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artists*, New York: Anchor Books.

Metcalf Bruce (2007) *Replacing the Myth of Modernism*, in: *Neocraft, Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alföldy, Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, pp. 4-30.

Morris Robert (1966) *Notes on Sculpture*, "Artforum" no. 6, pp. 42-44.

Owen Paula (2011) *Fabrication and Encounter*, in: M.E. Buszek, *Extra/Ordinary, Craft and Contemporary Art*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 81-95.

Risatti Howard (2007) *A Theory of Craft, Function and Aesthetic Expression*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Shiner Larry (2007) *The Fate of Craft*, in: *Neocraft, Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alföldy, Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, pp. 33-45.

**SZTUKA I RZEMIOSŁO – O NIEUCHRONNOŚCI MARGINALIZACJI
(streszczenie)**

Rozważania dotyczące relacji pomiędzy sztuką a rzemiosłem nie są często podejmowane przez historyków sztuki, estetyków czy filozofów. Z tego względu nadrzędnym celem artykułu jest ukazanie historycznej marginalizacji rzemiosła. Nie ucieka się on jednak do jednostronnej obrony rzemiosła jako prawowicie należącego do dziedziny sztuk pięknych, a raczej ukazuje zmienną dynamikę konstruowanych hierarchii oraz przedstawia marginalizację rzemiosła jako przykład działania władzy i autorytetu w świecie sztuki. Artykuł, ukazując szersze tło relacji pomiędzy sztuką a rzemiosłem, opisuje związki istniejące pomiędzy sztuką a rzemiosłem w latach sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych XX wieku w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Praca analizuje trzy odmienne grupy artystów tworzących w tym czasie prace z filcu i w efekcie trzy odmienne sposoby rozumienia relacji sztuka–rzemiosło będące rezultatem marginalizacji rzemiosła. Ostatnia część artykułu ukazuje liczne punkty przecięcia istniejące pomiędzy rzemiosłem a współczesnymi praktykami artystycznymi. Ich analiza umożliwi rewizję naszych poglądów dotyczących tego, co uważamy za sztukę, estetykę, ich centrum oraz marginesy.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka – rzemiosło – modernizm – filc.

Julia Sowińska-Heim

Department of Art History, University of Łódź
julia.sowinska@uni.lodz.pl

MARGINS AND MARGINALIZATIONS IN A POST-SOCIALIST URBAN AREA. THE CASE OF ŁÓDŹ

Abstract: As a result of post-socialist political transformations and globalization-related processes, the architectural landscape of Central and Eastern European cities is undergoing significant metamorphosis. Their architecture reflects and visualises not only economic, but also social and cultural changes. The transformations and architectural refurbishment contribute to the alteration of the city's image and the creation of new divisions into "luxury zones" and marginalized areas.

Keywords: marginalization – post-socialist city – Łódź – gentrification – redevelopment.

INTRODUCTION

Post-socialist cities have experienced major and rapid transformation. The collapse of the Communist system and the resulting democratization, market facilitation and decentralization of decision-making have produced numerous positive changes, including those in the urban design. However, some of the changes bring about different types of threats and negative results.

Currently, the "game for the city" is played by the new participants, such as the local government, foreign investors, developers and private entrepreneurs. According to Bohdan Jałowiecki, the stake is the urban area, in which each player tries to get the best location¹. Consequently, locations and zones within the city become divided into "good" and "bad" ones. The "bad" loca-

¹ Cf. B. Jałowiecki, *Gra o miasto w sytuacji transformacji ustroju*, in: *Gra o miasto*, ed. B. Jałowiecki, PAN Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju, Warszawa 1992, pp. 7-14.

tions are situated in the margins of interest and outside of the main development programs designed for the city.

The architectural tissue of the urban area becomes qualitatively and visually divided into “enclaves of luxury”, perfectly matching the dominating tendency of economic development, primacy of success and prosperity, and the neglected architectural substance or whole urban zones remaining in the margin, being subject to destruction and decapitalization. A margin is understood here, according to one of the basic senses of the word, as something which remains outside the mainstream of cultural, economic and political life, and thus has a secondary importance and minor value.²

The changes made in the architectural tissue of the city reflect the changes occurring in the society and the deepening social contrasts, and the processes of marginalization taking place in the city point to a considerable problem which is not easy to solve.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF WORKERS' HOUSING ESTATES IN THE PROCESS OF REDEVELOPMENT

It is interesting to examine the processes taking place in Łódź, a city that has suffered a particularly severe crisis resulting from deindustrialization. The city that owed its development to textile industry³ has gone through painful experience due to the political transformations and the consequent collapse of many of its big industrial plants within a short period of time. Large numbers of labourers, often from the families whose members had been employed in Łódź factories for generations, lost their jobs. Jerzy Dzieciuchowicz and Stanisław Kaniewski point out on the basis of their research that the social and professional structure of Łódź changed significantly during the period of transformation from socialist to free-market economy; “particularly negative social and economic consequences were caused by the decline in the number of those employed in the industry”⁴. The unemployment rate in the 1990s in Łódź was the highest of Polish biggest cities.⁵

² S. Dubiesz (ed.), *Margines*, in: *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego PWN*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008.

³ Light industry was a dominating branch of industry in Łódź both in the 19th and in 20th centuries.

⁴ J. Dzieciuchowicz, S. Kaniewicz, *Plansza XVII: Struktura społeczno zawodowa ludności*, in: ed. S. Liszewski, *Atlas miasta*, Urząd Miasta Łodzi, Łódź 2002.

⁵ Many times in the 1990s, unemployment rate in Łódź exceeded unemployment rate of big cities with the smallest rate sevenfold: E. Kryńska, *Przemiany polskiego rynku pracy w kontekście międzynarodowym*, 04.05.2014 (online Official website of the Ministry of Infra-

Losing their job, even a badly-paid one, deprived the labourers employed in Łódź factories of their previous status and pushed them into the social, economic and political margin. Research into the processes occurring today in the Polish society clearly indicate its polarization and the division into those who have “won” and those who have “lost” as a result of the transformation.⁶ It is pointed out that the losers are mainly the labourers⁷. After the political transformation of 1989 it was this group that became heavily exposed to poverty, resulting primarily from long-term unemployment. However, marginalization also involves the social status and its perception. Communist propaganda had emphasized the role of the “working class” in developing the People’s Republic of Poland, even if these were only empty slogans. Today the working class⁸ has largely lost its status, and the decrease in the number of labourers in a particular city is perceived as evidence of economic modernization⁹. Lech Gilejko also points out the marginalization of labourers in comparison to the role which they had played in the “democratic revolution”¹⁰.

Apparently, poverty and helplessness, regrettably often passed from generation to generation, is deepening among the former labourers¹¹. Interestingly, it is not only difficult living conditions and low material status that are important, but also the subjective impression of impotence, and an attempt to “define oneself” and determine one’s chances for success frequently puts a particular person in a position of withdrawal and places them in a social margin¹². These phenomena are particularly evident in post-industrial Łódź,

structure and Development. Available at: http://www.mir.gov.pl/rozwoj_regionalny/poziom_krajowy/polska_polityka_przestrzenna/zespol_realizacyjny_KPZK/Documents/ee329d16adf2458a9aea22db285a5c9bPrzemiany_polskiego_rynku_pracy_w_kontekście_midzynarodow.pdf, p. 9. Cf. *Strategia Zintegrowanego Rozwoju Łodzi 2020+. Diagnoza strategiczna Łodzi. Synteza*, oprac. Biuro Strategii, Partnerstwa i Funduszy Oddział Strategii Rozwoju Miast Urzędu Miasta Łodzi, Łódź, p. 11.

⁶ A. Karwińska, *Zagrożenie marginalizacją społeczną w Polsce a tworzenie i przekazywanie kapitału kulturowego*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie”, 2005, no. 682, p. 7.

⁷ P. Broda-Wysocki, *Wykluczenie i inkluzja społeczna paradygmaty i próby definicji*, Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych, Warszawa 2012, p. 116. Cf. L. K. Gilejko, *Przegrana większość. Robotnicy i chłopi*, in: ed. M. Jarosz, *Polska. Ale jaka?*, ISP PAN, Warszawa 2005, p. 187, and L. K. Gilejko, *Robotnicy w transformacji: ocena ich położenia i szans*, in: ed. M. Jarosz, *Wygrani i przegrani polskiej transformacji*, ISP PAN, Warszawa 2005, p. 197.

⁸ Currently it is also difficult to talk about the labourers as a separate social group.

⁹ L.K. Gilejko, *Robotnicy w transformacji...*, p. 195.

¹⁰ L.K. Gilejko, *Przegrana większość...*, p. 187.

¹¹ Cf. i.a. W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, *Bieda dzieci w środowisku wielkomiejskim (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, “Polityka Społeczna”, 2009, no. 9, pp. 13-17.

¹² A. Karwińska, *Zagrożenie marginalizacją społeczną...*, pp. 7, 8.

a city perceived in the People's Republic of Poland as one predominated by the working class.

After the political transformation, attempts were made to create a new image of the city. The vision of the new identity of Łódź based on evoking the values associated with the 19th-century dynamic multicultural development of a city of thoroughly European character, does not include the labourers, who have been clearly marginalized. This process and its direction has had consequences for the functional conversion of the post-industrial areas and the program of their redevelopment. The decisions concerning the redeveloped areas reflect the city's current social and economic situation.

The fact that in the 19th century Łódź had developed as an industrial city practically from scratch determined the character of its architectural tissue. In the central part of the city, industrial buildings (including huge factories) adjoined both residential areas (industrial barons' palaces, tenement houses and workers' housing estates) and service zones. Putting industrial companies, crucial to the economic functioning of Łódź, into liquidation resulted in considerable changes in the city's core.

In 1998, there were seventeen poverty enclaves in Łódź, twelve of which were situated in the city centre. The areas inhabited by the poorest citizens of Łódź bear the distinctive hallmarks of material destruction; the urban tissue is subject to decapitalization¹³.

According to Andrzej Majer, "Diversity within the global economic and political system also means contrasts in the symbolic dimension e.g. places (...) which are 'good' and 'bad', 'safe' and 'dangerous', conducive to development or not."¹⁴

It is worth attending to the processes producing such contrasts in Łódź, in the vast areas of the former factory and residential complexes, originally designed as a cohesive urban organism. The differentiation occurring in these areas in the post-Communist period introduces new divisions, in which certain parts become distinctively marginalized.

This process is visible e.g. on the premises of the former estate of Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański, 19th-century Łódź manufacturer and tycoon, one of the most important people in the city's history, who contributed to its prosperity and development. Poznański's empire occupied the vast area near

¹³ Cf. W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, *Bieda dzieci w środowisku wielkomiejskim (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, "Polityka Społeczna" 2009, no. 9, pp. 14-15; B. Jankowski, W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, *Mieszkańcy łódzkich enklaw biedy 10 lat później*, Wydawnictwo "Biblioteka", Łódź 2010, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ A. Majer, *Współczesna urbanizacja i szanse dla Łodzi*, in: ed. W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, J. Grotowska-Leder, *Ryzyka transformacji systemowej (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, Wydawnictwo "Absolwent", Łódź 2000, p. 71.

Piotrkowska street, the main axis of the city. This complex is thus important not only from the historical point of view, but for the future of modern downtown Łódź.

The factory and the residential area belonging to Izrael Poznański, expanded since the 1870s, was the second biggest complex of this kind, after the Scheibler and Grohman Corporation. The complex included not only factory buildings and the adjoining elegant residence of the owner, but also workers' houses, so-called "famułas", and such buildings as a factory hospital, a canteen for the employees, and a wooden church. The canteen was also used as a place of meetings and cultural events, e.g. the performances of an amateur theatre.

Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the premises of the factory covered the area of 28.5 ha, and it employed ca. 7000 workers¹⁵. With them in mind, Izrael Poznański decided to erect three large residential buildings with four or five floors and two or three wings as well as eighteen smaller houses, 1086 flats in all¹⁶. They were situated along Ogrodowa Street, opposite the factory buildings. Thus Ogrodowa Street became an internal axis of the complex, and the whole constituted a coherent and organized composition.

The flats usually had one or two rooms; only a few, inhabited by better qualified staff and above-average labourers, were a bit larger. The buildings did not serve only residential functions: service establishments were located on the ground floor at the front. Some greenery was arranged on the side of the yard. The construction lasted from the late 1870s to 1896.

After World War II and the imposition of the Communist system in Poland, the factory was nationalized, yet its function and form remained the same. The name was changed to Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant and then, in 1970, to "Poltex" Cotton Industry Plant. The new patron of the plant was not picked at random: the former manufacturer, capitalist, "exploiter" was replaced, in accordance with the new guidelines, by the Communist activist of the labour movement from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. After 1945, the plant was still the second biggest workplace in Łódź, employing 12,000 people¹⁷.

¹⁵ I. Popławska, *Architektura mieszkaniowa Łodzi w XIX wieku*, PAN, Komitet Architektury i Urbanistyki, Warszawa 1992, p. 100.

¹⁶ Although a decision to build houses or the whole factory housing estates resulted partially from willingness to improve dramatic conditions in which majority of labourers lived, it had also a distinctively different, practical aspect, since the manufacturer, providing his employees with accommodation, gained greater control over them. Cf.: J. Rykwert, *Pokusa miejsca. Przeszłość i przyszłość miast*, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Kraków 2013, pp. 124-125.

¹⁷ S. Kaczmarek, *Rewitalizacja terenów przemysłowych. Nowy wymiar w rozwoju miast*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2001, p. 111.

The status of Łódź labourers became elevated to “the avant-garde of Polish proletariat”¹⁸, at least in theory and in propaganda slogans, which declared that Łódź would turn into “a city of industry, culture and prosperity of the working masses”.¹⁹ The slogans stating that the factory would no longer serve the interests of “the successors of Poznański’s lords” but those of “the labourers working in this factory and their children”²⁰ were going to be confirmed by the proudly announced transformation of Poznański’s palace into “a gorgeous nursery school and a crèche”²¹. Although in the times of the Polish People’s Republic “the proletariat of Łódź” did not experience significant improvement of its material welfare, the working class was certainly in the centre of political attention.

When Poltex Cotton Industry Plant was put into liquidation in 1991²², the city began to search for a new function and first of all, new users of the post-industrial complex. It was not an easy process, considering the vast space and the capacity of the buildings.

In 1996, the French company Apsys decided to invest in this area and redevelop the historic complex²³. A huge shopping and entertainment complex, “Manufaktura”, one of the three biggest investments of this kind in Poland, was opened in 2006 in modernized post-factory buildings complemented with some new ones on the premises of the former plant²⁴. One of the old buildings houses the Modern Art Museum, while the monumental building of former weaving mill (30 meters high and 187 meters long, with the surface area of almost 40,000 square meters) was converted and adjusted by Op Architekten, Wojciech Popławski and Andrzej Orliński to the requirements and standards of the four-star Andel’s Hotel²⁵.

¹⁸ *Rezolucja Wojewódzkiej Konferencji aktywu PPS i PPR*, “Głos Robotniczy”, 1946, nr 98, p. 1.

¹⁹ Beatus, *Zbudujemy organizację partyjną ludu łódzkiego. Przekształcimy Łódź w miasto przemysłu, kultury i dobrobytu mas pracujących. Wywiad z tow. Kozłowskim pierwszym sekretarzem Komitetu Miejskiego Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, “Głos Robotniczy”, 1946, no. 94, p. 4.

²⁰ Beatus, *1-szy Maja u robotników Poznańskiego*, “Głos Robotniczy”, 1946, no. 107, p. 3.

²¹ *Nie oddamy naszych fabryk!*, “Głos Robotniczy”, 1946, no. 106, p. 3.

²² By a decision of the Minister of Infrastructure Ministra Przemysłu of 01.08.1991.

²³ In 2012, Apsys company sold “Manufaktura”, making considerable profit, to a German investment fund, Union Investment. A sum of 390 m. euro was the largest sum earned that year from selling commercial properties in Poland. Łódź City Hall did not use the preemption right.

²⁴ *Galerie i centra handlowe*. 12.06.2013. (online) Available at: <http://www.najlepszegalerie.pl/galerie>.

²⁵ More broadly about problems concerning redevelopment of the area and assigning new functions to it, see: J. Sowińska-Heim, *Conversions and redefinitions – architecture and identity of a place*, “Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les Arts”, vol. XV (XXIV), 2013, pp. 191-205.

The shopping and entertainment centre, opened in 2006, achieved notable commercial success. During its first year, it was visited by ca. 16 million people.²⁶ Manufaktura is regarded as a symbol of the redevelopment of Łódź in the post-industrial period, and at the same time as an “icon” of the industrial city.

An important part of the redeveloped complex is an internal “marketplace”, artificially created in place of the former narrow streets running between the factory buildings. The space formed in this way is attractive and consumer-friendly. However, although Manufaktura is situated in the city centre, it functions as a self-oriented, self-sufficient enclave. This problem is often noted and addressed during the meetings of Łódź urban planners, searching for the ideas for linking Manufaktura with other areas in the city centre²⁷.

The isolation of Manufaktura, resulting from an incomplete economic and social redevelopment of the complex, concerns its relationship with the city, but also the separation between the former factory and the residential complex built by Izrael Poznański for his employees. The workers’ houses, once an integral part of the architectural complex, have been totally marginalized and remain outside the redeveloped area. Ogrodowa Street, which used to be the axis of the complex, currently marks one of its borders, while its center is Manufaktura’s marketplace.

In his book *Old & New. Design Manual for Revitalizing Existing Buildings*, devoted to the conversion of the high weaver mill into the four-star Andel’s Hotel²⁸, Peter Jäger proffers very positive opinions on the redevelopment, and he finishes his text with a characteristic statement that enjoying the vertiginous, gorgeous view from the modern, fully-glazed swimming pool situated on the highest storey of the former high weaving mill, we realize that “the city of labourers is a thing of the past”.

Currently, the “fałszywa” (large tenement “multi-family houses”) inhabited mostly by the former workers of the factory form a downtown poverty enclave.²⁹ Their standard has practically not improved since the 19th century – time has stopped here for over one hundred years; the shared toilets are situated in corridors, there is no connection to the city sewage or heating systems. At the same time, the total negligence of investment lasting for

²⁶ K. Świerczewska-Pietras, *Rewitalizacja zamknięta jako przykład zagospodarowania poprzemysłowego obszaru Łodzi*, “Prace Komisji Geografii Przemysłu”, 2009, no. 12, p. 178.

²⁷ It was a motivation of i.a. a competition *At source of Piotrkowska*, organized by Miejska Pracownia Urbanistyczna in Łódź.

²⁸ F.P. Jäger (ed.), *Old & New – Design Manual for Revitalizing Existing Buildings*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2010, p. 137.

²⁹ J. Grotowska-Leder, *Łódzkie enklawy biedy*, in: ed. W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, *Życie i praca w enklawach biedy (Klimaty łódzkie)*, Instytut Socjologii Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1998, p. 40.

many years, or rather decades, and no renovations result in a slow degradation of the architectural substance.

The problem of ignoring the former labourers in the process of creating the modern image of Łódź has been pointed out by, for instance, Michael Fleming.³⁰ He claims that the 19th-century architectural complexes are becoming a tool in the campaign for changing the image of the city. Fleming writes simply about the “fetishization of the place”, while limited attention is paid to the needs of the citizens. He also emphasizes that the tenants of the old workers’ houses are often treated as a problem, making the process of redevelopment more difficult.³¹ It is them, and not the owners, who are generally blamed by the local council for the abject condition of the buildings.³² The poor inhabitants of the enclave, mostly jobless members of the working class, are also perceived as unwanted neighbours, and their presence evokes fears about the safety and the aesthetics of the place³³.

In 2011, Łódź City Hall even decided to build some container housing estates on the outskirts of the city for the people evicted from the council flats (mostly from the tenement houses) covered by the redevelopment program.³⁴ In this way, the poorest inhabitants were to “disappear” from the city centre. Had this project been carried out, we would not be talking now about marginalization, but rather about exclusion and sending people out to live in ghettos. However, a year later, the new Vice-President of Łódź stated that creating container housing estates was the last resort, which would hopefully not be used.³⁵

The *famuła* houses in 24 and 26 Orodowa Street (included in the Register of Historic Buildings) as well as the third *famuła* house in 28 Orodowa Street are marked on the map of *The Priority Area Redevelopment of the Centre of Łódź for 2014–2020+* prepared by the Łódź City Hall. It assumes a comprehensive renovation of the buildings and development of the area as well as the creation of new service establishments.³⁶ As a result of the renova-

³⁰ M. Fleming, *Legitimizing urban “revitalisation” strategies in post-socialist Łódź*, “East European Politics and Societies”, 2012, no. 2, pp. 267-268.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 266.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ J. Sobczyńska, *W Łodzi powstają 3 osiedla kontenerowe*. 30.04.2014 (online) Official website of “Dziennik Łódzki” newspaper, published 28.11.2011. Available at: <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/477226,w-Łodzi-powstana-3-osiedla-kontenerowe,id,t.html>.

³⁵ J. Sobczyńska, *Łodzianie nie trafiają do kontenerów*. 30.04.2014 (online) Official website of “Dziennik Łódzki” newspaper, published on: 14.03.2012. Available at: <http://www.dziennikŁódzki.pl/artykul/530161,Łodzianie-nie-trafia-do-kontenerow,id,t.html>.

³⁶ Biuro ds. Rewitalizacji i Rozwoju Zabudowy Miasta, *Rewitalizacja obszarowa centrum Łodzi. Wstępny plan projektu 7 – część inwestycyjna*, Łódź; Biuro ds. Rewitalizacji i Rozwoju Zabudowy Miasta, *Rewitalizacja obszarowa centrum Łodzi. Wstępny plan projektu 8 – część inwestycyjna*, Łódź.

tion, the standard of the flats will rise significantly – there will be no shared toilets in the corridors, the buildings will be connected to the sewage and heating systems. There will be more service and public areas. One *famuła* house is going to be divided into a residential part and a cultural one.³⁷

In August 2013, the President of Łódź, Hanna Zdanowska, presenting the plan for the redevelopment of the *famuła* house on the corner of Ogrodowa Street and Gdańska Street, admitted that 140 families would be relocated³⁸. She stated that on the completion of the renovation, the tenants would have the chance to come back to their flats on condition that they would not have any outstanding debts and would agree to pay a higher rent from then on.³⁹ In reality it means that the overwhelming majority of the current tenants will not come back to the same location. They may be offered flats located in various other parts of the city. Apparently, the process of downtown gentrification in Łódź is clearly beginning or rather going on.

CONCLUSION

The increasing contrast between the neighbouring areas, the marked social and spatial stratification, in which cost-effectiveness determines the fate of the place and its architectural tissue, results in a mosaic urban pattern.⁴⁰ Social inequality is consolidated within the city space. Some parts of the city undergo improvement in the quality of their architectural environment, while the others face physical, social and economic collapse. The relative spatial homogeneity of the Communist city is being replaced by the logic of free-

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ 58 eviction judgments with the right to social housing have been passed against the dwellers of the quarter outlined by Ogrodowa St., Zachodnia St., Legionów St. and Gdańska St., and the required number of social flats has amounted to 217. Whereas in the quarter outlined by Ogrodowa St., Gdańska St., Legionów St. and Cmentarna St., there have been 144 eviction judgments, and it has been decided that the number of required social flats amounts to 489. These decisions concern not only tenants of *famuła* houses, but also those living in neighbouring tenement houses: *Famuły jak nowe*, 03.05.2014 (online) Oficjalna strona Urzędu Miasta Łodzi; utworzona: 14.08.2013. Available at: <http://uml.Łódź.pl/miasto/aktualnosci/?news=23962>.

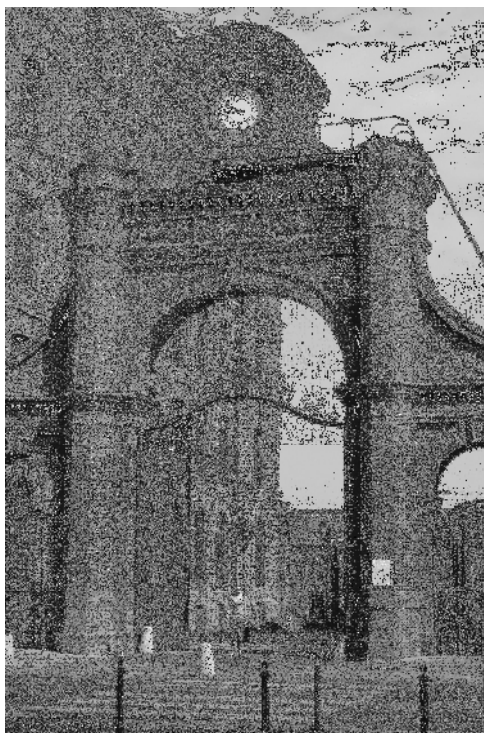
³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ According to Kazimiera Wódz and Jacek Wódz “mosaic cultural identity of a city” is particularly typical of transitional periods, coming, like in this case, after a fierce political transformation: J. Wódz, K. Wódz, *W poszukiwaniu nowej tożsamości. Miasta Śląska i Zagłębia w okresie przemian końca XX*, in: ed. B. Kloch, A. Stawarz, *Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa miasta postindustrialnego w Europie*, Rybnik–Warszawa 2005, pp. 7-16.

market rules.⁴¹ The marginalization discussed here is primarily connected with poverty⁴² and its physical reflection in degraded architecture.

The discontinuity and polycentrism of the urban space, emphasized by the division into “oases of luxury” and neglected zones situated in the margins seems to match the attributes of “postmodernity”, such as incoherence or fragmentation.⁴³

The visual and qualitative duality appearing in the city emphasizes the social differentiation and spatial marginalization of specific groups of citizens.



1. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim, The former main gate to Izrael Poznański's industrial complex, currently one of the entrances to *Manufaktura*, 2012

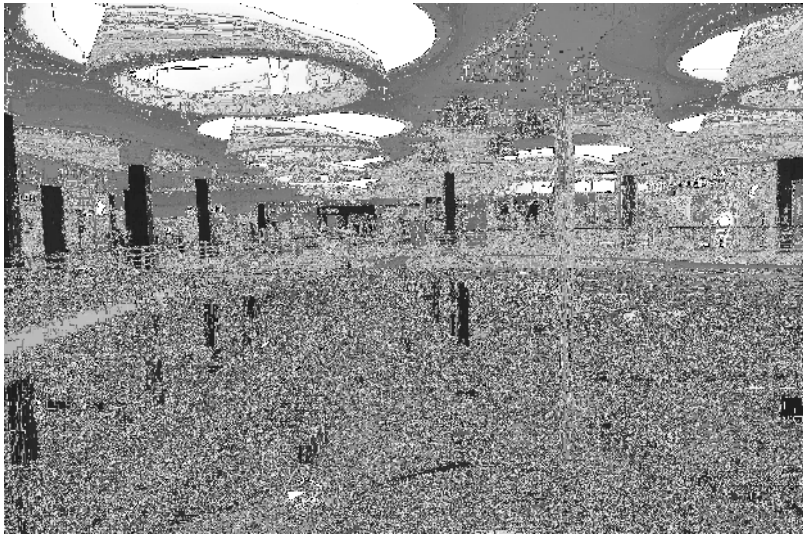
⁴¹ S. Hirt, K. Stanilov, *Twenty years of transition: the evolution of urban planning in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union, 1989-2009*, UnHabitat, Nairobi 2009, pp. 11, 25.

⁴² Marginalization types depending on a field of life which they concern have been clearly presented by: Ł. Łotocki, *Marginalizacja i wykluczenie a obcość*, in: ed. R. Szarfenberg, C. Żołądowski, M. Theiss, *Ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne – perspektywa poznawcza*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2010, pp. 174-175.

⁴³ Z. Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Instytut Kultury, Warszawa 1994, p. 7.



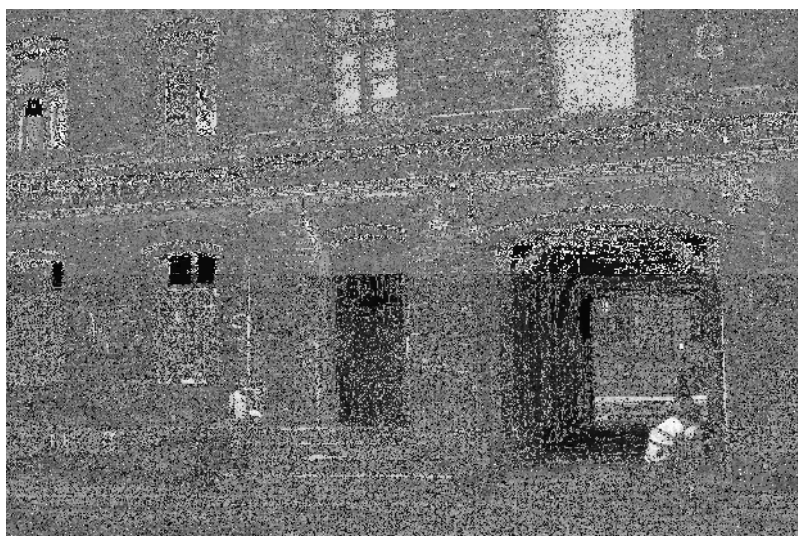
2. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim,
The “market” of *Manufaktura*, 2012



3. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim,
The interior of the shopping center, 2014



4. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim,
A view of the former workers' houses from *Manufaktura*, 2014



5. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim,
Workers' houses on the other side of Ogrodowa Street, 2014



6. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim, In the back yard, 2014



7. Photo by J. Sowińska-Heim, A view of Andel's Hotel (four stars plus a swimming pool on the roof), 2014.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beatus (1946) *1-szy Maja u robotników Poznańskiego*, "Głos Robotniczy", no. 107, p. 3.
- Beatus (1946) *Zbudujemy organizację partyjną ludu łódzkiego. Przekształcimy Łódź w miasto przemysłu, kultury i dobrobytu mas pracujących. Wywiad z tow. Kozłowskim pierwszym sekretarzem Komitetu Miejskiego Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, "Głos Robotniczy", no 94, p. 4.
- Biuro ds. Rewitalizacji i Rozwoju Zabudowy Miasta, *Rewitalizacja obszarowa centrum Łodzi. Wstępny plan projektu 7 – część inwestycyjna*, Łódź.
- Biuro ds. Rewitalizacji i Rozwoju Zabudowy Miasta, *Rewitalizacja obszarowa centrum Łodzi. Wstępny plan projektu 8 – część inwestycyjna*, Łódź.
- Broda-Wysocki Piotr (2012) *Wykluczenie i inkluzja społeczna paradygmaty i próby definicji*, Warszawa: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.
- Galerie i centra handlowe*, 12.06.2013 (online) Available at: <http://www.najlepszegalerie.pl>.
- Margines* (2008) in: *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego PWN*, S. Dubiesz ed., Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Dzieciuchowicz Jerzy, Kaniewicz Stanisław (2002) *Plansza XVII: Struktura społeczno-zawodowa ludności*, in: S. Liszewski ed., *Atlas miasta*, Łódź: Urząd Miasta.
- Famuly jak nowe* (2013) 03.05.2014 (online) Oficjalna strona Urzędu Miasta Łodzi. Available at: <http://uml.lodz.pl/miasto/aktualnosci/?news=23962>.
- Fleming Michael (2012) *Legitimizing urban "revitalisation" strategies in post-socialist Łódź*, "East European Politics and Societies", no. 2, pp. 254-273.
- Gilejko Lech K. (2005) *Przegrana większość. Robotnicy i chłopci*, in: M. Jarosz ed., *Polska. Ale jaka?*, Warszawa: ISP PAN, pp. 185-205.
- Gilejko Lech K. (2005) *Robotnicy w transformacji: ocena ich położenia i szans*, in: M. Jarosz ed., *Wygrani i przegrani polskiej transformacji*, Warszawa: ISP PAN, pp. 183-210.
- Grotowska-Leder Joanna (1998) *Łódzkie enklawy biedy*, in: W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska ed., *Życie i praca w enklawach biedy (Klimaty łódzkie)*, Łódź: Instytut Socjologii Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, pp. 36-63.
- Hirt Sonia, Stanilov Kiril (2009) *Twenty years of transition: the evolution of urban planning in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union, 1989-2009*, Nairobi: UnHabitat.
- Jałowiecki Bohdan (1992) *Gra o miasto w sytuacji transformacji ustroju*, in: *Idem ed., Gra o miasto*, Warszawa: PAN Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju, pp. 7-14.
- Jankowski Bogdan, Warzywoda-Kruszyńska Wielisława (2010) *Mieszkańcy łódzkich enklaw biedy 10 lat później*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo "Biblioteka".
- Karwińska Anna (2005) *Zagrożenie marginalizacją społeczną w Polsce a tworzenie i przekazywanie kapitału kulturowego*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie”, no. 682, pp. 5-20.
- Kryńska Elżbieta, *Przemiany polskiego rynku pracy w kontekście międzynarodowym*. 04.05.2014 (online) Oficjalna strona Ministerstwa Infrastruktury i Rozwoju. Available at: http://www.mir.gov.pl/rozwoj_regionalny/poziom_krajowy/polska_polityka_przestrzenna/zespol_re

alizacyjny_KPZK/Documents/ee329d16adf2458a9aea22db285a5c9bPrzemianyPolskiegoRynkuUprawyKontekciemidzynarodow.pdf.

Łotocki Łukasz (2010) *Marginalizacja i wykluczenie a obcość*, in: R. Szarfenberg, C. Żołędowski, M. Theiss ed., *Ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne – perspektywa poznawcza*, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, pp. 173-185.

Majer Andrzej (2001) *Współczesna urbanizacja i szanse dla Łodzi* in: W. Warzywoda, S. Kaczmarek ed., *Rewitalizacja terenów przemysłowych. Nowy wymiar w rozwoju miast*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Nie oddamy naszych fabryk! (1946) "Głos Robotniczy", no. 106, p. 3.

Jäger Frank Peter ed. (2010) *Old & New – Design Manual for Revitalizing Existing Buildings*, Basel: Birkhäuser.

Warzywoda-Kruszyńska Wielisława, Grotowska-Leder Jolanta ed. (2000) *Ryzyka transformacji systemowej (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo "Absolwent".

Popławska Irena (1992) *Architektura mieszkaniowa Łodzi w XIX wieku*, Warszawa: PAN, Komitet Architektury i Urbanistyki.

Rezolucja Wojewódzkiej Konferencji aktywu PPS i PPR (1946) "Głos Robotniczy", nr 98, p. 1.

Rykwert Joseph (2013) *Pokusa miejsca. Przeszłość i przyszłość miast*, Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury.

Sobczyńska Jolanta, (2012) *Łodzianie nie trafiają do kontenerów*. 30.04.2014 (online) Oficjalna strona gazety "Dziennik Łódzki". Available at: <http://www.dzienniklodzki.pl/artukul/530161, lodzianie-nie-trafia-do-kontenerow,id,t.html>.

Sobczyńska Jolanta (2011) *W Łodzi powstają 3 osiedla kontenerowe*. 30.04.2014 (online) Oficjalna strona gazety "Dziennik Łódzki". Available at: <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artukul/477226,w-lodzi-powstana-3-osiedla-kontenerowe,id,t.html>.

Sowińska-Heim Julia (2013) *Conversions and redefinitions – architecture and identity of a place*, "Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les Arts", vol. XV (XXIV), pp. 191-205.

Strategia Zintegrowanego Rozwoju Łodzi 2020+. *Diagnoza strategiczna Łodzi. Synteza*, oprac. Biuro Strategii, Partnerstwa i Funduszy Oddział Strategii Rozwoju Miast Urzędu Miasta Łodzi, Łódź.

Świerczewska-Pietras Katarzyna (2009) *Rewitalizacja zamknięta jako przykład zagospodarowania przemysłowego obszaru Łodzi*, "Prace Komisji Geografii Przemysłu", no. 12, pp.173-181.

Warzywoda-Kruszyńska Wielisława (2009) *Bieda dzieci w środowisku wielkomiejskim (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, "Polityka Społeczna", no. 9, pp. 13-17.

Wódz Jacek, Wódz Kazimiera (2005) *W poszukiwaniu nowej tożsamości. Miasta Śląska i Zagłębia w okresie przemian końca XX*, in: B. Kloch, A. Stawarz ed., *Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa miasta postindustrialnego w Europie*, Rybnik–Warszawa: Muzeum w Rybniku, Polskie Towarzystwo Etnologii Miasta, pp. 7-16.

MARGINESY I MARGINALIZACJA W POSTSOCJALISTYCZNEJ PRZESTRZENI MIEJSKIEJ NA PRZYKŁADZIE ŁODZI (streszczenie)

W wyniku postsocjalistycznej transformacji ustrojowej i procesów związanych z globalizacją krajobraz architektoniczny miast Europy Centralnej i Wschodniej ulega istotnym przemianom. Architektura odzwierciedla i obrazuje zachodzące zmiany nie tylko gospodarcze i ekonomiczne, ale również społeczne i kulturowe. Pod wpływem podejmowanych przekształceń i działań architektonicznych zmienia się obraz miasta i tworzą między innymi nowe podziały – “obszary luksusu” oraz przestrzenie zmarginalizowane.

Słowa kluczowe: marginalizacja – miasto postsocjalistyczne – Łódź – gentryfikacja – rewitalizacja.

Artist's essay

ART AND REVELATION

Abstract: The paper reflects on attempts to achieve revelation, epiphany, or enlightenment in the modern world. Sometimes the hope of reaching this state accompanies dangerous mountain trekking expeditions. However, it is believed that revelation can be achieved more quickly through drug use, practiced by artists from the nineteenth century onwards. Seeking visions in this way is part of the cultural tradition of the North and South American Indians. In the twentieth century, such artists as Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell and others alluded to these practices. The Russian tradition had a different way of achieving illumination. Avant-garde artists (such as Malevich or Kandinsky) drew inspiration from it, seeking sudden revelation combined with surprise. The paper concludes with the author's reflections on the possibility of personal experience today that would exceed the cognitive limits through contact with certain works of art, ancient and modern.

Keywords: revelation – mountain climbing expedition – drugs – modern art.

Revelation, epiphany, enlightenment – these experiences all take place in our consciousness. They come as a great surprise and discovery, as a sudden disclosure of the “sacred”. They come as moments of unforeseen clarity, when mental limitations and barriers seem to be lifted away.

At all times there have been men and women seeking revelation and enlightenment, willing to pay a high price to attain it. For some, it would cost forty days of fasting and praying in the desert, or even a lifetime of saintly living on the top of a pillar. For others, years of starving and freezing in the mountains of Himalaya.

Mountains seem to have been especially appropriate for the seekers of enlightenment. Is this because one is far away from cities and villages and

closer to the sky? It was on a mountain that Moses encountered the burning bush and received the Law. From mountains the prophets have come down to preach to the people.

The Italian philosopher Julius Evola, himself an enthusiastic alpinist, has written a book on the role of the mountain as a threshold of initiation, and included a case study of the persons who survived the falls from high altitudes¹. They might have been carried away by an avalanche. A loose stone, a moment of distraction, and they would have lost their foothold and fallen hundreds of meters. But instead of meeting inevitable death, these people miraculously survived, perhaps landing on a mound of soft snow. These survivors all shared the same experience, an experience of incredible clarity and a synthetic recollection of their past. They also all entered into a period of euphoria and bliss, only to sink down into deepest depression as the memory of their experiences faded away. It took them time to recover, if that is the right word, and they had difficulties to return to so-called normal life, to live the rest of their lives with a sense of loss. This example is not about art, but it gives a hint on how to understand what revelation or a transcendent experience might be.

Many people in our own time, not the least people in the artistic field, have searched for a quicker way of experiencing revelations, and thus turned to the use of drugs in order to expand their consciousness and to get great visions. Thomas de Quincy, Samuel Coleridge and Baudelaire were their forerunners in the 19th century. In our own time, some famous examples would be Aldous Huxley, William Burroughs, Carlos Castaneda and Henri Michaux. But the use of opium, mescaline and other drugs has often been a detriment, more harmful than beneficial. The doors of revelation are not easily opened! Revelation comes more as a gift than as a reward for suffering and meditation.

It might have been easier for those who grew up among the native peoples of North America, those for whom a "vision quest" was an established tradition. Before adolescents would be admitted as grown-up members of the community, they had to stay alone in the wilderness, without supplies, surviving on what they could find, staying there to search and wait for a vision, a revelation, or a dream experience with a symbolic impact. Having experienced such a revelation, only then would they return to their people. Depending on the nature and details of their spiritual journey they would get a new name, such as Standing Bear, Red Cloud, Yellowtail, Spotted Eagle, Sitting Bull. Their names would serve for the rest of their lives as a reminder

¹ M. Hulin, *Sur la chute en montagne*, in: Julius Evola, *Méditations du haut des cimes*, Pardes-Guy Trédaniel, Paris 1986, pp. 159-176 *passim*.

of the revelation, of an exceptional spiritual journey they once had made. Like a thread linking them to a state of being beyond the banalities of ordinary life.

With the Kuna Indians in Panama and northern Colombia it was not the names that functioned as reminders, but the *molas*. The Kunas also had the tradition of a “vision quest”, experiencing and earning a personal symbol, which, before the coming of the European missionaries, was tattooed on their chest/breasts. When the Christian culture forced them to cover their breasts, the young girls began to cut and embroider their totems on layers of multi-coloured cloth, the so-called *molas*. The tradition of the *molas* has given us examples of great geometric art. Still, let us remember that what appears to us to be works of art are strictly speaking not “pictures”, but something else – signs and symbols pointing towards spiritual experiences.

The traditions of the native peoples of America were a source of inspiration and were eagerly studied by the generation of the Abstract Expressionists in the USA, for instance Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell and others².

On the other side of the globe, Russian folk art and the icon tradition played a similar role as a source of inspiration for artists like Kandinsky, Larionov, Goncharova and Malevich. Certainly the famous black square of Malevich has earned its iconic status on very different merits. It has been described as a black hole that draws all one's light into itself, leaving us with nothing but a blank mind. Or, reversed – as a source of energy which strengthens the viewer's own light.³

Mentioning Kandinsky, let us remember the day when he happened to see one of his landscape paintings upside down in his studio, and suddenly had a revelation of something completely new. It has been said that it was in this moment that abstraction in contemporary art was born. What happened to Kandinsky? He had been surprised.

Surprise. This simple word contains the whole enigma of sudden revelation. Surprise is a gift! No amount of mental effort can so instantly peel off the layers of banality and grey habitualness that cover our lives and thoughts. Moments of surprise are especially important for artists. Because they are followed by reminiscence, literally a *re-minding*. We are all of a sudden overcoming blockages and limitations in our minds. Something completely new is revealed to us in an unexpected moment of transcendence and revelation. These are the moments that contain the seeds of new creations. An upheaval

² Cf. R. Lipsey, *The Spiritual in Twentieth Century Art*, Dover Publications Mineola, New York 2011.

³ *Revelations. Glimpses of Reality*, ed. R. S. Lello, Shepard-Walwyn, London 1985, p. 89.

in the mind may be the beginning of fresh, new projects, surprise being not only a gift but also an opportunity.

Thus, certain works of art – inspired works – seem more suited to provoking or awakening the sensations of surprise and revelation in the viewer than others. More people seem to share the experience of wonder and awe in front of the works by Titian and Velasquez, or Matisse and Rothko, than in front of the works by other artists from the same periods. The works of these artists were indeed inspired. Rothko even maintained that his paintings were not pictures. They were something else.

There is an interesting television interview with the British writer Iris Murdoch who testified to such an experience when she saw a late picture by Titian *The Flaying of Marsyas*. She thought about this work as a sort of a religious icon. "I was completely stunned. I didn't know this picture existed. I've seen a great many Titians in different places and I'd never heard of this one. I just went into that room and there it was." After a description of the subject matter and the myth of Marsyas and Apollo, she added: "The intensity of the whole picture is so great, it conveys a deep symbolic impression of human life with all its ambiguity, all its horrors and terrors and miseries – yet, at the same time, it's joyful and beautiful. It is to do with the entry of the spiritual into the human situation and the closeness of the gods"⁴

The impressions of paintings and sculptures are instantly registered. It is different with the performing arts, where the time factor is involved. But even here moments of revelation are apt to occur. When I hear certain themes of Gustav Mahler, I am reminded of the great singer Kathleen Ferrier. During a concert she was performing Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*. Although she had performed this music many times, she suddenly stopped singing in the middle of a particularly moving phrase, her eyes full of tears. Her voice just left her. Then, the musicians stopped playing one after another, and the same mood affected the audience. It is almost terrifying even to imagine such a situation, a concert hall with an orchestra and an audience suddenly galvanised by a singer who stops singing. As if all the beauty and all the energy of Mahler's music was concentrated in this one single moment, the singer's bursting into tears.

Similar examples could be multiplied. It was already Plato who gave us a description of a similar collective revelation in his shortest dialogue, *Ion*.

Let me end with a quotation, probably by Alice Bailey, written down in my notebook years ago:

Revelation is the revelation of that which is ever present. It is in reality not the revelation of something new and hitherto unknown. We may eventually

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

discover that we can perceive more than we ever knew was existent or perceptible but, at the same time, that we only perceive something that has always been there. The limitation is within us, and the way of revelation is through the discovery and the discarding of our own individual limitations.

Anders Lidén
anders.a.liden@telia.com

SZTUKA I OBJAWIENIE **(streszczenie)**

Tekst stanowi refleksję nad próbami osiągnięcia objawienia, epifanii lub oświecenia występującymi we współczesnym świecie. Niekiedy nadzieja na uzyskanie tego stanu towarzyszy niebezpiecznym wyprawom w góry. Za szybszą drogę uzyskania objawienia uważa się jednak zażywanie narkotyków, uprawiane przez artystów od XIX wieku. Poszukiwanie w ten sposób wizji należy do tradycji kulturowych Indian północno- i południowoamerykańskich. W XX wieku nawiązywali do nich Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell i inni malarze. Odmienne sposoby osiągania iluminacji właściwy był dla tradycji rosyjskiej. Artyści awangardowi (np. Malewicz, Kandnsky) inspirowali się nią poszukując nagłego objawienia połączonego z zaskoczeniem. Tekst kończą refleksje autora dotyczące możliwości doznania dziś indywidualnego odczucia przekroczenia granic poznawczych poprzez kontakt z niektórymi dziełami sztuki dawnej i nowoczesnej.

Słowa kluczowe: objawienie – wyprawy w góry – narkotyki – sztuka nowoczesna.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Krzysztof Cichoń – PhD, art historian (2000, Lviv National Academy of Arts, thesis: *Iconography of the Universe in the European Christian Art from Late Antiquity to 18th century*), temporarily unemployed. Main research interests: Comparative Cultural Studies, Iconography of the Cosmos, Iconography of Power, Iconography of Gesture, Early Medieval Art, Iconography of Silly Walks in Art. Selected Publications: *O sprytnych sposobach wy-patrywania ducha. Przyczynek do ikonografii płynności*, “Studia Etckie” 15 (2013) nr 3, pp. 369-392; *Jaja jako przedmiot poznania naukowego (a nawet rekonstrukcji). Prolegomena do szlabanologii artystycznej* in: *Biała aura. Łódź Kaliska, Darłowo* 2009, ed. M Pierzchała, Łódź 2010, pp. 132-143.

Grzegorz Dziamski – (b. 1955), professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Faculty of Cultural Studies) and at the Poznań Academy of Fine Arts. He published several books on contemporary art: *Postmodernizm wobec kryzysu estetyki współczesnej* [Postmodernism and the crisis of contemporary aesthetics], Poznań 1996; *Lata dziewięćdziesiąte* [The art of the 1990s], Poznań 2000, *Sztuka u progu XXI wieku* (Art at the threshold of the 21st century), Poznań 2002, *Sztuka po końcu sztuki* [Art after the end of art], Poznań 2009, *Przełom konceptualny* [The Conceptual breakthrough], Poznań 2010, *Art in the Postmodern Era. From Central European Perspective*, Berlin 2013. Editor of the volume *Avant-Garde Currents in Polish Art of the 20th Century* (Warsaw 1996) – part of the Encyclopedia of Polish Culture, a collection of essays by Clement Greenberg – *Obrona modernizmu* [Defence of modernity], Kraków 2006, and the anthology *Performance* [Performance art], Warszawa 1984, the first in Eastern Europe.

Eleonora Jedlińska – art historian, professor at the Department of Art History, University of Łódź. She teaches history of contemporary art and art and criticism. Member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), since 2008 member of the European Association for Jewish Studies. Author of the book *Sztuka po Holocauście* [Art after the Holocaust], 2001 and *Polish contemporary art in American art criticism 1984-2002*, and a few dozen articles devoted to the memory of the Shoah in contemporary art (e.g. Strze-miński, Kantor, Kupferman, Boltanski, Bałka). Currently working on a project concerning art and memory, commemoration of the past, and on a monograph devoted to the Jewish–Polish–French artist Marek Szwarc.

Ryszard W. Kluszczyński – PhD, professor at Lodz University, Poland, Chair of School of Media and Audiovisual Culture. Professor in Academy of Fine Arts in Lodz. In 1990-2001 Chief Curator of Film, Video and Multimedia Arts in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw where he curated numerous international art exhibitions and festivals. Curator of the International Biennale of Contemporary Art in Poznan 2010. Co-curator of the travelling

exhibition United States of Europe, 2011-2013. Artistic Director of the project Art&Science Meeting in Centre for Contemporary Arts, Gdansk 2011-2016.

He publishes widely about new media arts, avant-garde film and video art, cyberculture, theory of media and communication, information and network society. Some of his book publications include: *Interactive Art. From Artwork-Instrument to Interactive Spectacle*, 2010; *Information Society. Cyberculture. Multimedia Arts*, 2001; *Film – Video – Multimedia. Art of the Moving Picture in the Era of Electronics*, 1999; *Images at Large. Studies in the History of Media Art in Poland*, 1998; *Avant-Garde. Theoretical Study*, 1997; *Film – Art of the Great Avant-Garde*, 1990.

Ewa Kubiak – PhD, art historian, working the Department of Art History of Lodz University. After completing her doctoral program at Lodz University in 2002, she defended her doctoral dissertation at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. In 2010 her dissertation was published in the form of the book titled *Rezydencje biskupów włocławskich w okresie nowożytnym [Residences of the Bishops of Włocławek in the Early Modern Period]*. Since 2002, she has been researching Latin American colonial art. She has presented the results of her research during various Polish and foreign conferences. Author of many articles on colonial art, published in Polish and Spanish. Recipient of the Lanckoroński Foundation Fellowship of Brzezine (Rome 2004) and two fellowships of the Foundation for Polish Science (Brasil 2006, Argentina 2008).

Roman Kubicki – professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań. Author of the books: *Interpretacja a poznanie. Studium z filozofii sztuki [Interpretation vs cognition. Studies in the philosophy of art]*, 1991; *Zmierzch sztuki. Narodziny ponowoczesnej jednostki? [The twilight of art: The birth of a postmodern individual?]*, 1995; *Ani być, ani mieć? Trzy szkice z filozofii pamięci [Neither to be, nor to have? Three sketches on the philosophy of memory]*, 2001; *Pierscienie Gygesa [The rings of Gyges]*, 2005; co-author, with Zygmunt Bauman and Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Życie w kontekstach. Rozmowy o tym, co za nami i o tym co przed nami [Life in contexts. Talks on the past and the future]*, 2009; *Egzystencjalne konteksty dzieła sztuki. Studium z pogranicza estetyki i filozofii kultury [Existential Context of a Work of Art. A Borderline Study Between Aesthetics and Philosophy of Culture]*, 2013.

Agnieszka Kuczyńska – PhD, born 1966. Education: 1985-9 Art History at the Catholic University of Lublin. 2006 PhD at the Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Since 2000 Lecturer at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Current interests: post-war surrealism, Surrealist exhibitions, primitivism, collections of primitive art, André Breton. Selected bibliography: *Malowane kurtyny teatralne Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, Lublin 2010; *Wąski Dunaj nr 5. Ze Zbigniewem Makowskim rozmawiają Agnieszka Kuczyńska i Krzysztof Cichoń*, Łódź 2008; *Historia kurtyny teatralnej*, “Roczniki Humanistyczne”, 2007, t. LV, z. 4, pp. 121-150.

Anders Lidén – born in Härnösand, Sweden, in 1941. Studies at the University of Uppsala and Amsterdam 1960-67 (History of Art, History of Literature and Aesthetics), at the Sorbonne and Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie, Paris 1967-68. Lives in Härnösand and Paris.

Dominika Łarionow – PhD, lecturer in the Department of Art History, University of Lodz. Author of the book on *Leszek Mądzik and Scena Plastyczna KUL (The Space of Images. Leszek Mądzik, KUL, Lublin 2008)*. She wrote an article about set design, focused on Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Józef Szajna, Stanisław Wyspiański. She is also a convener of the Working Group in Scenography FIRT/IFTR, and member of the editorial board of *Theater and Performance Design* (Routledge, London).

Agnieszka Ługowska – doctor of philosophy, M.A. in English Studies, the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz; Interests: history of aesthetics, philosophy of aesthetics, contemporary art; Publications: articles published in *Estetyka i Krytyka, Art Inquiry* and other periodicals.

Aneta Pawłowska – PhD, after habilitation, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Art History, University of Łódź. She specializes in South African art and culture. Her research interests include: contemporary art, 20th century gender art and history and theory of collections Her current research focuses on Audio description. Selected publications: Books: *Pro Arte. Monografia grupy warszawskich artystów 1922-1932 [The Pro Arte Artistic Group (1922-1932)]*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton 2006; pp. 188; *Sztuka i kultura Afryki Południowej. W poszukiwaniu tożsamości artystycznej na tle przekształceń historycznych [Art and Culture of South Africa. In search of artistic identity of South Africa, as influenced by historical transformations]*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2013, pp. 406. Articles: *The Roots of Black Post-Apartheid Art in South Africa*, “Art Inquiry” 2004, pp. 81-104; *Some Remarks Regarding Contemporary South African Art in the Context of Political Changes and Stability of Artistic Principles*, “Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures” 2013, no.47, pp. 47-66.

Teresa Pękala – PhD, after habilitation, is UMCS Associate Professor, Dean of the UMCS Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology, and the Head of Department of Aesthetics. Her interest covers Polish aesthetics, problems of contemporary aesthetics and art, postmodern culture and the processes of aestheticization of the past. She has published ca. 100 articles and is the author or editor of eight books: *Secesja. Konkretyzacje i interpretacje [Art Nouveau. Concretizations and Interpretations]* Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1995; *Estetyka otwarta Mieczysława Wallisa [The Open Aesthetics of Mieczysław Wallis]* Instytut Kultury, Warszawa 1997; *Awangarda i ariergarda. Filozofia sztuki nowoczesnej [Avant-gardes, Ariere-gardes. Philosophy of Modern Art]* Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2000; *Mieczysław Wallis. Wybór pism estetycznych. Wprowadzenie, wybór i opracowanie [Mieczysław Wallis. Selected Aesthetic Writings. Introduced, Selected and Edited]* Universitas, Kraków 2004; *Przyszłość Witkacego [Witkacy’s Future]* (ed.), Universitas, Kraków 2010; *Powrót modernizmu [The Return of Modernism]* (ed.), Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2013, *Estetyczne konteksty doświadczenia przeszłości, [Aesthetic Contexts of Experience of the Past]* Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2013; *Konstanty Troczyński. Wybór pism estetycznych. Wprowadzenie, wybór i opracowanie [Konstanty Troczyński. Selected Aesthetic Writings. Introduced, Selected and Edited]* Universitas, Kraków 2014.

Maja Piotrowska-Tryzno – graduate of the Faculty of Graphics and Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, PhD student at the Department of Aesthetics of the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw since 2011, particularly interested in aesthetics,

philosophy of art, philosophy of life and the questions of perception. Active artist and designer, translator of texts on art, architecture and design into English. In 2013-14 she co-organized an interdisciplinary workshop "Family Memory of the Minorities" at the Institute of Philosophy. Since 2009, she has been developing and running an educational course for young people, "New Forms of Art" at the Centre of Culture and Civic Initiatives in Podkowa Leśna. So far she has taken an active part in one nationwide and seven international academic conferences and has published four articles concerning philosophical and artistic issues.

Kazimierz Piotrowski – PhD, art historian, critic, curator and philosopher of art. Studied history of art and philosophy at the Catholic University in Lublin. Obtained his PhD at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Letters (PAN) in 2000. Worked at the National Museum in Warsaw (1990-2003) and as a curator at the Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in 2001. Since 2004 a lecturer in philosophy and art history at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź. His publications include the book *Krzysztof Zarębski. Erotematy słabnącego Erosa. Przyczynek do dziejów sztuki performance w Polsce i Stanach Zjednoczonych po 1968 roku* [*Krzysztof Zarębski. The Erothemes of the Weakening Eros. A Contribution to the History of Performance Art in Poland and the United States after 1968*] (2009).

Magdalena Samborska – artist, PhD, assistant professor at the Strzeminski Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. Her artistic activity is stimulated by the tensions between art and design, fashion and feminism, masculinity and femininity etc. Forms of her artistic expression include installations, ready-made, dress-sculpture and photography. Her works address issues such as: sexual and gender identity, dominance, and woman's place in the symbolic order. In 1998 and 2008 she was awarded the Scholarship of the Minister of Culture.

Julia Sowińska-Heim – PhD, art historian, lecturer in the Department of Art History at the University of Łódź. Recipient of the Lanckroński Foundation scholarship. Author of the book *Forma i sacrum. Współczesne kościoły Górnego Śląska*. Her research centers on 20th-century Polish architecture, particularly focusing on the ideologies of architectural and urban space production in socialist and post-socialist cities in the former Eastern Europe. She also researches the mutual influence of form and the sacrum in contemporary churches and the idea of sustainable architecture in the designs and projects of Polish contemporary architects. She supports *Galeria J* in Łódź, where she organizes exhibitions of paintings and sculptures of modern Polish and international artists.

Paulina Sztabińska – PhD, associate professor in the Department of Art History, University of Łódź, lecturer at PWSFTviT in Łódź. Winner of the Jan Józef Lipski award for best MA thesis and the Szczęsny Dettloff award for best PhD thesis. Co-author and co-editor of the book *Imiona własne sztuki łódzkiej. Współczesne malarstwo, grafika, rzeźba i twórczość intermedialna* [The proper names of Łódź art. Contemporary painting, graphic arts, sculpture and intermedia art], Łódź 2008. Author of the books: *Geometria a natura. Polska sztuka abstrakcyjna w drugiej połowie XX wieku* [Geometry and nature. Polish abstract art in the second half of the twentieth century], Warszawa 2010 and *Sztuka geometryczna a postmodernizm* [Geometric Art and Postmodernism], Warszawa 2011. Editorial associate of the journal *Art Inquiry*. Her research interests focus on 20th century art.

Grzegorz Sztabiński – professor at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Łódź and at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź, where he is head of the Studio of Introductory Composition and lecturer in aesthetics and modern art history. Author of *Problemy intelektualizacji sztuki w tendencjach awangardowych* [The problems of the intellectualization of art in avant-garde movements], 1991; *Dlaczego geometria? Problemy współczesnej sztuki geometrycznej* [Why geometry? The problems of modern geometric art], 2004; co-author and co-editor of the book *Imiona własne sztuki łódzkiej. Współczesne malarstwo, grafika, rzeźba i twórczość inter-medialna* [The proper names of Łódź art. Contemporary painting, graphic arts, sculpture and intermedia art], 2008, *Inne idee awangardy. Wspólnota, wolność, autorytet* [Other Ideas of Avant-Garde. Community, Liberty, Authority], Warszawa 2011. Artist creating paintings, drawings and installations; his work has been shown in many individual and group exhibitions in Poland and abroad.

Ewa Wojtynika-Dębińska – PhD of fine arts, after habilitation, works at Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź. Main areas of expertise include graphic design, art theory, and art criticism. Author of articles on contemporary Polish artists. In her theoretical texts, she analyses the issue of the transmedia nature of art, transformations of the contemporary graphic and public art, as well as extrasensory sources of artistic activity.