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dr hab. Janina Falkowska, prof. WSEH

Projekt okładki: Katarzyna Kośmider

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Wydawca:

Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna

ul. gen. Wł. Sikorskiego 4,

43-300 Bielsko-Biała,

tel. 33 81 65 170

e-mail: wseh@wseh.pl

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SPIS TREŚCI / CONTENT

Od redakcji	7
From the editors	19

Interpretacje totalitaryzmu / Totalitarianism: interpretations

Leon Surette

Totalitarianism

Totalitaryzm 33

Wojciech Kaute

Totalitarianism: Human Misery, and Madness...

Totalitaryzm – ludzka niedola i szaleństwo... 53

Elżbieta Jaszczurowska

Mirosław Laszczak

Delation: describing interpersonal relations in a totalitarian regime

Donos – relacje interpersonalne w totalitaryzmie 79

Totalitaryzm a literatura / Totalitarianism in literature

Paul Coates

Totalitarianism as rhizome: Elizabeth Bowen`s *The Heat of the Day*

Splecione kłącza totalitaryzmu na przykładzie powieści Elizabeth Bowen *The Heat of the Day* 113

Xián-Lois Alcayde-Dans

Xosé-Antonio Neira-Cruz

Poetics against domination: Albert Camus and Manuel Rivas in the construction of the *Rebellious man*

Poetyka przeciw dominacji – Albert Camus i Manuel Rivas jako twórcy *Człowieka zbuntowanego* 159

Totalitaryzm w filmie / Totalitarianism in film.

Ricardo Rato Rodrigues

Film as propaganda during Salazar`s estado novo: the case of *O Pátio das Cantigas (The Courtyard of Ballads)*

Film jako narzędzie propagandy w epoce tzw. „nowego państwa” Salazara – *O Pátio das Cantigas (Dziedziniec Piosenek)* 195

Łukasz Sorokowski

The (in)human condition: selected aspects of the totalitarian regime as depicted in the *Lives of others*

Kondycja (nie)ludzka – wybrane aspekty totalitaryzmu w filmie pt. *Życie na podsłuchu* 231

Jeremi Szaniawski

East, west, and the total world: totalitarianism in history and aesthetics in Paweł Pawlikowski's *Cold War*

Wschód, zachód i świat totalny: totalitaryzm w historii i estetyce na przykładzie filmu *Zimna Wojna* Pawła Pawlikowskiego 255

Varia / Miscellaneous

Beata Terka

Torowanie syntaktyczne jako zjawisko wspomagające proces nauczania – uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego

Syntactic priming as a phenomenon facilitating the process of teaching-learning the grammar of Polish as a foreign language
281

Urszula Swoboda-Rydz

Speak English, Doctor! Between Academic Education and Labor Market Demands

Proszę mówić po angielsku, doktorze! Pomiędzy edukacją akademicką a wymaganiami rynku pracy 305

OD REDAKCJI

Numer 21 *Polonia Journal* poświęcony jest dwóm obszarom. Po pierwsze – różnym obliczom totalitaryzmu w filozofii, literaturze i filmie, co stanowi kontynuację tematyki tomu *Polonia Journal* nr 20/2025; po drugie – zagadnieniu procesów lingwistycznych w nauce języka angielskiego oraz praktyce stosowania języka angielskiego w zawodach medycznych. W epoce globalizacji i powszechnego zaniku granic omawiane zagadnienia są warte chwili zadumy nad stopniem skomplikowania współczesnego świata.

Pierwsza część aktualnego wydania *Polonia Journal* to owoc konferencji na temat totalitaryzmu, która odbyła się w dniach 1-3 października 2022 roku w murach Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomiczno-Humanistycznej w Bielsku-Białej, zorganizowanej przeze mnie oraz przez Profesor Lenutę Giukin ze State University w Oswego (USA). Kilka artykułów zostało dodanych już po konferencji; stanowią one dodatkowe głosy w dyskusji o różnych obliczach totalitaryzmu w literaturze i filmie.

Artykuły tworzące część pierwszą występują w trzech tytułowych sekcjach: interpretacje totalitaryzmu, totalitaryzm w literaturze oraz totalitaryzm w filmie. Zawierają one uwagi

i spostrzeżenia badaczy, wywodzących się z różnych obszarów teorii i praktyki badań filozoficznych, literackich oraz badań nad filmem. Poniższy spis artykułów przybliży zakres tematyczny tej części, która poświęcona jest interpretacji zjawiska totalitaryzmu.

1. Interpretacje totalitaryzmu:

*Leon Surette: Totalitaryzm

*Wojciech Kaute: Totalitaryzm: ludzka niedola i szaleństwo

*Elżbieta Jaszczurowska i Mirosław Laszczak: Donos: relacje interpersonalne w totalitaryzmie

2. Totalitaryzm a literatura

*Paul Coates: Splecione kłacza totalitaryzmu na przykładzie powieści Elizabeth Bowen *The Heat of the Day*

*[Xián-Lois Alcayde-Dans](#), [Xosé-Antonio Neira-Cruz](#):

Poetyka przeciw dominacji – Albert Camus i Manuel Rivas jako twórcy *Człowieka zbuntowanego*

3. Totalitaryzm w filmie

*Rato Rodrigues Ricardo: film jako narzędzie propagandy w epoce tzw. „nowego państwa” Salazara – *O Pátio das Cantigas (Dziedziniec Piosenek)*

*Łukasz Sorokowski: Kondycja (nie)ludzka – wybrane aspekty totalitaryzmu w filmie *Życie na podsłuchu*

*Jeremy Szaniawski: Wschód, zachód i świat totalny: totalitaryzm w historii i estetyce na przykładzie filmu *Zimna Wojna* Pawła Pawlikowskiego

Nie ulega wątpliwości, że totalitaryzm rozpościera się niczym gęsta mgła, która otacza każdy odłam rzeczywistości, w której przyszło żyć gnębionym osobnikom. Zjawisko to nie zawsze przybiera klarowny kształt; często wręcz podstępnie objawia swoją obrzydliwą twarz w mnogości szczegółowych reguł, nakazów i zaleceń dotyczących zachowania i języka, jakimi podwładni tego systemu posługują się każdego dnia.

Od kiedy istnieje świat totalitaryzm i inne radykalne ideologie były i są przekleństwem społeczeństw dużych i małych. Obecne czasy stawiają przed akademikami i intelektualistami wyjątkowe zadanie, jakim jest dokonywanie szczegółowej analizy retoryki totalitaryzmu, jego wpływu na zawartość tekstualną i formę dzieł literackich i wizualnych. Artykuły zawarte w niniejszym tomie realizują z powodzeniem to właśnie wyzwanie. Oferują studium zarówno oczywistej, jak i podświadomej retoryki w dobrze znanych, a także mniej znanych dziełach literackich i wizualnych, które, chcąc nie chcąc, są również komentarzem aktualnej sytuacji społecznej i politycznej w wielu krajach.

Zarówno w literaturze, jak i w filmie, można dostrzec pola tematycznej i estetycznej negocjacji, przecinające się na wielu poziomach analizy. Na przykład z powodu obecności cenzury w społeczeństwach totalitarnych, wymuszonej na obu polach działalności artystycznej, twórcy byli zmuszani do wprowadzania

alternatywnych środków wyrazu, takich jak język bajek, groteski, ezopowych aluzji i wielu innych tematycznych i estetycznych środków wyrazu. Badacze zajmujący się analizą tych tekstów, w tym: filmoznawcy, literaturoznawcy, socjologowie, filozofowie i specjaliści w innych dziedzinach humanistycznych znacznie przyczynili się do zrozumienia totalitarnych zjawisk oraz ich interpretacji w filmach i dziełach literackich.

Od czasu opublikowania w 1951 roku przez Hannę Arendt *Źródeł totalitaryzmu* pojawiło się wiele publikacji i dyskusji na temat totalitaryzmu. Mają one charakter bardziej otwarty niż jednoznaczne i w pewnym stopniu samoograniczające się ujęcia pierwszych badaczy. Wśród współczesnych autorów można wskazać na Obarrio Moreno, która traktuje totalitaryzm jako ideologię nieograniczającą się tylko do podłoża komunizmu, faszyzmu czy nazizmu. Nie należy ona ani do lewicy, ani prawicy w sensie politycznym, ale do każdego odłamu władzy, która pretenduje do posiadania prawdy. Totalitaryzm w takiej wersji może być zdefiniowany jako kwintesencja zła (Obarrio Moreno 2021a, s. 15; cyt. za Valverde, s. 234).

Anna Meyer, w swym najnowszym tekście, zauważa, że „percepcja świata obecnie nie zależy od wydarzeń, ale od tego, jak osobnicy panujący nad politycznym dyskursem chcą żebyśmy wierzyli w to, co się dzieje” (2025, s. 125). Sigrid Meuschel, z kolei, w swym dziele pt.: *Teorie totalitaryzmu a współczesne dyktatury: wstępna analiza*, sygnalizuje inne podejście – podział na

dwa rodzaje totalitaryzmu: w jednym totalitaryzm to „eksterminacja”, w drugim – „totalna kontrola” (Meuschel, s. 87). Rozwijając dalej temat, autorka twierdzi, że zjawisko to jest nie tak jednoznaczne, jak by się wydawało zarówno w wypadku unicestwiającego totalitaryzmu, jak i kontrolującego (Meuschel, 88). Przeglądając wielość aspektów totalitaryzmu jako aktu totalnej kontroli nad jednostką, zwraca uwagę na następujące możliwości interpretacji: „totalna kontrola jako zmanipulowany konsensus”, koncentracja władzy i dyferencjacja oraz deautonomizacja (s. 89-91). W mojej opinii wszystkie te interpretacje totalitaryzmu są bardziej lub mniej obecne w zawartych w tym tomie artykułach, stanowiąc podstawę dla dalszej krytycznej analizy dzieł literackich i filmowych.

Rzeczywiście totalitaryzm objawia różne twarze, które autorzy w tym numerze czasopisma *Polonia Journal* starają się ukazać. W pierwszych trzech artykułach zjawisko totalitaryzmu analizowane jest w ujęciach ideologicznych, filozoficznych i politycznych, opatrzonych wnikliwym komentarzem i krytycznymi rozważaniami.

Na sam początek czytelnicy muszą zmierzyć się z demarkacją granic i definicji pojęcia „totalitaryzm.” Leon Surette oraz Wojciech Kaute starają się udowodnić, że pojęcie to nie jest tak proste, jakby się wydawało. Surette wyprowadza termin od słynnego powiedzenia Hanny Arendt, która w *Źródłach totalitaryzmu* stwierdza, że, to, co jest konieczne dla pojawienia się

totalitaryzmu, to obecność lub wykreowanie „obiektywnego wroga”, którego ktoś musiałby unieszkodliwić lub spacyfikować.

Autorzy esejów na ten temat odnoszą się do tego stwierdzenia zarówno w analizie literatury, jak i filmów. Nic więc dziwnego, że prawie wszyscy odwołują się do słynnej książki Georga Orwella *1984* jako do najważniejszego tekstu literackiego, który świetnie „poddaje się” analizie krytycznej w duchu Hanny Arendt. Jak twierdzi Ana Valverde Gonzales, *Rok 1984* George’a Orwella zawiera interpretacje rewolucji socjopolitycznej, w której żyjemy, tak żeby nowe pokolenia czytelników przekształciły się w czytelników krytycznych, którzy rozumieją, w jakim kierunku rozwinęła się nasza cywilizacja w ostatnim wieku i w jaki sposób osiągnęła dzisiejszy punkt (Valverde, s. 233).

Trzy pierwsze eseje, zawarte w pierwszej części tomu pod hasłem **Interpretacje totalitaryzmu**, omawiają zjawisko totalitaryzmu z punktów widzenia teorii literatury, filozofii oraz funkcjonowania na granicy bezprawia. Leon Surette, w artykule pt.: „Totalitaryzm” i Wojciech Kaute, w swoim esej pod tytułem „Totalitaryzm: ludzka niedola i szaleństwo”, prezentują swoje interpretacje, opierając się na swoich specjalnościach badawczych. Ostatni artykuł w tej sekcji, „Donos: relacje interpersonalne w totalitaryzmie”, pióra Mirosława Laszczaka i Elżbiety Jaszczurowskiej, omawia niejasne aspekty totalitaryzmu, takie jak donosy na obywateli i współpracę ze służbami specjalnymi. Jak zauważają autorzy, w atmosferze wzajemnej podejrzliwości,

wzmocnionej dotkliwym poczuciem niepewności i napędzanej niskimi pobudkami, instytucja donosu ugruntowuje swoją pozycję na masową skalę. Na światło dzienne wychodzą prywatne relacje, które są badane przez sądy. Nie da się zrozumieć istoty społeczeństwa totalitarnego, nie biorąc pod uwagę instytucji donosu – tak samo, jak nie można oderwać świadomości człowieka od warunków, w jakich żyje.

Kolejna część tomu, **Totalitaryzm w literaturze**, zawiera dwa eseje traktujące o złożonym pojawianiu się totalitaryzmu w literaturze. W swoim artykule „Splecione kłaczka totalitaryzmu na przykładzie powieści Elizabeth Bowen *The Heat Of The Day*”, Paul Coates zauważa, że, psychologiczne, socjologiczne, estetyczne i filozoficzne kwestie splecione ze sobą w formie narracyjnej w powieści Elizabeth Bowen z 1948 roku *The Heat of the Day* łączą się i oddziałują na siebie, sugerując zniewalająco pouczający zestaw spostrzeżeń na temat relacji między totalitaryzmem, życiem codziennym, wojną, złem i niszczeniem tradycji. Xián-Lois Alcayde-Dans i Xosé-Antonio Neira-Cruz w artykule „Poetyka Przeciw Dominacji – Albert Camus i Manuel Rivas jako twórcy „Człowieka zbuntowanego”, stawiają hipotezę o obecności dyskursu emancypacyjnego negującego totalitaryzm w przestrzeni politycznej zdominowanej przez absurd. W wybranych dziełach literackich i ich późniejszych adaptacjach filmowych galicyjskiego pisarza Manuela Rivas i francusko-algijskiego twórcy Alberta Camusa, negującego totalitaryzm w przestrzeni

politycznej, zjawiska te objawiają się w całej okazałości. W tym celu autorzy artykułu, za punkt wyjścia obrali zbiór dzieł i myśli obu pisarzy – M. Rivasa *Ołówek stolarza* i *Język motyli* z książki *Kochanie, czego chcesz ode mnie?* A z twórczości Alberta Camusa analizują *Dżumę*. Ich podejście opiera się na pracach Szkoły z Essex, której teorie służą dyskursywnej analizie fragmentów wybranych dzieł w dialogu z ich filmowymi adaptacjami.

W ostatniej części, **Totalitaryzm a film**, czytelnicy znajdą trzy eseje traktujące o totalitaryzmie w filmie. Ricardo Rato Rodrigues, w artykule pt.: „Film jako narzędzie propagandy w epoce tzw. „nowego państwa” Salazara – *O Pátio das Cantigas (Dziedziniac Piosenek)*”, analizuje sposoby wykorzystywania filmu przez reżim do manipulowania psychiką publiczną, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wspomnianego filmu i sposobu, w jaki artykułuje on – co istotne, zawsze podstępnie – idee, które wspierały totalitarny system polityczny Portugalii. Artykuł bazuje zarówno na wnikliwej lekturze dzieł, jak i na szerokim spektrum źródeł teoretycznych, w celu ukazania niebezpiecznych związków pomiędzy polityką i kinem jako narzędziem propagandy politycznej.

Łukasz Sorokowski, w artykule pt.: „Kondycja (nie)ludzka – wybrane aspekty totalitaryzmu w filmie *Życie na podłuchu*, poddaje analizie sposób, w jaki reżyser Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck w swoim filmie przedstawia wstrząsający obraz

życia w Niemieckiej Republice Demokratycznej z jej wszechobecną tajną policją polityczną – Stasi. Nieludzka sytuacja panująca w wyjątkowo opresyjnym reżimie totalitarnym, którego kulminacja przypada na koniec lat osiemdziesiątych XX wieku, jest badana przez pryzmat moralnej i psychologicznej degradacji, narzuconej zarówno ciemieżcom, jak i uciśnionym. Artykuł analizuje również zastosowane techniki kinematograficzne, warstwę dźwiękową i elementy *mise-en-scène* w celu wzmocnienia wszechobecnego poczucia strachu i nieufności. Opierając się na przekazach historycznych i teorii politycznej próbującej wyjaśnić istotę totalitaryzmu, autor próbuje dowieść, że film jest zarówno krytyką autorytaryzmu, jak i świadectwem odporności ludzkiego ducha.

Ostatni artykuł w tej sekcji to tekst Jeremiego Szaniawskiego pod tytułem „Wschód, zachód i świat totalny: totalitaryzm w historii i estetyce na przykładzie filmu *Zimna Wojna* Pawła Pawlikowskiego.” Artykuł analizuje ideę totalitaryzmu w fabule, formie, ale także w tym, jak alegoryzuje naszą terażniejszość. Co więcej, spośród kilku wrażeń, jakie wyłaniają się po obejrzeniu filmu, jednym jest z pewnością poczucie, że nie ma dobrego wyboru między podziałem Wschód/Zachód, socjalizm/kapitalizm, ani pomyślniej alternatywy dla niego, który film bardzo intensywnie reprezentuje. Blok wschodni (Polska, Berlin Wschodni, Jugosławia) ukazany jest jako totalitarny w taki sposób, że bohaterowie dążą do ucieczki od niego; ale Zachód

(Paryż) proponuje im dekadenski styl życia, który ostatecznie zmusza ich do powrotu do Polski. Znajdują tam łagodniejszą, poststalinowską formę totalitaryzmu, która w ostatecznym rozrachunku wydaje się najgorszą i najbardziej beznadziejnie nieinspirującą z tych trzech propozycji.

Jak można stwierdzić po lekturze ośmiu esejów, totalitaryzm ma wiele twarzy, które autorzy starali się dogłębnie pokazać. Totalitaryzm pojawia się w literaturze, filmie oraz w zjawiskach społecznych. Podczas pracy nad bieżącym tomem cały czas zastanawialiśmy się, jakie jeszcze zjawiska zostaną uwypuklone, które rzucają dodatkowe światło na interakcje międzyludzkie, podporządkowane opresyjnemu reżimom.

W dziale *Varia* znajdują się dwa artykuły traktujące o procesie uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego oraz o ocenie roli języka angielskiego wśród przedstawicieli zawodów medycznych. W artykule Beaty Terki pt. „Torowanie syntaktyczne jako zjawisko wspomagające proces nauczania – uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego”, autorka prezentuje tezę, że „Świadome wykorzystywanie znanego z psychologii procesu torowania na polu glottodydaktyki polonistycznej może stanowić skuteczne rozwiązanie wspomagające proces nauczania-uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego”. Autorka wspiera swoje teoretyczne założenia konkretnymi badaniami na dwóch grupach kontrolnych, studentów ukraińskich i chińskich uczących się języka polskiego, które stanowią punkt wyjścia dla konkretnych hipotez

na temat procesu torowania. Proponuje też perspektywiczne badania na ten temat i kierunki dalszego ich rozwoju.

Drugi artykuł w dziale *Varia*, autorstwa Urszuli Swobody-Rydz, porusza temat roli języka angielskiego wśród przedstawicieli zawodów medycznych. Autorka słusznie stwierdza, że stosowanie języka angielskiego jako *lingua franca* na całym świecie wymaga od polskich lekarzy i pracowników sektora medycznego stosowania tego języka w komunikacji międzynarodowej z innymi specjalistami na świecie, utrzymywania własnych kompetencji zawodowych, oraz „ciągłego samokształcenia” w trakcie kariery zawodowej. W „Proszę mówić po angielsku, doktorze! Między edukacją akademicką a wymaganiami rynku pracy”, autorka przeprowadza badania ankietowe wśród ordynatorów oddziałów, lekarzy i pielęgniarek. Okazuje się, że podstawowy personel medyczny nie posiada dostatecznej komunikacji ustnej, czytania literatury specjalistycznej i pisania, o której brak częściowo oskarżają nie tylko edukację akademicką, ale również brak dostatecznego wsparcia przez pracodawcę. Autorka stwierdza, że sytuacja ta musi być poprawiona ze względu na brak języka łaciny jako języka uniwersalnego oraz dyktatu wiecznego dokończania się obowiązkowego dla wszystkich specjalistów w dziedzinach medycznych. Życzę udanej lektury i wielu refleksji na tematy poruszone w tomie, który z przyjemnością oddaję w Państwa ręce.

Janina Falkowska

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Obarrio Moreno, Juan Alfredo, *1984 (George Orwell). Diálogos entre el derecho y la literatura: Los totalitarismos I*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1s7cjmp>

Ana Valverde González, *Approaches to Totalitarianism, Humanism and Arts in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four A Critical Review of Waddell*, Nathan, ed. 20.

FROM THE EDITORS

The current issue of Polonia Journal covers two topics:

“Exploring the various faces of totalitarianism: philosophy, literature, and film,” which continues one of the themes of the previous edition of Polonia Journal no 20/2025. The second topic concentrates on linguistic processes in English language teaching/learning, followed by the usage of English in medical profession. At the time of globalization and universal opening of the borders in the world, all the thoughts present in this volume are worthy of debate over the degree of political and social complication in the contemporary world.

Most of the papers appearing in this volume were read and discussed at the conference on *Totalitarianism in Literature and Film*, held by myself and the Organizing Committee, chaired by myself and Professor Lenuta Giukin from the State University in Oswego, USA, from 1 to 3 October 2022 at the University of Economics and Humanities in Bielsko-Biała, Poland. Some articles were also added after the conference, and they serve as an addendum to the plethora of faces of totalitarianism portrayed in literature and film.

The articles in the first part of the present volume are collected in three sections: TOTALITARIANISM: INTERPRETATIONS, TOTALITARIANISM IN LITERATURE AND TOTALITARIANISM IN FILM.

The authors of these articles communicate their observations and conclusions from the point of view of philosophy, literary analysis and film studies. The list of articles below provides a summary of the areas the authors have chosen to deal with.

1. Totalitarianism: Interpretations

*Leon Surette: Totalitarianism

*Wojciech Kaute: Totalitarianism; Human Misery, and Madness...

*Elzbieta Jaszczurowska and Mirosław Laszczak: Delation: interpersonal relations in a totalitarian regime

2. Totalitarianism in literature

*Paul Coates: Totalitarianism as rhizome: Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*

*Dans Lois Alkayde: Poetics against domination: Albert Camus and Manuel Rivas in the construction of the *Rebel Man*

3. Totalitarianism in Film

*Rato Rodrigues Ricardo: Film as propaganda during Salazar's Estado Novo: the case of *O Pátio das Cantigas* (The Courtyard of Ballads)

*Lukasz Sorokowski: The (in)human condition: selected aspects of the totalitarian regime as depicted in *The Lives of Others* by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck

*Jeremy Szaniawski: East, West, and the Total World: totalitarianism in history and aesthetics in Paweł Pawlikowski's *Cold War*

Admittedly, totalitarianism comes across as deep fog that surrounds every little piece of reality in which oppressed individuals are forced to live. It does not always acquire a clear and obvious shape but surreptitiously manifests its nasty face in the multitude of detailed rules, regulations and recommendations concerning the behavior and language used every day.

Totalitarianism and other radical ideologies have always been a curse in societies – big and small. The present time demands from academics and intellectuals to engage in a detailed analysis of what happens in the rhetoric of totalitarianism, and provide the interpretation of its influence on the content and form in both written and visual texts. This collection of articles offers an analysis of the obvious as well as subliminal rhetoric in well-

known and less-known works that look at these issues and offer a comment on the recent political events across European countries.

In both literature and film, we can spot thematic and aesthetic negotiations that are intersected on many levels of analysis. Due to several forms of censorship imposed on both content and form, film authors, for example, have engaged in a play of alternative languages, such as the language of fairy tales, grotesque, Aesopian allusions, and many other thematic and formal elaborations. The film scholars, sociologists, philosophers, and scholars of other disciplines have contributed with a plethora of worthy comments and observations in an open debate on representations of historical phenomena in both totalitarian and anti-totalitarian films, and the ways they are expressed in literary texts.

Since Hanna Arendt's famous text, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), there have been numerous discussions on totalitarianism. They are more embracing and open-ended than the restrictive first interpretations of the term. Among the authors are Obarrio Moreno, who refers to totalitarianism as an ideology that is not limited to Communism, Fascism, or Nazism; it does not belong just to the right or the left politically speaking, but to every kind of power that pretends to be the owner of the truth. Totalitarianism, consequently, could be defined as evil's quintessence (Obarrio Moreno 2021a, p. 15; (Valverde, p. 234).

Anya Meyer (2025, p. 125) has noted in recent discussions that, “the public’s perception of the world is not built anymore on events, but on what the people dominating the discourse want us to believe is happening.”¹

Another author, Sigrid Meuschel in her *Theories of Totalitarianism and Modern Dictatorships: A Tentative Approach*, has suggested a different approach to totalitarianism, that is a division into two types of totalitarianism. One she calls “totalitarianism as extermination” and the other “totalitarianism as (total) control” (Meuschel, p. 87). Further on in her article, she argues, however, that the phenomenon is more complex with both the annihilatory and controlling totalitarianism depending on “ideology and terror.” (Meuschel, p. 88). Going through various aspects of “totalitarianism as total control,” she mentions “total control as (manipulated) consensus”, concentration of power and dedifferentiation, concentration of power and deautonomization, (pp. 89-91), all of which are present in the articles offered in the included essays, in one way or another. (or, in a more explicit or subdued analysis).

Totalitarianism, indeed, has several faces which the authors of the articles included in this volume of the journal have attempted to reveal. In the first four articles, it has been analysed in its ideological, philosophical and political realizations, deeply commented upon, and critically addressed.

The beginning of this collection is all about demarcating the borders of the phenomenon called “Totalitarianism.” It proves problematic to do starting from studies of Professor Leon Surette and Prof Wojciech Kaute. Prof Leon Surette starts from Hanna’s Arendt’s famous statement in her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) that what is needed for totalitarianism to emerge is the presence or creation of “an objective enemy” whom one has to pacify or conquer.

The authors of the essays in *Polonia* journal refer to such statements in their analyses of books and films. Not surprisingly, almost all of them take Orwell’s *1984* in literature as the most important text on the matter and Hanna Arendt investigations as the starting point in their discussion. As Ana Valverde Gonzalez argues, George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* informs our understanding of the socio-political evolution that we are experiencing so that new generations of readers become critical thinkers who can comprehend how our civilization has developed in the last century and reached the point at which it finds itself at the moment. (Valverde 233)

In the present edition of *Polonia Journal*, the first three essays talk about the nature of Totalitarianism. Leon Surette and Wojciech Kaute, professors of literature and philosophy, respectively, present their interpretations of totalitarianism from the point of view of their areas of research. Then the third essay, on propaganda and delation by Miroslaw Laszczak and Elzbieta

Jaszczurowska, deals with more ambiguous symptoms of totalitarianism. Various shades of propaganda and subtle changes in interpersonal relations scarred by denunciations are only some aspects of totalitarianism's insidious techniques when controlling people. Three essays included in this section provide an ample illustration of the sinister nature of totalitarianism.

The other two essays, found in the section **Totalitarianism in literature**, deal with the intricacies of literary expression of totalitarianism. Paul Coates, in his *Totalitarianism as rhizome: Elizabeth Bowen's The Heat of the Day*, argues that psychological, sociological, aesthetic and philosophical issues woven together in narrative form by Elizabeth Bowen's great 1948 novel *The Heat of the Day* coalesce and interact to suggest a hauntingly illuminating set of insights into the relationship between totalitarianism, everyday life, war, evil and the destruction of tradition. Dans Xian Lois and Xose-Antonio Neira-Cruz, in their *Poetics against domination: Albert Camus and Manuel Rivas in the construction of the Rebel Man*, reveal the presence of an emancipatory discourse that denies totalitarianism in a political space dominated by the absurd in a selection of literary works, and their subsequent film adaptations, by Galician author Manuel Rivas, and the French-Algerian Albert Camus. For this task, the authors take as a starting point a selection of the works of both writers, which are, in Rivas, the cases of *The Carpenter's Pencil* and the story *The language of the Butterflies*, from the book *Honey, What Do You Want from Me*.

From the work of Albert Camus, they have selected the novel *The Plague*. The authors' approach is based on the work of the Essex School in relation to discourse theory, the application of which helps the discursive analysis of extracts from selected works in dialogue with their adaptations to individual languages.

In the last section, **Totalitarianism in film** Ricardo Rato Rodriguez, in his paper *Film As Propaganda During Salazar's Estado Novo: The Case of Pátio Das Cantigas (The Courtyard of Ballads)*, discusses the totalitarian regime in Portugal, and the ways film was used to manipulate Portuguese society to accept the ideas of dictatorship. The Estado Novo regime in Portugal, spearheaded by António Salazar, was the longest dictatorship in Europe and one that was particularly effective at using many means of propaganda, including cinema. It was during the years in which this authoritarian regime flourished and developed that, coincidentally, Portuguese cinema has lived what many have called its golden period. A so-called "film industry" was then developed, but of course under the control of the state, which used popular comedies to spread its ideals and to propagate an idea of Portuguese society (in)formed by the main tenets of the regime. The paper analyses the different ways in which film was used by the regime to manipulate the public psyche. Particular attention is paid to the way Portuguese cinema of the period articulates (always insidiously) various ideas that propped Portugal's totalitarian political system.

Łukasz Sorokowski, in his paper based on Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others*, looks at the various ways in which the contemporary German director has managed to portray a harrowing depiction of life under the oppressive surveillance state of East Germany, and its omnipresent network of the Stasi, the GDR's secret police. The inhuman condition within a totalitarian regime, which culminates in the late 1980s, is scrutinized by focusing on the moral and psychological degradation imposed on both the oppressors and the oppressed. Through the character arc of Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler, a dedicated Stasi officer whose ideological convictions erode upon witnessing the humanity of his targets, the film explores such leitmotifs as isolation, control, and possible redemption.

Finally, Jeremy Szaniawski, in his *East, West, and the Total World: totalitarianism in history and aesthetics in Paweł Pawlikowski's Cold War*, argues that the theme of totalitarianism runs large in Paweł Pawlikowski's arthouse hit *Cold War* (2018)—not only in the plot and form, but also in how it allegorizes the present moment, as the author attempts to demonstrate. The Eastern bloc (Poland, East Berlin, Yugoslavia) is shown as totalitarian in a way that has the protagonists aspire to run away from it; but the West (Paris) proposes a devitalized and decadent lifestyle that has them eventually return to Poland. There they find a milder, post-Stalinist form of totalitarianism, which, in the end, seems to be the worst and most hopelessly uninspiring of the three

propositions. Clearly, totalitarianism has several faces which the authors of the articles included in this series have attempted to reveal. It is powerfully analyzed in literature, films, and social manifestations. While I was collecting the essays for this collection, I was wondering what else would surface as an element painfully manifesting itself in human interactions stilted by oppressive regimes, the interactions not necessarily artistically reworked and transformed into works of art.

In “Varia,” the authors concentrate on linguistic processes in English language teaching/learning, followed by the usage of English in medical profession.

The first article is devoted to the role of the priming mechanism as a tool supporting the teaching and learning of English language. In her article, “Syntactic priming as a phenomenon facilitating the process of teaching-learning the grammar of Polish as a foreign language,” the author states that “The deliberate application of the priming mechanism, well established in psychological research, within the domain of Polish-language glottodidactics appears to be a promising tool supporting the teaching and learning of Polish grammar. She supports her theoretical assumption with concrete research experiments carried out on two groups of Ukrainian and Chinese students, respectively. These experiments constitute a starting point for specific hypotheses on the topic of priming. Finally, she suggests potential directions for further inquiry into this area of study.

The other article in “Varia” is Urszula Swoboda – Rydz’s “Speak English, Doctor! Between Academic Education and Labor Market Demands,” focuses on the role of English in the medical professional community. The author states that the use of English as lingua franca in the whole world demands its unquestionable use by Polish medics in the following areas: communication with English-speaking medical staff within their specializations all over the world; maintaining and upgrading their own level of medical knowledge; and, self-education/ constant education during one’s professional career. Based on the results of questionnaires sent out to heads of medical departments, medical doctors and nurses, she concludes that the basic medical staff has insufficient knowledge of English for professional purposes. The questionnaire participants accuse the academic education and their own employers of inadequate help in both basic education and its expansion in the later years. The author ends her paper with a declaration that this situation needs improving, as Latin is no longer the lingua franca in medicine and English universally took over its role, making a high level of English obligatory for all the specialists in the area of medicine.

Janina Falkowska

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**INTERPRETACJE TOTALITARYZMU/
TOTALITARIANISM:
INTERPRETATIONS**

Leon Surette**ORCID: 0009-0005-4672-6506; lsurette@uwo.ca****Western University, London, Ontario, Canada****TOTALITARIANISM****TOTALITARYZM****ABSTRACT**

Any discussion of totalitarianism in the twentieth century must begin with Hanna Arendt's 1951 study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (reissued in 1966). She dates the modern rise of totalitarianism with "one-party military dictatorships" beginning "in Russia in 1929, (...) and in Germany in 1933". She adds that totalitarian regimes require an "objective enemy." World history since 1945 attests to the wisdom of that assessment. British novelists – Huxley and Orwell imagined contrasting futures that can still be instructive. *Brave New World* published between the two great wars (1931) imagined a distant future totalitarian and benign world government populated by "engineered" human beings. Orwell, after WWII imagined a near future world divided between three hostile totalitarian regimes constantly at war over a contested hinterland. We don't yet have engineered humans, but today's world fits Orwell's dark vision of three hostile powers competing in a contested hinterland in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. Russia's invasion of Ukraine represents a dangerous departure – a conflict, not in the hinterland, but on the edge of Western Europe. It is a similar, but much more severe – and

bloody – test of Western resolve, than the Berlin airlift of 1948. We can only hope it ends as well.

Keywords: totalitarianism, dictatorship, politics, philosophy, Western Europe, humanity

STRESZCZENIE

Dyskusja na temat totalitaryzmu w XX wieku musi zacząć się od dogłębnej analizy dzieła Hanny Arendt z 1951 roku pt. *Korzenie totalitaryzmu*, wznowionego w 1966 roku. Współczesny wzrost zapędów totalitarnych sięga „jednopartyjnym dyktaturom wojskowym”, które rozpoczęły się „w Rosji w 1929 r., (...) i w Niemczech w 1933 r.” Autorka dodaje, że reżimy totalitarne potrzebują „obiektywnego wroga”. Historia świata od roku 1945 potwierdza słuszność tej oceny. Brytyjscy powieściopisarze Huxley i Orwell wyobrażali sobie kontrastujące ze sobą wizje przyszłości, które wciąż mogą być pouczające. *Nowy wspaniały świat*, opublikowany w okresie międzywojennym (1931), obrazuje odległą przyszłość, totalitarny i łagodny rząd światowy zaludniony przez „zmodyfikowane” istoty ludzkie. Orwell po II wojnie światowej wyobrażał sobie świat niedalekiej przyszłości podzielony między trzy wrogie reżimy totalitarne, nieustannie toczące wojnę o sporne zaplecze. Nie mamy jeszcze zmodyfikowanych ludzi, ale dzisiejszy świat pasuje do mrocznej wizji Orwella, w której trzy wrogie mocarstwa rywalizują ze sobą w spornym zapleczu na Bliskim Wschodzie, w Afryce i Azji Południowej. Inwazja Rosji na Ukrainę to niebezpieczne odejście – konflikt nie w głębi lądu, ale na obrzeżach Europy Zachodniej. Jest to podobna, ale o wiele bardziej dotkliwa – i krwawa – próba zbadania siły determinacji Zachodu niż berliński most powietrzny z 1948 roku. Możemy mieć tylko nadzieję, że to też się również skończy.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, dyktatura, polityka, filozofia, Europa Zachodnia, ludzkość

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain. Hannah Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: Preface 1951 (Kindle Edition.)

Any discussion of totalitarianism in the 20th century must begin with Hanna Arendt's 1951 study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (reissued in 1966), written in the wake of World War II. In the introduction to the 1966 reissue, she dates the modern rise of totalitarianism with "one-party military dictatorships" beginning "in Russia in 1929 and in Germany in 1933" (p. v 1951). There is no reason to quarrel with that judgment, but her subsequent expectation that, following the death of Stalin, "an authentic, though never unequivocal, process of detotalitarization [sic]" had begun in Russia, has proven to be incorrect (1966 Preface). We all thought that her expectation had been fulfilled with *perestroika* and *glasnost*, launched by Mikhael Gorbachev in the late 1980s. The Russian experience has proven that it is much easier to maintain a totalitarian regime than it is to reform it. And Victor Orban's transformation of democratic

Hungary into a proto-fascist autocracy, demonstrates that even Europe is not secure from anti-democratic forces.

The following discussion of great power rivalry and military behaviour in the eighty-odd years since the end of the Second World War can be regarded as a rather lengthy footnote to Arendt's analysis of the international forces for war or peace, democracy or autocracy, in the immediate post war. Unfortunately that footnote must be largely pessimistic, given events over that decade or so. We must take what solace we can from Arendt's optimism immediately after the conquest of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan by the Allies: (Britain and its empire, and former colonies, Canada, Australia and South Africa, and the USA.

Even though Arendt's expectation – which almost everyone until virtually yesterday – that autocracies would succumb to democracies has proven to be overly optimistic, her assessments of how a post-war totalitarian regime would maintain, or reanimate, itself is prescient. What is required is an “objective enemy”: “The category of objective enemies,” she observes, “outlives the first ideologically determined foes of the movement; new objective enemies are discovered according to changing circumstances” (P. 425). Of course, even democratic countries (or democratic alliances) can traffic in “objective enemies”. The USA (and NATO and even the UN) engaged in numerous, allegedly defensive, military actions after 1945: Korea, Viet Nam, Iraq, and

Afghanistan – to name only the most prominent. All of these justified – whether legitimately or not – by an appeal to an external threat – either Communism or terrorism.

On the other hand, Putin’s invasion of Ukraine could not be justified by an appeal to an internal enemy. Instead it was justified by an appeal to historical precedent – Ukraine’s former status as a Soviet Republic. However that was reinforced by the fantasy that it was governed by “Fascists,” and therefore represented a threat to Russian security. Of course, the real reason was that Ukraine’s new Zelinsky government promised to be Western friendly, and perhaps even prosperous – both features representing a threat to Putin’s kleptocratic regime in Russia. Surprisingly, despite the blood bath that Russian troops have suffered in Ukraine, internal support for the “special operation” apparently remains strong in Russia, as does Ukrainian resistance to the invasion.

Trump, the other rogue leader currently threatening neighbouring, and distant, countries, similarly is not appealing to an “objective external enemy”. Although his political career was founded in considerable part on his identification of Latin American immigrants as the “external enemy” – an enemy that only he could conquer. However, the Biden administration largely resolved the problem of irregular immigration. So Trump, in his second term, has been obliged to turn his attention to the enemy within – the undocumented (or even legal) Hispanics within the USA. This policy has been proven to be far more brutal, and

less popular, than the previous Trump policy of excluding economic and/or political refugees, but it is nonetheless one which Trump is pursuing—even in the face of widespread popular resistance.

The Soviet Union and Communist China fulfilled the role of external enemy for the United States of America. Within months of the defeat of the Axis powers relations between the Western allies (Britain, France and the USA) and the Soviet Union had soured. Canada, a seldom mentioned “ally” played a role in that souring. On November 5, 1945, 3 days after the end of the war, Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, Canada defected exposing Soviet espionage activities against its former allies, permanently souring relations between the former allies. Given current events, it is perhaps worth noting that, although born in Russia, Gouzenko was of Ukrainian heritage.

The mutual post war hostility between the USA and the USSR sustained the maintenance of massive military establishments in both countries from 1945 to the present, motivating proxy wars around the globe. Although the Soviet Union and the USA were often directly involved in wars – as is the case in Ukraine for Russia – they never directly confronted one another. The USA provided the Afghans with weapons when the Soviet Union invaded (1979-89) , but no troops. When the USA, in turn, invaded Afghanistan (2001-14), the Russians kept out.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine is an invasion of a *European* neighbour - unlike the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or the later American invasion, or indeed of any of the other Soviet or American "special military operations" in the Far East, Middle East or Caribbean. This invasion threatens not only Ukraine, but also the former Soviet satellite nations as well as Germany and France, and ultimately, Britain. That is to say, it threatens the *status quo* established between Russia and NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the independence of its former satellites. Ukraine itself, of course, was never a satellite, but a component of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Russian "special operation" in Ukraine is very much like the USA's engagement in Viet Nam. It is indeed a "special" war, in that Russia is *directly* engaged, but the USA and NATO are only *indirectly* engaged. The USA has now (late 2025) disengaged – except as a partisan interlocutor between Ukraine and Russia in which the USA puts great pressure on the Ukrainians to accept a very disadvantageous peace settlement. In partisan wars only one side puts "boots on the ground," thereby avoiding casualties. In the Viet Nam, war China and the USSR supplied the North Vietnamese with material support, but no troops, just as the USA initially did in Ukraine, and NATO is now doing. Correspondingly, American blood and treasure were spent in Viet Nam, but Russia and China spent only treasure. The Ukrainian war is an adventure in which initially the USA, and now NATO is expending *only*

treasure, assigning the expenditure of blood, infrastructure and property entirely to the Ukrainians and the Russians.

It is a disastrously asymmetrical struggle for both Russia (blood, treasure and infrastructure) and Ukraine (blood, treasure, infrastructure and urban property). I fear it can only end badly for both countries, unless Putin can be removed internally. The Vietnamese parallel is not encouraging. True, it ended with the triumph of the indigenous combatants, but at an appalling cost to them, and a terrible cost in blood, treasure and credibility for the Americans. It is very likely that Putin will suffer considerable diminishment – if not replacement – as a result of his Ukrainian “adventure,” just as Landon Johnson’s presidency was marred, and ultimately foreshortened, by the American involvement in Vietnam.

But to return to the topic of this conference, *Totalitarianism in Literature and Film*, Arendt offers no guidance at all. Even though *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was written in English, Arendt, a native German speaker, was not terribly well informed about English language literature, or indeed, any fictional literature. Zamyatin’s *We* had been published in an English translation in 1924 – in the original Russian only in 1952, a year after the first edition of *Origins*. Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* appeared in 1931, and George Orwell’s *1984* in 1947, four years before *Origins*. Her neglect of fictional treatments of totalitarianism is, of course, nothing that she would need to explain or apologize for.

After all, her study was historical and philosophical, not a survey of literature on the topic, least of all of imaginative literature. However there existed a considerable body of speculative literature on ideology, and specifically the behaviour of both democratic and autocratic governments following the collapse of the Central Powers and the Ottoman empires in 1918. Imperial powers, Britain and France carried on as if nothing had changed in international relationships. They reanimated their imperial reach into the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, and maintained or expanded their presence in Africa and Asia. In spite of the war weariness of Britain and France, after the armistice, they even inserted themselves (together with the USA) fruitlessly into the Russian civil war on the side of the Tsarist regime. They did so despite widespread support amongst intellectuals in Britain and France (but not the USA) for the new nascent state.

That support is relevant to the topic of this conference because it is reflected in the fiction of Huxley and Orwell. Huxley's *Brave New World* sketched out a mostly sympathetic portrayal of a totalitarian world set many centuries in the future, in which the entire world has been federated into a single state, with distinct regions bureaucratically governed by "Controllers." The novel is set in what is now Britain and South Central USA, all governed by Controller, Mustapha Mond.

Huxley has told us that Mond's explanation of world history was inspired by Bertrand Russell's description of

the middle distant future in *Scientific Outlook* (1931). In that book Russell imagined a future when wars will have ended, as the result of the overwhelming triumph of one, or a few, national entities. In this respect, Russell anticipated Francis Fukuyama's 1992 thesis in *The End of History and the Last Man*, which makes very nearly the same argument, but reaches a conclusion contrary to Russell's. In the introduction to the book, Fukuyama quotes from his 1989 article that preceded it, observing that "a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal government [has] emerged throughout the world and conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently, communism may constitute the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and as such constitute the end of history." Of course, he did not mean that there would be no more historical events such as wars, disasters or industrial developments, but rather that the Hegelian dialectic would have been fulfilled once and for all and societies around the world would inevitably proceed toward the political model of liberal democracy. But it is clear that even that more restricted prophecy has not been fulfilled.

In contrast to Fukuyama, Russell believed that future nations could not be both democratic and egalitarian. "Equality, therefore, like liberty" he wrote, "is, I fear, no more than a nineteenth-century dream. The world of the future will contain a governing class. And this governing class will interfere more and more with the life of the individual, and will learn more and more

the technique of causing this interference to be tolerated (*Scientific Outlook* 233-4). Until recently, Russell's dark vision of a totalitarian future applied principally to Communist regimes such as Russia, China and North Korea. However, the rise of electronic communication and the manipulation of discourse on the internet or WEB and by Large Language Models like CHATGPT in the 21st century have fulfilled Russell's dark prophecy even for erstwhile liberal democracies such as the USA. Contemporary China is probably the most thorough surveillance state in the world and probably in history, since Xi Jinping has modernized the old Maoist system of neighbourhood watches with a vast network of video cameras and face recognition technologies.

It is striking that Russell's prophecy is never mentioned in Arendt's *Origins*, even though he was a prominent figure, and a Soviet sympathizer in the twenties and thirties. *Scientific Outlook* was first published in 1931, and reissued in 1949, just two years before *Origins*. Nor is it mentioned by Fukuyama. It is also striking that Arendt does not even index the word "war" in *Totalitarianism*. Although Russell's *Scientific Outlook* was written in the first years of the world wide depression triggered by the 1929 New York stock crash, his preoccupation is with the prospect of war. He believed that it was "only in the direction of an organized world State" that the human race can develop a remedy for unprecedented destructiveness of war in the 20th Century. The only alternative, in his view, was the abandonment of "scientific technique, and it

["the human race"] will not do this except as the result of a cataclysm so severe as to lower the whole level of civilization."

His remedy for the destructiveness of inter-nation war was "an organized world State" whose advantages "are great and obvious." The first, and most obvious advantage will be" security against war and a saving of almost the whole effort and expense now devoted to competitive armaments." In place of wars between nations, he proposes "a single highly efficient fighting machine, employing mainly aeroplanes [sic] and chemical methods of warfare, which will be quite obviously irresistible, and will therefore not be resisted. (*Scientific Outlook* 219).

In *Brave New World* Huxley imagines a world government much like Russell's, but ignores the problem of collective violence – aka "war" – between organized societies. He does address the problem of civil disobedience, however. Probably picking up a hint from Russell's mention of "chemical methods of warfare". When a riot breaks out among the Beta and Epsilon denizens of his imagined world, Huxley has the authorities break up the disturbance by means. But the "means" are not tear gas or pepper spray, as employed by Trump's ICE agents, but "soma," a gas Huxley imagines that renders everyone passive, but randy. The riot comfortably turns into an orgy.

So Huxley fulfilled Russell's totalitarian prediction by the twin methods of ectogenetic conditioning and chemical pacification, rather than omnipresent electronic surveillance and

monopolization of citizen's attention by 24/7 internet presence – all backed up by state goons in Trump's America. So far as I am aware, Xi Ging Ping has not resorted to Trumpian tactics in China. But the threat of state violence is always present. Putin seems not to have been troubled by any civil disobedience in opposition to his "special operation" in Ukraine, but there too, state violence is always a possibility. Of course, it must be admitted that state violence against its own citizens has always been considered to be legitimate in certain circumstances in Western democracies, as it is in every organized state.

Huxley addressed the problem of civil disobedience in other ways in *Brave New World*. He borrowed a speculative process called ectogenetic conditioning from the British Marxist, J. B. S. Haldane's *Daedalus, or, Science and the Future* (1924), a contribution to the *Today and Tomorrow* series of the London publisher, Kegan Paul., to which Russell also contributed. His coyly tilted, *Icarus* is a response to Haldane's contribution (Daedalus is the mythical scientific figure of Greek mythology who designed human wearable wing so that he and his son, Icarus, could escape King Minos' imprisonment. Daedalus foolishly flew too high; his waxen wings melted, and he fell to his death. Russell's *Icarus* debunks Haldane's optimistic hope for a technologically enabled utopian and Marxist future.)

In Huxley's imagined future the state has taken over human reproduction, incubating human fetuses in Hatchery and

Conditioning Centre which create distinct “grades” of humans through the “Bokanovsky Process” of inducing the division of fertilized eggs to produce up to 96 identical twins. Those twins would be cognitively compromised “Deltas” making them suitable for menial tasks. In the Hatchery they also produce normal “Alpha” individuals as well as “Beta” (working class), and “Gammas,” “Deltas” and Epsilons” each suitable for some level of useful activity. The purpose of such a monstrous system is to eliminate discontent among a population designed from birth to perform the tasks assigned to them. In addition to being genetically suited to their role in life, they are “conditioned” in the fetus and early childhood through various Pavlovian techniques.

George Orwell’s *1984*, written after World War II with knowledge of the Stalinist Soviet Union, painted a much less sanguine picture of a totalitarian future. Whereas Huxley’s totalitarian future was informed by the scientific optimism of Haldane and Russel, Orwell’s is informed by the example of the Stalinist Soviet Union, and also by James Burnham’s 1941 book, *The Managerial Revolution*. Burnham praised, rather eclectically, Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler for discovering the historical trend toward what he called a “managerial society.” Russell paid tribute to Burnham in the prefatory note to the 1948 re-issue of *Scientific Outlook*, accepting his “managerial society” as equivalent to his own version of totalitarianism, the “scientific society,” enhanced and articulated by Huxley in *Brave New World*.

Soon after publishing *The Managerial Society*, Burnham broke with the Trotskyite Marxism that animated that book, and early in 1942, joined the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), a precursor of the CIA. While there, he wrote a report that was subsequently published as *The Struggle for the World* (1947). In that book he argued for a world government modelled on the managerial state he had articulated in his first book.. The opening sentence of Chapter 4, “World Government or World empire?” sets the tone of the book very boldly: “A RECOGNITION of the fact that the survival of Western Civilization, and perhaps of mankind, depends upon the early establishment of a monopoly control over atomic weapons usually leads to the conclusion that a ‘World Government’ must be formed” (*Struggle* Original emphasis 42). Orwell’s *1984* is to a very large extent a response to Burnham, and prospectively to the subsequent foreign policy of the USA throughout the Cold War and beyond. (Unsurprisingly, *1984* is frequently invoked in critiques of Trump’s foreign and domestic policies.)

Thanks to the rise of China as an industrial and military power, the probability of an American led world empire as envisioned by Burnham in 1947 is remote. But it was pretty much the world that Fukuyama took for granted in *The End of History and the Last Man*, even though he does not mention Burnham. Unfortunately, instead we have a world occupied by hostile states armed with world destroying power, whose citizens are largely still

tribal, and susceptible to manipulation by ever more powerful and intrusive instruments of persuasion and oppression. Our current world is alarming close to that imagined by Orwell in which three dominant states are in constant conflict with one another. Until Trump, we had a reasonably comfortable international scene with Europe, North America and Japan confronting Russia, North Korea and China. Trump has upset that comfortable *status quo* – cosyng up to Putin’s Russia and alienating Western Europe, Canada and Mexico with tariffs and territorial threats.

In *1984* Big Brother, the fictional image of the State, watches everyone through a two way television in every residence that cannot be turned off. The novel’s protagonist’s, work at The Ministry of Truth is to manipulate the public record on a daily basis, sending cancelled news bulletins down the “memory hole” to be obliterated and replaced by alternate stories.

The behaviour of ICE is the wake of the fatal shooting of Rene Good in Minneapolis on January 9, 2026 is truly Orwellian. ICE does not deny the shooting, but justifies it by imputing a non-existent threat to the officer, and manufacturing an anti-government motive of the victim. Of course, the existence of multiple video records of the incident is typical of our age of omnipresent sent smart phones. However, smart phones in the hands of ordinary citizens somewhat upends Orwell’s vision of a surveillance state. Despite recurrent lying, ICE cannot prevent millions of Americans from sharing incontrovertible evidence of the actual events

surrounding Rene Good's murder, at least the American state cannot. Apparently the Iranian state can shut down internet communication, as I assume other totalitarian states can do.

Early in the novel, the protagonist, Winston goes to the cinema and we get a description of a scene troublingly similar to those circulated of American forces obliterating alleged drug smuggling boats:

April 14, 1984. Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him, first you saw him wallowing along in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopter guns sights, then he was full of holes and the sea round him turned pink and he sank as suddenly as though the holes had let in the water, audience shouting with laughter when he sank.

In a strikingly similar ethical standard, images of the destruction of drug smuggling boats by the American military have been repeatedly circulated on the internet. They are not intended to be amusing, but do reflect a triumphalist attitude characteristic of Trump's America.

In addition to the celebration of violence, another troubling feature of Orwell's state is the omnipresence of lottery gambling. The Lottery, Winston observes of the "proles," (as ordinary folks are called) "became their pleasure, their folly, their anodyne, their

highbrow stimulant.” Winston believes that the lotteries are fraudulent, and do not pay out. But Orwell’s point that the lottery is just another way of distracting people from the fact of their exploitation and manipulation by the state. It is troubling, because since online gambling has been legalized in Canada gambling advertisements for the various gambling sites has become omnipresent, and the amounts bet are enormous. It is estimated that net gambling revenue in Canada is project to reach \$15 billion by the end of 2025. For comparison, the current (2026) Canadian defence budget is \$81.8 billion *spread over 5 years!* In other words, by the end of that 5 year window the Canadian defence budget will probably be overtaken by gambling revenue – perhaps a good thing. So far as I know the Canadian lotteries, although exploitative, are not fraudulent unlike those of the novel.

Undoubtedly, Orwell’s vision of the near future – now our not-so-near past – is a much more plausible –and troubling – vision than Huxley’s of the distant future. Orwell’s is largely formulated by the spectacle of the Stalinist Soviet Union – as well as Burnham’s modelling of a totalitarian future. Huxley’s is more ambivalent. Clearly the eugenicist movement had a considerable influence on him, although it is difficult to be sure if he was satirizing eugenic fantasies with his test tube babies, or modelling a society structured on an extreme version of a eugenic state.

Although Russell’s version of the future in *Icarus* is little more than a tyranny of the technically competent, I will close with

his rather cynical and pessimistic assessment of what is possible in that work:

Science has not given men more self-control, more kindness, or more power of discounting their passions in deciding upon a course of action. It has given communities more power to indulge their collective passions, but, by making society more organic, it has diminished the part played by private passions. Men's collective passions are mainly evil; far the strongest of them are hatred and rivalry directed towards other groups. Therefore at present *all that gives men power to indulge their collective passions is bad*. That is why science threatens to cause the destruction of our civilization. (*Icarus* My emphasis)

Arendt's prescience in analysing the forces at play post 1945 has proven to be unable to determine events – as is, alas, true of all scholarly prescience. In conclusion, one can only lament the degree which everything changes in human societies (technology, sexual mores, the reach of communication, wealth) while everything remains the same (inappropriate sexual behaviour, communication failure, ubiquitous poverty).

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Wojciech Kaute

ORCID: 0000-0002-5092-7117; wojciech.kaute@gmail.com

Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej

**TOTALITARIANISM: HUMAN MISERY,
AND MADNESS...**

**TOTALITARYZM – LUDZKA NIEDOLA
I SZALEŃSTWO...**

ABSTRACT

The concept of totalitarianism is one of the basic categories of political science. When reflecting on this concept and the phenomenon of social life, one should bear in mind that European culture and civilization are two epochs. The first era is determined by the thought of ancient Greece. Here, the rules of collective life are determined by the world of objective values (Plato, Aristotle). The second era is marked by the so-called „modern breakthrough”. This is the thought of Machiavelli, Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke. Here the only source of value is a specific person; I. This is the main message of J. J. Rousseau and the Enlightenment. The point is that the culture of the Enlightenment carries a significant ambiguity. It was I. Kant who defined this message. There is me; and his courage. Here, however, the possibility of a radical interpretation of this

program appeared. This is the concept of Fichte, Hegel and the thought of K. Marks. Ultimately, it gave the conviction that the individual, the I - being the source of everything - is able to comprehend the entirety of social life into one objective sense; totally. And this - ultimately - gave birth to the crimes of fascism and communism. The human „spirit” of modern times is stretched between the limitless possibilities of action, though always in uncertainty and never with a guarantee of success, and the risk of madness; between democracy and totalitarianism. And this is also true today.

Keywords: totalitarianism, modernity, values, interpretation, madness

STRESZCZENIE

Pojęcie totalitaryzmu jest jedną z podstawowych kategorii nauk o polityce. Zastanawiając się nad tym pojęciem i fenomenem życia społecznego, należy mieć na uwadze, że kultura i cywilizacja europejska to dwie epoki. Pierwsza era jest wyznaczona przez myśl starożytnej Grecji. Tu reguły życia zbiorowego wyznacza świat obiektywnych wartości (Platon, Arystoteles). Druga epoka charakteryzuje się tzw. "nowoczesnym przełomem". Jest to myśl Machiavellego, Kartezjusza, Hobbesa i Locke'a. Tutaj jedynym źródłem wartości jest konkretna osoba; I. To jest główne przesłanie J. J. Rousseau i Oświecenia. Chodzi o to, że kultura Oświecenia niesie ze sobą znaczącą dwuznaczność. To I. Kant zdefiniował to przesłanie. Tam jestem ja; i jego odwagę. Tu jednak pojawiła się możliwość radykalnej interpretacji tego programu. Jest to koncepcja Fichtego, Hegla i myśli Marksa. Ostatecznie dała ona przekonanie, że jednostka, ja - będące źródłem wszystkiego - jest w stanie objąć całość życia społecznego w jeden obiektywny sens;

całkowicie. I to – ostatecznie – zrodziło zbrodnie faszyzmu i komunizmu. Współczesny „duch” człowieczeństwa rozpościera się między nieograniczonymi możliwościami działania, choć zawsze w niepewności i nigdy z gwarancją sukcesu, a ryzykiem szaleństwa; między demokracją a totalitaryzmem. I tak jest również dzisiaj.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, nowoczesność, wartości, interpretacja, szaleństwo

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘totalitarianism’, used in the title of this article, is one of the fundamental concepts of culture and political sciences, deeply rooted in deliberations over various concepts of community life and its practical manifestations. This fact makes it – in one way or another – a political concept. Its sense is included in the very name and etymology. *Totum* in Latin means entirety, totality; *totus* – entire, total. Now, everything seems clear and obvious. Totalitarianism is the opposite of democracy – it challenges the fundamentals of democracy and this very fact is sufficient to see it as a dangerous phenomenon that deserves reflection. No – not just reflection, but serious attention. Yet, apparently, this is only a first impression. These innocent words – ‘totality’ and ‘total’ – embrace the basic dilemmas of European culture, or we should rather say – its basic dramas.

Modern times, often referred as the so-called *post-* era, originate from the ‘spirit’ of modernity. What is the essence of this ‘spirit’? It is the defiance or even rejection of everything that was before. Such approach can be found in many thinkers, with Niccolo Machiavelli and his *The Prince* (1532) being the key example. As once noted by the most prominent twentieth century historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, in his article with the very telling title *The Originality of Machiavelli*: “There is evidently something peculiarly disturbing about what Machiavelli said or implied, something that has caused profound and lasting uneasiness; [...] [something that - W. K.] shocked western feeling.”¹ “What was [...] so upsetting [...]? – Berlin asks. [...] [What is it] that proves so shocking during all these centuries?”² And he writes: “One of the deepest assumptions of western political thought is the doctrine, scarcely questioned during its long ascendancy, that there exists some single principle which not only regulates the course of the sun and the stars, but prescribes their proper behaviour to all animate creatures; Animals and sub-rational beings of all kinds follow it by instinct; higher beings attain to consciousness of it, and are free to abandon it, but only to their doom. This doctrine [...] has dominated European thought since Plato; it has appeared in many forms, and has generated many similes and allegories; at its centre is the vision of an impersonal Nature or Reason or cosmic purpose, or of a divine Creator whose power has endowed all things and

¹ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 209.

² Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 219.

creatures each with a specific function.”³ “It is this rock – Berlin continues – upon which western beliefs and lives had been founded, that Machiavelli seems, in effect, to have split open.”⁴

And what is left? “Not long ago [the term] ‘masters of suspicion’ [...] was applied to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud” – writes Pierre Manent, a contemporary French scholar, in his *Intellectual History of Liberalism*. “The characterization is justified inasmuch as these three authors urged us to doubt our best motives. But Machiavelli was the first to carry suspicion to the strategic point of men's life: their political life. [...] His suspicion has never left us since”⁵. “Machiavelli is the first of the ‘masters of suspicion’”⁶. Machiavelli demonstrated that every human thing begins with a specific human being. And this is the only source of the world of values, of everything...”To understand how modern politics was set in motion and developed, one must – Manent writes – have previously grasped the change in what has to be called the status of the good⁷. This is the essence of the term “modern breakthrough”. And this will be the essence of the present discussion.

Who, then, is this specific human being? The answer is obvious – an entity. Now, we are left with the other ‘half’ which cannot rely upon any ‘primary principle’. What can it rely on, then? On itself – is the answer given by Descartes, the ‘father’ of

³ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 253.

⁴ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 254.

⁵ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 28.

⁶ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 28.

⁷ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 28.

modern culture. And this is the only thing that is certain, the only thing that is. “I noted” – he wrote in the *Discourse on Method* (1637) – “that, while I was trying to think of all things being false in this way, it was necessarily the case that I, who was thinking them, had to be something; and observing this truth: I am thinking therefore I exist, was so secure and certain that it could not be shaken by any of the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics, I judged that I could accept it without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.”⁸ *Ego cogito, ergo sum*. I am thinking, therefore I exist. This seemingly innocent conclusion carries a ‘charge’ that is not to be overestimated. A charge that will blow up the foundations of the European culture in all respects. What does it essentially mean? Leszek Kolakowski, a world famous Polish philosopher, in the book published in Oxford at the end of the 1980s under the telling title *Horror Metaphysicus (Metaphysical Horror)* writes: “Descartes, however, discovered the inner world not in order to transubstantiate it into the divine ground of being; it was supposed to be the final step itself. [...] The Cartesian ego is indeed an absolute in the sense that, being unique and exclusive every time, self-closedly and self-reflectedly mine, it may always say, like the biblical creator ‘I am who I am’. I am the pure actuality because in every ‘now’ I am everything I can be.”⁹ At the threshold of modern era, the ‘primary principle’ is ‘I’

⁸ Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, 49.

⁹ Kolakowski, *The Metaphysical Horror*, 83.

and only 'I'. And this will be the starting point of the 'spirit' of the European culture until the present day.

There is an individual, an entity with whom everything begins (and ends). This way of thinking is also observable in Thomas Hobbes's reflections. "Each man has the liberty" – writes Hobbes in his major work *Leviathan* (1651) – "to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything which, in his own judgement and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto."¹⁰ But what is this "anything"? For Hobbes it is "the desire of power, of riches, of knowledge, and of honour."¹¹ And the conclusion is simple – an individual wants to live, every individual wants to live... In this sense, everyone is a *wolf*. And there is nothing bad or good about it... Community life is *war of every man against every man*. It is also a cliché. So, how is an individual supposed to function in such a world? We need to have, as Hobbes admits, law. Law is understood quite literally here, as all norms, legal acts, etc. issued by an authorised body, by a legislator, or simply as 'paper'. It is the paper that makes it possible for an individual to live among other individuals; to articulate by each of them their own 'desire for power'. The final element of this Cartesian and Hobbesian concept will be contributed by a 17th century thinker, the 'father' of *liberalism*, John Locke. An entity wants to live... In order to live, to survive, an entity needs to make

¹⁰ Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, 113.

¹¹ Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, 64.

an effort and utilise what nature is offering, and this is effort is simply work, labour. The effects of such labour, *by definition*, belong to the labourer. What makes the effects big or small? It is ‘*the first gathering*’ – Locke replies¹². There is no such thing as abstract use – the use by some human being ‘in general’ – of the gifts of nature. There is always specific „gathering” of a given thing by a given entity. An entity, their labour and the effects of that labour, make up a world. The effects – the world of things – constitute an integral part of the self – of “*I*”. An entity is here reduced to his/her resourcefulness. The problem is that one “*I*” may be more resourceful than another. And, naturally, one cannot have everything. And so – Locke writes – people “*had agreed [to] a little piece of yellow metal*”¹³. This means that anything can be exchanged for something else. To live means to work. And to work – ultimately – means to have *a little piece of gold metal*, to have *capital*. And when one has *capital*, one may – through labour – make it grow bigger. And as the capital grows, so does the Self. This situation is “above discursive reasoning, above any objection”¹⁴. Early bird catches the worm. This is the starting point for every *single* entity and for all entities; the ‘point zero’ for the whole modern culture and civilisation. *Habere*, to have... What defines ‘*value*’ – if this word can be ascribed any clear meaning in the present context – is the price. This is pure economics, pure life.

¹² Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 182.

¹³ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 188.

¹⁴ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 73.

That's the way it is, and there is no way to refer to anything 'beyond'.

The analysis of the 'spirit' of the European culture could end here. We live, work, exchange. This is the best possible world. The problem is that we have a few more centuries ahead, and they will bring the way of thinking, the programme where the world of manufacturing and exchanging perceived as the entire world of human being, is unacceptable. This new thinking will be initiated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In the opening paragraphs of *The Social Contract* (1762), he writes: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains"¹⁵. For, how does the market work? *I* have the effects of my work, but I don't have what *you* have and you don't have what I have, so we meet in the world of exchange. And in that world *I* only see in *Yourself* the owner of what I don't have. And I only see in *Myself* someone who has something in excess and wants to sell it. But why should we perceive it as chains? Because – Rousseau answers – a man is something more than a thing. A man "is good by nature."¹⁶ Here – following the Rousseau's logic – Rousseau 'adds' something to an entity, he adds 'goodness'; some kind of goodness 'in general'; of unknown origin.

This path will be followed by Immanuel Kant. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) we can read: "Plato perceived very clearly that our faculty of cognition has the feeling of a much

¹⁵ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 11.

¹⁶ Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, 243.

higher vocation than that of merely spelling out phenomena [...] for the purpose of being able to read them as experience, and that our reason naturally raises itself to cognitions far too elevated to admit of the possibility of an object given by experience corresponding to them – cognitions which are nevertheless real, and are not mere phantoms of the brain.”¹⁷ Kant agrees with this view. He accepts the Plato’s opinion that although cognitions are ‘far too elevated’, we still need to ‘raise’ that far. “He who” – Kant writes – “would derive from experience the conceptions of virtue [...], would in fact transform virtue into a nonentity changeable according to time and circumstance and utterly incapable of being employed as a rule. [...] That the actions of man will never be in perfect accordance with all the requirements of the pure ideas of reason, does not prove the thought to be chimerical.”¹⁸ And he sees nothing ‘ridiculous’ in Plato’s view that ‘a prince can never govern well, unless he is participant in the ideas.’¹⁹ “A constitution of the greatest possible human freedom according to laws, by which the liberty of every individual can consist with the liberty of every other [...] must be placed at the foundation not only of the first plan of the constitution of a state, but of all its laws.”²⁰

Kant tells us to look towards the sphere which the ‘sprit’ of modernity keeps behind locked door. ‘Sensuous data, from which

¹⁷ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 303.

¹⁸ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 303-304.

¹⁹ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 304.

²⁰ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 305.

every entity's cognition of the world begins, give what they give, and give everyone what they give... Yet, the ambition of a human being is to reach 'beyond'. And this means that we should look not with dim moles' eyes [...] [but] with the eyes belonging to a being that was made to stand erect and look at the heavens.²¹ "Man!" – admits Kant in *What is Enlightenment?*, written in 1783, "Have the courage to use your own reasoning!"²² *Sapere aude!* This 'courage' is, as he writes, based on "duty, that of making something (the *summum bonum*) the object of my will so as to promote it with all my powers"²³. What is, therefore, required to achieve this? "Nothing is required but freedom,"²⁴ claims Kant. "If we are asked, 'Do we now live in an enlightened age?' the answer is, 'No', but we do live in an age of enlightenment. [...] But on the other hand we have clear indications that the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment or the release from self-imposed tutelage are gradually being reduced."²⁵

The Kantian project did not prove fully acceptable to the critics of 'objectification' of man in the market world. And here – Fichte, Kant's student and collaborator – enters the stage. "Johann Gottlieb Fichte" – we can read in a monumental work by L. Kołakowski entitled *The Main Currents of Marxism*.

²¹ Kant, *On the Common Saying...*, 13.

²² Kant, 2, *What is the Enlightenment?*, 53.

²³ Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, 141.

²⁴ Kant, 2, *What is the Enlightenment?*, 54.

²⁵ Kant, 2, *What is the Enlightenment?*, 58.

The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown – “sought to remove the limitations of the Kantian doctrine of man’s summons to freedom and expounded the view that it is within man’s power, and is his duty, to achieve a radical awareness of his own unbounded domination over the conditions of Being, the absolute primacy of his own existence, and his complete independence of any pre-existing order”²⁶. This is a concept of transcendental ‘self’, a vision of mankind engaging in never ending “action”; in an effort to organise community life, the effort which is fully autonomous and independent. Yet, this is not where the modern thought stops evolving. For Kant, the point of reference was that which is specific, the world of ‘P’; for Fichte it is that which is general... However, as Kolakowski writes, “*either* the mind comes to grips with the *contingency of existence*, and in cognizing it is, so to speak, infected with contingency, or it does away with contingency and thereby does away with the *manifoldness of existence*.”²⁷ Both standpoints will be synthesised by another German thinker, Georg W. Fr. Hegel. This is how Kolakowski explains Hegel’s system: “The reason, thinking of the Absolute, must be able to give a meaning to its own thought by relating itself to the Absolute; [...] [we must be aware that] our thought is itself [...] a continuation of the very thing to which it relates. Hegel is not writing about the Mind: he is writing the Mind’s autobiography.”²⁸ An opposite

²⁶ Kolakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, 47.

²⁷ Kolakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, 52.

²⁸ Kolakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, 54.

situation, observed in the culture preceding him, is when “we have an unhappy consciousness, torn between awareness of itself as an autonomous being and as a contingent one.”²⁹ Hence, “the independence of the Mind and the manifoldness of Being [...], are to be safeguarded [...] by means of a historical description [...] comprising the whole development of Being and capable of giving an integral sense to the history of the world [...]. [...] Such is the purpose of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*”³⁰. And this is how a modern entity – transgressing the market world – may find self-realisation, may find its ‘humanity’... In classic German philosophy, ‘happy consciousness’ is attained at the level of nation, within national community, which – many generations later – will ultimately give rise to fascism.

And this leads us to Karol Marx. The author of *The Capital* (1867) refers to Hegel; however, he’s critical about his views. “My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite” – we read in the afterword to the second German edition of the work, published in 1873. “To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of “the Idea,” he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of ‘the Idea’. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought. (...) With

²⁹ Kołakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, 58.

³⁰ Kołakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, 53.

him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.”³¹ What is this ‘right side’? It is the production of material goods, the world of economics. The point is, as Marx puts it, that “private property has made us stupid”³². What do we need, then, to regain our natural human “wisdom”? According to Marx we need to make the means of production common and distribute its effect justly, which means ‘equally’. This is how we should understand *capital*... And all this is organised by the centralised state using law to deliver its tasks. Production, distribution, and an entity manifested by its highest *values* form an inseparable unity. And this is the manifestation of ‘reason’, ‘freedom’, ‘courage’, ‘everything’... This is the idea of communism.

In the vision presented above, an entity - the only source of value in the world – ‘discovers’ that the market is the exact opposition of all values, which means that this sphere of life is self-contradictory. And this discovery is made by every entity... Everyone has their dignity and pride. But if we challenge the very starting point of *liberalism*, what is the alternative? Let us go back to the starting point, then. In the opening passage of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle writes: “Every art and every inquiry [...] is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”³³ The point is, Aristotle

³¹ Marks, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 19.

³² Marks, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 581.

³³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a.

adds, that “a certain difference is found among ends”³⁴. Some ‘ends’ are less important and subordinate to the more important ones. On the other hand, “[...] we do not choose everything for the sake of something else.”³⁵ Therefore, we need to assume that there is [some end] “which is always desirable in itself and which is why we desire everything else”³⁶. So, “clearly this [end] must be [...] the chief good.”³⁷ “Will not the knowledge of it, then” – asks Aristotle – “have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right?”³⁸. Human life, therefore, resembles an archery contest. We are all aiming at the mark. And there is only one ‘mark’. In the conclusions to the most significant book of his *Metaphysics*, the *Lambda* book, Aristotle writes: “Those who say that mathematical number is the first entity and assert the existence of a series of substances and different principles for each substance, make the substance of the universe a chain of disconnected incidents [...] and set up many principles. But the world refuses to be governed badly. *The rule of many is not good; one ruler let there be.*” (*The Iliad*, II, 204).³⁹ As we know from Descartes’s lecture – modernity rejects this way of thinking, describing it as ‘death of

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 2.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 10, 20.

³⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 15.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 20.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 20.

³⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1983; 1076 a.

metaphysics⁴⁰. An individual doesn't have to rely on anyone or anything. He or she 'deals the cards'. There is no aiming at a mark. And if there is aiming, it is 'exteriorization' of the Self. It is an individual who 'enlightens' the darkness of nature and the world of animals. But if we reject pre-*cogito* world and the world of market and *democracy*, the question returns – what is left?

And so, a modern reasoning entity comes up with a diabolic idea to deduce from the *Self* a projection of community life which will embrace the entirety of the *Self*, of all selves. This is the entirety which – as its very name suggests – cannot be transgressed; what is more – no one will want to transgress it. An Entity, forming a part of the Entirety is, at the same time, in itself and for itself an undefinable entirety – *ergo*, it is not a part... This is absurd and unattainable... And yet, by adopting this view, a human being makes this effort. In the world where only things are left, let us once again refer to Rousseau (after all, it was his 'adding' that began the thinking about Entirety), using the words of already quoted Manent: "What might be done [...] is to succeed in identifying each individual with the polity itself: in that way, no member of the body politic will any longer distinguish his own being from the common being. He will be whole because he will become one with the body politic.⁴¹ This is the Kantian 'principle' – a situation where 'the liberty of every individual can coexist with the liberty of every other'.

⁴⁰ Possenti, *Nihilizm teoretyczny...*, 1998.

⁴¹ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 112.

What does it mean? “Laws are,” notes Rousseau, “really only the conditions of civil association. Because the populace is subject to the laws, it ought to be their author: the conditions of the society ought to be regulated solely by those who come together to form it. But how will they do this? By a common agreement? By a sudden inspiration? (...) How can a blind multitude, which often doesn’t know what it wills because it rarely knows what is good for it, carry out for itself such a great and difficult enterprise as a system of legislation? The populace left to itself always wills the good, but left to itself it doesn’t always see what that is. [...] It ought to be [...] made to see objects as they are, and sometimes as they ought to appear to it; shown the good road it is in search of, [...] made to weigh the attractions of present and sensible advantages against the danger of distant and hidden evils. Individuals see the good that they reject; the public wills the good that it doesn’t see. Both need guidance”⁴². But an individual who is the only source of value in the world, the only source of everything, can’t have a ‘guide’. Yet, in real life – due to technical reasons, or one might even say ‘division of tasks’ – the guidance comes usually from a very specific body, or even a very specific individual. And here the stage is taken by Stalin in his white jacket – a ‘prince who is participant in the ideas’... And we are happy with it, because he is one of us... There is *one ruler* who rules and rules not. It is the perplexity inherent in this way of thinking, in this

⁴² Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 36-37.

‘brave’ effort to transgress the world of market... Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx, their thoughts and ideas – regardless of the original intentions – will eventually form the intellectual ‘roots of totalitarianism’ – to use the term coined and introduced in the literature of the subject by Hannah Arendt.

Having started with Machiavellian entity, in Cartesian system Modernity had to equip it with ‘certainty’. Yet, by granting such status to the ‘*self*’, we are faced with a highly awkward fact. As Kołakowski notices: “The Cartesian ego is a kind of black hole: it can suck in anything [...] and nothing can escape from it. Ineffable and incommunicable, conceptually ‘unconstructible’, it may be properly called nothing (indeed, they tell us now in Oxford that the word ‘I’, while having a meaning, has no reference).”⁴³ By giving ‘certainty’ to an entity, Modernity has forced it to deal with a challenge comparable to squaring of the circle. An entity exists, but it doesn’t exist... So, there is no one who could “look at the heavens”... And here, the Enlightenment comes up with a solution to this *par excellence* ‘existential’ problem. It is the ‘light’. Having opened unlimited possibilities for the ‘*I*’ (of which the world and European culture have continuously made use to the present day and whose essence is expressed in Kantian conviction that ‘spelling out phenomena’ is not sufficient), Modernity created a starting point for the programme of ‘giving an integral sense to the history of the world’ and introducing ‘sense’ in

⁴³ Kołakowski, *The Metaphysical Horror*, 85.

practical community life. *Habere* is one of the components of the concept. But, here we encounter yet another problem. The era of Enlightenment, although it does not perceive itself as 'enlightened', claims to be on the path to enlightenment. But 'light' cannot call itself 'light' or 'partial darkness', can it? How can 'light' make judgments about 'light'? How to measure its 'courage'? How to define its limitations? Where, then, should we seek the sources of such thinking? They can be found – as paradoxically as it sounds – in the language, in the very word 'enlightenment'. The rejection of virtue understood as 'nonentity changeable according to time and circumstance' produced – though it didn't have to – an unimaginable nonentity of the world of 'delusion'. An attempt to avoid 'doom' had led to 'doom', after all. Fascism and communism are the most evil – and the most murderous in its consequences – manifestations of practical application of the idea of 'unbounded domination over the conditions of Being'. It is 'chimera world', but in the opposite to that of Kant's understanding. 'The change in what has to be called the status of the good' revealed its ugliest face.

Having challenged the Plutonian and Aristotelian way of thinking and developed a programme to organise a truly 'human' reality, Modernity has found itself facing the *nothingness*.... Its concept of a human being, of an entity, doesn't know – and cannot know – what it can count on. And this is the spirit that will prevail in subsequent generations. T Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz

(Witkacy) described it a century ago: “Temporariness of private life, [...] temporariness of politics, of offices, of factories, of trains, of trams, of shops, of telephones – of everything. No one believed in permanence of the contemporary system in the form which has so far existed by pure inertia of the fading powers of the past. Shortage of men – they whispered; shortage of concord – they shouted; shortage of everything; one big shortage; shortage city, provisional city. Empty form that could be filled up, if only there was something to pour from and something to pour in. We were stuck in the past, and the future was sometimes disgusting like the most horrible dream which hurts even when retold to oneself. (...) All ‘bigger people’ with investments abroad, with suitcases packed, ready to leave any time, looking around with ‘*reise fever*’ in their eyes, occupying waiting rooms at railway stations. Rush, fever, taking things day by day: get some money and spend it, get it and spend it. (...) The sky sunken as deep as infinity (...) intensified the longing for a different life so much that it hurt. And where was this different life, anyway? ‘Within ourselves’ said some mundane voice, but nobody wanted to listen.”⁴⁴ And all this in “anticipation of the revolution.” These words proved truly prophetic.

The modern world of ‘men released from self-imposed tutelage’, projected by Kant, has two faces. On the one hand, it is the world of democracy and liberalism, where an individual makes

⁴⁴ Witkiewicz, *Jedyné wyjście*, 201-202.

an effort to organise his or her life through laboriously developed patterns; through trial and error. There is nothing certain and established once and for all. And this is the essence of human misery, also in our times. On the other hand, there is an ambition to go beyond this common human experience, to solve all problems for good. This ambition is also manifested in a megalomaniac conviction that human condition understood as Entirety can be defined... This is nothing else but longing for the world which no longer exists. This Rousseauian 'adding' resembles Aristotelian metaphysics in the world deprived of metaphysics, and this 'looking in the heavens' – as the last centuries have proved – turns out to be the world of demons and madness. This is totalitarianism. Modern 'I' has definitely overestimated itself... The Machiavellian 'suspicion' reveals its ambiguity and it is the source of its 'originality'... “ (...) The plague bacillus never dies or disappears; (...) it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; [...] it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and [...] perhaps the day would come when [...] it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city ” – wrote Albert Camus⁴⁵. It is, therefore, a phenomenon which cannot be considered not-worthy serious attention. And the areas of culture which – with particular acuteness and perceptiveness – reveal the state of facts are art and literature... For this is their vocation..⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Witkiewicz, *Jedyne wyjście*, 201-202.

⁴⁶ Camus, *Dżuma*, *The Plague*, 303.

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Elżbieta Jaszczurowska

ORCID: 0000-0002-0286-4596; ejaszczurowska@wseh.pl

Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej

Mirosław Laszczak

ORCID: 0000-0001-6060-4285; mirek.laszczak@wp.pl

Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej

**DELATION: DESCRIBING
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS IN A
TOTALITARIAN REGIME**

**DONOS – RELACJE INTERPERSONALNE
W TOTALITARYZMIE**

ABSTRACT

Totalitarianism is sometimes wrongly referred to as authoritarianism, with dictatorship or despotism. Although there are several commonalities between these concepts, there are major differences between them as well. Totalitarianism does not stop at the “fetishisation” of power; it reaches further and takes over the sphere of the sacred and questioned thoughts. The rebellious are thrown into prisons or sent to gulags, or confined in “psychushka” (asylum). In the atmosphere of mutual suspicion, reinforced by an acute sense of insecurity and deceived by low motives, the institution of denunciation becomes massive. Private relations are brought into the light, and are examined by courts. One

cannot understand a totalitarian society disregarding the institution of denunciation, just as one cannot detach man's consciousness from the conditions in which a human being exists. This is easy to notice in the digital civilization, where denunciation comes down to a single photo, sometimes manipulated, or a one-sentence description sent by a single click.

Keywords: totalitarianism, power, fetish, denunciation, delation, citizens

STRESZCZENIE

Totalitaryzm jest czasami błędnie określany jako autorytaryzm, z elementami dyktatury lub despotyzmu. Chociaż istnieje kilka cech wspólnych między tymi pojęciami, istnieją również między nimi zasadnicze różnice. Totalitaryzm nie kończy się na "fetyszyzacji" władzy; sięga dalej i zawłaszcza sferę świętych i kwestionowanych myśli. Buntowników wtrąca się do więzień lub wysyła do łagrów, albo zamyka w tzw. "psychuszcze" – miejsca, w którym w ZSRR przetrzymywano dysydentów. W atmosferze wzajemnej podejrzliwości, wzmocnionej dotkliwym poczuciem niepewności, napędzanej niskimi pobudkami, instytucja donosu ugruntowuje swoją pozycję na masową skalę. Na światło dzienne wychodzą prywatne relacje, które są badane przez sądy. Nie da się zrozumieć istoty społeczeństwa totalitarnego, nie biorąc pod uwagę instytucji donosu – tak samo, jak nie można oderwać świadomości człowieka od warunków, w jakich żyje. Łatwo to zauważyć w cywilizacji cyfrowej, gdzie donosy sprowadzają się do pojedynczego zdjęcia, czasem zmanipulowanego, lub jednozdaniowego wpisu, wysłanego jednym kliknięciem.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, władza, fetysz, donos, więzienia, obywatele

INTRODUCTION

Denunciation? What is there to talk about? After all, it has always been around. The average person will grumble – not because the issue is uninteresting, but because of the mystery of it. There is no shortage of well-known delators throughout the ages: Dalila, the harlot Rachab, and even Daniel Defoe. However, the individual denunciations that run through the history of civilization and anyone does not wash those forms of dilators creativity. Denunciation in these systems takes on a mass, widespread and even unbearable form, leading to complaints from the authorities unable to keep up with processing the plethora of incoming signals.

The goal of this paper is to look at the sources of ‘totalitarian denunciation’. It makes an attempt to answer a variety of questions, such as why denunciation occurs on such a large scale in totalitarian systems, what its character and form is, and what the driving forces of denunciators are. At the same time, the paper outlines the causal relationship between the elimination of the private sphere and the desire of citizens to denounce,

highlighting a network of interpersonal relationships epitomized by jealousy, fear, and calculation.

TOTALITARIANISM: THE STATE IS EVERYWHERE

The concept of ‘totalitarianism’ has become commonplace, a stylistic form that adds the necessary drama to the speech. It appears mainly as a catechism that attracts negative associations along with tyranny, dictatorship, despotism, and autocracy. Hardly anyone cares about the semantic abuse committed here. What is important is the overall impression.

The term ‘despotism’ is derived from ancient Greek and was coined by the ancients to depict the Persian system of power, in which the ruler had as much power over his people as a master over a slave. He was the chosen of the gods and could decide on the life and death of all those over whom his power extended.

Tyranny, characteristic of many Greek city-states, also has an ancient Greek provenance. A ruler equipped with strong power granted by the people could oppose the oligarchs and implement pro-state policies in accordance with the will of the majority.

An autocrat is simply any ruler capable of independent and completely sovereign decision-making. Of all these negatively associated terms, only the word ‘dictator’ stems from Latin. He is an official elected for six months by the consuls and by order of

the Roman Senate; he is vested with absolute power, as conditions threaten the integrity of the state and the tranquility of citizens. However, power is limited in time and, if only for this reason, is not abused. The Roman people were vindictive, as excessive oppression and unjust rule could always be held accountable.

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, these terms had made it possible to convey the essence of the power exercised and to highlight its nuances. But the world did not stop in its efforts to theoretically explain the right to increasing over citizens. Nineteenth-century philosophers were inclined to broaden the concept of power to include all spheres of life. G. W. F. Hegel, for example, confers special powers on the State. For him, the State is omnipotent; it is bound by no moral obligations, and its only measure of legitimacy is success in the historical, supraindividual realm. The norm governing individual conduct is the benefit rendered to the collective as a whole. A heroic and praiseworthy life stands in stark contrast to “grey vegetation” — above all to the life of the trader, the bourgeois, or the selfinterested peasant - a *kulak*.¹

Whether due to new philosophical concepts or perhaps the political turmoil of the early twentieth century – in 1923, Giovanni Amendola, originating from the circle of Italian fascists, probably for the first time used the neologism ‘totalitarianism’,

¹ R. Beacker: *Totalitaryzm. Geneza, istota, upadek*. Index Books, Toruń 1992, 16 – 17.

warning against the communists' desire to create a state controlling every sphere of citizens' lives, i.e. – *il sistema totalitario*.² The concept must have settled in, as two years later Benito Mussolini used it, proclaiming in 1925 the slogan ‘*Tutto nello Stato, niente al di fuori dello Stato, nulla contro lo Stato*’.³ It meant that the State was everything, and thus claimed the right to penetrate even the most private spheres of life; no taboos, nor any domains connected with family, privacy, or religion, were exempt from its reach. The State could therefore usurp the right to decide in every sphere of human existence. In 1937, Hitler expressed this idea with characteristic insolence when he declared: “We regulate the life relations of the two sexes. We raise the children.”⁴

There is no room for privacy. The 1937 ruling of Supreme Court of the Reich stated that criticizing the authorities could lead to prosecution, even if it took place within a family circle or against a person obliged to maintain secrecy.⁵ The State is appropriating ever larger portions of civil liberties, becoming an end in itself. To be a citizen means accepting one’s own objectification. The only true subject is the State — a monstrous entity hungry for human

² [https://www.profesor.pl/publikacja,34602,Artykuly, TOTALITARYM](https://www.profesor.pl/publikacja,34602,Artykuly,TOTALITARYM) [accessed May 16-th, 2022].

³ P. Jaroszyński: Co to jest totalitaryzm. [In:] <http://www.ptta.pl/pef/pdf/t/totalitaryzm.pdf> [accessed May 16, 2022].

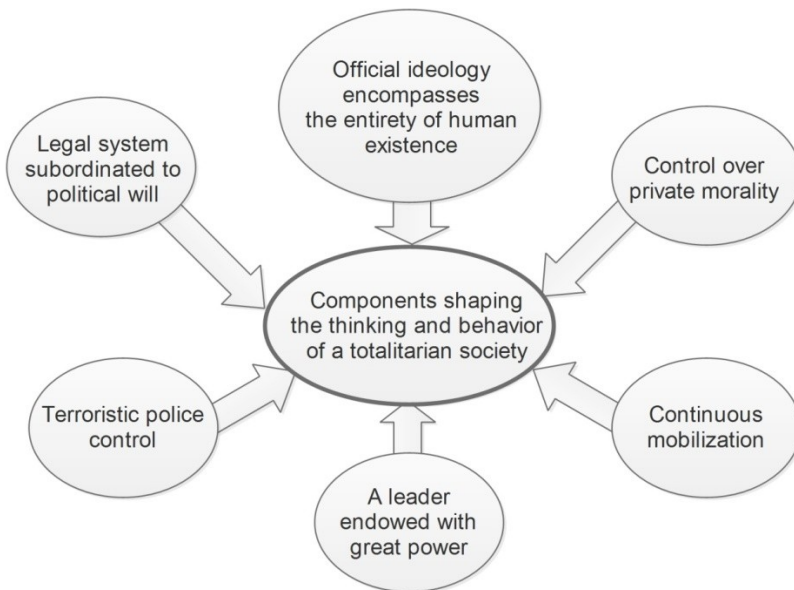
⁴ H. Picker: *Hitlers Tischgespraeche*, Bonn 1951, p. 443. Cyt. za: R. Beacker: *Totalitaryzm...* op. cit., 30.

⁵ R. Grunberger: *Historia społeczna Trzeciej Rzeszy*. T.1. PIW, Warszawa 1987, 182.

lives and sacrifices, demanding the abolition of intimacy and the subordination of the individual.

It sounds absurd, but totalitarian states are willing to implement such ideologies and cherish them. There are citizens enjoying such total submission, lining up to be called a modern man and fighting against tradition.

Figure 1: Features of a totalitarian society



Source: author's own elaboration based on R. Beacker: *Totalitarianism. Genesis, essence, decline*. Index Books, Torun 1992, p. 12.

A totalitarian society must change; it is always imperfect, it always strives for something, it must constantly repair and improve to meet the exorbitant requirements of the state.

THE “FORMATTED CITIZEN”

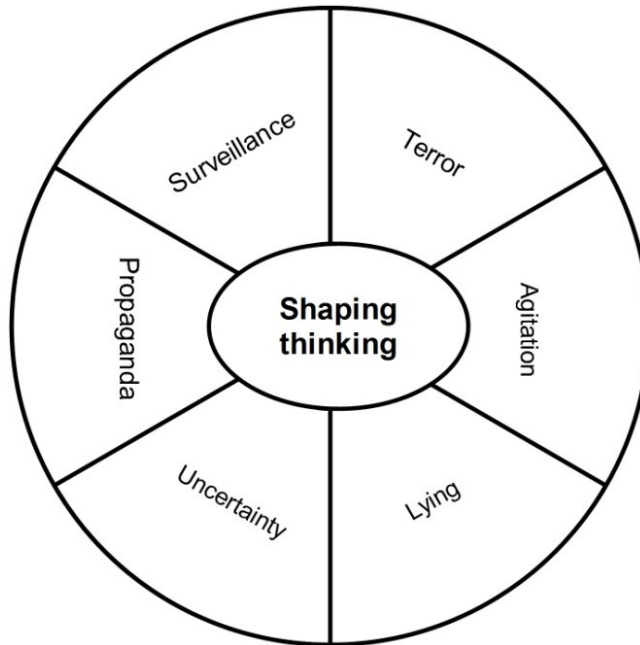
In the grotesquely carved space of a totalitarian state, there is no truth, and words become detached from their meanings. The Stalinist constitution of December 1936, drafted by Bukharin and proclaimed in the USSR as “the most democratic constitution in the world”, in fact legitimized the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party and established a new order in which no mechanisms of social oversight over power existed.⁶

For the rebellious, there was the *gulag*, a mass institution through which the whole society passed physically or mentally (in the sense of receiving a resocialization lesson through contacts with inmates, their families or friends). Fear, eavesdropping and uncertainty have shaped a submissive and indifferent citizen, deprived of his own will and convinced that it is not worth thinking differently than the authorities want.⁷

⁶ A. Bryk: *Budowa ustroju totalitarnego w Związku Sowieckim*. [In:] „Regnare, gubernare, administrare : prawo i władza na przestrzeni wieków: Prace dedykowane profesorowi Jerzemu Malcowi z okazji 40-lecia pracy naukowej”. Ed.: S. Grodziski, A. Dziadzio, Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne - Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM 2012, 197-232.

⁷ W. Szalamow: *Opowiadania kołymskie*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1999, pp. 238, 302–303, 478.

Figure 2: Types of influences shaping citizen thinking in totalitarian systems



Source: own elaboration.

Citizens are getting dizzy from constant demands. For the sake of peace of mind, please the state and do good to the state. Citizens feel worthless, even flawed.

*I am not a nightingale,
And not turn into the gale,
but I will be a plough
to plow the earth deeper, and deeper go.*
A folk song by T. Kowalczyk translated by authors.

They live in a state of constant uncertainty, convinced that they do not meet the requirements of the prevailing regime. This has its consequences. Absurdity begins to prevail over rationality and concepts become detached from meaning. Appearances function as evidence of normality. Osip Mendelstam wrote down: *It seems to us that everything is all right only because trams are running.*⁸

Since the norm is absurdity and madness, normality should be treated in psychiatric institutions. This is how the institution of ‘psychushka’ hospitals – special psychiatric hospitals for the detention of unruly citizens – came into being. They were a miniature version of the totalitarian system. An almost perfect representation.

The ‘psychushka’ may resemble the institution from Ken Kesey's ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest’. Unjustly so, because against the Soviet spec-hospitals, the book's mental health institution resembles a semi-holiday-colony with comforts.

It was possible to get into a ‘psychushka’ ward for no good reason: someone wanted to wear their hair long, someone else wanted to learn English or build a radio to receive Western stations, someone else wanted to start a band and play ‘Western music’ or, God forbid, speak ill of Communism. Such cases were classified as asymptomatic schizophrenia (sometimes called creeping

⁸ Cit.: L. Jęczmyk: *Światło i dźwięk. Moje życie na różnych planetach*. Wyd. Zysk i S-ka. Poznań 2013, 175.

schizophrenia). Treatment was difficult, persistent and painful. The diagnosis itself, on the other hand, was simple: only a mentally ill person breaks the rules of society. These rules were set in the USSR by communism, *ergo*, someone who breaks the rules must have a muddled mind, after all any sane citizen is proud to live under communism.⁹

Instead of reflecting on the nature of the prevailing regime, a far safer option was to escape into alcoholic oblivion. Unsurprisingly, violence and alcoholism became the dominant forms of afterwork life in the Soviet Union. It was not unusual to see young boys lying in the gutters of Moscow's streets – and similar scenes were common across the cities of the entire Eastern Bloc.¹⁰ In this way, the crushing weight of ideological enslavement was momentarily suspended. Alcohol became an escape from a reality defined by everinflated standards, exorbitant production demands, and grotesque social relations.

Citizens relaxed in the fumes of ever stronger vodka. Alcoholism was not an inheritance from tsarist times. It was a currency and an escape. It allowed people to forget the deplorable living conditions, the lack of prospects and the uncertainty of tomorrow. Alcohol anesthetized the fear of repression and replaced

⁹ A. Zechenter: *Schizofrenia bezobjawowa*. [In:] „Dziennik Polski”, 6 July 2009.

¹⁰ J. Sakowski: *Wódka w państwie robotniczym*. [In:] „Wiadomości” 15. 06. 1958. Rok 13, nr 24 (637) Londyn. Cit.: <http://retropress.pl/wiadomosci/wodka-w-panstwie-robotniczym/> [accessed: 10 July2022].

the lack of entertainment. A two-liter bottle of 25% moonshine turned out to be a measure of trade worth more than a rouble. In line with the intention of the authorities seeking ways to increase entrepreneurship, even ‘samogon labor cooperatives’ were established. In the Kursk governorate, seventeen per cent of the grain harvest was used to produce mash.¹¹ The authorities only verbally condemned vodka drinking. In reality, it was in its favor. After all, alcohol loosened tongues and informers were on the lookout for incautious utterances by tipsy citizens of the Soviet state. The files in the NKVD archives were swelling, as were the number of patients in the ‘psychushka’ and prisoners in the gulags.

DENUNCIATION: A FORM OF EXPRESSION

It was a currency and an escape. It allowed people to forget the deplorable living conditions. A model citizen is one for whom the welfare of the state is more important than friends and family. On the way to his own excellence, he does not shy away from pointing out perceived mistakes, stumbles or various forms of waywardness. Overcoming shame and prejudice, he even reports on his own father. Oh yees, this is praiseworthy behavior. And at the same time, denunciation turned out to be a weapon of the weak, expecting the state to use its power in their stead, to level

¹¹ <https://www.rp.pl/historia/art10654841-zsrr-alkoholik-by-l-produktem-bolszewizmu> [accessed: 15 July 2022].

the playing field and punish, doing justice to burning envy. Denunciation is also an offshoot of applied demagoguery. Citizens are ready to believe that by denouncing they are doing an exceptionally good thing. That they are helping the state.

In early September 1932, the bodies of two boys, Fyodor and Pavel Morozov, were found near the village of Gerasimovka in the Urals. The murderers were not difficult to find. Just a few months earlier, fourteen-year-old Pavel had denounced his own father for giving false documents and certificates to kulaks which resulted in the deportation of the father to Siberia. Trofim Morozov was arrested and convicted. The son could feel proud, he had earned praise, he had done a good deed. However, he did not enjoy the respect of his immediate family. The killers of both boys turned out to be the uncles, who did not forgive Pavel for his denunciation. The uncles were sentenced to death, and the sentence was carried out quickly.

In the figure of Pavka Morozov, the communist system fashioned a new martyr and symbol of sacrifice. The young denouncer was mythologized; poems and songs were written about him, and he was held up as a model to emulate. In reality, however, Pavka was a double victim — not only of his vengeful uncles, but above all of Soviet propaganda.

DONATION IN PRACTICE

Totalitarian systems feed on the basest motives of their citizens: they fuel insecurity, cultivate fears of illegitimacy, and threaten punishment for any behavior that might displease the authorities. In such conditions, the boundary between “better” and “worse” dissolves; even the poorest citizen can accuse his wealthier neighbor and then watch with satisfaction as a fortune built over years collapses like a house of cards. The manager in the factory loses his job, and his wife’s lover is sent to the gulags. “So there is still justice in the world,” the citizen thinks, and sits down to write another denunciation. Personal resentments and jealousies suddenly acquire the power to be settled. *I’ll show him*, crosses the mind of those burdened with complexes, delighted by the chance to compensate for imagined wrongs. And the victims of denunciations did not remain passive — they, too, wrote reports on their accusers. A true perpetualmotion machine.

The form of denunciation is relatively simple. Firstly, it is to intrigue; secondly, it is to make you read; thirdly, it is to be alarming enough to arouse the vigilance of power and lead to its intervention.

Table 1. Categories of denunciation

Category of sender of denunciation	Percentage of all reports
Individual denunciations	77%
Collective denunciations - the author makes it clear that he is expressing the opinion of a larger number of people	10%
Donations of collective entities (associations, groups...)	1,34%
Anonymous letters	8,5%

Source: François-Xavier Nérard: *5 procent prawdy*, Wyd. Świat Książki, 2008, pp. 225-226.

There are many authors of denunciations, yet their style is strikingly uniform, as if all were written from the same template. Whistleblowers strive to present themselves as responsible citizens acting solely out of concern for the welfare of the state. Their vocabulary is impoverished; the range of epithets moves from expressions of despair, through declarations of personal honesty, to outright insults. Stock phrases and verbal clichés drawn from speeches, pamphlets, and official propaganda recur endlessly. Although the language of denunciations mirrors the language of power, it also preserves terms that the authorities themselves have already abandoned, while adopting new ones only with delay. The texts imitate the formulas of official documents. Favorite

words include: *pest, saboteur, careerist, idler, hooliganism, bureaucracy*. The authors ignore any potential personal gain and focus instead on the alleged harm caused by other citizens. They emphasize the speed of their reaction with phrases such as: “as soon as I saw...”, “as soon as I learned...”, “as soon as I heard...”, “I am writing immediately because I cannot stand...”. The whistleblower casts himself as the righteous one, aligned with the authorities, while the denounced person is stripped of human qualities. He is the embodiment of evil and must be punished.

NEITHER A LAUDABLE GOAL NOR MOTIVATION

One of the features of totalitarian regimes is the massiveness of denunciations. No matter how absurd it all is, we are faced with a situation where even illiterate people moved to the pens. Denunciations flooded offices. Special offices were even set up to assess the veracity of denunciations. In Nazi Germany, officials became so physically and mentally tired of assessing the veracity of incoming denunciations that a hundred marks (equivalent to the salary of an unskilled laborer) were promised to anyone who... files a denunciation against a false denouncer.¹² Because, after all, it was realized that behind the denunciation lurked primarily private grudges or cunning. Denunciation often smoothed one’s career path

¹² R. Grunberger: *Historia społeczna...* op.cit., 167.

and enabled the “inheritance” of positions. A deputy could easily step into the post vacated by a dismissed manager; a mediocre musician suddenly had a chance to replace the lead violinist; and a conductor of lesser skill could become head of the orchestra. The constant movement and pervasive atmosphere of danger — so essential to totalitarian systems — could finally take material form.

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Denunciations also stemmed from ideological differences. A socialist electrician who was repairing plumbing at a parsonage in Nazi Germany repeated to the police an anti-Hitler joke unwittingly told by a sympathetic pastor. The clergyman was executed.¹³

The separation of families during the war created new opportunities for the spread of denunciation. Husbands in the trenches learned of real or alleged betrayals by their wives, while wives received reports of their husbands’ conduct that violated their vows of fidelity. In peacetime, similar letters appeared in the mailboxes of citizens whose spouses had left on distant assignments. Their purpose was simple: to break up

¹³ Ibidem, 173.

families, provoke quarrels, and relish the turmoil of others – and then perhaps to offer comfort, advice, or a “helping hand,” the very same hand that had written the denunciation only moments before, still stained with ink.

It is impossible to enumerate all the motivations behind writing denunciations. A woman from Mannheim informed on her husband not out of concern for legality, but simply because she wanted him out of the way during her amorous encounters with her nineteenyearold lover — a Wehrmacht soldier, *nota bene*. Another German woman summoned the police to stand beneath her apartment windows so they could overhear her unsuspecting husband’s unflattering remarks about the government. She obtained a swift divorce, while he exchanged his home for a fouryear stay in a prison cell. Yet another Frau wrote directly to Hess, complaining that her husband refused to have more children and listened to the banned Radio Moscow. The teacher’s husband lost his job, and soon after lost both his wife and his freedom.¹⁴

The denunciation of a family member deserves broader analysis. Behind such acts lie echoes of domestic quarrels, the desire to avenge humiliation, and the impulse to punish real or imagined infidelity as swiftly as possible. Sometimes there are even traces of resentment toward parents. The teenage daughter of a prominent Viennese ballet dancer informed on her mother for allegedly listening to foreign radio stations banned during the war.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 171.

The dancer never performed again; the court sentenced her to three years in prison. A nineteenyearold Berliner, unable to endure the beating he received from his stepfather for having drunk away his wages, reported that the man was not only violent but also listened to prohibited foreign broadcasts. The radio was confiscated, the *pater familias* was brought to trial – and ultimately acquitted after demonstrating that the device could not receive any frequencies other than those permitted by the state. The nineteenyearold could, of course, expect another beating upon returning home. Denunciation, too, required a certain skill.

It is difficult to determine what motivated a twentyoneyearold man to join Hitler's party. Perhaps he wished to prove himself to his superiors but had little to offer; perhaps family conflicts or the demagogic speeches of party leaders clouded his judgment. Whatever the reason, he denounced his mother and brother for engaging in alleged communist subversive activities. The machinery of justice operated flawlessly: his mother received a twoyear sentence, and his brother six. From that moment, the young man had the entire flat to himself — though there was no one left to wash his clothes or cook his meals. It is hard to say whether his loyalty to the party ultimately served him well.

There were also denunciations made accidentally, unintentionally, in good faith, or without reflection. A pupil at a Berlin primary school, after listening to his teacher's venomous antiSemitic tirade, remarked calmly: "My dad says the Jews aren't

so damn mean after all.”¹⁵ His stepfather was arrested immediately. An intergenerational scar was surely left on the family, along with the conviction that children should not be encouraged to express their thoughts honestly.

In totalitarian systems, everyone is encouraged to denounce everyone else. Even the closest family becomes an object of fear. The line drawn by the authorities is precarious: the distance between a hidden thought and a carelessly spoken sentence is dangerously short. Thus emerged the category of “selfsabotage,” the so-called *Wehrkraftzersetzung*. A Luftwaffe captain learned its meaning firsthand when he wrote in his diary that Germany could no longer win the war. After one of the raids, the diary fell into the wrong hands, reached the police, and the pilot was ultimately charged with sabotaging himself.

A totalitarian state seeks to be everywhere, but its favorite place is inside the citizen’s mind – to penetrate thoughts, inspect them, and administer punishment. And punishment must always be severe. Totalitarian regimes developed a taste for draconian sentences, finding justification in Nietzsche’s maxim that “criminal law is a weapon used to eliminate the enemy,” which Alfred Rosenberg rendered in a simpler form: “Punishment is to be used to get rid of alien types and deviant natures.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibidem, 172.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 181.

The courts inexorably processed case after case and handed down heavy sentences. And citizens used this machinery for swift and sure revenge. In a report on the state of civic morality in Germany at the end of the Second World War, it is lamented that the number of anonymous letters to all possible authorities, in which the sole aim is to slander one's acquaintances, has risen to unexpected heights. The motives for writing denunciations are of an extremely low nature and are the result of envy or jealousy'.

A GOOD CITIZEN IS AN INFORMER

Looking through the records of denunciations in Germany during the Second World War, one can easily notice a correspondingly higher percentage of female authors than denunciators. There are many reasons for this. There are relatively more women during the war. They are more bored. Often exasperated, they are thus more easily angered, and they pour out any envy on paper, joining the growing ranks of other reporting women. It is quite possible that they react more strongly emotionally to specially heated moods of suspicion, distrust and a certain emotional sway, typical of conditions of war and totalitarian oppression.

There are, of course, additional motives. Women often regarded prying into their neighbors' affairs and monitoring their behavior as a civic duty — a kind of feminine contribution to

the ongoing war. One woman learned from a neighbor that her son, whom she had long believed dead, appeared on a Russian prisonerofwar list. Without hesitation, she denounced the wellintentioned neighbor for allegedly listening to Radio Moscow.¹⁷

A relatively high proportion of denunciations written by women was also observed in occupied France. Researchers noted with astonishment that “although women constituted a small minority among the excluded, they were greatly overrepresented among the informers.”¹⁸ In the Soviet Union, by contrast, denunciations were written primarily by men. Women simply had no time for such activities; with their wages at stake and burdened by both domestic and professional responsibilities, they were more inclined to long for rest and dream of peace and quiet than to seek opportunities to strike at someone.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 174.

¹⁸ F.-X. Nérard: *5 procent prawdy*, Wyd. Świat Książki, 2008, 258.

Table 2: Those who reported. Random statistics on denunciation in the Soviet Union

Who reports?	Percentage
Men	68%
Women	11,5%
Collective letters	8%

Source: François-Xavier Nérard: *5 procent prawdy*, Wyd. Świat Książki, 2008, p. 250.

A review of Soviet archives suggests that denunciators were typically city dwellers — clerks rather than kolkhoz workers. The latter rarely denounced anyone in the middle of summer, when fieldwork absorbed all their attention and left little room for contemplating how to harm their neighbors. But when winter arrived, and again in spring, even kolkhoz workers reached for their pens and targeted those with whom they had longstanding grievances.¹⁹ Denunciations were most often written by people who held no official position. Occupying the lower rungs of the professional hierarchy, they sought ways to level the playing field or at least damage the superiors they disliked.

The content of denunciations also reveals something about the denouncer. He or she appears as a citizen fully integrated into the system, aware of the significance of denunciation and its

¹⁹ Ibidem, 250.

consequences. To lend their accusations an air of credibility, *delatores* often describe themselves and their attitudes: how much they owe to Soviet power, their belonging to groups oppressed under the tsars, their unhappy childhoods, their devotion to socialist and communist ideals, and their heightened social sensitivity. One might wonder why these biographical fragments appear at all, and who could possibly care about the denouncer's difficult childhood. After all, what should matter is the case itself. But this is not so. A denunciation is meaningless without a reader, and the reader must be drawn in by something. The information must be detailed. Embarrassing, trivial, or irrelevant as it may be, the denunciator does not know this — convinced that the more content, the better. As with a cake, the more filling it contains, the more appealing it seems. The denunciations resound with envy, yet they also paint a vivid picture of the misery of Soviet life. One of them reads:

*“All winter they ate as few people ate before the war. They made cakes from white flour, made dumplings and lots of pielmienis...”*²⁰

One might ask: what is there to envy? And yet, someone couldn't stand it and decided to poison this idyll a little, while revealing the shortcomings of everyday life in the best system in the world. For the denunciations always reveal the abysmal nature of everyday life, while at the same time they speak of

²⁰ Ibid, 253.

the denunciator's hidden complexes, rancor and vindictiveness, and are not at all intended to improve the world around them.

TOTALITARIANISM 2.0 AND A NEW FORM OF DENUNCIATION

It is said that when Osip Mandelstam first heard the word “progress” as a child, he burst into tears. His intuition did not deceive him. It is, indeed, a dangerous word. Totalitarianism is toxic on many levels. Human relationships deteriorate, the image of the surrounding world becomes distorted, and utopian visions are sometimes mistaken for reality. Truth and falsehood exchange roles. All this occurs because totalitarian systems select the human mind as their primary target. They seek to settle inside the citizen’s consciousness and subordinate his thinking. In the twentieth century, this was achieved through restrictive legislation, intimidation, and demagogic influence exercised via radio and later television. Brainwashing did not proceed without resistance – prisons filled, and the security apparatus suppressed attempts at independent thought.

Times, however, have changed. The IT revolution has created a new virtual world. Its defining feature is not the free flow of information; for a long time now, it has ceased to be about safeguarding freedom of communication. On the contrary, the web

collects data about users, links them to one another, and ultimately constructs an image of the Internet user. Privacy disappears; desires, needs, health conditions, weaknesses, and views become known. The dreams of totalitarian governments materialize: a “surveillance society” emerges, one that allows access to the most intimate corners of the mind – and, moreover, consents to this constant observation.²¹

Thanks to advances in behavioral metrics, a mind-reading technology, the sensor builds a 3D model of the face, captures involuntary muscle movements and transforms them into a behavioral profile. Thoughts, attitudes, reactions to arbitrary stimuli and inclinations are revealed. The sphere of privacy disappears. The average Londoner is filmed three hundred times in one day. The metaphor of “the state as a camp” has become a reality.²² Citizens are under surveillance on a previously unknown scale, and all it takes is for the system to deem an Internet user's behavior inappropriate, and the punishment will be immediate and non-negotiable. Ejection from an online forum, suspension from a portal membership and even an unexpected visit from the police are just some of the vast array of online reprisals.

²¹ A. Breczko, A. Miruć: *Totalizujące praktyki we współczesnych demokracjach (aspekty filozoficzne i teoretycznoprawne)*. [W:] „Białostockie Studia Prawnicze”, zeszyt 20/B, 2016, 23.

²² G. Agamben: *Homo sacer. Suwerenna władza i nagie życie*, Wyd. Prószyński i S-ka, Kraków 2008.

Incorrect online behavior is thus sometimes a denunciation made against oneself, how close to the Nazi crime of diversion against oneself? This is not the worst of it, however. The Internet and social media model thinking. And they know exactly how to do it. The information is partly true and partly manipulated. The message is simple - so that it can be assimilated almost immediately. It is enclosed in a so-called "framework" – that is, it is a product of a particular language and a particular culture. The recipient must know immediately that it concerns him and is important to him. Novelty – because, after all, information cannot be boring.²³

Specially crafted content becomes a way into the minds of Internet users and creates a picture of reality. The manipulated but intellectually sticky message becomes the canvass for thinking and perceiving the world. One uses this information to judge other people's behavior.

Emotions play the greatest role in shaping attitudes. One may ask which emotion spreads fastest online: is it curiosity, fear, joy, sadness? Well, no. According to research - the emotion that travels fastest and reaches the farthest is anger.²⁴ So all we need to do is attach an angry emotion to a properly crafted message and we are assured of an instant message that will stimulate more people in the network to pass it on to others.

²³ P.W. Singer, E. T. Brooking: *Nowy rodzaj wojny. Media społecznościowe jako broń*. Wyd. Vis-à-vis, Kraków 2019, 207-208.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 209.

It is not clear where the vulnerability to anger comes from, but it is well known what consequences it has. Leaving aside some of the trolls who are simply psychopaths, the rest of the troll-prone Internet users are ordinary people, tired of work and everyday life and giving vent to their anger. They write malicious posts, invent lying and harmful information, directed against people or groups with different views. Information is accepted uncritically, and because it seemingly facilitates understanding of the world, it begins to shape thinking.

‘You are either with us or against us’ – was the regime's call. The Web also leaves no choice. All the more so because trolling need not at all be confined only to the web. It is moving to the streets, starting demonstrations, marches, street fights, as in the case of American gangs with their ‘cyber tagging’ and ‘drilling.’

Emotionally inflamed, angry and angry at the whole world, social media users are not idle. They need to give expression to their anger. Trolling is just one way. Another is to write *strictly* denunciations. These are much simpler. A photo and a malicious caption are enough. In an instant, the victim of such denunciation can be stigmatized, publicly maligned, virtually lynched, and without any opportunity for defense. Totalitarianism in the modern world takes on a character that is not at all virtual. It reaches further, deeper and quite possibly deforms thinking more strongly than ever before. The danger is all the greater because

denunciation, which is the image of interpersonal relations, has never before had such ease of occurrence. You don't even have to know how to write, you don't have to go to the post office or buy a stamp, just click and the rest happens on its own.

CONCLUSIONS

Totalitarianism means the domination of the state over every sphere of human life. No scrap of independence remains, not even the smallest enclave of free thought. The apparatus of repression expands relentlessly, and a population shaped by the totalitarian system adopts denunciation as a form of expression and a tool of selfdefence. Through it, citizens feel less helpless. They rely on the power that denunciation seems to confer, unaware that they are slipping morally, destroying networks of interpersonal trust, and ultimately harming society by widening the scope of impersonal danger, spreading insecurity, stigmatizing others, and eroding the last fragile remnants of free thought.

Denunciation is always an act of indirect violence. It invites the authorities to administer justice according to the denouncer's own sense of right and wrong. Every society contains individuals willing to harm others gratuitously, but only totalitarian systems set in motion the mass production of complaints and accusations. Denunciation becomes a collective reflex — a way to curry favor with the authorities and, above all, to vent one's own negative

emotions. Citizens appeal to the state because they feel weak. They imagine that if the state can intervene on their behalf and settle old scores, their opinion carries weight. This is why denunciation reaches its apogee in totalitarian regimes.

Such proliferation would be impossible without the specific features of totalitarianism. The regime reigns in the minds of citizens, occupies ever new spaces of thought, and shapes their perception of the world. This is visible in the ways people denounce one another, in the language they use — full of verbal calques from government leaflets and public speeches — in the categories of alleged “crimes,” and above all in the intentions that drive the *delator*.

Denunciation serves the needs of a totalitarian government hungry for complete control over society. The digital revolution has enabled an unprecedented expansion of this control, while cynically exploiting new techniques of manipulation. The digital regime has entered the realm of thought and begun to shape behavior. “The network” knows precisely how to stir emotions. One way to discharge them is through denunciation, which in the digital age has become easier than ever — reduced to the simple act of clicking ‘send’.

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**TOTALITARYZM A LITERATURA/
TOTALITARIANISM IN LITERATURE**

Paul Coates

ORCID: 0000-0003-2858-4485; pcoates2@uwo.ca

Western University, Canada

**TOTALITARIANISM AS RHIZOME:
ELIZABETH BOWEN'S *THE HEAT OF THE
DAY***

**SPLECIONE KŁĄCZA
TOTALITARYZMUNA PRZYKŁADZIE
POWIEŚCI ELIZABETH BOWEN *THE
HEAT OF THE DAY***

ABSTRACT

The paper argues that psychological, sociological, aesthetic and philosophical issues woven together in narrative form by Elizabeth Bowen's 1948 novel *The Heat of the Day* coalesce and interact to suggest a hauntingly illuminating set of insights into the relationship between totalitarianism, everyday life, war, evil, and the destruction of tradition. The story of the love between Stella Rodney and Robert Kelway, a wounded British soldier suspected of adherence to and spying for the National Socialists during World War Two, dramatizes the way a crumbling of tradition and the loyalties inspired by it attacks such repositories of meaning as the sense of place and the meaningfulness of the face. This crumbling is further dramatized in a sub-plot strikingly anticipatory of the meditation on war, the face, the photograph and the sense of nothingness in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*. The paper looks at Bowen's novel by teasing out such strands (sometimes ones placed between lines by its Symbolist aesthetic) as the ones related to

the photograph, beginning, storytelling, the grotesque, crises of tradition, the face, and the nature of evil, all of which knitted together by global war and totalitarianism.

Keywords: totalitarianism, life, war, evil, tradition, Bergman

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł dowodzi, że psychologiczne, socjologiczne, estetyczne i filozoficzne kwestie splecione ze sobą w formie narracyjnej w powieści Elizabeth Bowen z 1948 roku *The Heat of the Day* łączą się i oddziałują na siebie, sugerując zniewalająco pouczający zestaw spostrzeżeń na temat relacji między totalitaryzmem, życiem codziennym, wojną, złem i niszczeniem tradycji. Historia miłości Stelli Rodney i Roberta Kelwaya – rannego brytyjskiego żołnierza podejrzanego o przynależność do narodowych socjalistów i szpiegostwo na ich rzecz podczas II wojny światowej – w sposób dramatyczny ukazuje, jak rozpad tradycji i inspirowanej nią lojalności atakuje takie stałe repozytoria znaczeń, jak poczucie miejsca i znaczenie godności. Obraz tego rozpadu jest dodatkowo wzmocniony w wątku pobocznym, uderzająco podobnym na poziomie rozważań nad wojną, godnością, rolą fotografii i poczuciem nicości w filmie Ingmara Bergmana pt. *Persona*. Artykuł bada powieść Bowen, wyodrębniając takie wątki (czasami umieszczone między wierszami przez jej symbolistyczną estetykę), jak te związane z fotografią, początkiem, opowiadaniem historii, groteską, kryzysem tradycji, godnością i istotą zła, a wszystko to splecione jest ze sobą przez globalną wojnę i totalitaryzm.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, życie, wojna, zło, tradycja, Bergman

The ecstatic blaze fell back into the nothing that gave it being¹
 “What is ‘nothing’?”²

INTRODUCTION

In an essay entitled “Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought,” Hannah Arendt remarked “For us totalitarianism necessarily has become the central event of our times and, consequently, the break in tradition a *fait accompli*.”³ That break, as partial as all breaks, may be described as one with religious structures of belief that nevertheless persist as structures of feeling (to borrow a term from Raymond Williams), lodged in hearts if not heads, though the head’s allegiance is solicited also through totalizing maps that imitate the historical ones of their rivals, the Judeo-Christian religions. It may be no surprise that Stalin began as a seminarian and ended as a ghastly parody of a god. The combination of nationalism and socialism in Germany travesties a miracle, instantiating the “impossible” that is one of the key themes of this paper’s subject – *The Heat of the Day* by Anglo-Irish novelist Elizabeth Bowen.

¹ Bowen, *Eva Trout, or Changing Scenes*, 108.

² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 362.

³ Arendt, ‘Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought’,

If the identity of the “us” in Arendt’s statement is not entirely clear, one reading might be “my generation,” which would surely include Bowen, as a juxtaposition of life-spans suggests: Arendt, 1906-1975; Bowen, 1899-1973. Bowen, of course, was not a political philosopher, and did not seek to examine totalitarianism as a putative system or in any systematic way. It is simply the massive, underground background or root structure of its characters’ lives, in particular that of Robert Kelway, the lover of the novel’s protagonist Stella Rodney. Bowen’s description of Robert offers something Arendt might have provided, but was unwilling and possibly unable to do, in the case of her lover Martin Heidegger: a probing of the underpinning of a person’s seduction by National Socialism. Since Arendt’s unpublished draft of a piece on Heidegger at eighty even praises his conduct in the thirties as courageous⁴ it is unlikely that any coded reference to his case might subtend her statement that after the Nazi rise to power ““what disturbed us was the behavior not of our enemies but our friends.”⁵ Meanwhile, analyzing the Austrian modernist novelist Herman Broch in terms that might have encompassed Heidegger’s philosophy also, Arendt argues that inasmuch as Broch’s thought was oriented towards “the philosophical dignity of the death experience (...) Broch remained limited to this, his generation’s horizon of experience”: a horizon then “broken through by the

⁴ Arendt ‘Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought’, 430.

⁵ Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 24.

generation for whom not war but totalitarian forms of rule were the basic, the crucial experience.” For Arendt, the experience of totalitarianism overshadows that of death because it ushers in a realization that “killing is far from the worst that man can inflict on man.”⁶ Her reference to the worst suggests Orwell’s *Room 101*, where the fear of rats burrowing into his face prompts Winston Smith’s plea that O’Brien “do it to Julia” instead, annihilating self-respect and with it the self.

In the context established by Arendt, Robert’s experience in Bowen’s novel may suggest how an existentialism for which death is either a quasi-religious point of orientation, or the nearest admissible thing to one – to revert to Heidegger – shades over into a totalitarianism whose aura of transcendence grounds itself most credibly in a claim to all-embracingness, omnipresence. As Robert declares himself non-existent,⁷ National Socialism becomes, like him – to quote Wallace Stevens in another context – “the nothing that is,”⁸ a concrete form of non-existence. It is as if his participation in the retreat from Dunkirk, and subsequent invaliding out of active service, has inducted him into Germany’s World War One trauma of defeat, priming him to accept its compensatory “remedy,” National Socialism. For Robert the horizon of experience begins in war but carries on into totalitarianism,

⁶ Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 126-7.

⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*. 129.

⁸ Stevens, *Selected Poems*, 15.

bridging the generational and attitudinal gap Arendt deems absolute: after all, totalitarianism is permanently on a war footing.

BORN IN EXILE: DOUBLINGS AND LOST BEGINNINGS'

“Below one level, everybody’s horribly alike.”⁹
The Heat of the Day, which is set and was first drafted in London during the Blitz, includes a description of passengers alighting at Euston station: “Nobody could wait for the train to stop; everybody was hurling themselves on London as though they, too, must act upon some inhuman resolution before it died down.”¹⁰ The arresting final reference both to an “inhuman resolution” and to the possibility of its dying down is a marker, at a microscopic level of the novel, of its concern with various forms and metaphors compatible with human nothingness, particularly ghosts and machines. Robert Kelway has a deep sense of his own nothingness, declaring “I not only am not but never have been;”¹¹ when Harrison, the counter-spy, stands beside Stella, they have an “absolute inhumanity together” and Harrison appears as a ghost in her eyes;¹² while even when alone Stella picks up the ‘phone with “a mechanical reflex (...) to a mechanical thing.”¹³ Kelway’s

⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 152.

¹⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 201.

¹¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 129.

¹² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 155.

¹³ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 46.

betrayal of his country's secrets to the Nazis may correspond to an "inhuman resolution" cognate with modernity's transposition of humans into machines, that leitmotif of the 1920s *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) art that emerged on the eve of National Socialism and seems to anticipate the characterological uniformity (the *Gleichschaltung* (co-ordination)) it enforced. Here Bowen's strong investment in a wondrous Irish countryside constitutes an almost Wordsworthian alternative to wartime London, where technology is experienced primarily as delivering death. The inhumanity that interests Bowen is the borderland between the human and the ghostly inhabited by Robert, who describes the Nazi new order as "the beginning of a day."¹⁴ Insofar as the novel looks away from his treachery, never showing what he actually does (all we have is Harrison's vague outline of it),¹⁵ the focalization and viewpoint belong to Stella, who is perhaps inoculated against treachery, against believing it of Robert, and against the either/or thinking of warfare, through her connection with another country whose difference is not necessarily opposed to Britain and the Allies, neutral Ireland. As Harrison points out,¹⁶ her thought is not attuned to war. Nevertheless, the late obtrusion into her consciousness of William Wordsworth's Lucy poem "A slumber did my spirit seal"¹⁷ may bespeak an unconscious

¹⁴ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 308.

¹⁵ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 35.

¹⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 33.

¹⁷ Wordsworth, *Selected Poems of William Wordsworth*, 61-2.

realization of her possible blindness to the hollow core of Robert's nature. In abbreviating that poem's last two lines she both represses the potential for self-reproachful insight in its opening, titular line and admits the thought of dehumanization in death: "Rolled round with rocks and stones and trees,"¹⁸ like a screen memory, arguably hides the repression under the apparently tough-minded confrontation of death that is a leitmotif of existentialism.

Robert's love for Stella, for its part, has undertones as clearly related to incest and narcissism than Nazism. Narcissism and incestuousness intersect implicitly as the first two letters of Robert's name echo into both the first name of Stella's only son, Roderick, and her own surname, Rodney. The reverberating "Ro-" opening of three names ties in also with a concern with lost or failed beginnings, which itself is linked to doubling. The doubling becomes explicit when, home on leave and staying overnight at Stella's flat, Roderick dons Robert's dressing-gown, and later notes that both he and Robert are simultaneously with their mothers; and Robert too is younger than Stella. Stella's in-law Colonel Pole later confuses the names of the two men. Moreover, the first name of Harrison, who keeps tabs on Kelway for the British War Office, proves to be Robert, as Stella only learns near the end: his naming folding him ironically into his counterpart with a gesture of finality, as if all four cards of identity have now been played and shown to

¹⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 308.

be of one suit. Like Kelway, this Robert tells Stella he has never been loved.¹⁹

If doubling implicitly references a failed beginning, an individual's inability to establish truly independent existence, it may be unsurprising that failures of beginning recur in Bowen's work. I will quote only one example, which speaks of how the words of Robert and Stella's first exchange are lost due to the sound of bombs: "Most first words have the nature of being trifling; theirs from having been lost began to have the significance of a lost clue. What they next said, what they said instead, they forgot; there are questions which if not asked at the start are not asked later; so those they never did ask."²⁰ Relationship thus comes to rest on a footing both shaky and romantically mysterious.

Meanwhile, some later meditations on beginning conclude: "That first path, taken to be a false start – who was to know, after all, where it might not have led?"²¹ There is wit in that "after all:" a casual interjection that also raises the specter of how things might seem retrospectively, when the story is fit to be told, can be fitted to a frame. The concern with the false start is related to one with the origin of an evil, and the unwillingness of Louie, who carries the book's sub-plot, to ask her friend Connie how things had begun. In Robert's case, the place of evil's inception appears to be the family he sees his spying as negating, not realizing that it

¹⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 44, 362.

²⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 104.

²¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 146.

reproduces it, like a mirage on the far side of a temporal horizon; a phantom in one dimension, material in another. Home for Robert is where he never existed, as if always already ghostly: as if the photographs of him dotting his home room's wall, those material ghosts, have driven him from it. The Nazi obsession with Heim may itself reproduce an imagistic object of fixation, the uncanny mirage one cannot will across the horizon and into reality and which therefore spurs the crossing of so many borders in the Nazi imaginary. As Freud might have said of the uncanny, and as Bowen writes: "In the unfamiliar the familiar persisted like a ghost."²²

Loss of the beginning may even suggest a desire in Bowen to reproduce the effect of her own congenital stammer, which itself can figure a Symbolist hovering on the edge of the unsayable. It can figure a transgression's recurrence in various lives, as Bowen once stated "it is not only our fate but our business to lose innocence."²³ there can be no return to the Eden in which Eve's acknowledged emergence from Adam's body knit marriage, society and narcissism into an original, contradiction-free knot. Any return home occurs under the auspices of a nothingness echoed across the novel in such cognate words as "empty," "vacuum" and "vacancy." Tellingly, Robert describes freedom as a "vacuum" that sends people "trying to dive back into the womb."²⁴ His intended

²² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 107.

²³ Bloom, *The Bright Book of Life: Novels to Read and Reread*, 433.

²⁴ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 302.

criticism of others is also an unconscious self-diagnosis. It is when he and Stella visit his family's home that he says he has always felt non-existent, "that I not only am not but never have been."²⁵ that home, a mesh of apparently prophetic "swastika-arms of passage leading to nothing,"²⁶ always on the market, awaiting sale, in fact cancels the idea of home. Stella comments: "How can (...) anyone live in a place that has for years been asking to be brought to an end?"²⁷ It may be that, much as in the Weimar Germany that spawned the Nazism Robert now supports, a capitalist régime in which everything, like this house, is always marked as awaiting sale logically subverts the notion of allegiance brazenly liquidated thereafter by that movement's claim to be both nationalist and socialist. It slides continually across a foundation of betrayal, or self-betrayal, like that of Goebbels, who began as a socialist. If, as Robert Calasso argues, "Only when we become aware of a sudden consistency between incompatibles can we say we have crossed the threshold of myth,"²⁸ the mechanism driving totalitarianism's aspirations to mythical status stands revealed. The family in capitalism may have bred readiness for life within a totalitarian panopticon; thus Robert's sister Ernestine remarks that "as children we should have never dreamed of attempting to hide anything," perhaps largely because "[a]s for mother, she of course is

²⁵ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 129.

²⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 289.

²⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 133.

²⁸ Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, 22.

practically able to read thoughts.”²⁹ Noting that Mrs. Kelway’s armchair “commanded all three windows,” Stella wonders “[w]as this position strategic.”³⁰ One may become a spy so as to feel oneself unseen (again, as in Eden, hiding from God), to claim sole ownership of the eye and claim the ghostliness that bestows invisibility; in any case, one escapes a childhood, or childlike, oppression. Robert’s treachery, requiring him to conceal thoughts from his environment, may enact in extreme form the individualist imperatives of capitalism.

Robert comments near the end that doing what he did “undid fear. It bred my father out of me, gave me a new heredity.”³¹ The fear is one of the traditionally evil eye. One of its associations is with that most ontological affliction, shame: “Unstated indignities suffered by the father remained burned deeply into the son’s mind – Mr. Kelway, by his insistence on Robert’s constantly looking him in the eye, may have meant to challenge his son to recognize any one of them.”³² In the early twentieth century the evil associated with that eye becomes primarily one of inter-generational envy, that logical concomitant of the idea of progress, as the old contemplate youth. Totalitarianism prepares a continuation of the slaughter of the young initiated in World War One, which prompted Wilfred

²⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 207.

³⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 118.

³¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 307.

³² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 289.

Owen to rewrite the story of Abraham and Isaac so that the father ignores the ram and kills his son.³³ The endless steady-state of war sustaining the totalitarian regime requires equally endless youthful self-sacrifice. The young, alienated from possible identification with any parent, become available for conscription into a sliding set of new identifications whose mutual cancellation sets the seal on one's non-existence: the Big Other, no longer traditionally fatherly, hatches Big Brother, Big Mother. Robert's fear of the eye is in fact one of the totalitarian parent, who fuses father and mother to outflank the self, occupying both the space it can survey and its blind spot, surrounding one like its representative, the house.

ECHOING CHARACTERS

David Daiches once argued that Robert "is not, in fact, convincingly presented as a person who could turn traitor in this fashion," terming him rather "perhaps, the type of the Communist who turns over atom-bomb secrets to Russia"³⁴ (Rosamond Lehman viewed him similarly³⁵), he overlooked the character's existentialist, suicidal drive to turn a sense of non-existence to the good. Significantly, Arendt finds adherents of the totalitarianisms marked by a desire "to do something, heroic or criminal, which was

³³ Owen, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 4.

³⁴ Daiches, in Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer*, 311.

³⁵ Lehman, in Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer*, 151.

unpredictable and undetermined by anyone else,”³⁶ a motivation that marks both Robert and much existentialism. Daiches and Lehman may have superimposed upon him, with his relatively privileged background, the afterimage of the Oxbridge leftists and spies of the 1930s, or of a figure such as Arthur Koestler, of whose Communist phase Michael Scammell writes that “working in the clandestine world of the party appealed to Koestler’s romantic temperament,” while for him and his comrades “the party and the Communist International supplied the elements of “family and fatherland” they often missed in their own lives.”³⁷ Following another tack: whether Robert’s psychology could be illuminated, and rendered more plausible, by paralleling him in part with the even more privileged ‘traitor king,’ Edward VIII: who hated “bolshevism;” approved of National Socialism; envisaged a coming ““new order in Europe;”³⁸ whose life revolved romantically around a divorcée; who once stated that Wallis Simpson “gave me everything that I lacked from my family;”³⁹ and of whom his assistant private secretary said “[h]e hated his country since he had no soul,”⁴⁰ may seem far-fetched a priori, yet the comparison may

³⁶ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 329.

³⁷ Scammell, *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic*, 83-4.

³⁸ Lownie, *Traitor King: The Scandalous Exile of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, 155.

³⁹ Lownie, *Traitor King: The Scandalous Exile of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, 330.

⁴⁰ Lownie, *Traitor King: The Scandalous Exile of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, 12.

resonate. Daiches and Lehman, meanwhile, overlooked the mimesis of the two totalitarianisms and the frequency with which figures moved from extreme left to extreme right or vice versa. Arendt, surely more perspicaciously, interpreted the social atomization prevalent after World War One as fostering a general susceptibility to the “mass movements” that culminated in totalitarianism: the “atomized society which alone can be totally dominated.”⁴¹

As the novel’s principal names – Robert, Rodney, Roderick – echo one another, but only partially, they fuse into an incest that both is and is not, a ghostly event, both seen and unseen, like the transparencies traditionally representative of ghosts. It is also an echo of another triangle, the unacknowledged fusion of Charles Ritchie, the lover to whom the book was dedicated; Bowen’s husband Allan Cameron, who like Robert was wounded in a World War (in his case, the First); and Bowen herself (a quasi-spy in Ireland for the Ministry of Information during World War Two). If the echoing first letter suggests a transformation of Bowen’s own stammer, the word’s non-completion implies the pressure of taboo. The therefore unsurprisingly distanced, merely hinted status of the idea of incest is underlined by the restriction of more explicit reference to a subplot with Irish Cousin Francis and his Cousin Nettie, who says Francis wanted her as a wife,⁴² yet did not use that word. The echoes between the names, partial and partially

⁴¹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 485.

⁴² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 242.

unconscious, remove incest's ultimate contraction of relationship to fantasy, to inhabiting a realm of most deeply proscribed wishes. This is surely because incest represents romantic love in its most apocalyptic form, whose fulfilment would compromise procreation and begin to extinguish the human project. Thus, although Bowen does not make this connection explicitly – indeed, so much of the novel's intense life lies poetically between its lines – the heart of the Nazism that attracts Robert may lie in Wagnerism, in particular in the *Liebestod* consummating *Tristan und Isolde*. This love is just as taboo as selling one's country, a treachery it may transpose into another key. Only in the unconscious of Robert however does the fantasy approach achievement; Stella has no suspicion of his activities and learns of them only from the counter-spy Harrison, whose strangely doubled look may see what others cannot. Bowen herself, meanwhile, may practice a partial "libidinal withdrawal" founded on movement from one collectivity, that of England, to the Ireland where she was born and where Roderick receives his inheritance.

Bowen's novel prompts questions regarding the economy of desire in relation to totalitarianism; in particular, the compatibility of a romantic love founded on exclusivity and a collectivized system. Philip Slater remarks: "So long as an individual loves more than one person, he or she will (...) always remain available for collectivization."⁴³ But totalitarianism squares the circle, its

⁴³ Slater, *Footholds*, 115.

dialectical synthesis of diffusion and contraction of the objects of libidinal cathexis yielding an apparently maximal satisfaction, an apparent end of history and change: because the collective is incarnated in the leader, one can love that (but only that) one person without sacrificing love of, and enfolded in, the social totality. As the two opposed forms of love fuse, leader and collectivity both become inescapable. (Orwell's conclusion, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, that Winston Smith "loved Big Brother," may ground his novel's comparison to Bowen's even more firmly than the adjacency of their publication years.) This squaring of the circle is pinpointed in the conclusion of Bowen's narrator's musings on love: "To have turned away from everything to one face is to find oneself face to face with everything."⁴⁴ Facing everything fuses everything. It is as if all faces are layered into a blankness, a white screen for successive projections, of fear or of love, be it like the fearsome face apprehended in Bowen's story "The Demon Lover"⁴⁵ or the mutually substitutable faces of the different men Louie picks up in the novel's sub-plot. The two fuse when, shortly after Robert's proposal, Stella's assessment of its motive being that "it suddenly seems to you necessary to keep me under your eye"⁴⁶— "he fixed his eyes on her face — though

⁴⁴ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 218.

⁴⁵ Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, 661-6.

⁴⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 222.

somehow not, it appeared, on her. Nor did those eyes appear to her to be his – they were black-blue, anarchical, foreign.”⁴⁷

Such facial substitutions are common: Louie, described as “no sort,” a vacuum to be filled with the newspaper opinions a Heideggerian existentialism would ascribe to a “one who is no-one, is prone to “look for her husband in other faces” and “felt nearer Tom with any man than she did with no man.”⁴⁸ Robert meanwhile scrutinizes his niece Anne, “searching her face for the face of someone else,”⁴⁹ perhaps because “the woman she would become stared askance at him out of her child’s features.”⁵⁰ It is as if existentialist choice eschews the irrevocable, lest it limit its primary value of freedom: every face becomes implicitly transparent, inherently one with the ghosts that preoccupy Bowen. The face’s substitutability becomes part of existentialism’s project of constantly facing death. Loving everything becomes loving nothing, the resultant libidinal gain resembling the one informing Henri Bergson’s argument that negation is richer than positive assertion.⁵¹ No wonder Robert can tell Stella, near the end of their discussion of his proposal, “You know you see right through me,”⁵² as if the transparency the narrator saw affecting people in

⁴⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 221.

⁴⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 160.

⁴⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 295.

⁵⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 294.

⁵¹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 284.

⁵² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 223.

September 1940⁵³ had tinged him permanently: as if he too were as transparent as ghosts are assumed to be, their inveterate envy of the living stoked by their muscling out by the environments that manifest themselves through them, on which they can press no tangible claim. Reviewing a book of ghost stories, Bowen rejected the traditional view of ghosts as haunting particular locations, stating that “it would seem they adapt themselves well, perhaps better than we do, to changing world conditions – they enlarge their domain, shift their hold on our nerves and, dispossessed of one habitat, set up house in another.”⁵⁴ If “ghosts should today be ubiquitous,” she continues, it may be because although “Tradition connects them with scenes of violence...Our interpretation of violence is wider than once it was.” This greater width is also spatial, as “Who knows what has gone on, anywhere?”⁵⁵ One war may haunt another, a protagonist’s World War One lover reappearing in World War Two London; while, as Amy Bell notes, war itself forges a chain of substitutions: “Bowen’s *Demon Lover* is not war but something darker, deeper, and more private that war draws out.”⁵⁶ Part of Robert’s qualification to be Stella’s lover may lie in the repetition by his war-woundedness of that of her deceased husband Victor after “the 1914 war.”⁵⁷ No wonder Robert’s response to Stella’s suggestion that he must have had “moments” is

⁵³ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 100.

⁵⁴ Bowen, *Afterthought: Pieces About Writing*, 101.

⁵⁵ Bowen, *Afterthought: Pieces About Writing*, 102-3.

⁵⁶ Bell, ‘Landscapes of Fear: Wartime London, 1939-1945’, 175.

⁵⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 90.

“Imitation ones.”⁵⁸ No wonder that imitation characterizes Louie⁵⁹ and even Roderick, according to him “some way (...) even, you might say, to be.”⁶⁰

FACE DEFACED

The loss of the beginning described above can also be one of the face, the primary point of bodily orientation for the look. That loss partially reflects the spy’s own sacrifice of expressive appearance to the poker face. Such gambling is one form of his Nietzschean dangerous living. The loss is made easier by the degree to which totalitarian orders are founded on a mystification of the face of a leader. Hitler’s face is decontextualized, lapped by a black background on a famous election poster; as the *Two Minute Hate* in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* begins “[a]s usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People (...) flashed onto the screen”⁶¹ and as it ends an enemy soldier’s “hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother, black-haired, blackmoustachio’d, full of power and mysterious calm, and so vast that it almost filled up the screen.”⁶² Afterwards “the face of Big Brother seemed to persist for several seconds on the screen, as though the impact it had made

⁵⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 129.

⁵⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 13.

⁶⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 50.

⁶¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 15.

⁶² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 19.

on everyone's eyeballs was too vivid to wear off immediately."⁶³ It is clearly a version of the Face of God, of which it is as much an afterimage as totalitarianism is of a haunting religion, overpowering because isolated from anybody, any institution, and, therefore, able floatingly to dissolve the sense of distance on which viewer orientation rests. (The heady, 3-D quality of Bowen's world may even instantiate that dissolution, which she subjects at the same time to analytical slow motion.) The resultant potential closeness may betoken peculiar menace or radiate love. This face of course becomes multipliable in the age of mass reproducibility and so can become a material, and hence more widely credible, form of the divinity whose omnipresence it mimics. As it separates head from body, the photograph of the face adumbrates totalitarianism as a projection onto the body politic of the general fragmentation of bodies in modernity, whose machines and dynamite disintegrate them (war as "mechanized advances excoriating flesh and country"⁶⁴). Totalitarianism claims to be able to sew together again what has been separated completely by the technologies on which it depends, even as the operation's forcible nature gives the lie to its feasibility. The photograph is dialectical, an agent of separation whose legerdemain also delivers a new totality, that of the face, its blowing-up an explosion that is also a bellows' infusion of air into it, that Méliès trick.

⁶³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 20.

⁶⁴ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 157.

In a world of totalitarisms, even areas beyond its reach are only provisionally so, as they too display in incipient form the aporias it generates around the face. Thus, very early on in *The Heat of the Day*, the disparity between the profile and the more explicitly totalitarian full-face of the ‘absolute’ image yields a set of dualities, beginning with Louie’s reflections on Harrison’s eyes. “His “interestingness” – had that been a lie of his profile’s? No, not quite; now that she had him full-face a quite other curious trait appeared –one of his eyes either was or behaved as being just perceptibly higher than the other. This lag or inequality in his vision gave her the feeling of being looked at twice –being viewed then checked over again in the same moment.”⁶⁵ The duality also characterizes the phrasing, as in “was or behaved.” The wavering between the eyes may generate another “lag,” the recurrent problem with time signaled in the doubleness of the moment that allows a double-checking: thus the wrist-watches of Robert and Stella “which, in the time to come, were to come at some kind of relationship of their own by never perfectly synchronizing – found it, respectively, to be a minute before and a minute after half-past two;”⁶⁶ while, after a dream “even her wrist watch seemed to belie time; she fancied it had lost hours during the night, that this might be midday, even the afternoon – her first act, as she hurried into the street, was to look about in vain for a public clock.”⁶⁷ If studies of

⁶⁵ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 9.

⁶⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 107.

⁶⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 105.

totalitarianism often interpret its installation of a new temporality as reflecting its revolutionary ambitions, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for instance beginning with the clock striking thirteen, the enigmas surrounding temporality here suggest those of the oneiric paintings of De Chirico, which might be read as pre-fascist intimations of the effects of fascism's coming disorder of time; Bowen's own earlier work seemed uncannily to skip time when, in *To the North*, published in 1932, its protagonist Cecilia, seated in a train experienced as a "cattle truck," "sent one wild comprehensive glance round her fellow travelers, as though less happy than cattle, conscious, they were all going to execution."⁶⁸

The lag noted in the *Heat of the Day* passage quoted above correlates also with Stella's sense of participating in "two different stories."⁶⁹ When Louie perceives Harrison as "interesting" she is using a term Kierkegaard declared characteristic of "the present age" and "a border category (...) between esthetics and ethics;"⁷⁰ in other words, one symptomatic of a difficulty in fixing oneself in place. Bowen insists on the riven quality of a modernity that cannot simply paper over its contradictions with claims to have founded a new totality, for instance by dubbing itself "national socialism." Each leg of the would-be colossus stands on one side of an abyss that widens threateningly.

⁶⁸ Bowen *To the North*, 2.

⁶⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 149.

⁷⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling; Repetition*, 83.

During Stella's first conversation with Harrison, photographs of her son Roderick and her lover Robert are described: "the photographs were two dark unloving squares."⁷¹ Photographs are not necessarily triggers for or repositories of affection: here, it is as if they have been transformed into the windows which also do not transmit light, their blacking-out being mentioned repeatedly. Their covering against air-raids is the first task we see Stella perform. Later, having learned of Robert's spying, Stella tries to interpret his photograph by invoking her memory of her brothers, who by way of contrast "had left no trace. They had been made heroes while things were simple: heroes were the creatures of a simplicity now gone, he said. But had they left no trace – the revulsion in her against his act? The sale of the country.... She looked at this photograph, on this chimney-piece, of the man in the other room, at the black-and-white of what was forever dissolved for her into the features of love – at the same time, they were the mold of what? Twisted inspiration, a sort of recalcitrance in the energy, romanticism fired once too often. The face of a latecomer. He had been right: time makes the only fatal differences of birth. He was right: it was not for her brothers or their sister to judge him."⁷² "Had been" right or "was": how much difference is made by the one between those temporal forms?

In any case, seeing a photograph need not involve looking at it: one may fear to sow the seed of a look back experienced as

⁷¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 58.

⁷² Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 312.

accusatory, or the almost inevitable confrontation with absence. For Louie, the formal photograph of her husband Tom records “the face of a man already gone (...) the eyes looking straight, measuringly, unexpectedly at nothing.” The image registers an absence giving the lie to an ostensible presence. Thus “[t]o attempt to enter or intercept that look at no one was to become no one – after which how was anything to be the same again, ever?”⁷³ Is this the Nietzschean abyss, to stare at which is to find it staring back at oneself? Might this nothingness be another form of the evil anchored in the blank face in Bowen’s chilling short story “The Demon Lover”? In *The Death of the Heart*, the orphaned adolescent Portia falls in love with Eddie, only to discover, as Harold Bloom puts it, “that there is no one there to love. Eddie is a blank.”⁷⁴ In the same novel, meanwhile, the narrator remarks that for a romantic man “his love seems to hit the ideal mark somewhere between two different faces”⁷⁵ in other words, is both haunting and never really there, because outside time. The non-existence Robert discerns in himself mirrors the vaporization of the community around him, which begins with the family and the idea of home. If Arendt is correct to argue that “[i]n rootless evil; there is no person left whom one could forgive,”⁷⁶ one may wonder how close Robert’s self-perception

⁷³ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 176.

⁷⁴ Bloom, *The Bright Book of Life: Novels to Read and Reread*, 429.

⁷⁵ Bowen, *The Death of the Heart*, 105.

⁷⁶ Heberlein, *On love and tyranny; the life and politics of Hannah Arendt*, 244.

places him to a condition in which ‘there is no person left,’ except that of the ghosts that recur across the novel; while the proposition that may fix him with deadly seriousness becomes satirical, of course, in the case of the Eichmann Arendt adjudged as the embodiment of what she famously (for some, infamously), termed “the banality of evil.”

Another word for the place of the ideal face imagined by the romantic may be ‘abeyance,’ a word used in relation to Tom’s photograph: “The frame with the regimental crest held a picture that was at the best abeyance – at the worst, there came out of it a warning to the bottom of her heart, that no return can ever make restitution for the going away. You may imitate but cannot renew safety.”⁷⁷ “Abeyance” is also used to describe Stella’s own look after Robert’s death, which becomes as focused on nothing as Tom’s in his photograph. Thus “She seemed to be someone for the first time finding herself alone among humanity. At the same time, the conveyance of that look of hers from one to another face was to be taken as the one sign of life: otherwise, this person sat like an image, upright against the grime-impregnated tapestry of the compartment, dead gloved hands crossed in her lap, palms up. There were moments, between its being a look at faces, when the look became not a look at all; but then invariably, as though in recoil from its own abeyance, it would turn to the window, taking the head with it.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 176.

⁷⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 329.

THE GROTESQUE, THE DOUBLE, AND THE GHOST

On learning of Robert's adherence to National Socialism, Stella remarks that "It's not just that they're the enemy, but that they're horrible – specious, unthinkable, grotesque." Robert picks up that final adjective and argues that although this new order may look grotesque at present, that is how things are at birth: "In birth, remember, anything is grotesque. (...) 'You may not like it, but it's the beginning of a day.'"⁷⁹ The answer to the question why anything undergoing birth should seem grotesque may lie in its possession of the double body ascribed to it in Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization of the grotesque (of which more below). The process of becoming may indeed seem grotesque, involving things inadequate to their own concepts, the forms they only shadow forth. This model of partial realization gains force through its resemblance to one advanced in a very different ideological context, C.S. Lewis's description of the process of a Christian's transformation during life, with its implicit reference to Pegasus. For Lewis, this sanctification "is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature." As this happens "there may be a period, while the wings are just beginning to grow, when it cannot do so: and at that stage the lumps on the shoulders –

⁷⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 308.

no one can tell by looking at them that they are going to be wings – may even give it an awkward appearance.”⁸⁰ The grotesque may be declared impossible (that key-word of this novel) because not yet fully itself.

The grotesque is another form of the double, the double body a marker of incomplete birth, one body only partially separated from another, which may be its old home. Moreover, it is not only, as Bakhtin comments, “not separated from the rest of the world:” “it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits.”⁸¹ Bakhtin’s focus is on a physical body from whose orifices unsolidified or still unnamed matter (which may be a child) emerges. Robert’s case involves a new body of thought that to some extent still lacks substance, for all its growth, like the shadow that obsessed German Expressionism because it could wax ambitiously larger than the person casting it and so adumbrate both the impressive dimensions of a “new man” and the dangers of unfettered desire. (Few Expressionists guessed what would become of that “New Man” under National Socialism, though Fritz Lang’s wife Thea von Harbou arguably had a good idea and approved.) Robert’s interest is surely in the self-transgression Bakhtin mentions: the Nietzschean existential freedom whose dynamism may be set against the more Heideggerian existentialism of Being instantiated in Bowen’s Ireland. Bowen’s engagement with the European thought of the mid-century is thus serious, if

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 180-1.

⁸¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 26.

allegorical, as it names no names. And here Bergson may be relevant again, as he might have interpreted the German interest in shadow and Mephistophelean negativity, had it drawn his attention, in terms of his reading of negation as containing more than positive assertion, as it augments the assertion with the thing that negates it⁸²: Mephisto's negations may be linked to his offer to Faust of more than the simply present world. Thus in the name "National Socialism" the adjective functions as a negation, indicating an anti-socialism's incorporation of socialism, feeding on it to destroy it. Its oxymoron is indeed what Stella calls it, "unthinkable" (no wonder a key word of the novel is "impossible") – for that unthinkable status stymies effective initial opposition to it. National Socialism posits a new totality – or as Robert puts it, an order – grotesquely in the making, as it spans the ideological field, encompassing both the nationalistic and the socialistic. (Its contemporary adversary, Stalinism, would arguably do likewise by proclaiming "socialism in one country," while retaining the international arm of agitation known as Comintern.) Potential opponents are meant to be nonplussed by the paradox, outflanked by an ideological pincer movement.

If Stella is more obviously a double or "possible self" for Bowen, a refined and patriotic woman with family links to Ireland (a concern with the nature or replicability of selfhood motivating the frequent references to what is either possible or impossible),

⁸² Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 284.

Stella's lover Robert is so too, and Robert is one even for Stella. Both lovers are wounded outcasts, though they map out logically contrasted responses to that woundedness: Stella accepting her maligning in the false version of her marriage's breakdown current among her in-laws; Robert, reacting bitterly against a familial woundedness repeated doubly in the defeat of Dunkirk, from which he says no-one came back, and his physical wounding. If Stella is prepared to accept the consequences of the misapprehensions concerning the responsibility for her divorce, assuming a blame that in fact lay with her husband, another story wounds her more by its incompleteness; by its failure (as if she too were indeed Bowen's double, a novelist) to assume the proper shape of a story. Thus she confesses to Harrison that she is haunted by the way his departure after Robert's death deprived her of knowledge of the whole story, and therefore of healing. As she puts it: "What's unfinished haunts one; what's unhealed haunts one."⁸³ And a sense of haunting characterizes Bowen too; an author of ghost stories who presents bombed London as replete with ghostly presences, stories broken off as abruptly as the buildings in which they were playing out. An astonishing passage describes how "the dead, from mortuaries, from under cataracts of rubble, made their anonymous presence – not as today's dead but as yesterday's living – felt through London. Uncounted, they continued to move in shoals through the city day, pervading everything to be seen or heard or

⁸³ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 362.

felt with their torn-off senses, drawing on this tomorrow they had expected – for death cannot be so sudden as all that.”⁸⁴ Commenting on ghosts in a review of *The Second Ghost Book*, Bowen remarks “[t]radition connects them with scenes of violence – are we now to take it that any and every place is, has been or may be a scene of violence?”⁸⁵ A Londoner during the Blitz, Bowen may well have answered yes to her own question.

A note of spectral presence is struck almost at the outset, however, well before the evocation of Harrison’s “inhumanity” as that of a variety of ghost, in the description of the musicians at the outdoor afternoon concert he and Louie attend. “On the stage, the musicians’ grouped black seated bodies had fastened to them the faces and hands of ghosts.”⁸⁶ Possibilities of absence and alternative, ghostly meaning also slide through sentences as the book frequently omits the commas that would normally separate three successive adjectives (a Keatsian tic accompanying its equally Keatsian sensuousness, the senses’ overwhelming by experiences deprived of pauses for breath). This issue becomes explicit in Roderick’s comments on the commas’ absence from one sentence of the will bequeathing Mount Morris to him. Noting the ambiguity of one key sentence (“In the hope that he may care in his own way to carry on the old tradition”) Roderick laments “Why

⁸⁴ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 99.

⁸⁵ Bowen, *Afterthought: Pieces About Writing*, 102.

⁸⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 11.

must lawyers always take out commas?"⁸⁷ The two possible readings created by this underpunctuation form a gap through which any clear notion of tradition, of handing on, seeps away. As Nietzsche might have said: no divine order without grammar. The sentence lacking commas between its adjectives effectively summons up the ghost of another sentence, where their presence would create another meaning. The result is an openness found also in Stella's final exchange with Harrison. She remarks: "I always have left things open. – As a matter of fact, though, I think the raid's over." / "In that case..." said Harrison, looking at his watch. "Or would you rather I stayed till the All Clear?"⁸⁸ Things are left hanging, unhealed, and there is no "All Clear" in relationships. (The totalitarian order seeks to remove the sense of haunting not by healing or reconciliation with the other but by 'finishing off' the other story, the alternative, just as it breeds out of Robert any relationship to his father,⁸⁹ to tradition; tellingly, Roderick remarks that Robert "never did seem (...) to be living anywhere very particular."⁹⁰) Only in the subsequent dénouement of the subplot, an ironic satyr play to the main tragedy, does resolution occur: a child is born to Louie, the death in service of her husband averting a possibly fraught reunion, and swans rather than planes fly as a coda, nature's fly-past denying persistence to

⁸⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 95.

⁸⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 363.

⁸⁹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 307.

⁹⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 336.

the instruments of war. Their westward flight is also a self-deprecating, contrapuntal restatement of Bowen's own main positive, which sets the old orders of Ireland, Nature and inheritance over against Robert's "new order." Yet Ireland, as experienced by Stella and her son Roderick on separate visits, is a complexly Wordsworthian positive, far-removed both from the hollow familial order that causes Robert to recoil and from a haunted London. It resembles Wordsworth's notion of "stepping westward" in his poem of the same title, as the day accrues length to suggest immortality; taking the same trajectory, travelling to Ireland, Stella "had forgotten that by travelling west you enter longer days"⁹¹ (that possible unconscious motivation of migration, so much of which moves westward), while Wordsworth's poem describes doing so at sunset as "A kind of heavenly destiny" on an "endless way," asking "who would stop, or fear to advance, Though home or shelter he had none, / With such a sky to lead him on?"⁹² Tradition persists not as direct lineage but through the knight's move, the obliquity of Cousin Francis's unexpected bequest to Roderick. Insofar as existentialism marks the novel, in Stella's case it is the Heideggerian sense of Being both she and Roderick experience in Ireland; in Robert's, that of a Nietzschean dangerous life. It may be a measure of Bowen's patriotism that she indicates only fragmentarily the path that has led Robert to betray: because she cannot identify with it in full. Yet her own family's

⁹¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 180.

⁹² Wordsworth, *Selected Poems of William Wordsworth*, 96-7.

history of mental troubles may have rendered her well-equipped to diagnose Robert's trajectory as a misguided quest for healing, a Nietzschean choice of espionage as the living dangerously that seeks to counter the decadence he discerns in himself, as did Nietzsche. (Bowen's intense preoccupation with a post-Nietzschean consciousness spills over into a short story published during her work on *The Heat of the Day*, "Summer Night," one of whose characters, Justin, states that "We've precipitated, this moment, between genius and death," envisages a "new form (...) on the far side of the nothing," and seeks an "I not 'I:'" in his case the danger towards which he edges would involve expressing his homosexual impulses⁹³; while the concern with espionage is transposed into another character's sense of her house as a place where "the enemy is within it, creeping about."⁹⁴) For Robert Kelway, living dangerously may involve courting death, as despite his limp he seeks to escape arrest by leaving Stella's apartment across rooftops, with his subsequent fall accompanied by a suggestion of suicide (the ghost of another reading of events). The story rounded out by a death has the shape of a whole story of a man tragically lacking in wholeness and yet it is marked as not rounded out by its coda in the excessively resolved subplot with Louie.

TIME AND SHADOWS IN A PANOPTICON

⁹³ Bowen, *Look at All Those Roses: Short Stories*, 194-5.

⁹⁴ Bowen, *Look at All Those Roses: Short Stories*, 209.

In the conditions of permanent war established by totalitarianism, all are subject to monitoring: society is recast in the mold of the panopticon. War's aftershocks rumble through everyday consciousness and penetrate even to the unconscious. Thus Stella's shock over Harrison's correct estimate of the moment when she tipped-off Robert that he was being surveilled, unacknowledged consciously, is displaced into a distorted perception of the restaurant where she is sitting: "Space between the counter and the tables was by this time congested by standing groups, holding glasses, looking (it seemed to her) with stunned calculation into each other's faces. She got the impression that news unheard by her had detonated dully among these people, without causing a blink to the lights or a shock to anyone. Perhaps the fact was that the seeing of everybody by everybody else with such awful nearness and clearness was already enough. They were neither smart nor shabby, drunk nor sober, saved not damned – born extras, if anything too many."⁹⁵ The fellow-diners are unshocked, of course, for the shock is in her; and that internal detonation manifests itself centrifugally, radiating out into London, like the landscape reverberating round the protagonist of Edvard Munch's *Scream*. If others are "born extras," it is because they are extraneous to the triangle of Stella's drama.

⁹⁵ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 260.

The effect on Harrison of Louie having watched him is that “[s]he had given him, the watcher, the enormity of the sense of having been watched. New, only he knew how new, to emotional thought, he now saw, at the first of his lapses, the whole of its danger – it made you act the thinker. He could, now, do not better than travesty, repeat in order to judge exactly how much it showed, his originally unconscious trick of the hands; he recalled this trick in his father, not before in himself – but it must have been waiting for him.”⁹⁶ The question is one of time: as in Proust, the ancestor manifests himself unexpectedly yet inevitably in his successor’s body, at the appointed hour. This repetition becomes the unconscious form of persistence of a tradition consciously rejected. Movement betrays Harrison’s duality and self-doubling, his status as both self and father, and hence in a sense a double for Robert, also preoccupied with his relationship with his father and seeking to flush him out of his own body.

Insofar as Robert “breeds out of himself” all relationship not only to father but to country, his choice is one of an existential freedom that – ironically – rejects the idea of destiny so often invoked by the National Socialist order he espouses. (Stella, for her part, sees her son, Roderick, in an implicit contrast with Robert of which she is unconscious, as “fitted into a destiny; better, it seemed to her, than freedom in nothing”⁹⁷: the “nothing” that is a keyword of the novel. Her life meanwhile is characterized less by destiny

⁹⁶ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 11.

⁹⁷ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 194,

than, as if in a Heideggerian wordplay, by a “destination” by definition “unknowable.”⁹⁸) The idea of destiny may however be undermined by the modernity it camouflages: National Socialism decrees the past subaltern; for all its invocations of national heritage, it was technologically modernizing, yoking technology to the administration of such age-old prejudices as anti-Semitism. Its signature image may be the shadow of Hitler’s plane traversing medieval Nuremberg in Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*. Reflecting on the notion of destiny, the conservative thinker Ortega y Gasset reads any compromising of commitment to it as indicative of a fundamental falsity, as “abasement” characterizes “the manner of life of the man who has refused to be what it is his duty to be:” “his genuine being, none the less does not die; rather, is changed into an accusing shadow, a phantom which constantly makes him feel the inferiority of the life he lives compared with the one he ought to live. The debased man survives his self-inflicted death.”⁹⁹ That “self-inflicted death” is apparent in the shadowiness of his subsequent life (arguably rendering Robert unreadable also to such critics as Daiches and Lehman); it is modelled in the life in the shadows known as espionage, as mask replaces face, and the mask’s eyes, those remnants of the face, become objects of repugnance (looking at Harrison, Stella recalls “how embarrassingly repugnant the human eye, in almost all cases, was

⁹⁸ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 218.

⁹⁹ Ortega, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 79.

found by Robert”¹⁰⁰). In this context the word “double” could be substituted for Ortega’s cognate one, “shadow,” as well as Bowen’s haunting “ghost.” After all, the stories of the selling of the self’s image in the German Romanticism invoked and travestied by the Nazis include both E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “Story of the Lost Reflection” and Chamisso’s story of Peter Schlemihl, who sells his shadow, each of them anticipating the later national quest for “a place in the sun.” The double serves self-assertion by facilitating social mobility in a scenario of obsessive interest to German speakers, that of *The Student of Prague*, filmed three times in successive decades up to and including the one dominated by National Socialism. That self-assertion cuts all links to origins and finally unveils its status as a form of suicide – that key theme of existentialism, which here feeds into totalitarianism – when the student who has sold his reflection to advance socially stabs his independent mirror-image, and himself dies: an event that doubles the initial suicide of the reflection’s sale itself, placing the entire transaction in a fantastic time outside time. Because the German desire for ‘a place in the sun’ comes late in the colonial day, it generates a long shadow fantastically unlike its owner, and hence more likely to haunt than be realized. *The Student of Prague*’s story of doubling arguably casts a forward shadow as pregnant as that of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, in which Siegfried Kracauer located a

¹⁰⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 254.

teleology summed up in the title of his history of Weimar cinema: *From Caligari to Hitler* (Kracauer).

THE USES OF FICTION: NON-EXISTENCE AS HOME

At one point it is said of Harrison: “By the rules of fiction, with which life to be credible must comply, he was as a character “impossible” – each time they met, for instance, he showed no shred or trace of having been continuous since they last met. His civilian clothes, though one could be remotely conscious of alternation in suit or shirt or tie, seemed to vary much less than Robert’s uniform; the uninterestingly right state of what he wore seemed less to argue care – brushing, pressing, changes of linen – than a physical going into abeyance, just as he was, with everything he had on him, between appearances. “Appearance,” in the sense used for a ghost or an actor, had, indeed, been each of these times the word. Coming out of that vacuum, the reiterated unrelated story of his desire could but be unmeaning.”¹⁰¹ Ghosts of course tend to be unvarying in appearance, frozen forms advertising the shock of often sudden death, their traditional whiteness like a held reflection of the immobilizing stab of a flash-bulb. No wonder therefore that Bowen’s characters often peruse photographs, whose linkage to the ghostly begins in the spirit-photographs of the nineteenth century,

¹⁰¹ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 155.

long before photography's correlation with an essential ghostliness by Sontag and Barthes among others. When Bowen writes of her difficulty in achieving the "slow combustion" of the novel, having instead the short-story writer's liking for "flashes,"¹⁰² she pinpoints a virtual identity between the short story and the ghost story that is one of the genres she favors.

Throughout her work, Bowen is preoccupied with characters who feel/fear they may not exist. In her second novel, *The Last September*, Laurence experimentally rearranges married couples so that this novel's protagonist, Lois, never came into being. Even if existent, she would be at best a "born extra." Fiction therefore may be for Bowen, an "anti-Laurence," a privileging of the otherwise unprivileged, the non-existent, in reversal of the order of this world. A diary account by Charles Ritchie, Bowen's lover, of an exchange between Bowen and himself, suggests Stella's dialogue with Robert: "When she said "I love you," I said "There is nothing there to love."¹⁰³ A letter Bowen wrote shortly before (June 30th 1946) recounts experiencing Ritchie as simultaneously present and absent, recalling her imagery of ghosts and transparency: "I had a most uncanny moment the other day in daylight; I was coming down the last flight of stairs into the hall and thought I saw the outlines of someone standing (as though on the step, having rung the bell and now waiting for

¹⁰² Bowen, *Afterthought: Pieces About Writing*, 93.

¹⁰³ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love's Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 107.

the door to open) on the other side of those painted glass panels on the front door. I felt certain it would be you – saw, in anticipation, the clothes you would be wearing, your attitude, the expression on your face. I opened the door but of course there was no one there....”¹⁰⁴ That sense of the uncanny suggests deep identification with Ritchie, the non-existence before her a projection of the self that one cannot see. Privileging non-existence, writing fiction, transposes self into other and vice versa. Something of this kind marks a later letter to Ritchie, dated 18th November 1946: “My darling.... All this last week I’ve been in a state of submerged sadness, that frightens me. It’s nothing my mind can explain so it’s nothing my mind can cope with. It’s like something supernatural. It goes on underneath whatever is happening in the day, and at night I have dreams I can’t remember but which leave me when I wake up with a feeling of loss and fear. I think you feel like this more often than I do: with me till now sadness has always been something definite and explicable that I could fight against. It makes me wonder whether it’s true that when two people have been as much and as close together as you and I have lately, their blood-streams (sic) really do get mixed up, so that the nature of one begins to circulate through the nature of the other.”¹⁰⁵ The mingling of bloodstreams suggests what happened in the writing of *The Heat of*

¹⁰⁴ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love’s Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 94.

¹⁰⁵ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love’s Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 99-100.

the Day, which she called “your and my book,” adding that “[s]hort of there having been a child there could be no other thing that was more you and me.”¹⁰⁶ The ghost, like fiction, disembodies the afterlife that might have assumed form in a child, and viewing it resembles the seeing of Charles in every room she called “in the happiest sense a haunting.”¹⁰⁷ Sadness is linked both to a feared ordinariness and to madness. Thus she remarks in another letter that “[t]he moment one is sad one is ordinary. If you notice, nobody in Shakespeare (Shakespeare having no use for ordinary people) is ever just sad. They have moments of interesting melancholy, listening to music and referring to violets, but once there is any question of being just sad, they step right off the edge of that into one or another kind of lunacy.’ Thus ‘[s]adness seems to take away all one’s powers – it’s like getting something into one’s eyes so that one can’t see properly (...).”¹⁰⁸ If that failure to see properly surely correlates the ‘uncanny moment’ of June 30th 1946 with the mode of perception that conjures ghosts, similar perceptions may also characterize a totalitarian order in which the afterimage of Big Brother persists “on everyone’s eyeballs,”¹⁰⁹ even after the screen has gone blank. Is Big Brother the ghost by whom one cannot but

¹⁰⁶ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love’s Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love’s Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 134.

¹⁰⁸ Bowen and Ritchie, *Love’s Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie...*, 121.

¹⁰⁹ Orwell, *1984*, 20.

be haunted, as the novel separates out into mutually-echoing characters the multiple desires focused in his image (for “everybody’s horribly alike”¹¹⁰), which then all echo one another, omnipresent, both God and crowd?

¹¹⁰ Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 152.

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Xián-Lois Alcayde-Dans

ORCID: 0000-0002-5041-6587; loiscalcaydedans@gmail.com

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela

Xosé-Antonio Neira-Cruz

ORCID: 0000-0002-9669-0661; neira.cruz@usc.es

Universidade de Santiago de Compostela

**POETICS AGAINST DOMINATION:
ALBERT CAMUS AND MANUEL RIVAS IN
THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
“REBELLIOUS MAN”**

**POETYKA PRZECIW DOMINACJI –
ALBERT CAMUS I MANUEL RIVAS JAKO
TWÓRCY “CZŁOWIEKA
ZBUNTOWANEGO”**

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we propose the hypothesis of the presence of an emancipatory discourse that denies totalitarianism in a political space dominated by the absurd in a selection of literary works by Galician author Manuel Rivas and French-Algerian Albert Camus. For this task, we take as a starting point a selection of the works of thought of both writers, which are, in Rivas, the cases of *The Carpenter's Pencil* and

the story *The language of the Butterflies*, from the book *Honey, What Do You Want From Me*. From the work of Albert Camus we select the novel *The Plague*. Our approach is based on the work of the Essex School in relation to discourse theory, whose development serves for the discursive analysis of the extracts from selected works in dialogue with their adaptations to individual language, with the interest of verifying if it can be related in our comparative reading, the linguistic with the political. We then address the question of whether it is possible to identify the construction of this "Rebel Man" in the two chosen authors, and if this construction of the politician occurs through the process of metaphors.

Keywords: totalitarianism, politics, rebel man, Albert Camus, Manuel Rivas, metaphors

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule postawiono hipotezę o obecności dyskursu emancypacyjnego negującego totalitaryzm w przestrzeni politycznej zdominowanej przez absurd w wybranych dziełach literackich galicyjskiego pisarza Manuela Rivas i francusko-algierskiego twórcy Alberta Camusa, negującego totalitaryzm w przestrzeni politycznej. W tym celu za punkt wyjścia obrano zbiór dzieł i myśli obu pisarzy – M. Rivas *Ołówek stolarza* i *Język motyli* z książki *Kochanie, czego chcesz ode mnie? Z twórczości Alberta Camusa analizujemy Dżumę*. Nasze podejście opiera się na pracach Szkoły z Essex – w odniesieniu do teorii dyskursu, której rozwój będzie służył dyskursywnej analizie fragmentów wybranych dzieł w dialogu z ich adaptacjami do indywidualnego języka w celu sprawdzenia, czy można je powiązać z lekturą porównawczą – na styku języka i polityki. Autorzy zadają sobie zasadnicze pytanie: czy możliwe jest zidentyfikowanie konstrukcji "człowieka zbuntowanego" u dwóch wybranych autorów, oraz czy konstrukcja polityczna ta dokonuje się literacko poprzez metafory.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, polityka, buntownik, Albert Camus, Manuel Rivas, metafory

THE CAMUSIAN “REBELLIOUS MAN” AND HIS ANTAGONISTIC BASE

In his essay *Against All This. A rebellious manifesto*, Manuel Rivas notes that “what is not seen, what cannot be seen, what would be better not to see. The shame helps you see. It is not an outcome, it is a beginning.”¹ There are two words: “shame” and “not” – one for the sense of exceeding one's own integrity, i.e. of a border; and another, the second one, for the consequent action in denying the exteriority that threatens one's own border, which allow us to open this article with a cause and a consequence that result in a certain paradox that we believe interesting to expose two authors who are, in turn, journalists authors of opinion and contemporary thinkers.

To produce what we bring up from Rivas' writing, i.e. the concept of “shame”, we first have to express what exceeds the border, that is, how to say “no” and, in turn, when expressing the “no.”² We denote shame for the border exceeded, for the limit transgressed by totalitarianism embodied in violence, the one that in Camus translates into something that “wants to preserve”, that “is worthwhile”, as a certain notion, we appreciate, of a “we”, an “us”, as a community, as an aggregation of events against hatred, a

¹ Manuel Rivas, *Contra Todo Isto. Un manifesto rebelde*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2018), 13.

² Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde. Obras III*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 29.

defense of the worthy against that which undermines that sameness. Let's approach these two concepts proposed by two authors, separated in space and time, but with similar sensibilities in relation to these two terms.

We start from the premise of the actor role of “shame” that leads, in this logic of meaning, in rebellion, in the “no” to a situation prior to denial as the first active principle of rupture, that of Rivas, which we want to put in dialogue with Camus. The first, like the Franco-Algerian, starts from the indignation, so it means, the “shame”, as a principle of rebellion and, therefore, as a driving principle of a counter-hegemonic action, that is, against an established order that justifies, in its innate incompleteness, the always necessary openness or constitutive lack that serves as a field for the existence of a critical reply. From a rebellion to a sense of order, in a few words. In Camus the perception of one's self, which opens his work *The Rebellious Man*, comes with the negation, which in turn is an affirmation. The negation implies antagonism, because it denies the presence of another. In a few words: if the “other” is, I cannot be. This vision relates to the proposal from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They define antagonism as something that “prevents me from being totally myself.”³

³ It is of interest to return to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* for deepen in the perception of the “other” and that serves as a starting point to include that otherness in the exercise that Camus carries out with the event of “shame”, which is the source of rebellion. The configuration of the rebellious man as an incomplete element that needs the bond of rebellion to overflow his

To the extent that there is antagonism I cannot be a full presence for myself. But neither is the force that antagonizes me: its objective being is a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overwhelmed by a plurality of senses that prevents it from being fixed as full positivity. [...]. Antagonism constitutes the limits of all objectivity—which reveals itself as objectification, partial and precarious. If language is a system of differences, antagonism is the failure of difference [...] ⁴

Albert Camus limits the intended order by establishing a border between denial and affirmation. So, he writes: “What is a rebellious man? A man who says no. But to deny is not to give up: he is also a man who says yes from his first move.”⁵ On the one hand, there is the negation of what there is and, on the other hand, the necessary negativity that is inferred from that negation by opening, only with its invocation, only by, precisely, the “shame”⁶, a window to the alternative, that is, to its limitation, to its reality or antagonistic possibility. The term, that of antagonistic, which in our thesis is built based on what is contributed by theorists such as the Belgian author Chantal Mouffe.

being, to “fracture it” [Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996)], 33.]

⁴ Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 168.

⁵ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 29.

⁶ Here the concept of “shame” shows its openness. This word acts as a metaphor, so it implies more than one meaning. It also works as a trigger of the Camus’s “rebellious men”. The metaphor of “shame” is needed if the “Rebel Man” has to exist.

Antagonism, therefore, far from being an objective relation, is a relation in which the limits of all objectivity are shown—in the sense in which Wittgenstein said that what cannot be said can be shown—. But if, as we have seen, the social exists as a partial effort to institute society—that is, an objective and closed system of differences—. Antagonism, as a witness to the impossibility of an ultimate suture, is the "experience" of the limit of the social.⁷

In *A Rebellious Man*, Camus tells us that the human being realizes his state as a human, as a conscious being, as an entity we do not know if emancipated or in the process of emancipation, and his position in the *ethos* when he recognizes the emotion of “shame”, when he relates to “shame” the rest of things that happen to this human being. So “shame” acts as a metaphor that makes him perceive that lack of completeness within the individual, that pain of the abuse inferred from the unequal position that is, for Camus, the first frontier that already distinguishes a “we” and a “they”.

⁷ Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 169.

It means, for example, "things have already lasted too long [...] "you go too far" and "there is a limit that you will not exceed". In short, that "no" affirms the existence of a border. The same idea of limit is again found in the rebel's feeling that the other is "exaggerating", that he extends his right beyond a border from which another right confronts him and limits him [...].⁸

In *The Plague*, the very situation of exception that the pandemic grants Camus makes the narrative fact an experiment of, almost, surrealism, where rats, from the first pages, appear in the hotel where Rieux and his mother live, in the streets of Oran, where the narrator tells us that rats, as the days go by, accumulate, dead, in the corners, on the doors of the houses, as if it were an episode of biblical plague, inconceivable in our normality.

Our fellow citizens, they now realized, had never thought that our city could be a particularly suitable place for rats to go out to die in the sun or for porters to perish of strange diseases. From that point of view in short, they were in error and their ideas demanded to be revised. If everything had remained in that, customs would have continued to prevail.⁹

A few pages later, the narrator himself explains how "this cannot last, it is too stupid,"¹⁰ which again emphasizes the intention

⁸ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 29.

⁹ Albert Camus. *La Peste*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Madrid: Edhasa, 2010), 30.

¹⁰ Albert Camus. *La Peste*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Madrid: Edhasa, 2010), 45.

of relationship between "absurdity" and death, which will be the tonic of the whole novel. This altered normality creates a state of absurdity where "the totalitarian" exists. In this atmosphere of the absurd where there is no "truth", so no one can relate to any certainty, the exception is rule. This notion comes from the German author Carl Schmitt. Schmitt, a theorist of the political in a particular conservative way, says that any political system can be constructed without the concept of "exception". "Exception", in his own words, "escapes from the general formula, but, in time, it reveals in all of its purity a specifically formal and legal term, the decision."¹¹ In this absurdity that Camus narrates the loss of life makes suffering something ordinary, it becomes the perfect totalitarian spring, since it makes every terrible experience uniform with the ordinary: "Two thieves were shot, but it is doubtful that this caused any impression on the others, because, in the midst of so many deaths, those two executions went unnoticed: they were a drop of water in the sea."¹²

War, also absurd, also deserves mention by the author since, although it is "stupid", it does not mean "that it does not last"¹³. The executor of this exception is the plague itself, there is no

¹¹ Carl Schmitt, *Teología política I e II; Ex captivitate salus*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2022).

¹² Albert Camus. *La Peste*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Madrid: Edhasa, 2010), 196.

¹³ Albert Camus. *La Peste*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Madrid: Edhasa, 2010), 45.

human hand, it is the evolution of events, it is, within an existentialist perspective, the absurd condition that determines, before a powerless man, the arrival of death and destruction. But our Rieux, the Camusian protagonist, rebels in a love of life that makes him not resign himself thanks to the shame consubstantial to his existence. In order to exist, the Camusian man has to denote “shame”.

THE RIVASIAN “INDIGNANT MAN” AND HIS BASIS IN “SHAME”

In the work of thought of Manuel Rivas, “shame” also has an important role, almost essential. In Manuel Rivas, we observe that the “first step” of the individual is the same “rebellion”. The way this rebellion appears is, as it happens in Camus’s works, caused by “an injustice” says Rivas. Thanks to that “injustice”, “the shame can appear.”¹⁴¹⁵

¹⁴ Manuel Rivas, *Zona a defender. A esperanza indócil*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2020), 14.

¹⁵ Because for this article the originals of Manuel Rivas were used in two editions in Galician language. Therefore, it is necessary to indicate that what appears collected from this writer in this text has been translated by the authors from the article from Galician to English. Both in the parentetic quotes and in the different bleeds that will appear later.

It's what's going that makes it (shame) visible as injustice. There is a very special sensor that transforms that optical blow of shame into a particle of consciousness. That effective imbalance that Victor Hugo saw as “a possibility of a tear in the eyes of the law”, in one of those miserable, dystopian times, in which the task of true justice is not to fulfill the law, but to free it from itself.¹⁶

That “shame” in Rivas vision is a principle of uprising. It is shame, the consequent indignation at the state of things, that denotes “pain”; “shame” is the reaction to what disturbs us, what germinates a revolt and justifies rebellion, hence action. In fact, “shame” is the essential trigger that gives sense to the conflict present within the story.

Manuel Rivas writes his work in the Galician language, so we thought convenient to take a look at all the meanings of "shame" offered by the Royal Galician Academy (RAG) in its web dictionary: shame as "feeling of who did something that he should not or who suffers a humiliation"— we denote here an aggression of something to someone, an interpretation of someone's threat exercised by something; "feeling of inferiority and humiliation that someone feels before others and that prevents him from functioning normally", that is, an external element, present in the real, that does not allow us the completeness of our identity; "valuation of one's own dignity", is shame. In Rivas' work, shame gives us “identity”, so it creates, as in Camus, a “we” and a “they” recognizable in

¹⁶ Manuel Rivas, *Zona a defender. A esperanza indócil*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2020), 14.

the political. “Shame” is the door that opens to the political arena, the political “game”, because it gives sense to rebellion against the totalitarian *ethos* which, as we will see right now, is present in Rivas’s selected works.

So, in Manuel Rivas we have two characters whose lives are going to be prejudicated by the emergency of totalitarianism. On the one hand, we have the teacher who appears in the story “The language of the butterflies”, which is part of the book of stories *Que me queres, amor? (What do you want from me, love?)* (1995), a work that earned Rivas the Torrente Ballester Prize Award and gave him fame on the national and international scene. On the other hand, the author gives us the character of Daniel Da Barca in *O lapis do carpinteiro (The Carpenter's Pencil)*. The shame that dignity grants is evident in the figure of a teacher that the author does not hold back on relating to beauty at a time when Galicia and Spain were approaching a bloody civil war. The context of the story is set in 1936, the year of the beginning of the contest that will confront the legitimate republican government with the coup side, the so called “Movimiento Nacional”, in which several reactionary families of Spanish political culture were found, such as Falangism, Italian-style fascism, and Carlism.¹⁷ Rivas

¹⁷ The “Movimiento Nacional” (“National Movement”, in English) was the name given by the authors of the Spanish National Coup of 1936. It references to the wide range of families and political sides behind the coup that caused the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). These political families went from the far-right inside the democratic republic to the fascist style-party imported from Mussolini’s Italy. In this movement the group of falangists, the “Falange”

strives to create a relationship between a democratic and free-thinker teacher who embodies the opposite of “hatred” and one of his students, “Pardal”, a nickname which means “sparrow”, in English. In Rivas literature, as we will see in these selected examples, “hate” acts as Rivas “absurd” which is necessary in order to the narrative conflict to appear.

One of the teacher’ students says: “I loved that teacher very much. At first my parents couldn't believe it. I mean they couldn't understand how I loved my teacher”¹⁸. This kid impression contrasts with, as the author exposes, an authoritarian environment. This totalitarian environment is first perceived by references given by the author when he tells us about the “school”, a word “that in the air moved like a bamboo stick”, like a threat. It was an atmosphere of natural violence.¹⁹ This free-thinker teacher is the one who leads Pardal, who is also the narrator of the story, to

party, gained popularity and was the biggest family within the coup. This party, “Falange” was created by the spanish thinker José Antonio Primo de Rivera and others in 1933. It was inspired, as we said, by Italian fascism and authoritarian corporativism. The latter was imposed in the previous Spanish dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, José Antonio’s father, who came into power in 1923. This previous dictatorship regime decayed and paved the way to the Spanish Republic of 1931. Carlism was one of the other political families inside the coup. It was, and it is, a traditional branch of the far-right in Spain that advocates for other line of succession to the Spanish Crown, different from the present line of succession. Carlism defends traditional society and institutions based on the medieval and pre-Enlightment Spain, the old kingdom.

¹⁸ Manuel Rivas, *Que me queres, amor?*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Vigo: Galaxia, 1996), 21.

¹⁹ Manuel Rivas, *Que me queres, amor?*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Vigo: Galaxia, 1996), 21.

discover the butterflies in their outings to the fields that surround their village, located in the heart of Galicia's countryside. This teacher acts in the story as a reference of love and purpose in a world which, as the future Civil War approaches, is beginning its own path to absurd, to totalitarianism and fascist dictatorship. This "evasion" previous to the disaster of reality has already been studied by authors such as Ekaterina Volkova, who has already related it to a certain notion of "magical realism" in literature.²⁰

The German critic Franz Roh applied this term to the work of certain post-expressionist painters and their artistic ability to discover the extraordinary in the everyday. As Darío Villanueva and José María Viña explain: "Roh uses the adjective magic as an index of a mystery that does not descend to the world represented, juxtaposing itself with greater or lesser harmony to it, but hides and beats in its very bosom."²¹

The Rivasian subject nests in the absurdity of violence. In the story, the teacher is the one who represents culture and humanism. He constantly requests the Ministry of Public Instruction to provide the school with a microscope to observe insects. After the coup triumph in Galicia, located in the North of Spain, is this teacher who perishes in a mob, at the end of the story. After the fascist victory, the people of the village welcomed the military and got dressed as if it were a great occasion and

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ekaterina Volkova. *Lo que el viento trajo: El realismo mágico en Galicia*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Madrid: Revista Madrygal, 2018), 274.

celebration. They, the inhabitants, gathered at the main square of the village and insulted the men imprisoned by the coup plotters in that small town. In this last part, Pardal sees how his free-thinker teacher is taken to the truck to the place where, predictably, he will be executed by the supporters of the coup.²² Pardal's mother plays the part of the “absurd” and urges her son to shout and insult the teacher, in an almost unbridled way, to demonstrate his fidelity to the new fascist rulers. Previous relations, love, affections, were evaporated by the presence of the absurd of totalitarianism. Terror, which appears in both authors, takes shape in Rivas' work in the same sense in which Hannah Arendt related it to fascism: as an essential weapon of totalitarianism²³ to exercise collective control. An environment characterized by “a continuous climate of radical patriotism, reinforced in some cases by terror”, recalls the historian and expert on fascism, Roger Griffin.²⁴

The child, Pardal, is imbued in this ecosystem that Rivas narrates so quickly, is pushed by the terror of his mother and the same shouts, enters the inconceivable absurdity of rebelling against a father figure that opened the doors of knowledge and a

²² This was an act known as “paseo”. It means, literally “to have a walk” in Spanish, but it also had a sinister meaning in the context of the Spanish Civil War of 1936. “Paseo” meant that men and woman were taken from prison, from the street or from their homes to be executed far from the people’s view, in the woods, in the margins of the road, in the hills... And their bodies were buried in the same place. These were summary executions without trial or court.

²³ Hannah Arendt, *Los orígenes del totalitarismo*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Madrid: Alianza, 2006), 478.

²⁴ Roger Griffin, *Fascismo*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Madrid: Alianza, 2019), 68.

particular way of understanding goodness. This boy, a prey to the collective terror, runs after the truck, runs with the other children, throwing stones at the vehicle that leads the dissidents of the fascist coup to their death.

We recognize in Rivas, then, the appearance of “shame” as the first necessary notion in the construction of an identity. This metaphor that, in Rivas’ case, implies a demand for “freedom”, therefore “shame against fascism” is “shame in favor” of that freedom. Here the Rivasian “active hope”, here the vindication of desire triggered by “shame” in a context of totalitarianism.

Shame gives way to hope. Hope is not expected. It must be torn from the arms of conformism. It opens the way to the drive of desire, in the face of the depression in which we want to see the regression. It is an erotic task that we cannot renounce: to produce another time, to produce hope. That word that doesn't feel afraid when you write it.²⁵

We can see that it is this “shame” that, literally, functions as a detector and impeller for Manuel Rivas, in tune with Camus, shame as a lens constituted through which we find ourselves and walk “to hope”. It is the location of another to whom someone says “no” (an antagonist) that implies an existence based on resistance and rebellion. Again, the metaphor of “shame” that makes possible the presence of a self, of a “we”, even of a “me” notion. Rivas says, as we read in the last extract, that it is precisely “shame” what

²⁵ Manuel Rivas, *Contra todo isto. Un manifesto rebelde*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2018), 44.

triggers conscience, what triggers, in fact, conflict. Moreover, in Mouffe vision, as there is a conflict, so there exists the political.

This pattern is repeated in Albert Camus. “Shame”, insofar as it is perceived, denotes an illusion of existence to the subject by the fact that it makes the subject perceive the violence exercised against him. Thanks to the metaphor of “shame” the subject, the individual, can elaborate and understand a discourse in which him is being oppressed and, therefore, the individual in question can compare his position and, at the same time, in that comparison, detect the antagonistic position. This, as we said, is the source of conflict and the same source of the political nature. The individual in question wants to reverse a certain situation in which he has “shame”, denotes pain and has an opposed discourse, all in one. He wants to “be the master”, as Camus implies, so he finally rejects being a “slave”.

The first step in detecting an injustice is for a sense of shame to appear. It is what will make it visible as injustice. There is a very special sensor that transforms that optical blow of shame into a particle of consciousness. That effective imbalance that Victor Hugo glimpsed as “the possibility of a tear in the eyes of the law” (Rivas 2018, 14).²⁶

That consciousness, to Rivas, is consubstantial to a sense of proper justice. To Camus that consciousness derives from rebellion. “Rebellion” and its realization, that is, “conscience” come together in Camus when he writes that “consciousness is born with rebellion.”²⁷

THE PLACE OF HORROR: ABSURDITY AND VIOLENCE IN THE TWO AUTHORS

Manuel Rivas and Albert Camus, in the selected examples, build their plots, as we have seen, around a place that evolves to a certain aspect of totalitarianism, in which the arbitrary is a rule and so the absurd is the common ground. In Rivas it is the rise of fascism that paves the way to totalitarianism; in Camus it is the Plague that erases the meaning of life and, therefore, opens the door to absurd. The absurd, as happens in Rivas, leads to totalitarianism.

²⁶ Manuel Rivas, *Contra todo isto. Un manifesto rebelde*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2018), 14.

²⁷ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde. Obras III*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 31.

Totalitarianism also triggers the political concept within a society. In Rivas' literary work, specifically in *O Lapis do Carpinteiro*, we are introduced to Daniel Da Barca, a free-thinker doctor, talking about the Galician nationalist claim, the Spanish Republic and the modern role of contemporary women. He is the embodiment of the spirit of the modernist Spanish Republic, the character himself is a metaphor. But, as we saw in the previous example, the story is broken by the introduction of the absurd. The parallel situation with the Camusian Oran is evident. Normality is broken in Rivas by the political fascism; normality, in Camus, is broken by the introduction of the disease that causes the plague. Both exceptions, both the trigger that the political needs to go right on the spot of totalitarianism.

Then we accepted our status as prisoners, we were reduced to our past, and if some were tempted to live in the future, they had to give up very soon, [...] The deep suffering they experienced was that of all prisoners and all exiles, the suffering of living in useless memory. That very past they thought about continuously had only the taste of nostalgia.²⁸

Fascism, on the one hand, disease, on the other, become agents of an absurd commonplace where horror and violence make their way, where the exception is open to totalitarian discourse. It is interesting to see how in the direction of both authors to

²⁸ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde. Obras III*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 82-84.

the subversion of normality is connected, in the literary tradition, with a “magical realism”²⁹ in which the author finds all the tools of the absurd, of the coexistence between an absurd world and an ordinary world where “exceptional” actions are integrated as “normal.”

This is very interesting, since in Rivas magical realism makes him put into practice the Schmittian maxim of "the normality of exception", which the jurist Carl Schmitt took to the summit of his political theory, in reference to his critique of the liberal way of understanding the legal organization of states, as we also said at the beginning of this article. It embodies a totalitarianism typical of movements such as Italian fascism or Nazism, where the will of the leader is the national will, the will of the single party.³⁰ Rivas' interest in the German jurist transcends the literary, as the author himself acknowledges in a newspaper article where he brings up one of the many tributes that Franco's dictatorship made in Spain to the far-right thinker.

Who was that "redeemed master" who deserved such a tribute in Spain in 1962? The presentation had highlighted his status as a full professor in Cologne and Berlin and his authority in Constitutional Law. In reality, thus, without historical chronology, it was a cautious presentation. Carl Schmitt had been much more than all that. He had been known as the *kronjurist*,

²⁹ Ekaterina Volkova. Lo que el viento trajo: El realismo mágico en Galicia, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Madrid: Revista Madrygal, 2018), 282.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, Los orígenes del totalitarismo, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Madrid: Alianza, 2006), 513.

the crown or the jurist brain of the Third Reich. The main architect of the legal architecture of Nazism. The designer of the permanent “state of exception”, for whom politics is synonymous with war, and the adversary or dissident, with an enemy. The theorist of decisionism, who takes to the perverse limit Hobbes's maxim: “Auctoritas non veritas facit legem” (authority, not truth, is what makes laws) (Rivas, 2006).

Daniel Da Barca, the main character of *The Carpenter's Pencil* occupies the same profession in the plot as Bernard Rieux in Camus's *The Plague*. Both are doctors and both embody the ideals of the Enlightenment and Humanism, both embody the negative, the "no" to the totalitarian present they had to live, to them is added another “free-thinker profession”, that of the teacher of *The language of the butterflies*, by Rivas. The characters created by Rivas refused to comply with the new regime and are punished for it, even with a court martial and assassination attempts by the coup plotters. The Camus own main character, Rieux, is the rebellious man when he refuses to accept the designs of death and absurd that fell upon his town. These characters embody the values of a resistance that emanates, as we said, from a precise and essential “shame”, from a will that justifies the enlightened refusal to horror, that justifies the fight against totalitarianism.

These characters, in order to conflict to appear, have relationships that require deny their present, their time. They say “no”, they both rebel against a repressed collective will, either by fascism, in one case, or by total illness, in the other. Da Barca,

Rieux and the teacher are linked to the “friend-enemy” duality generated by the political; they are in the middle, they are mediators who decided to say “no”, so now they exist and have meaning in their plots, they are “individuals”, so they are rebellious men, as Albert Camus would say. Da Barca does it in his resistance in the prison of Santiago and in Coruña, he does it through his sense of humor, resistance, sensitivity. The author presents him as a mediator even in his position within the last prison, where he helps as a nurse in the care of other prisoners. Da Barca, a rebellious man, is involved in the absurdity of navigating the line between oppressors and people oppressed. The same happens to the teacher, by Rivas. He met several times with the rest of the “authorities” of the town and he himself sees how ordinary people like Pardal's father, the tailor, gives him a suit in gratitude for the good relationship with his son. Rieux, as a physician, enjoys natural authority in Camus's novel. He even has the power to give orders in the Oran plunged into the bubonic plague. He is another mediator, in his case, between life and death.

Death is—in both ecosystems, that of Rivas and that of Camus—the extreme of the totalitarian. In Rivas it is reached through extreme violence, in Camus through the inevitability of the plague. Rivas takes his inspiration from the criticism of authors such as Carl Schmitt and his defense of the conflict that ends in wars to denounce the absurdity of extreme violence that, hand in hand with totalitarianism, leads to death. A polarization between

friend-enemy in which fascism declares an enemy within to defeat, with no care for losses or all its consequences.

THE CAMUSIAN "NO" AS A TRIGGER FOR MEANING AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Camus notes that this subject, encouraged by this principle of “shame”, detects, in the particular view which Rivas will later also describe to us, a series of unsatisfied demands with which a construction of a so-called “chain of equivalences”³¹³² is inferred: this is, as we mentioned at the beginning of this text, the way in which Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe define the identification by an individual or collective of a discursive articulation.

How does this subversion take place? As we have seen, the condition of full presence is the existence of an enclosed space in which each differential position is fixed as a specific and irreplaceable moment. Therefore, the first condition for subverting this space, to prevent closure, is to dissolve the specificity of each of these positions [...] differences are canceled out to the extent that they are used to express something identical that underlies all of them.³³

³¹ This term, translated into English, is literally the term that Laclau and Mouffe use to describe the essential part of discourse: how the elements of that discourse are linked and have, finally, a whole meaning which is the result of a particular construction.

³² Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipación y diferencia*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1996), 79.

Rebellion, argues Camus, "takes the individual out of his supposed loneliness"³⁴, that is, it fulfills the "collector function" that we link to our thesis, the "shame" as a big word, as a metaphor capable to be used in discourse in order to transform the very own discourse. "Shame", in both selected cases of study, gives the individual a communion between him and his equals by articulating that subversion from the demarcation of an antagonist. In doing so, dissolving the differences with the others through the illusion of a certain presence. For his part, Manuel Rivas also mentions a certain "aggregator" that acts as a metaphor when, in *Zona a Defender*, he points out, through the act of naming, the fact of "naming an absence"³⁵, to "what can unite us in an indocile hope". Rivas says that rejection is precisely what invokes "the revolution". The latter comes from "despair", from "boredom". Here, like Albert Camus, he demarcates the limits of a "shame" and he understands the metaphor "shame" in the same way Albert Camus does, which is inferred as what Rivas himself uses as "decorum", that is, the violation of his own border, here below.

"And why are you a revolutionary?"

"For decorum, dear Marquise."

³³ Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 170-171.

³⁴ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 32.

³⁵ Manuel Rivas, *Zona a defender*. *A esperanza indócil*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2020), 14.

It is a dialogue in *The Miracles 'Court*, by Valle-Inclán. The character who invokes “decorum” as a reason to justify a revolution in the Iberian arena is a poet. How strange that word sounds in a political speech. And yet, it is strange to be precise. To speak of decorum is to speak of honor, honesty, esteem, dignity. A first task of ecological urgency in our time is to recover the meaning of words. His moral breath. The accent of truth.³⁶

Camus gives us a state prior to the achievement of a coherent discourse coming from the hegemonic articulation of demands and pains previously isolated, lived on the border of the individual, denied, not yet collectivized and converted into a metaphor around a unifying sense, not yet endowed with an objectivity through a logic of difference.

The condition of a total equivalence is that the discursive space is strictly divided into two fields. Antagonism admits of *no tertium quid*. [...]. Because if we could differentiate the chain of equivalences with respect to something other than what it opposes, its terms could no longer be defined exclusively negatively; We would have given it a specific position in a system of relations: that is, we would have endowed it with a new objectivity [...] We must at this point consider the structuring of political spaces from the opposite logics of equivalence and difference.³⁷

³⁶ Manuel Rivas, *Zona a defender. A esperanza indócil*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2020), 13.

³⁷ Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005),

In this “constituent negativity”, as both authors say, we find, also in the manner of Rivas when he understands the discourse, a certain principle of metaphor essential in the making of discourse that aggregates meaning. The metaphor of “shame” emerges as a key to understand the opposition to totalitarianism in both authors, Rivas and Camus, as it is the founder of the political based on a rebellious man who, in the Rivasian case, is invoked precisely from the margins, from a certain "outside" that is claimed inside, an ecosystem, we see, of oppressors and oppressed where humanity embodies the Camusian "Rebellious Man". In order to rebel, “shame” needs to be sensed, understood, recognized.

Let's look at things differently. There is a humanity, especially in that constellation of shores, the proud "subhumanity" of the margins, often hidden in the undergrowth of jungles or cities, that does not accept the unacceptable. A humanity that is not on the planet in an imperial way. That he wants to put an end to the constituted praise of serfdom.³⁸

Camus realizes that it is precisely the articulating sense of "no" who acts, after the subject has sensed the “shame”, as a trigger to rebellion. That rebellion provoked by “sham” is a rebellion that means a lot of things about human nature and dignity. It has some

172-173.

³⁸ Manuel Rivas, *Zona a defender. A esperanza indócil*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Vigo: Xerais, 2020), 18.

kind of aggregative energy of passions and demands around a cause that, in the specific case of this philosopher and journalist, has an essentialist reduction that introduces into the human being, a supreme good to all subjects that performs the elimination of that "servitude" of which Rivas speaks, many years later.

[...] In the movement of rebellion, he (the slave) thereby shows that he sacrifices himself for the benefit of a good which he considers to be beyond his own destiny. If he prefers the probability of death to the denial of that right he defends, it is because he places the latter above himself. He acts, then, in the name of a value that is still confused, but which he feels, at least, as something he shares with all men.³⁹

In that "absurd experience" that is the world without essences that Albert Camus assumes, the rebellion in favor of a unifying will, the individual being is aware of "being collective" too.⁴⁰ According to Albert Camus, thanks to that "shame" the individual is already capable of invoking rupture, so rebellion is not a self-consummated fact, but, in fact, it is an impulse for what will come, the exercise of power. From rebellion, we say, action is born and from this we arrive to the pure opening to power.

³⁹ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 32.

⁴⁰ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 39.

The slave, the instant he rejects the humiliating order of his superior, rejects at the same time the status of slave. The movement of rebellion takes him beyond where he was in simple denial. He even exceeds the limit he set for his adversary, and now asks to be treated as an equal. What was at first an irreducible resistance of man, becomes the whole man who identifies with it and is summarized in it.^{41 42}

Those unsatisfied demands from the “slave” or the oppressed or the victim of fascism (as we read in Camus and Rivas works) have something of relation to each other in what they suppose as the democratic dissatisfaction of those first “popular demands”, returning to a term of Ernesto Laclau. The dominant system or hegemony, in this view, is not capable of absorbing them, of, if we want to be even more precise, to satisfy them. So the same slave, the same “oppressed” detects in the ostentation of that dominant hegemony an “unjust” exercise of power that justifies the *Rebellious Men* “counter-hegemonic” rebellion. Camus simplifies it with the aforementioned case of the Master and the Slave, he polarizes the perception of abuse to radicalize the difference, thereby making it even more evident. Totalitarianism, in this line, would be the exacerbating force of the

⁴¹ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 30-31.

⁴² Note the explicit essentialist concession made by Camus, who finds in Man something irreducible, something prior to identification, a difference between “inside” and “outside” where the individual is a closed identity that relates to the world, on a necessary and not contingent plane, a contingency that, as we say, does have for the common the real, where the trauma of the absurd arises that it pretends to relate, then, with the events of murder and suicide.

conditions of submission generated by that “master-slave” binomial.

[...] From the movement of rebellion an awareness is born: the perception, suddenly evident, that there is in man something with which man can identify, at least for a time. This identification was not really felt until now. The slave suffered all the exactions prior to the moment of insurrection. And he had even often received without reaction orders more outrageous than his refusal provokes. He was patient with them; He rejected them perhaps in himself, but since he was silent, he was more careful of his immediate interest than still aware of his right. With the loss of patience, with impatience, begins, on the contrary, a movement that can extend to everything that was previously accepted.⁴³

At this point we see the “Camusian rebellion” as a plausible tool that adds meaning and will in the power of a counterhegemony. It looks as something “irresistible” once invoked, but we know that it is not so, but that it is what it is: a discourse useful tool. Camus claims in “his blind impulse” a system, “an order in the midst of chaos and unity at the very heart of what flees and disappears.”⁴⁴

In this kind of rebellion, an insurrection is the origin of meaning: “to be, man must revolt,”⁴⁵ the subject must deny; denying the “other”, the Rebellious Men, that “slave”, initiates a

⁴³ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 30

⁴⁴ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 24-25

process of construction of his own discourse, so its own verbal and political existence. We rely on what Ernesto Laclau contributed to his work *Emancipation and Difference* to relate this “from negative to positive meaning”. It is, in simple words, a certain emergence of a notion of the “universal” through the particular self. In fact, language operates as a tool that forms part of a whole, which is called “discourse”. Camus achieved this notion some years before Laclau, perhaps innocently, when he, as we conclude, achieved “meaning” through negation. By knowing what the individual does not want to be (a “slave”, an “oppressed”, for example), the individual reaches some meaning of himself, because he can confirm his own discourse from zero, and that “zero” is “shame”, which is the basis of the Camusian rebellion that we are exposing here. For Laclau⁴⁵, to understand “discourse” is to understand the notion of an antagonistic relationship that is “constitutively divided”, that is, there is an underlying negativity that transcends it. Both in Laclau and Camus, also in Rivas, negativity, the “no” is required to begin discourse, to begin some notion of meaning for the individual. It is, in our view, quite an emancipatory discourse because it begins first by recognizing the pain and oppression we suffer as individuals, as inhabitants of Earth.

⁴⁵ Albert Camus. *El hombre rebelde*. Obras III, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Barcelona: Alianza Editorial, 1996), 39

⁴⁶ Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipación y diferencia*, trans. Lois Alcayde Dans (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1996), 32.

Through Ernesto Laclau notion of discourse, a threatened identity detects an equivalence between the different threats to its identity, to its very identity. This equivalence, continues the theorist of the Essex School, is an equivalence precisely because of that common meaning that, in some way, binds and unleashes the forces that are perceived as antagonistic to this threatened identity in question.

The universal has no content of its own, but is a fullness absent or, rather, the signifier of fullness as such, of the very idea of fullness; (2) The universal can only emerge from the particular, since it is only the negation of a particular content that transforms that content into the symbol of a universality that transcends it (Laclau 1996, 33).⁴⁷

In our view, finally, that Camusian “no”, that detection, demarcation, expulsion and combat of those negative charges of the identity of the so-called “Rebellious Man” are translated into a single movement due to the existence of a metaphor, which is, in this case, that of “shame”. That metaphor, in the end, activates the whole process and gives logic to the whole operation of the rebellious men in both authors.

CONCLUSIONS

⁴⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipación y diferencia*, trans. Lois Alcaide Dans (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1996), 33.

The writers and journalists Manuel Rivas and Albert Camus worked in his literature with an emancipatory discourse against totalitarianism that takes place through the individual in communion with the collective. That discourse has its heart and meaning in the metaphor of “shame” which initiates the whole process of “rebellion”. It that rebellion which gives meaning, in both authors, to their own literary characters, who also reflect, as we saw in Rivas case, a particular way to observe even the individual himself. It is a discourse where the totalitarian is the element to fight and where this totalitarian *ethos* adopts, in our selected cases, two different figures with similar results in both respective plots. An individual who, in both cases, denies the absurdity that surrounds him and, in both cases, becomes the “rebellious man”, in Camus ‘way.

This totalitarian ecosystem, in the work of Manuel Rivas, takes shape through violent fascism, the rupture of democratic beauty, the loss of innocence. In Camus that same innocence collapses thanks to a totalitarianism that also occurs in an absurd ecosystem, but hand in hand with the infallibility of death, embodied in a tragic plague pandemic in his novel.

The two authors, either by influence, in the case of Camus, or by condemnation of his present, in the case of Rivas, want to denounce the permanence of fascist discourse as a threat to democracies. Both authors reflect the contradictions and drawbacks of similar “rebellious men” who say “no” to a particular totalitarian

era. The characters presented to us are beings confronted with the absurd, they are “patient”, almost in the manner of martyrs who drown, but survive, in an adverse *cosmos*. In Rivas, the tragedy of the Spanish war occurs. In Camus, the combat of intelligence, science and all that ideal of combat is inspired by the French resistance to the Nazi invader. Their characters embody rebellious men who, in two different totalitarianisms, one political with doses of magical realism and the other absurdity. They rebel against existentialist pessimism, combat evil, and combat destruction, and “Shame” is the first trigger that the individual has on his own to begin his own freedom discourse from the wrath of tyranny. This rebellion takes as a source of action the Camusian “no”, the negation of the abuse exercised to one’s self. But, in the case of Rivas, he contributes to magical realism as an ecosystem of the exception, of the singular, of the supernatural. Even, Rivas relates the absurd to death. It is the same result (absurd = murder) that Camus already made in his day with his novel *The Plague*, in which although it is not a classic "magical realism", there is a situation of exception and absurdity that nourishes the concept of "rebellion". Shame, later rebellion, are what gives meaning to their plots and, above all, to the "rebellious men", rebellious subjects, that both authors present.

When we observe the damage and threats to a certain "we" when we can describe ourselves as "we"; without that "enemy", without that opponent or adversary, in democratic terms, we would

not be able to identify ourselves, there would not be, in the logic that Camus and Rivas give us, a location or perception of borders. This shame as a sensitive principle for the rebellion can be expanded with words that Manuel Rivas himself offered to the media – in this case, to the digital *O Salto Galiza*, in 2018⁴⁸: “Writing, that writing pulls forward is always a drive of eros, desire, the erotic, sometimes, the fatigue. A need to fill the void. In this case the word shame weighs, it is one of those words that activated the book. The word shame is the first activist.”

⁴⁸ Lois Alcayde Dans, Manuel Rivas: “Reivindico o xornalismo como o activismo da liberdade” (Santiago: O Salto Galiza, 2018) <https://osalto.gal/literatura/manuel-rivas-xornalismo-activismo-liberdade> (accessed on: 12 January 2025).

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**TOTALITARYZM W FILMIE/
TOTALITARIANISM IN FILM.**

Ricardo Rato Rodrigues

ORCID: 0000-0002-6783-6326; ricardo.ratorodrigues@mail.umcs.pl
Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie

**FILM AS PROPAGANDA DURING
SALAZAR'S ESTADO NOVO: THE CASE
OF *O PÁTIO DAS CANTIGAS* (THE
COURTYARD OF BALLADS)**

**FILM JAKO NARZĘDZIE PROPAGANDY
W EPOCE TZW. „NOWEGO PAŃSTWA”
SALAZARA – *O PÁTIO DAS CANTIGAS*
(*DZIEDZINIEC PIOSENEK*)**

ABSTRACT

The Estado Novo regime in Portugal, spearheaded by António Salazar, was the longest dictatorship in Europe, and one that was particularly effective at using many means of propaganda, including cinema. It was during the years in which this authoritarian regime flourished and developed that, coincidentally, Portuguese cinema has lived what many have called its golden period. A so-called “film industry” was then developed, but of course under the control of the state, which used popular comedies to spread its ideals and to propagate an idea of Portuguese society (in)formed by the main tenets of the regime. One of its best-known examples is the film *O Pátio das Cantigas* (*The Courtyard*

of Ballads), released in 1942, when Europe was amidst the turmoil of World War II. Portugal, a neutral country, having been “spared” the harsh realities of the war, was at the optimal stage for Salazar to implement his ideological views and cinema was the perfect medium for such an endeavour. This paper aims to analyse the different ways in which film was used by the regime to manipulate the public psyche, paying particular attention to the aforementioned film and the way it articulates (always insidiously) the different ideas that propped Portugal’s totalitarian political system. The paper will be supported by both a close reading and wide theoretical sources (Arendt, et al.) with a view to serve as a caveat for the current political uses of cinema as a vehicle for political propaganda.

Keywords: Estado Novo, regime, Portugal, totalitarianism, film, propaganda, politics

STRESZCZENIE

Reżim Estado Novo w Portugalii, na czele którego stał António Salazar, był najdłuższą dyktaturą w Europie i szczególnie skuteczną w stosowaniu wielu środków propagandy, w tym kina. To właśnie w latach, w których ten autorytarny reżim kwitł i rozwijał się, portugalskie kino przeżyło to, co wielu nazywa swoistym „złotym okresem”. Rozwinął się wówczas tak zwany „przemysł filmowy” – oczywiście pod kontrolą państwa, które wykorzystywało popularne komedie do szerzenia swoich ideałów i propagowania idei społeczeństwa portugalskiego (nie)ukształtowanego przez główne zasady reżimu. Jednym z najbardziej znanych przykładów jest film *O Pátio das Cantigas (Dziedziniec ballad)*, który ukazał się w 1942 roku, kiedy Europa znajdowała się w samym środku II wojny światowej. Portugalia, kraj neutralny, „oszczędzony” przez brutalne realia wojny, znajdowała się dla Salazara w optymalnym momencie realizacji jego poglądów ideologicznych, a kino było idealnym medium do takiego przedsięwzięcia. Artykuł analizuje sposoby wykorzystywania filmu przez reżim do manipulowania psychiką publiczną, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wspomnianego filmu i sposobu, w jaki artykułuje on (zawsze podstępnie) różne idee, które wspierały totalitarny system polityczny Portugalii. Artykuł bazuje zarówno na wnikliwej lekturze dzieła, jak i na szerokim spektrum źródeł teoretycznych (Arendt i in.), w

celu ukazania niebezpiecznych związków pomiędzy polityką i kinem jako narzędziem propagandy politycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: Estado Novo, reżim, Portugalia, totalitaryzm, film, propaganda, polityka

Before properly engaging with the object of this critical endeavour, a theoretical caveat is needed: we will not use the concept ‘totalitarianism’. As Žižek has put it, “‘totalitarianism’, far from being an effective theoretical concept, is a kind of *stopgap*: instead of enabling us to think, forcing us to acquire a new insight into the historical reality it describes, it relieves us of the duty to think, or even actively *prevents* us from thinking.”¹ This is particularly relevant for the object of our study, given the historical background in which it is inserted, the corporatist right-wing dictatorship of the Portuguese Estado Novo (1933-1974). If, on the one hand, it was true that the regime did display what historian Fernando Rosas names as a “totalitarian aptitude”². during the 1930s and 40s, on the other hand it is also true that the regime went through different phases of ideological development (the reader must be reminded that the Estado Novo regime was the longest dictatorial regime in Europe) and thus, to continue to use the same theoretical concept for a changing object would be quite limited. To use the concept would be a distraction, for it would most likely bring to our mind

¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (Verso Books, 2011), 3.

² Fernando Rosas, “O salazarismo e o homem novo: ensaio sobre o Estado Novo e a questão do totalitarismo”, *Análise Social*, Vol. XXXV (Inverno), n.º 157 (2001).

those other regimes (Nazi Germany and Soviet Communism) that, albeit not entirely dissimilar, presented characteristics that were different enough to warrant a different kind of approach. The specific historical reality of Portugal is not as widely known as that of, say, Mussolini's Italy or Franco's Spain and it does present unique characteristics that merit a closer analytical observation, a sort of exceptionalism that would paradoxically please the supporters of the regime but at the same time prevent a more detailed consideration in terms of what is 'unique' about it and how that has determined the artistic artifacts produced then. Furthermore, it would also be dismissive of what (as Žižek seems to be postulating) it would serve as a kind of theoretical fixed category, a box that would encapsulate but also isolate, that would prevent us from looking at the infectiousness and insidiousness of certain characteristics that remained in Portuguese culture even after the fall of the regime, particularly in the field of cinema. Thus, one must proceed without this theoretical 'trap'.

However, in order to establish a general historical and political background, some contextualisation is needed. The regime in which the film *O Pátio das Cantigas (The Courtyard of Ballads)* is inserted was 'contemporary with the regimes of Mussolini in Italy and Primo de Rivera, The Elder, in Spain and was commonly described by its opponents as a fascist system of government'³. By the time of the film's release, in 1942, the regime had by then

³ David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal (Second Edition)* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 163.

crystalised its ideological foundations, having matured in its particular political vision, so the term ‘fascist’ ‘fails to illuminate the specific nature of Portuguese government in the 1930s and its contrasts of substance and style with both the other dictatorships of the Western Mediterranean.’⁴

These differences had a lot to do with its figurehead, António de Oliveira Salazar, the leader and creator of Estado Novo (but who had already been in a position of power in the military dictatorship that preceded it⁵). Compared to a stereotypical image of a fascist leader – military, strong, charismatic – he cut out a completely different figure. ‘Instead of being visible he became reclusive and his propaganda machine presented him as a wise and monkish father, the saviour of the nation [...]’⁶ However irrelevant this rather superficial aspect may seem for the construction of an ideological core or for the production of propagandistic artifacts, it is precisely this fine point that permits us to perceive the insidiousness of Estado Novo’s propaganda and the extremely effective use of a certain type of cinema (light-hearted popular comedies, such as *O Pátio*) as a tool for its implementation.

⁴ Birmingham, *A Concise History*, 164.

⁵ The Portuguese First Republic lasted between 1910-1926, being afterwards replaced by a military dictatorship (1926-33) which would eventually originate the Estado Novo (1933-1974). Salazar had been appointed as Minister of Finance in 1928 and his political shrewdness and display of great financial control jettisoned him to the position of head of state in 1933, permitting him to create the new regime.

⁶ Birmingham, *A Concise History*, 164.

Equally repressive, equally authoritarian, when compared with its contemporaries, the Estado Novo regime was certainly not as outwardly triumphalist, belligerent, or boisterous. ‘The violent repression of alternative visions was undertaken discreetly by trained police agents and not by Nazi-style mobs’⁷. It is then not surprising that, rather than a Riefenstahl’s *Triumph des Willens*, the Portuguese regime opted instead for the much less triumphalist and much more discrete *O Pátio das Cantigas*, a light popular comedy using well-known comedic ‘cabaret’ actors.

This “turn to comedy”, allied with the deceiving soft image projected by the leader of the regime would have lasting effects, the strategy proving to be successful in terms of its insidiousness. The use of film (of this *particular* film) would be one the many ways in which Salazar’s propaganda would hammer its point home, successfully inscribing it in the collective psyche of the Portuguese for decades to come (and still very much present in the 21st century).

⁷ *Ibid.*

Salazarism was not a regime of terror, it was not a concentration camp, the police were even relatively “soft” [...] - this discourse seemed credible in the eyes of the defenders of the “situation”. Life went on, with the appearance of a normal life, an appearance that was so internalised that it came to be lived as reality.⁸

O Pátio das Cantigas was released in 1942, at the time when war raged throughout Europe and Portugal had maintained its neutrality (an act of political ingenuity given the close ideological ties with Fascism and Nazism but also an ages-old alliance with Britain). Directed by Francisco Ribeiro and starring popular actors Vasco Santana, in the role of Narciso, a good for nothing drunkard who lives of the profits of a small “leitaria”⁹ which he owns but is run by his son, Rufino; and António Silva (in the role of Evaristo), a drug-store owner who regards himself as the leading figure of the neighbourhood where they live. The space where the film’s action takes place is that of a “pátio”, a courtyard in a neighbourhood of Lisbon, typical of the capital’s urban activity and geographical outlook of the time. In itself, this is relevant for the perceiving the film as mirroring the ideological vision of the regime – a small, harmonious community where everyone knows each other,

⁸ This is the author’s translation of the following passage by philosopher José Gil: ‘O salazarismo não formou um regime de terror, não era um campo de concentração, a polícia era até relativamente “branda” [...] – este discurso dos defensores da “situação” parecia verosímil. A vida continuava, com a aparência de uma vida normal, aparência que foi de tal modo interiorizada que chegou a ser vivida como realidade.’ José Gil, *Portugal, Hoje: O Medo de Existir* (Relógio d’Água, 2012), 122. All forthcoming translations will also be done by the author.

⁹ A sort of precursor of cafés.

somewhat protected from the urban realities one would expect to find in a capital city. In other words, a microcosm of social harmony and peaceful existence, almost like a village-within a city. Such as has been analysed by Rui Manuel Brás, who has highlighted the role of the city as presented in the film in its double function (the wider urban space in contrast with the microcosm of the courtyard). For him, a particularly relevant scene is when one character (Mr. Heitor) is mugged somewhere on the street (off-screen, outside the courtyard):

By introducing this robbery in the film, the director shows the negative side of the city but, at the same time, that Mr. Heitor is not alone because he can count on his family and his neighbors' [*sic*] solidarity. It is possible to see here a criticism of urban environment as responsible for the nurturing of wrong values, which could be contradicted by upholding [*sic*] traditional values as a true alternative. These would be the values of friendship, brotherly love, union, simple life, popular culture and tradition which are the cement that keeps together the people who live in the courtyard.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rui Manuel Brás, "Making films under Salazar's gaze: Cinematic representation of Lisbon in two popular comedies of the 1940s." *IX European Social Science History Conference*. ESSHC. (2012), 7.



Mr. Heitor finds comfort in his support network, his neighbours from the courtyard after having been mugged.

This contrast reinforces the idea of a glorified “smallness” of a close(d) community. Brás’ own reading is that this can be seen as an element that serves rather as a friction to the ideological precepts of the regime, because ‘the film presents a conservative view of modern society, but without the nostalgia for the rural past’¹¹. His contention is that the lack of a *proper* rural setting, coupled with the fact the courtyard is, albeit presented as separate, a space within the city, the film is not entirely dominated by a strong ideological grip. Our reading, however, is the complete opposite – it is *precisely* by being inserted in the urban space that the film’s

¹¹ Brás, “Making films under Salazar’s gaze”, 8.

ideological discourse is particularly pervasive and insidious. We no longer have a clear separation between the rural and urban; the city, presented as a collective of small pockets of village-like communities and at the same time maintaining the inherently “dangers” of a big urban space, represents a new way of life, one that rejects modernity in its urban embodiment by rejecting metropolitan progress by upholding the rural ways in the very space of the city.

The relative isolation of the courtyard also functions as a sort of haven (an idea of Portugal that Salazar cultivated nationally and abroad), safe from the political turmoil, a place of refuge in a time of war and revolution. This aspect crops up several times throughout the film, as we will see, but very early on the point is made in a slightly oblique way – via one of the inhabitants of the courtyard, its only foreigner, a Russian man named Boris Dunov, whose presence in the courtyard is never explained but nevertheless still telling. Played by the multifaceted Russian Jew Eliezer Kamenesky¹², Boris, is shown in one of his first appearances performing a song in Russian, a melancholic lullaby that expresses his longing for his home country. It is obvious that there is another symbolic dimension at play here. The only foreigner in the courtyard, in the film, and perhaps in the entire

¹² Eliezer Kamenesky was also a poet, vegetarian, naturist and animal rights advocate. It is not clear why he was living in Portugal, but it is known that he had lived in Brazil before. However, given the political climate of the time, it is not hard to imagine that his situation, albeit unclear, was a precarious one.

catalogue of comedies produced at the time happens to be a Russian – an embodiment of Salazar’s main political enemies, the communists. Certainly, in the closed society of 1940’s Portugal, the onscreen presence of a Russian must have had a profound impact on the audiences of the time, and it is not farfetched to interpret this inclusion as a direct reference to the geopolitical situation of the time. Boris, most likely a refugee fleeing Soviet Russia, despite missing his native country, is welcomed and accepted amidst the community idealised by the Estado Novo. In other words, Salazar’s regime was upheld as a haven for those fleeing communism.

The ideological dimension of this inclusion is, therefore, easy to grasp for today’s audiences and it would be even more so at the time. It is worth remembering that the same actor had, years earlier, participated in that which is the only official propagandistic film of regime, *A Revolução de Maio [The May Revolution]* (1937)¹³, directed by the producer of *The Courtyard*.

However, one aspect needs clarification – the *de facto* state control of the film, or rather, the lack of it.

¹³ In this film, we are presented with a man with strong communist tendencies who falls in love with a woman that is a believer in the ideals of the *May Revolution*, the event that led to Salazar’s ascension. In the end, the man rejects communism and embraces Salazar’s ideas. A curious element is that Francisco Ribeiro, the director of *The Courtyard*, participated as an actor in this film.



Boris Dunov (played by Eliezer Kamenesky). A Russian refugee living in the courtyard.

As mentioned above, *A Revolução de Maio* was the only film officially produced by the *SPN - Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional* (National Secretariat of Propaganda). This was a film entirely produced, financed and controlled by the regime. That was not the case of *The Courtyard*, which enjoyed some degree of independence, having been only co-financed by the SPN and therefore not officially controlled by the state.

Some critics, like Vasco Diogo, have tried to contextualise this:

In private productions (including comedies, which were financed with state funds in a variable proportion, for which no data is available), the main interest was to make films that could ensure their profitability on the domestic market. As such, there was no markedly subversive or divergent cinematographic production in this period in relation to the ideals of Salazarism due to the fact that these films, if they existed, would have been prohibited by censorship and their private producers would have been ruined. Private production was subject to two major constraints: the need to make films according to values that did not carry the risk of excessive mutilation or prohibition and also the need for these films to be big box-office hits, which would limit the aesthetic-ideological possibilities of film production.¹⁴

There is no question that this was indeed the case and Diogo's analysis is correct not only in the context of the Portuguese Estado Novo but in all authoritarian regimes where state control of most cultural productions is the norm. However, and even though Diogo is referring to the wider production of comedies and not any specific film, such a reading opens the door to a certain dismissal

¹⁴ 'Nas produções privadas (onde se inserem as comédias, cujo financiamento era colmatado com verbas estatais numa proporção variável, em que não estão disponíveis dados) interessava sobretudo fazer filmes que pudessem assegurar a sua rentabilização no mercado nacional. Como tal, não existiu nesta época uma produção cinematográfica marcadamente subversiva ou divergente em relação aos ideais do salazarismo pelo facto de que estes filmes, a existirem, seriam proibidos pela censura, ficando, assim, os seus produtores privados arruinados. A produção privada fica sujeita a dois grandes constrangimentos: a necessidade de fazer filmes de acordo com valores que não comportassem o risco de mutilação excessiva ou proibição e ainda a necessidade de estes filmes constituírem grandes êxitos de bilheteira, o que irá constituir uma limitação das possibilidades estético-ideológicas da produção cinematográfica.' Vasco Diogo, "Comédias cinematográficas dos anos 30-40 em Portugal." *Análise Social*, Vol. 36, No. 158/159 (Primavera-Verão), 306.

of the problem, thus permitting a blind spot towards the insidiousness of the film, to its power as a tool of propaganda, whether or not it was controlled by the regime. For him (as for many other critics) there is a case to be made for these films (i.e., the comedies of the 30s and 40s) as works that, because of its slight freedom from the claws of the regime and at the same time the constraints of censorship they had to endure, are still watched and appreciated today because of its quality as films. For Diogo, ‘this visibility and this perdurability tend to be understood from a reductive approach that seeks in these films mere reflections [the author means that these films were a mirror of the regime] of a political regime, analysing them as propagandistic forms of a political ideology.’¹⁵

Yet, Diogo seems to be failing to address the elephant in the room. If, on the one hand, these films require (and deserve) viewership and inclusion in the Portuguese film canon, on the other hand, it seems disingenuous to not qualify at least some of the comedies as overtly propagandistic. After all, the man behind the propaganda¹⁶ machine, António Ferro, understood this power

¹⁵ ‘essa visibilidade e essa perdurabilidade tendem a ser compreendidas a partir de um enfoque redutor que busca nesses filmes meros reflexos de um regime político, analisando-os enquanto formas propagandísticas de uma ideologia política.’ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁶ For a wider approach to the topic of propaganda during the Estado Novo, the following are recommended: Jorge Ramos do Ó, *Os Anos de Ferro — o Dispositivo Cultural durante a «Política do Espírito», 1939-1949*, Lisboa, Ed. Estampa, 1999, e Heloísa Paulo, *Estado Novo e Propaganda em Portugal e no Brasil*. O SPN e o DIP, Coimbra, Ed. Minerva, 1994.

perfectly, a clear understanding of what would later be described as *soft* power:

One could almost say that it is not even necessary to look at the screen because it is the images of the films themselves that enter sweetly, almost without waking us, into our eyes that are simply open... The Americans have marvellously understood this penetrating power of the cinema and it is through it that they have been able to bring about their great revolution in the world. If today Europeans in many ways think or live like Americans, dressing, enjoying themselves, dancing and loving like them, Hollywood is exclusively responsible for this. Hollywood alone is responsible for this dominance.¹⁷

It is nevertheless true that the regime would eventually disassociate itself from these types of comedies, perhaps discarding them after realising that their purpose for the consolidation of power has run its course. Ferro, who was never a big fan of these comedies, which he thought to be vulgar and obscene, declared in 1947 (and passed into law in 1948) that ‘comic films can continue to exist if they do not contain obscenities, for there is unfortunately still a large audience for them, but - we take this opportunity to state this firmly – without the support of the National Film Fund.’¹⁸ He went as far as declaring these films as ‘the cancer of national

¹⁷ Ferro, quoted in Eduardo Geadá, *O Imperialismo e o Fascismo no Cinema Português* (Moraes Editora, 1977), 81.

¹⁸ Ferro, quoted in João Bénard da Costa, “Imagens do cinema português dos anos 40”. In *Arte Portuguesa — Anos 40* (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1982), 121.

cinema'¹⁹ in what looks like an attempt to cleanse the cultural production associated with the regime, which in his view should pursue loftier aesthetics. However, in 1942, when *The Courtyard* was released, a few exceptions were not seen in the same way, as it is noted by Luis Reis Torgal:

One of these exceptions would certainly be *O Pátio das Cantigas* (1942), written by António Lopes Ribeiro²⁰'s brother, Francisco Ribeiro ("Ribeirinho") (...). It tells the simple "stories" of the urban people (...) a small world where the "good people" live happily and in which the small problems are solved, even if comical jokes may arise, as in Salazar's Portugal, which was seen as an oasis of peace in a world at war.²¹

In another reading, it is possible to interpret this change in a more cynical way – an adjustment to the new political ideas (and aesthetics) ushered in by the end of World War II. This has, in fact been pointed out elsewhere:

¹⁹ António Ferro, *Teatro e Cinema (1936-1949)*, *Colecção Política do Espírito* (Edições SNI, 1950), 14.

²⁰ António Lopes Ribeiro is an important figure in the history of Portuguese cinema due to his role as a producer and director during the dictatorship. He was responsible for several propagandistic documentaries and films. His close proximity to the political regime can be seen as yet another encroachment of ideology in what was supposed to be an 'independent' film.

²¹ "Uma destas excepções seria certamente *O Pátio das Cantigas* (1942), escrito pelo irmão de António Lopes Ribeiro, Francisco Ribeiro ("Ribeirinho") (...). Conta as simples "histórias" do povo urbano (...) um pequeno mundo onde as "boas pessoas" vivem felizes e onde os pequenos problemas são resolvidos, mesmo que possam surgir piadas cómicas, como no Portugal de Salazar, que foi visto como um oásis de paz num mundo em guerra." Luís Torgal (ed.) *O Cinema sob o olhar de Salazar* (Temas e Debates, 2001), 24.

Despite Portugal's neutrality, the outcome of the world conflict profoundly marked the ideological direction of the Estado Novo, visibly redefining its political and cultural strategies. From 1946 onwards, António Ferro began a series of public communications that were marked above all by their critical and resigned character in relation to the Portuguese cultural panorama and the failure of his cultural project, and which we call the "act of contrition" of the power in the Estado Novo.²²

This reading sheds a light on a somewhat neglected aspect of the film: the representation of war at a time when WWII was being fought and was still a long time away from its end.

In a crucial scene of the film, when the courtyard is celebrating the popular festivities of the city's patron saint, a dispute provoked by the rivalry between Narciso and Evaristo becomes a brawl, involving almost all the inhabitants of the courtyard. Soon, the brawl becomes widespread chaos and it is at this point that the director juxtaposes several images (and crucially, sounds) that resemble the reality of war: canons made of

²² Apesar da neutralidade portuguesa, o desfecho do conflito mundial marcou profundamente o rumo ideológico do Estado Novo, ao redefinir visivelmente as suas estratégias políticas e culturais. A partir de 1946, António Ferro inicia um conjunto de comunicações públicas que se pautam sobretudo pelo seu carácter crítico e resignado em relação ao panorama cultural português e ao fracasso do seu projecto cultural, e que nós designamos por "acto de contrição" do poder no Estado Novo.' Paulo Cunha, "Ferro contra Ferro. Um "Acto de Contrição" do Poder no Estado Novo." (Master Thesis, Universidade de Coimbra, 2003), 19, http://www.academia.edu/2240861/Ferro_contra_Ferro.Um_Acto_de_Contricao_do_Poder_no_Estado_Novo_2003_.

bottles, shooting their corks as bullets, men wearing metal plates on their heads resembling the helmets of soldiers, a makeshift nurse²³, a man escorts at “gun point” (a bottle) another man to a “prison” (chicken coup) , marching like a soldier. The sound (and let’s remember that the use of sound was still more or less a novelty in the cinema of this period) is used to great effect: several small firecrackers explode, their sound amplified to resemble that of bombs. In the sky, a Chinese lantern catches fire and the director juxtaposes this image with the sound of airplanes and explosions, creating the illusion of planes being shot down, with dramatic effect.



A brawl irrupts in the courtyard during a popular celebration.

²³ In a moment of cross-dressing, Narciso’s son becomes a female nurse. However, any potential subversive function of this image is deflated by the fact that this was a common comedic trope in the cabaret plays the actors of the film were known for.



A firecracker explodes, by accident, in a bin, causing widespread panic.



Boris appears at his window, peering through a pair of binoculars and wearing a military cap.



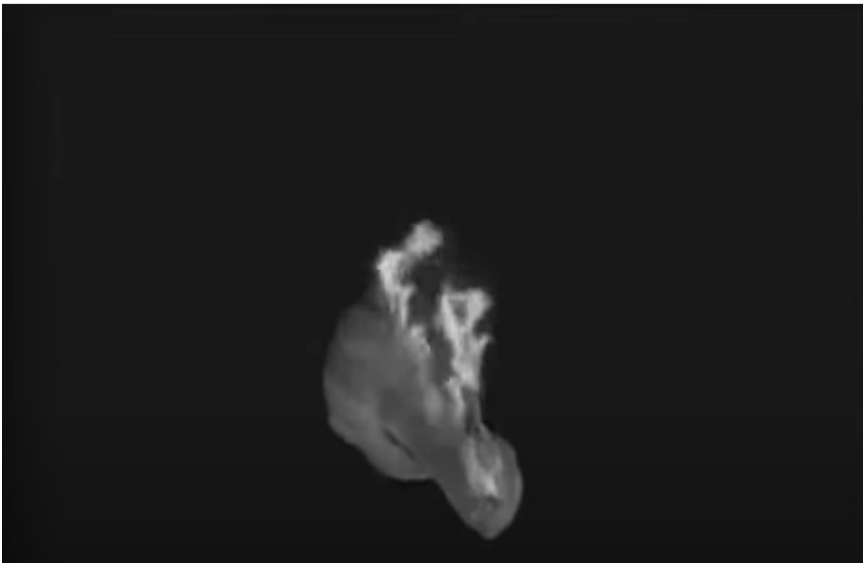
Narciso lines up some wine bottles, transforming them into makeshift cannons by using the corks as projectiles.



Evaristo (one the instigators of the fight) is held at “gunpoint” by Narciso’s son.



Narciso’s son escorts and locks up Evaristo in a chicken coup (being used as a “prison”).



A Chinese lantern catches fire, an image that is punctuated by the sounds of explosions, undoubtedly reminding viewers of the violence of war. It is worth remembering that the film is from 1942, when the Second World War was raging on.



Immediately after the shot of the Chinese lantern on fire, viewers are presented with a scene in which some of the courtyard's men are hiding in makeshift trenches (mostly tables), wearing metal fruit bowls on their heads. These objects resemble the helmets used by the army. The fact that this scene focuses exclusively on men should not be overlooked either, as war was solely a masculine reality in this period.



For comic relief, Narciso's son appears to morph (cross-dress) momentarily into a female nurse.



Drawing a cross on the kitchen towel he has over his head, Narciso's son provides help and consolation to some wounded men. The image is clearly evoking a red-cross nurse aiding soldiers in a context of war.

The above scene is essential. Not only it would remind audiences of the horrors of World War I, in which Portugal participated (rather disastrously), not yet far in the horizon as it still lingered in public memory, the current horrors of the war that would be known as World War II (being waged at the time of the film's showing) and, more obliquely, it would reinforce the image of Portugal as a safe haven that protected its citizens against the harsh realities of war. And it would achieve this threefold objective by using humour, not triumphalism.

Crucially, in a rather unsubtle "hammering the message home", the brawl/war scene ends with Narciso escorting the neighbourhood's children to safety, hiding them in a warehouse, inside a wagon topped by a banner with Salazar's name. When making sure the children are all safe, Narciso's parting words are to the effect of "Stay here and no harm will come to you."



Amidst the fight, Narciso escorts the courtyard's children to the safety of a warehouse, gathering them and placing them on a wagon.



A close-up of the wagon, accompanied by triumphant music, focuses on the wagon's banner, which displays the name "Salazar" (Portugal's dictator and head of state at the time).

The scene is obvious as a piece of propaganda and it certainly does not need further explanation. However, the lack of subtlety is not to be confused with the lack of craft. The whole war-like montage is perhaps the most technically accomplished shot of the film, and it is functioning as André Bazin has analysed it: ‘Montage (...) did not give us the event; it alluded to it’²⁴. Even if in a crude and obvious way, the film manages to hint rather than show, in an attempt to “convert” the audience to the realisation that their government is the only possible choice. ‘Thus between the scenario properly so-called, (...) and the image pure and simple there is a relay station, a sort of aesthetic “transformer”. The meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator’²⁵.

Even though Bazin wrote these words several years (1950) after *The Courtyard*, it is easy to understand that the Portuguese regime had already grasped the transformative potential of cinema as a ‘force for change’, as a gentle tool of manipulation to convert a passive audience into buying the necessity of the dictatorial regime. Rather than attracting ‘believers to the cause’ by a display of strength and power (much like the fascist and nazi regimes), the original voice of Portuguese cinema as a tool for propaganda

²⁴ Bazin, quoted in Leo Braudy and Cohen, Marshall (eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

was its soft approach, much more a preaching than a show of force – and very much in tune with the figure and demeanour of the dictator himself. The quasi-religious dimension of Salazar (who was a devout Catholic and who capitalised on the image of both the preacher and the monk) is effectively extended to cinema. If, as Robin Wood as pointed out, one of the strengths and functions of ideology is ‘to inhibit the imagining of radical alternatives’²⁶, the Estado Novo regime tries to achieve this inhibition by means of *conversion*.

As it had already been seen in *A Revolução de Maio* (*The May Revolution*) – where a Soviet sympathiser is literally *converted* to the ideology of Estado Novo - conversion is the method of choice to persuade audiences. Whilst in this film (a proper propaganda production), the process of political conversion is overt and easy to be grasped, in *The Courtyard*, the conversion is not presented so openly but it is still nevertheless there, namely in the “return to peace and order” after the brawl, the solution to the several petty problems that arose throughout the film, but particularly in what concerns the fate of Narciso. Introduced as one of the main characters and the main comedic focus of the film, Narciso’s drunkenness is (albeit a comedic element), a source of disturbance and subversion of “natural order”, given the fact that it is his son that is running the *leitaria* and generally taking care of his father (by ensuring his safety and

²⁶ Wood, quoted in Leo Braudy and Cohen, Marshall (eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 725.

tucking him into bed after a night of drinking). By the end of the film, Narciso's role in the community is, in what is an act of "restoring order", reversed and he quits drinking, finally facing up his responsibilities towards his son and his own business.



In the film's last sequence, we see a transformation in Narciso, who, after finding love and giving up drink, is restored to his place as the "head of the family". Order is therefore restored, in line with the ideological principles of the Estado Novo regime.

The "conversion" is a small element, but it is nevertheless an important one because it works in conjunction with all the other elements in the film to cause an effect of community harmony that, even though it had been present before in a smaller degree, it is only by the restoration of order that it achieves its greater potential. As Luís Torgal has pointed out:

In this climate in which "conversion" occupies a fundamental place - the Estado Novo (New State) itself represented, after all, according to its own interpretation, the "conversion" of a country, its "reconstruction", the "reconquest of order" - it is evident that propaganda cinema would grant this phenomenon of the spirit a special place.²⁷

Thus, a seemingly positive moral point about the dangers of alcoholism, the resolving of several innocent conflicts and petty fights, when put together and at the service of an underlying ideology, can function as a powerful tool for "conversion" and an effective tool of political manipulation. Moreover, this dimension serves yet another purpose – the consolidation of the regime's ideas to itself, that is, the regime is *talking to itself*. This is an important aspect, as identified by Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni: '(...) film is ideology presenting itself to itself, talking to itself, learning about itself'²⁸.

This process of "discovery" is nothing but part of a programmatic side of Salazar's ideological precepts. For him, the "originality" of his regime rested on the double function of propaganda – the first, informative and the second, educational²⁹. In reality, what he meant by this was the indoctrination of

²⁷ 'Neste clima em que a "conversão" ocupa um lugar fundamental - o próprio Estado Novo representava afinal, de acordo com a sua própria interpretação, a "conversão" de um país, a sua "reconstrução", a "reconquista da ordem" -, é evidente que o cinema de propaganda haveria de conceder a esse fenómeno do espírito um lugar especial.' Luís Torgal (ed.) *O Cinema sob o olhar de Salazar* (Temas e Debates, 2001), 67.

²⁸ Comolli and Narboni, quoted in Leo Braudy and Cohen, Marshall (eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 815.

the Portuguese people by “formative political education”, a process whereby, using simple but suggestive ways, the regime could consolidate faith in the believers and convert the disbelievers³⁰. In order to achieve this, the SPN published the pamphlet *Decálogo do Estado Novo* (1934) in which the principal tenets of the regime were presented (in religious overtones) as the “ten commandments” of the regime³¹. It also formulated the idea that the regime was some kind of synthesis between all what was positive in tradition and all what was positive in modernity. So, to be against the Estado Novo was to be against the nation.³²

The logic is clear: the Portuguese people were actively discouraged from pursuing ideals that were seen as not traditional, which in turn would discourage social ascension and promote the current status quo. The social hierarchy was to be maintained, with the elites having the “burden” of indoctrination placed upon themselves, as Fernando Rosas analyses:

²⁹ Torgal, quoted in Luís Torgal (ed.) *O Cinema sob o olhar de Salazar* (Temas e Debates, 2001), 66.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

And that was the task of the elites. If so, they would know how to control and lead the masses, enhance the "virtues of the Portuguese people" (their stoic attachment to order, to work, to the hardships of life), organize consensus and conformation, in short, guarantee the stability and durability of the regime: therein lay the supreme art of governance.³³

Paulo Granja, in his analysis of the so-called Portuguese comedies (the genre in which *The Courtyard* is included), has noted that the disapproval of social ascension is a recurrent theme whose purpose is always the same; "social indoctrination":

The desire for social ascension does not cease (...) to be condemned or at least ridiculed. The characters who wish to change their condition or who believe themselves superior to those of their social class are presented to us as being frivolous or pretentious and are almost always (...) opposed to a model of simplicity and virtue.³⁴

³³ 'E essa era a tarefa das elites. Se assim fosse, elas saberiam controlar e conduzir a massa, potenciar as "virtudes do povo português" (o seu estóico apego à ordem, ao trabalho, às agruras da vida), organizar o consenso e a conformação, em suma, garantir a estabilidade e a durabilidade do regime: nisso residiria a arte suprema da governação'. Fernando Rosas, "O salazarismo e o homem novo: ensaio sobre o Estado Novo e a questão do totalitarismo", *Análise Social*, Vol. XXXV (Inverno), n.º 157 (2001), 1038.

³⁴ 'A vontade de ascensão social não deixa (...) de ser condenada ou, pelo menos, ridicularizada. As personagens que pretendem mudar de condição ou que se julgam superiores às da sua classe social são-nos apresentadas como sendo frívolas ou pretensiosas, sendo-lhes quase sempre (...) contraposto um modelo de simplicidade e de virtude.' Granja, qtd in Luís Torgal (ed.) *O Cinema sob o olhar de Salazar* (Temas e Debates, 2001), 205.

In *The Courtyard*, this can be seen in the character of Evaristo, who is constantly being presented as thinking highly of himself and as belonging to a class above. In a scene at the beginning of the film, he appears at his window, criticising the musical taste of his fellow residents of the courtyard. He then starts to play opera in the megaphone, which he directs at the street. Eventually, he is rebuffed and mocked, and his response is calling his neighbours “ignorant” before closing the window and disappearing inside.

This scene (and many other of the same kind) reveal the social conception of the Estado Novo: ‘A conservative conception whose main characteristics were a strong sense of hierarchy and social immobility, as well as a certain mistrust of the upper classes’³⁵.

The “indoctrination” process was, therefore, the affirmation of an authoritarian, socially and economically conservative regime which has discovered a useful ally in cinema and made effective use of it to its own political benefit. This was also a process not only of affirmation but also of erasure, of “pacification” through passivity. By stripping away illusions of social ascension, by reinscribing individuals in their national tradition and in a collective that depended on a paternal state and on a father figure (Salazar), the regime and its propaganda arm were in fact erasing

³⁵ ‘Uma concepção (...) conservadora e cujas principais características eram um forte sentido de hierarquia e de imobilismo sociais, bem como uma certa desconfiança relativamente às classes superiores.’ *Ibid.*

an alternative existence, an alternative not only at the political level but also at the deeper level of collective unconscious, thanks to the insidious power of films such as *The Courtyard of Ballads*. The result, as José Gil has indicated, has been nefarious and long-lasting:

Salazar managed to transform existence into trauma. As such existence was beyond the limit of tolerable suffering - it became a non-existence, a time of annulment of individual existence. To exist was to participate in the evil, the metaphysical illness that had invaded all Portuguese life.³⁶

The Courtyard of Ballads might be just a film, might be (rightly so) a part of the canon of Portuguese cinema; but it is also part of an industry that had at the time been used for propagandistic effects and which served a brutal dictatorial regime. This last aspect cannot be overlooked and, even though its enduring popularity – attested by the fact that it has been remade in 2015 under the same title but with significant differences in terms of plot – one must not let it rest easy in the way it is viewed now by the majority of Portuguese audiences; as simply an inoffensive comedy form a by-gone era, cleansed by effect of nostalgia.

³⁶ Salazar conseguiu transformar a existência em trauma. Como tal a existência estava para além do limite do sofrimento tolerável – tornou-se uma não-existência, um *tempo de anulação da existência* individual. Existir era participar no mal, na doença metafísica que tinha invadido toda a vida portuguesa.’ José Gil, *Portugal, Hoje: O Medo de Existir* (Relógio d’Água, 2012), 122.

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Łukasz Sorokowski

ORCID: 0009-0002-1662-7468; lsorokowski@wseh.pl

Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej

**THE (IN)HUMAN CONDITION: SELECTED
ASPECTS OF THE TOTALITARIAN
REGIME AS DEPICTED IN *THE LIVES OF
OTHERS***

**KONDYCJA (NIE)LUDZKA – WYBRANE
ASPEKTY TOTALITARYZMU W FILMIE
PT. „ŻYCIE NA PODSŁUCHU”**

ABSTRACT

The paper looks at the various ways in which Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others* (2006) portrays a harrowing depiction of life under the oppressive surveillance state of East Germany and its omnipresent network of the Stasi, the GDR's secret police. The inhuman condition within a totalitarian regime, which culminates in the late 1980s, is scrutinised by focusing on the moral and psychological degradation imposed on both the oppressors and the oppressed. Through the character arc of Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler, a dedicated Stasi officer whose ideological convictions erode upon witnessing the humanity of his targets, the film explores such leitmotifs as isolation, control, and possible redemption. The study delves into the use of cinematography, sound design, and *mise-en-scène* to reinforce the pervasive sense of fear

and mistrust. Drawing from historical accounts and political theory, it is argued that *The Lives of Others* serves as both a critique of authoritarianism and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, as, ultimately, the film seems to transcend its purely historical setting, paving the way for a universal meditation on the ethical dilemmas faced under oppressive regimes.

Keywords: totalitarianism, East Germany, Stasi, regime oppression, surveillance, resistance

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule poddano analizie sposób, w jaki reżyser Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck w swoim filmie *Życie na podsłuchu* (2006) przedstawia wstrząsający obraz życia w Niemieckiej Republice Demokratycznej z jej wszechobecną tajną policją polityczną Stasi. Nieludzka sytuacja panująca w wyjątkowo opresyjnym reżimie totalitarnym, którego kulminacja przypada na koniec lat osiemdziesiątych XX wieku, jest badana przez pryzmat moralnej i psychologicznej degradacji, narzuconej zarówno ciemieżcom, jak i uciskanym. Poprzez wyjątkowo osobisty wątek kapitana Gerda Wieslera – pierwszoplanowej postaci filmu w roli oddanego oficera Stasi, którego przekonania ideologiczne ulegają stopniowej erozji, gdy ten zderza się z człowieczeństwem śledzonych przez siebie „obiektów”, film ukazuje takie motywy, jak izolacja, kontrola, etyka zawodowa i możliwość odkupienia grzechów. Artykuł analizuje również zastosowane techniki kinematograficzne, warstwę dźwiękową i elementy *mise-en-scène* w celu wzmocnienia wszechobecnego poczucia strachu i nieufności. Opierając się na przekazach historycznych i teorii politycznej próbującej wyjaśnić istotę totalitaryzmu, autor próbuje dowieść, że film jest zarówno krytyką autorytaryzmu, jak i świadectwem odporności ludzkiego ducha. Wykracza on bowiem poza czysto historyczne tło, w którym jest osadzony, stanowiąc przyczynek do uniwersalnych rozważań nad dylematami etycznymi, przed którymi stają reżimy totalitarne i jednostki realizujące ich założenia.

Słowa kluczowe: totalitaryzm, NRD, Stasi, opresyjny, reżim, inwigilacja, opór

“1984. East Berlin. *Glasnost* is nowhere in sight. The population of the GDR is kept under strict control by the Stasi, the East German secret police. Its force of 100,000 staff and 200,000 informers safeguards the dictatorship of the Proletariat. Its declared goal: ‘To know everything’” [The Lives of Others, 2006].

INTRODUCTION

The idea of recreating totalitarian realities in visual arts encompasses a wide range of cinematic works that explore the oppressive nature of authoritarian regimes and the vicissitudes of the lives of those who have had to endure them. Set in specific settings, geared towards depicting the historical atrocities of totalitarianism and relying heavily on intersections of personal and political narratives, these works of art serve as both artistic expressions and critical commentaries on the political ideologies that govern societies at a particular moment in time, often illustrating both the origins of such regimes and the contemporary reflections on their impact on the human condition.

Admittedly, the significance of this topic lies in its ability to illuminate the complexities of totalitarianism, including its effects on individual freedoms, societal structures, and the mechanisms of

state control. Totalitarian-themed films frequently depict narratives of resistance and rebellion, highlighting the struggle of individuals against oppressive systems. Striving to portray such leitmotifs as surveillance and control, societal collapse, propaganda and ideological omnipotence, as well as resistance and rebellion against the overwhelming nature of the system, such films clearly evoke emotional responses and provoke critical thought on the importance of freedom and personal autonomy. The intersection of personal and political narratives in totalitarian cinematography mirror the broader societal transformations that occur during periods of oppression. By weaving individual stories into the fabric of political oppression, filmmakers delve into the extent to which totalitarian regimes impact everyday lives. As such, this genre not only serves as a cautionary tale against the abuse of power but also prompts audiences to engage with the emotional weight of historical atrocities and the relevance of these themes in modern society. Also, along with the continuing popularity of films attempting to address the implications of authoritarianism, the genre remains a key medium that facilitates the examination and critique of the realities of totalitarian control, as well as the endurance of the human mind and soul in its pursuit of individual freedom and social justice.

In one of his papers, Marc De Kesel [2004, pp. 299–301] examines Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian perspectives on totalitarianism, revolution, and political action. Žižek argues that our reality is

structured by a symbolic order, with ‘the Real’ representing an unattainable object of desire. Totalitarian regimes, he notes, deny this inherent virtuality of reality, presenting their ideology as an absolute truth and suppressing the subject's desire for the Real. In contrast, a genuine political act acknowledges the contingency of the symbolic order, disrupting it to create a revolutionary event *ex nihilo*. Such an act involves embracing the inherent inconsistencies of the symbolic structure, recognizing that politics is fundamentally a symbolic phenomenon sustained by signifiers rather than any ultimate reality.

Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl Friedrich [1965, p. 22] posit that there are six key features of totalitarianism, which define a highly centralised and oppressive political system. First, a totalitarian state is led by a single, all-powerful ruling party, often dominated by a charismatic leader. Second, it employs an official ideology that seeks to control all aspects of life and justify the actions taken by the regime. Third, the state exercises total control over the media and employs propaganda to mould public opinion. Fourth, a highly developed system of secret police enforces obedience through surveillance, terror, and repression. Fifth, the regime controls the military and uses it to suppress opposition and maintain authority. Finally, it exerts central control over the economy, directing resources to serve state goals and ensuring dependence on the government. These features collectively

establish a system where the state seeks absolute authority over all facets of society [Wielomski 2021, pp. 171-199].

Drawing from numerous theories of political cinema, filmmakers have portrayed totalitarian states through various aesthetic and narrative techniques and strategies, frequently using dystopian allegory, propaganda critique, or historical dramatization. Through dystopian landscapes, propaganda imagery and characters trapped under rigid state control, these films show the psychological and societal consequences of totalitarian rule. From the bleak surveillance state as depicted in Michael Radford's *1984*, based on George Orwell's eponymous novel, through the portrayal of the personal and political upheavals following the fall of the Berlin Wall, portrayed in Wolfgang Becker's tragicomedy *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003), to Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others* (2006), these films offer a poignant reflection on historical change and personal sacrifice against the backdrop of state control, oppression, ideological conformity, and resistance. This paper looks at the ways in which totalitarianism has been featured in *The Lives of Others*, a German drama that peels off the different layers of totalitarian power in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

**THE STASI: “THE SHIELD AND SWORD” OF
THE RULING PARTY**

The GDR’s Ministry for State Security, commonly known as the Stasi, was the primary intelligence and security organisation of East Germany. Founded in 1950, the Stasi quickly became one of the most effective and feared secret police forces in history, tasked with preserving the socialist regime of the GDR. Its mandate extended far beyond traditional law enforcement, encompassing a wide range of activities aimed at suppressing dissent, controlling information, and ensuring ideological conformity [Koehler 2000, pp. 18-19].

The Stasi’s operations were epitomised by an extraordinary level of infiltration into East German society. At its peak, the organisation employed approximately 100,000 full-time operatives and managed an extensive network of unofficial collaborators, estimated to number between 170,000 and 200,000. This network meant that nearly every community, workplace, and social group was under some form of surveillance. The sheer scale of its reach is reflected in the staggering statistic that there was one Stasi agent or informant for every 6.5 citizens in East Germany. These collaborators spied on their neighbours, colleagues, and even family members, feeding a culture of suspicion and paranoia.

The methods employed by the Stasi ranged from conventional espionage to psychological manipulation. Techniques

such as wiretapping, mail interception, and covert surveillance were used to gather information. Flats and entire houses were bugged and/or wired, as vividly depicted in the film, where microphones were installed in the ceilings and walls of Georg Dreyman's home. Beyond physical surveillance, the Stasi also engaged in *Zersetzung*, a tactic aimed at undermining individuals psychologically [Hertzberg 2021]. This involved spreading false rumours, sabotaging personal relationships, and creating a sense of isolation to neutralize perceived threats.

The portrayal of the Stasi in *The Lives of Others* aligns with historical accounts, capturing both the omnipresence of its surveillance apparatus and the personal toll it took on individuals. For example, the bugging of Dreyman's flat and the close surveillance of his movements reflect the Stasi's invasive practices, while the coerced collaboration of Christa-Maria Sieland mirrors the difficult moral choices many East Germans faced under pressure from the regime. By grounding its narrative in such historical realities, the film offers a powerful insight into the mechanisms and consequences of surveillance under totalitarian rule.

The psychological effects of this pervasive surveillance were profound. Many East Germans lived in constant fear of being watched or betrayed, leading to self-censorship and a loss of trust even among close friends and family. The legacy of this fear persisted long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, as revelations about

the extent of the Stasi's activities shocked the world. By anchoring its story in this historical context, *The Lives of Others* not only illuminates the realities of life in East Germany but also raises universal questions about the cost of state surveillance and the fragility of personal freedom.

The state's influence penetrated every aspect of East Germans' existence, and their entire lives were coated with a thick political and ideological wash. All the social and cultural activities people undertook were embedded in a politically ideological framework, and people's behaviour in the various social organisations and arenas was closely scrutinised [Veenis 2012, p. 115].

KEEPING THE EYES AND EARS WIDE OPEN

As the fall of the Berlin Wall is still half a decade away, Captain Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe) is introduced showcasing his mastery of the craft of mental torture on a prisoner who is being interrogated in his office. A rigid member of East Germany's Stasi, Wiesler is shown as a saturnine regime puppet, a perfect instrument in the hands of a political system that is steeped in paranoia by keeping ruthless taps on its people. Even Grubitz, his superior and former classmate, thinks his dedication to what he calls "the party's shield and sword" is a bit too much: "All that teaching is ruining your instincts," he laughs out, so what better way is there for the

automaton to regain them than by monitoring a couple of outgoing artists, seeing his own chilly orderliness thaw while he learns from their humanity?

The film features four characters each of whom has different moral conundrums. For a film to depict four rich and diverse characters who have various moral conundrums and various levels of knowledge about what each of the others is doing, what they know, and what the secret police are going to do about it is really a remarkable component. One can focus on any one of these characters, but the film actually casts light on one main character – Wiesler, the mid-level bureaucrat working for the Stasi. Beginning early in the film, he is portrayed as a torturer, a seasoned investigator and a lecturer who teaches in college on how to interrogate and torture people. Then he is assigned to spy on Georg Dreyman, the East German playwright regarded as loyal to the system and the nation. It's Wiesler's idea to spy on him, as he suspects anyone who is trying to move up the chains of bureaucracy, so he advises Grubitz to launch the operation, even though Dreyman enjoys the reputation of an individual of impeccable moral rectitude with a loyalty to and faith in the state beyond question.

One of the most insidious effects of surveillance depicted in the film, is its ability to suppress individuality and creativity. Dreyman, a playwright known for his carefully apolitical work, embodies the self-censorship that many intellectuals adopted to

avoid conflict with the state. His reluctance to write openly critical pieces reflects the internalized constraints imposed by the Stasi's watchful presence. However, the suicide of his close friend Albert Jerska, a blacklisted director, becomes a turning point. Jerska's tragic fate underscores the toll of censorship on creative expression, driving Dreyman to take a stand by writing an anonymous exposé on East Germany's suicide rates.

Christa-Maria, too, struggles with the erosion of her individuality. As a celebrated actress, her artistry and sense of self are undermined by her need to conform to the regime's demands. Her submission to Minister Hempf's advances further exemplifies how surveillance and coercion strip individuals of agency, reducing them to pawns in a system designed to maintain power at any cost.

Within a few minutes from the outset of the film, we are told that the GDR is a humanistic system, a premise that throughout the film is challenged and made ironic, as the socialism shown from start to finish is immoral and corrupt. The Stasi tortures people, spies on them and blacklists anyone who is thought to be against it. Wiesler runs an operation in which he spies on Dreyman. The Stasi break into his flat, which is wired from top to bottom, and then Wiesler sets up a station on top of the flat right above where Dreyman lives, and sits there and listens to him day after day. Wiesler thus gets a front-row seat on Dreyman's life: he assumes the role of a voyeur of an ordinary man's life, so that he knows all about him. He becomes like a movie watcher, a hidden

observer getting to spy into a life, but he's nowhere seen to respond or react to it in public. Interestingly, he does not observe through visuals, but through audio, listening to everything that is said or done inside the flat, and then meticulously writes down his reports. As his surveillance goes by, one more conundrum comes up, as he begins to empathize with the ones he is keeping an eye on. He begins to understand the life of the man he is listening to. What is a secret policeman to do when he admires and empathizes with someone, and that someone becomes a rebel against the state or does something illegal? Should he forge his reports, or should he report on the man he now looks up to, protecting himself but harming the person he likes in the process? Also, since he knows little or nothing about Dreyman's life, should he intervene with his life whenever a situation might come up?

Alongside Wiesler, each character portrayed in the film is in one way or another at a crossroads: Dreyman, who becomes a loyal artist but finds his fellow artists blacklisted and harmed, who wants to write about suicide in East Germany, which would be against the socialist system and would get him in trouble; his girlfriend Crista Maria Sieland (CMS), who may sooner or later find out about Dreyman and finally report on him; Grubitz, the mid-level Stasi bureaucrat who can turn Wiesler in any time. Each of these people may turn each other in at various times. They have different levels of knowledge about the spy operation going on in Dreyman's home.

The entire plot rests on what could be dubbed a game theory: should you preserve yourself, should you turn others in order to preserve yourself, should you keep secrets at the cost of getting harmed once your secret is found out and the authorities prove that you have been keeping them? Also, there are several metaphors about whether these people can really act and have the freedom to act, or whether they are constrained in terms of the system that overwhelms them. The puppet on the wall in Dreyman's home as his girlfriend and him are involved in a heated and politically sensitive conversation on the potent nature of the system they live in, or the metaphor of the playwright writing lines for actors to say out loud just because they have to, as these are lines that are given to them to perform. Every citizen is just an actor doing what they have to do, saying the lines they have to say to the secret police, the puppet masters of the social, political and economic show that is being staged. There are different levels of bureaucracy in the film: Wiesler, Grubitz above him, and the archvillain, Minister Bruno Hempf, who starts the ball rolling as he is having second thoughts about Dreyman's loyalty to the system. Clearly, the film has feeling of George Orwell's *1984* throughout. It seems to be fitting, as the first words of the movie set the early stage of the plot in the winter of 1984, a year that may not have been chosen randomly, to act as homage to Orwell.

(IM)PERFECT SURVEILLANCE

One of the leading themes of *The Lives of Others* is the intricate relationship between surveillance and power dynamics within a totalitarian regime. The film meticulously illustrates how the Stasi exercises control through a pervasive network of surveillance that not only monitors behaviour but also infiltrates people's personal and intimate lives. This form of surveillance may be described as a "creature of its social context," reflecting the asymmetrical visibility that defines such regimes [Shaw 2017]. The Stasi's methods exemplify a top-down, hierarchical approach, where the populace is constantly aware of their vulnerability, resulting in self-policing behaviours born from fear.

Surveillance is not merely a backdrop to the story but a driving force that shapes the lives of its characters and propels the narrative. The film's depiction of surveillance offers a deeply personal lens through which to understand the mechanisms of control wielded by the Stasi, as well as the ethical dilemmas faced by those involved in its execution. From the outset, the film immerses viewers in the intricate web of observation and manipulation, vividly illustrating the invasive methods employed by the East German secret police.

The film artfully portrays the Stasi's use of advanced techniques to monitor and control individuals. Wiesler's surveillance of Dreyman involves hours of listening to intimate

conversations, reading personal letters, and documenting daily activities. The stark contrast between the cold, impersonal nature of his task and the warmth and humanity of Dreyman and Christa-Maria's relationship highlights the dehumanizing effects of such work.

Key scenes, such as Wiesler eavesdropping on Dreyman playing a haunting piano piece, illustrate the emotional toll of surveillance not only on the subjects but also on the observer. As Wiesler becomes increasingly drawn into the lives of those he is monitoring, his role shifts from a passive observer to an active participant, ultimately choosing to alter his daily reports with a view to protecting Dreyman.

The film employs a variety of cinematic techniques to make the audience feel the potency of surveillance, the quiet power of human connection and the overall thematic depth. Camera work, including tracking shots and point-of-view angles, immerses the audience in the characters' experiences, particularly Gerd Wiesler's internal conflict as he navigates his duties as a Stasi agent. The tracking shots not only convey a sense of continuity but also intensify emotional moments, allowing viewers to empathize with the characters' vulnerabilities. Numerous lighting choices contribute to the atmosphere, reinforcing the mood of oppression and secrecy. The careful selection of lighting contrasts serves to reflect the psychological states of the characters, particularly in scenes where Wiesler grapples with his moral dilemmas.

Frequent close-ups are used, mostly on Wiesler, to highlight his internal transformation. His face is often framed in tight shots, emphasizing his isolation and growing emotional turmoil. On the one hand, Wiesler's early scenes are shot with rigid, static framing, reflecting his disciplined and mechanical personality as a Stasi officer. On the other hand, when he listens to Dreyman and CMS, the camera often frames him in over-the-shoulder shots, reinforcing his role as a silent observer. Ultimately, the moment he hears Dreyman play the *Sonata for a Good Man* is shot with soft lighting and a close-up on Wiesler's face, revealing his emotional awakening, the turning point and climax of the plot.

ART AS REDEMPTION: TRANSFORMATION AND REBELLION

Cheryl Dueck examines how the film portrays members of East Germany's secret police in a more human light, a departure from their typical depiction as purely oppressive figures. She argues that this humanization is central to the film's success and cultural significance and notes that the film is groundbreaking as it is “the first widely successful feature film to portray the Ministry for State Security (Stasi) at the centre of the story, and it humanizes the individual Stasi worker on film,” a perspective not previously explored in German cinema [Dueck 2008, pp. 599–602]. She

contends that the film's narrative structure effectively reduces the vast issue of the Stasi's role in society to a manageable scale, engaging viewers' imaginations to confront this traumatic past. This approach offers what may look like a “fable” through which audiences can access and reflect upon this history. However, Dueck also acknowledges critiques, such as those from Anna Funder, who argue that humanizing the Stasi might lead some former officers to perceive themselves merely as individuals “just 'obeying orders' or were 'small cogs' in the machine,” potentially downplaying the harm they caused.

As his secret mission proceeds and delves deeper into the lives of Dreyman and CMS, Wiesler becomes emotionally entangled with the lives of the people he is spying on. The act of surveillance, initially intended to reinforce his loyalty to the regime, becomes the catalyst for his moral awakening. As he observes the genuine love and artistic passion in Dreyman's household, Wiesler begins to question the morality of his work. This transformation is subtly depicted through his actions, such as his decision to redact incriminating information from his reports and his eventual sabotage of the investigation. The intimacy of surveillance thus paradoxically leads to a deep empathy with those being observed, challenging the dehumanizing intent of the Stasi's practices.

Ironically, the act of surveillance itself can give rise to empathy and resistance, as exemplified by Wiesler's

transformation. Initially an instrument of the regime, Wiesler's exposure to Dreyman and CMS's unguarded lives awakens his sense of humanity. His decision to falsify reports and ultimately shield Dreyman from the Stasi's scrutiny represents a quiet but profound act of defiance. Wiesler's journey demonstrates how even within systems of oppression, the human spirit can find ways to resist.

Admittedly, the psychological impact of surveillance extends beyond those being watched to those doing the watching. For Wiesler, the emotional toll of his work becomes increasingly evident as he grapples with the moral contradictions of his role. His loneliness and alienation, mirrored in his sterile and solitary lifestyle, underscore the dehumanizing effects of participation in a system that thrives on fear and control. By the film's conclusion, Wiesler's quiet rebellion and ultimate redemption reflect the possibility of reclaiming one's moral compass, even within the most oppressive environments.

Clearly, at the heart of the plot is Wiesler's struggle to reconcile his role as a Stasi officer with his growing sense of morality. Initially, Wiesler views his assignment to monitor Dreyman and CMS as a duty to the state. In this social role, he is a model enforcer, embodying the regime's values and operating under the belief that his actions are necessary for the preservation of socialism. However, as he becomes immersed in the couple's lives, he confronts the ethical implications of his work.

The invasion of their privacy, the manipulation of their fears, and the ultimate threat to their freedom force him to question the legitimacy of his actions and push him into a new role.

This moral conflict reflects a broader dilemma faced by individuals in authoritarian systems: the tension between personal conscience and institutional loyalty. For Wiesler, the decision to redact incriminating information from his reports marks a critical turning point. It represents his rejection of blind obedience to the state in favour of a higher ethical standard, underscoring the moral complexity of serving within oppressive regimes.

In a system designed to dehumanize, empathy becomes a form of resistance. Wiesler's growing empathy for Dreyman and CMS ultimately drives his moral awakening. By choosing to shield them from the Stasi's scrutiny, he acts against his training and risks his own safety. His actions underscore the potential for personal ethics to triumph over institutional mandates, even in the most oppressive circumstances. This transformation raises profound questions about the capacity for moral growth and the possibility of redemption for those complicit in unjust systems.

Wiesler's journey also invites reflection on the ethical responsibilities of individuals in positions of power. His decision to sabotage the investigation that he once was so eager to launch himself suggests that even within rigid hierarchies, there is room for personal agency and moral choice. However, the cost of such resistance – loneliness, professional ruin, and personal sacrifice –

illustrates the immense challenges faced by those who seek to act ethically within oppressive systems.

By framing surveillance as a deeply ethical issue, *The Lives of Others* seems to transcend its historical setting to engage with enduring questions about human morality, agency, and the costs of complicity in systems of oppression.

CONCLUSIONS

Arguably, *The Lives of Others* offers more than just a purely historical account of life under East Germany's authoritarian regime; it provides a powerful exploration of the human experience under surveillance and the profound ethical dilemmas it entails. Through its meticulous depiction of the Stasi's methods, the film delves into the psychological and societal impacts of pervasive monitoring, showing how fear, mistrust, and coercion can erode the very fabric of a society. It reveals the high personal cost of living in a state where privacy is a luxury and individuals are reduced to mere subjects under constant observation.

Central to the film's narrative is the moral transformation of Wiesler, whose journey from a loyal enforcer to a reluctant protector underscores the possibility of resistance even within the most oppressive systems. His evolution highlights a fundamental truth: the capacity for empathy, moral reflection, and personal agency can survive, and even thrive, in environments designed to

crush them. Wiesler's ultimate act of defiance – protecting those he was tasked to destroy – seems to offer a glimmer of hope, illustrating that even the most deeply entrenched systems of control cannot completely extinguish the human spirit.

By exploring themes of surveillance, coercion, and ethical choice, the film invites viewers to reflect on the delicate balance between state power and individual freedom. In doing so, it raises timeless questions about the nature of privacy, the morality of compliance, and the potential for resistance in the face of systemic injustice. The film's relevance extends beyond its historical setting, offering insights into the ongoing challenges posed by surveillance technologies and their implications for personal liberty in the modern world.

Ultimately, *The Lives of Others* explores the potential for personal transformation in the face of adversity. The character arc of Wiesler encapsulates this theme as he grapples with his moral compass and the implications of his actions. Wiesler's journey reflects the possibility of redemption, as he evolves from a tool of the regime to a protector of the very individuals he was assigned to keep an eye on.

Despite the criticism voiced against the film's superfluous depiction of the Stasi as a monolithic organization, in which individual operatives can undergo moral transformation, or the narrative suggesting that personal integrity can lead to social salvation – an interpretation that fails to account for the harsh

realities faced by those who resisted the regime, many of whom suffered severe personal and professional consequences – the film is a poignant reminder of the fragility of freedom and the importance of safeguarding the personal space in which individuality and creativity can flourish. It prompts viewers to consider not only the ethics of surveillance but also their own role in protecting the rights and dignity of others. With its compelling characters, moral complexity and historical grounding, it offers a profound commentary on the human cost of totalitarian systems and the enduring struggle for personal autonomy.

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Jeremi Szaniawski

ORCID: 0000-0001-5437-4516; jszaniawski@umass.edu

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Yale University

**EAST, WEST, AND THE TOTAL WORLD:
TOTALITARIANISM IN HISTORY AND
AESTHETICS IN PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI'S
*COLD WAR***

**WSCHÓD, ZACHÓD I ŚWIAT TOTALNY:
TOTALITARYZM W HISTORII I
ESTETYCE NA PRZYKŁADZIE FILMU
*ZIMNA WOJNA PAWŁA
PAWLIKOWSKIEGO***

ABSTRACT

Like its characters, the film *Cold War* (2018) can't decide which term to favour between East/Socialism/Stalinism and West/Capitalism/Liberal Democracy. While this unresolvable dilemma hardly works when considering the film as a period piece, it appears that its 'neither/nor' dialectics make sense if we look at *Cold War* as an allegory for the twenty-first century. In this sense, the 'neither/nor' narrative dilemma has more to do with a vanishing of difference between East and West in a purportedly global world, an increasing absence to the meaning of choice, and an updating of the concept of totalitarianism, than with the cold war years per se. Standing at a radical historical remove from the period it

depicts, the film otherwise treats both politics and aesthetics as something seemingly of the past. While it can scarcely be envisaged as a politically enlightened or subversive film, *Cold War* nevertheless serves to demonstrate that cinema, and the modern-day “art film” in particular, can still function as a political index even when it forecloses any conception of a politics that could amount to anything more than melancholy resignation.

Keywords: Cold War, Paweł Pawlikowski, totalitarianism, socialism, Joseph Stalin, Stalinism, pastiche, History, dialectics, East, West, (absence of) choice, (liberal) democracy, freedom

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł analizuje ideę totalitaryzmu, który w absolutnym hicie kinowym Pawła Pawlikowskiego pt. *Zimna wojna* jest szeroko rozpowszechniony – w fabule, formie, ale także w tym, jak alegoryzuje naszą terażniejszość, co postaram się wykazać w dalszej części. Co więcej, spośród kilku wrażeń, jakie wywołują się po obejrzeniu filmu, jednym jest z pewnością poczucie, idąc pod prąd większości europejskiego kina artystycznego z lat 50. i 60. (zarówno zachodniego, jak i wschodniego), które bardzo świadomie pastiszuje w sposób bardzo świadomy, że nie ma dobrego wyboru między podziałem Wschód/Zachód, socjalizm/kapitalizm, ani pomyślniej alternatywy dla niego, który film bardzo intensywnie reprezentuje. Blok wschodni (Polska, Berlin Wschodni, Jugosławia) ukazany jest jako totalitarny w taki sposób, że bohaterowie dążą do ucieczki od niego; ale Zachód (Paryż) proponuje im zdewitalizowany i dekadenski styl życia, który ostatecznie zmusza ich do powrotu do Polski. Znajdują tam łagodniejszą, poststalinowską formę totalitaryzmu, która w ostatecznym rozrachunku wydaje się być najgorszą i najbardziej beznadziejnie nieinspirującą z tych trzech propozycji.

Słowa kluczowe: Zimna Wojna, Paweł Pawlikowski, totalitaryzm, socjalizm, Józef Stalin, stalinizm, pastisz, historia, dialektyka, Wschód, Zachód, (brak) wyboru, demokracja (liberalna), wolność

The theme of totalitarianism looms large in Paweł Pawlikowski's arthouse hit *Cold War* (*Zimna wojna*, 2018)—in plot, form, but also in how it allegorizes our present moment, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in what follows. Moreover, out of several impressions to emerge from viewing *Cold War*, one is certainly the sense, going against the grain of much of European art cinema of the 1950s and 1960s (Western and Eastern alike—films which the film very self-awardedly pastiches!), that there is no good choice between, or auspicious alternative to the East/West, Socialism/Capitalism divide Pawlikowski's film very intently represents. The Eastern bloc (Poland, East Berlin, Yugoslavia) is shown as totalitarian in a way that has the protagonists aspire to run away from it; but the West (Paris) proposes a devitalized and decadent lifestyle that has them eventually return to Poland. There they find a milder, post-Stalinist form of totalitarianism, which, in the end, seems to be the worst and most hopelessly uninspiring of the three propositions.

The protagonists of the film, Zula and Wiktor, meet in Stalinist Poland around 1949. He is an ethnomusicologist, pianist, and conductor, holding much responsibility in putting together a national folk music ensemble, Mazurek; she is a young aspiring talent in said ensemble. Wiktor is in his late thirties, Zula may not even be twenty yet. Theirs is a burning romance that seems to know no bounds, but that is tragically hampered by outside circumstances: Zula is made to spy on Wiktor even as (or because!)

they conduct an illicit affair. Not that any of this seems to have dramatic consequences, but Wiktor is fed up with the impositions of socialist realism, including the ways it impedes on the folk music repertoire performed by the ensemble. As a result, he defects to the West, but Zula stays behind, unwilling to sacrifice her position in Mazurek. Later, however, she manages to move West by marrying a Sicilian man (a clear allusion to Roberto Rossellini's *Stromboli!*). Wiktor and Zula are reunited in Paris, where he leads a Bohemian life and makes a living by playing in a jazz club and composing film music. Yet their romance is thwarted. Zula feels sapped of energy, the two drink profusely, and their quarrels intensify. She desperately wants Wiktor's attention, but both are apparently doomed by being far away from the motherland. Eventually Zula cheats on Wiktor and returns to Poland. Wiktor, in a melodramatic turn, unable to live without her, follows suit. Since he defected, he is sent to a labour camp. She endeavours to get him out, but by the time she manages (which involves marrying the same apparatchik who had had her spy on Wiktor, Kaczmarek, and begetting him a child) they are both broken people : she has turned into an alcoholic, blasé pop singer, while his days as a pianist are irrevocably behind him due to the hardships and cruelty of the camp. The two end up committing suicide after having performed a marriage ritual inside a church in ruins. "Let's sit over there, we'll get a better view," are Zula's final words before the two leave the screen, a view of a meadow with wind-swept tall grass.

As a reflection on history, *Cold War* may not go very deep—except for what it tells us not about the cold war years, but rather about our 21st century present, to which I shall return. But first, I would like to look at Pawlikowski's film as pastiche, which obliges us to consider its relationship with older films it draws upon. And these need to be considered in not just aesthetic, but historical terms too. There are clear references here to the films of Rossellini, Michelangelo Antonioni (the Paris jazz club is called L'Eclipse!), Robert Bresson, Ingmar Bergman, as well as films by Eastern European filmmakers, including Sergei Eisenstein, Grigori Alexandrov, Andrzej Wajda, and many others (maybe the film's finest moments are simply those that humbly pay homage to the documentaries of Krzysztof Kieślowski, Pawlikowski's long-time role model). Yet those films were products of a specific moment (or moments) in which both political and aesthetic transcendence (the formation of new communities and bonds, an attempt to move beyond modern alienation and scepticism) was still treated as a possibility, or at the very least an ideal to be strived for. *Cold War* can't claim the same, despite its evident attempts to channel the spirit of modernist European art cinema; it stands at a radical historical remove from the period it depicts, which is of course precisely that of the films that it is drawing upon. As a result, both politics and aesthetics are treated here as something that belongs to the past. But in an obscure way, the film seems aware of this predicament: it depicts a situation in which its characters are filled

with melancholy, free-floating anxiety, not capable of or willing to choose between one of two transcendences – one post-war Western philosophical sublime celebrating a resilient or subversive spirit of community, resisting reification (the ‘Leftism’ that pervaded the capitalist West, or, more broadly yet, the conglomerate of ideologies that arose in reaction and resistance to capitalism and consumerism, or Atlantic/American capitalism); and the other sublimating life and labour through the cult of a Socialist totality. Like its characters, the film can’t decide which of these two terms to favour. And this proves to be *Cold War*’s undoing, one which it attempts to counter, forestall, or cover up with swathes of seductive music and a starkly unifying black and white cinematography. Rather than choice (which would of course in this case only, at least on the surface, represent a past choice that can no longer be made anyway), what we find here is a kind of hermetically sealed piece of kitsch: immaculate over-aestheticized black and white images which precludes an imaginary, be it utopian or dystopian (liberal freedom and Stalinist totalitarianism, depending on the point of view), as form and style are relegated almost entirely to the task of connoting a certain “good taste” or “seriousness” that indicate this is an “arthouse” film, rather than being used in a way that could set some sort of dialectic or thought into motion. Like so many other contemporary films in this category (think no further than *Roma* by Pawlikowski’s friend Alfonso Cuarón), *Cold War* dispenses with the modernist (and sometimes even postmodernist)

effort to use form to create something new, to move towards something. Instead, it gives us a total, complete commodity, whose aesthetics operate at the superficial and static level of, say, a perfume commercial. Such a work prevents any genuine historical thinking or any possibility of historical transcendence, but again, the film itself has some subterranean awareness of this fact. A lot of it has to do with the fact that *Cold War* more or less obliquely addresses a form of impasse that is redolent of a total system that can't generate any real enthusiasm or collective project any longer—and can only incarnate a parody, degraded version of community.

As a consequence of the above, *Cold War*'s presentation of romantic pessimism is neither very excruciating, nor is it believable or compelling. As a document about defectors/immigrants from the East in the 1950s and 1960s, it can only convince the most uninformed viewer. Here again, the film's stunning black and white aesthetic, making every shot look like something out of a commercial or Studio Harcourt photo shoot, only adds to the artificial quality of it all; we would seem to be in full "mode rétro," as Fredric Jameson would say, but in a way that claims to offer some sort of deeper, more emotional connection to history. The film's largely fantastical vision of the *Cold War* world, however, precludes this and the romantic pessimism itself would seem to be little more than a cliché, a feeling that is somehow meant to neutralize any real deep thinking about history. But—

returning to this chapter's central argument—as an allegory of our 21st century, *Cold War* is much more interesting indeed. To draw this interest out, we need to begin by seeing it as a work of fantasy, not in any way a historical film. Of course, it uses real elements as its backdrop: Wiktor is tailored after Tadeusz Sygietyński, the real-life musician and pedagogue who founded, along with his wife Mira, the much-loved Mazowsze ensemble, one of Poland's best cultural exports. No doubt, *Cold War* is a melodrama parading as historical reconstruction. And for a substantial part, it belongs in the musical genre, known for its distortions and simplifications of human passions, and often addressing history in highly allegorical or fancy ways. Yet, it is also fair to say that the musical genre has often much more to say—if obliquely—about history, than many more 'serious' period pieces. There certainly is a great affinity between the musical genre and the great machine, the superstructure: were Lloyd Bacon's and Busby Berkeley's celebrations of American society, including its underworld, not a sublime spectacle of capitalism first and foremost? And what about Soviet musicals, who at once ripped off the US models and indeed revealed the fundamentally total project at the core of one of the paramount cinematic genres? Excess and supreme method have come to define most musicals. *Cold War*, however, may only be a musical in that arthouse, degraded, depressing way. It mourns the heady élan of the musicals of the proverbial golden age. Clearly it offers only an acappella rendition of a song from a

famous Soviet musical, ('Serdtsse' [literally, "Heart"]) from Grigori Alexandrov's „Veselye rebyata" (Jolly Fellows), during Zula's audition; and it denounces the lost purity of the folk song 'Dwa serduszka' ("Two Hearts") recorded by Wiktor and his partner, Irena, in the Polish countryside. This latter folk song is then packaged as a spectacle for the concert hall. Later, when Zula consigns onto a vinyl record in a Parisian studio her folk tune under the French title 'Loin de toi' ("Far from You"), and the further commodification of that already commodified mode or form, the musical recording, has been accomplished, the critique at the heart of the film has been made clear. And yet: while it may suggest that in their travels to the West, Stalinism and its brand of totalitarianism have been left behind by Zula and Wiktor, the ghost of Stalin AND the musical, their total—and totalitarian—nature remains very much present throughout the film.

Any total system, as Hannah Arendt taught us, ends up devouring its children. The devouring entity, in the film's first part, is a well-known one (if endlessly fascinating and complex in its far-reaching implications): Stalin (or "Stalin"). But lo and behold: against the grain of typical anti-Soviet propaganda, the film elects to avoid violent repression and instead endows Stalin with a highly charged, symbolic quality as a figure which enables (the rebirth of Poland after the war in its socialist new clothes), stimulates (the enthusiasm of those involved in Mazurek's creation), and constrains or prohibits (both the imposition of socialist realist doxa

on Polish folk song; and activities—artistic, romantic, or otherwise, with plenty of ideological strings attached). Besides this important detail, the film's first part describes a typical representation of your middle-of-the-century totalitarian regime, with its surveillance apparatus, rampant propaganda, and exclusion of those who do not fit comfortably in the fabric of a total system. Yet, it is only once the characters move West that they discover how being removed from under the 'benevolent' total gaze of the Stalinist system can sap them of their vitality. Cast out of a system where community is imposed, the characters are confronted with a consumerist and individualist world equally predicated on certain prescriptions and false affection on the part of social actors (here, the Communist apparatchik Kaczmarek is replaced by a high-sexed music producer, Michel; and Wiktor's initial ethnomusicologist partner, Irena, by a poet, Juliette). Finally, once the angst and restlessness have started to turn into free-floating anxiety, Wiktor and Zula self-destructively return to post-Stalinist Poland. There they find a form of zombified totalitarian state, still going through the motions, but having gradually become a degraded parody of high Stalinism—as in the pop song Zula now sings: at once a parody of the calypso genre, and a far cry from the more soulful folk songs she sang with Mazurek.

So, how does one move from the Stalinist and post-Stalinist Communist world of *Cold War* to our present? The key lies in the way that it begins to articulate not so much the difference

between East and West during the Cold War, but instead the difference between different types and historical moments of totalitarianism, namely the Stalinist past and our present. And this is where *Cold War* becomes truly telling: if it speaks of a world where neither a totalitarian regime nor liberal democracy holds appeal, this is perhaps because Poland very rapidly moved through both and was convinced of neither, but also because the difference between the two modes, or regimes, has in the 21st century, increasingly been blurred or under erasure. Ultimately, this speaks not so much of an opposition between a repressive and controlling but vibrant Socialist bloc (a totalitarian regime) and a decadent, devitalized consumerist West (a Capitalist ‘liberal democracy’)—although it certainly does this on a superficial, manifest level. Rather the film speaks of a world where neither one nor the other holds any appeal or salvation. And this is precisely because it allegorizes the totalitarian insanity that had manifested itself clearly in Stalin’s reign and emerged with increasing vigour in the West. It suffices to look at the way corporate mentality and its own totalitarian tendencies have traversed and perverted all aspects of civil society, from academia to politics to the entertainment industry, in recent years. This was captured rather clearly in the way these actors influenced the handling of the covid pandemic. A health crisis was turned into spectacle and used as a pretext for new modes of control. All the while, as the saying goes, “our crisis was their opportunity,” with a most socially destructive money-making

machine put into motion. Unquestionably, the crisis (think of lockdowns and sweeping vaccination policies) were handled in often all-too similar ways in so-called liberal democracies and in countries like the People's Republic of China. All this does not go to show exactly that there is no clear separation between East and West, nor do I mean to equal them here (each continue to vie for influence and power, with distinct ideologies and agendas). But what is certain in the sobering spectacle of the global pandemic is that, at least, one cannot take sides, that neither side is more desirable, and that there are not really any sides to take in the first place. And while things seem to have been far more clear-cut in another major geopolitical event which followed the pandemic, namely, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, there too a slew of actors, mostly through online platforms, have been waging a war of disinformation and misinformation. The latter brought to light the dangers for liberal democracy which more authoritarian actors represent; but it also shed light on the telling way the West, too, has of late had to increasingly float by the option whereby it would reevaluate its own principles, as in the aporetic motto "in order to save democracy, antidemocratic measures are in order."

In a way that may echo a lot of people's sentiment circa 2022, *Cold War* establishes a neither/nor conundrum (neither with you, nor without you; neither here, nor there; neither Left, nor Right...). And it makes a lot of sense that Poland should serve as a crucible for this allegorical "neither/nor" narrative. Positioned

between the Soviet bloc and the Western Bloc, a member of the Warsaw pact and then of NATO, and a country often described as a martyr among nations and outright “God’s playground,” to use a somewhat infamous quip by Norman Davies, Poland may be the only country in the world that experienced, over just a few decades, colonial rule (as part of Prussia, Austro-Hungary, and the Russian Empire), Capitalism, Nazism, Stalinism, post-Stalinist Communism, Post-Communist liberalism, and membership in NATO and the EU. This certainly taught its people a thing or two about the deepest historical traumas, authoritarianism, censorship, freedom, poverty, and being a vassal state to the Soviet Union and, later (albeit in more discreet ways), the United States (and increasingly nowadays, experiencing China’s influence). Poland, arguably more than any other nation on earth, found out that all these regimes are fundamentally similar in at least one way: in that they merely obey rules of power and business, and that any ideological claims beyond this are mere posturing, except in the high totalitarian moment, when ideology supersedes the already ruthless nature of *realpolitik*. This transcendence of *realpolitik* leads to a kind of delirium that can explain the outright inexplicable behaviour of the protagonists of *Cold War*, hypnotized as they are to the point of self-destruction by the idea of these perennial constructs: love and freedom.

Not that any of the above is concealed in the film. What can be added to the “neither/nor” dimension of the film, and to the fact

that it bespeaks also a form of uninspiring total world, is how it operates a strange synthesis of Socialist realist aesthetic and Western arthouse modernism. On the surface, as we saw, the film is vastly a pastiche of the latter, with its score of pointed cinematic references. It also pastiches high Stalinist cinema in some of its imagery situated in Poland in the 1940s and early 1950s. But it also seems to connect to Socialist realism in other ways: the characters may seem complex initially, but they are as one-sided and stereotypical as those of Alexandrov's or the Vasilyev brothers' Stalinist fare. Nor is the film's indirect critique of individualism subtle: the only vibrant and happy moments happen in the context of collective initiative, when Mazurek is put together and people assemble to create a meaningful *gemeinschaft*. Furthermore, the Stalin years in *Cold War* may be ruthless in places, they are never paranoid. Perhaps Wiktor and Zula aspire to escape because they are being spied upon and scrutinized, their budding dalliance hushed like adolescent heavy petting on the rear seat of a car, and their discourse stifled and self-censored (what is more unbearable for love and desire but to be muffled and censored? But what is better for it, too, I ask?). Yet there is no sign here of gulag or torture or political assassination. The Stalinist gaze may hover, but it doesn't strike. Our characters pursue an individualistic (if relatable) dream of desire and romance away from scrutiny, that may express itself freely, only to realize that once the gaze of the Big Other has been removed, their dream rings hollow. This proposition is both

accurate and deeply flawed from a psycho-sexual perspective, depending on which end of the aisle one stands. Be it as it may, the film stages a rather human and sympathetic Stalinist world (imperfect yes, and with its set of prohibition), but everything bad that happens to the characters occurs due to past trauma (the war) and in a post-Stalinist frame (the labour camp is represented in the post-Soviet period!). And while on the surface the film seems to associate nostalgia in general with a dead-end (as attested in the protagonists' fate), what *Cold War* also expresses among other things is this most surprising, yet actual thing: nostalgia for Stalin, which is still very much alive in Russia (where temples in Stalin's glory have mushroomed in the last two decades), and even among resilient numbers of people in the former Eastern Bloc, including Poland. This somewhat pathological nostalgia (lest all nostalgia is sickly, of course!), points precisely to something that we fundamentally lack now on any side, namely faith in ideology or belief that reaches beyond mere power/money interests. This includes the fraught ways in which the debate over sustainability and the environment have been instrumentalized and reified (think only of Greta Thunberg hobnobbing with Davos people at the World Economic Forum's summit!). With such utterly aberrant coexistence of emotions in an otherwise capitalist system, one may ponder, again, about the actuality or validity of a bipolar/divided world. One is tempted to outright question the truth behind the representation of a world that is really divided into ideological

blocs, and this in spite of the efforts to reinforce this narrative by NATO on the one hand and Russia, or its tacit ally, China (and its not so tacit ally, North Korea... China's protégé!), on the other one. And this is the true horror: not that any belief system was ever true (by definition, it is always a construct), but rather that totalitarianism is both total... and contentless: a devouring, gaping chasm.

Why is it revealing that *Cold War* addressed this West/East and neither/nor dialectic circa 2018? The film could not be prescient of the pandemic or the war in Ukraine, but surely it was resonating with an awareness, if a dim one, of a collapse of the liberal democratic model in America and the EU over the past twenty years, and of the rise in belligerent aspirations by the Russian Federation and China in the same period. What would seem to be the real actor, in historical terms, behind all this properly burning and tragic mess is a global capitalism gone haywire, and hell-bent on taking over completely, now as a truly total system of its own. And this, the latest iteration of capitalism must do by morphing away from its two earlier major expressions (American laissez-faire, deregulated capitalism; and Chinese State-Control 'communist' capitalism). The aspiration would be to merge the two, acquiring the zest for speculative zeal and liberal excess of the former with the dimension of totalitarian control of the latter. This is a function of an increasingly surveillant and controlling society, where the usefulness of freedom as an engine of capitalism

(freedom of speech, of circulation, and soon, perhaps, of thought) is gradually phased out, when it is not reviled. Surely a clear indicator of this would be, as Fabio Vighi has at length elaborated, the way cash flows were constricted during the pandemic lockdowns, and, in the short to middle-term, the overt project by many Western democracies to more or less abolish cash. Put differently, according to Vighi, the fabled lockdowns implemented during the covid pandemic had much less to do with curbing the spread of a virus, and much more with a market frantically trying to curb the circulation of cash. Describing this gradual societal shift well, from liberal democracy to apparatuses of control, first theorized by Foucault and Deleuze, Thomas Elsaesser showed how it is expressed in contemporary European cinema through figures of characters who become objects of the system (he died too early to include *Cold War* in his purview!). All this may not lead, necessarily, to some dark totalitarian dystopia on the world scale, something out of Zamyatin's or Orwell's nightmares, but there is cause and reason for concern. What it does certainly confirm, and which we all already know, is that freedom, and perhaps desire itself, are merely ideological constructs and illusions. While realizing this may be empowering or liberating, or at least helpful in swallowing the totalitarian pill, it can also plunge one into an abyss of suicidal thoughts and depression. To tie this back to *Cold War*: the characters die not because they wasted the best of their youth in search of a better place to live and love, but rather

because, having seen “both sides,” they have grasped the nature of the system, in its frightening totality—and the incapability of escaping it—which saps them of their illusions and life force.

To conclude on our discussion of history and film form as they relate to *Cold War*, we could see the despair of the film’s characters as a lament for lack of choice and leave it at that. And yet, totalitarian systems constantly hold out the illusion of choice as a sign of their democratic nature. There is, of course, only one right choice as far as the system is concerned, but the fact that one is making a choice is insisted upon. A totalitarian system does not tolerate the bystander (here we can return to our analogy with boundaries being blurred in the 21st century between liberal democracies and more authoritarian regimes: think only, and again, of the strange and alarming theatre orchestrated in 2021 and 2022, and to mention but one exemplar, the way in which the dissenting voice of Giorgio Agamben was ignored if not reviled or ridiculed (including for drawing, it is true, egregiously excessive analogies between the handling of the COVID crisis and Nazi German¹))

The point being that, under totalitarianism, we are being told that a given choice is ours to make, but that to choose wrong is to be excluded entirely. *Cold War* operates similarly, staging the idea of a choice (and there does seem to be some measure of difference--defect to the West or stay in Poland circa 1950; take the job or lose

¹ See this rather comprehensive rebuke by Agamben’s English translator: <https://slate.com/human-interest/2022/02/giorgio-agamben-covid-holocaust-comparison-right-wing-protest.html>

your job circa 2021), but of course, without sustaining the illusion that one choice will end up better than the other. The melancholy of the lack of choice, however, can be seen just as much as a form of post-ideological resignation, as a work of skepticism about any and all political/economic systems; ultimately to have no choice can be beautiful, can be sublimated into the form of this (quite literally) luminous commodity. But the fact is, that this false binary is not as all-encompassing as the film would have it; *Cold War*'s logic ends up conveniently foreclosing the idea of any third option. And yet, there is almost always a third way, a third option, which this film, as well as recent geopolitical discourse, do not seem to acknowledge. Zula and Wiktor could have gone elsewhere (say, Turkey, Latin America, or the US for that matter!), just as anthropology and Henri Laborit clearly laid out at least three types of behaviour: fight, flight, and inhibition, the first two of which he commended. The divisions we see now around the Ukraine war likewise insist on the same fraught idea of a binary (the good West vs. the bad East), as if there was some fundamental, even ontological, difference between the two sides vying for power and dominance, and no other option besides one or the other winning side. This absurd and simplistic discourse obfuscates many other actors and more or less active bystanders, not least of all the one that the USA has its sights set on most intently. Under such circumstances, the proposed illusion of 'choice' or 'binary' (which is actually a quasi-moral obligation, artificially imposed on

the people by the governments of their respective spheres of influence) cannot work, since the enlightened or informed (or deeply paranoid!) subject understands or intuits that there is no possibility of conceiving or choosing a 'side'. *Cold War* says nothing other than this, however unconsciously: on the level of content as much as on the level of form, choice and difference have been swallowed into a whole. The question then becomes, of course, whether it will be possible to make a choice precisely by refusing the constructed, predetermined version of choice with which one has been presented, or whether this refusal simply leads to death.

Beyond the false alternatives it thematizes, *Cold War* leads precisely to an effort to find pleasure in total absorption into a choiceless totality: to make it, through film, one that is sensuous, palpable, and "beautiful," in a generic and unchallenging way. Art cinema does not strive to go elsewhere, but instead becomes a punctual, repeatable phenomenon, a set of aesthetic elements that have solidified into a clear formula, just as with any other mass-produced commodity. Pawlikowski's *Cold War* is only one of many recent arthouse products to have lost any form of artistic relevance in an asphyxiated globalized mass culture sphere: there are no longer actual, or real choices between commercial fare and art film, and all these films increasingly become undistinguishable from one another. This is particularly true of the many products released for online platform, seemingly churned out by the same

machine or artificial intelligence. But what makes *Cold War* specific and more interesting than, say, Cuarón's *Roma*, David Fincher's *Mank*, or Andrew Dominik's *Blonde* is precisely the way in which it maps out a path via which we can begin to see the synthesis I have been describing, as well as the ways in which film aesthetics has been reshaped by it.

A lavish product or cultural export of Poland by a worldly filmmaker (whose background is Polish, Catholic, Jewish, and English in various degrees), *Cold War* perspires a transient and multicultural quality which, however obliquely, must have informed its articulating and entering a dialogue with current geopolitical phenomena. This may in no small part be what accounts for the disenchantment at the heart of the film. But beneath its bubbly and shimmering pastiche aesthetics, it is the film's allegorizing—intentional or not—of the workings of global capitalism which deserves most attention. While on one hand it would be disingenuous to claim Pawlikowski's film as a politically-enlightened or subversive film (because, like most ideological products, it functions by containing the very problems it raises), *Cold War* demonstrates that cinema, and the modern-day "art film" in particular, can still function as a political index (or seismograph, perhaps), and an illustration of ideological manoeuvring—not to mention a political unconscious, even when it would seem to foreclose any conception of a politics that could amount to anything more than melancholy resignation.

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VARIA / MISCELLANEOUS

Beata Terka

ORCID: 0000-0002-0911-2047; beata.kiwit@uj.edu.pl

Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Wydział Polonistyki, Instytut Glottodydaktyki
Polonistycznej

**SYNTACTIC PRIMING AS A
PHENOMENON FACILITATING THE
PROCESS OF TEACHING-LEARNING THE
GRAMMAR OF POLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE**

**TOROWANIE SYNTAKTYCZNE JAKO
ZJAWISKO WSPOMAGAJĄCE PROCES
NAUCZANIA – UCZENIA SIĘ GRAMATYKI
JĘZYKA POLSKIEGO JAKO OBCEGO**

STRESZCZENIE

Świadome wykorzystywanie znanego z psychologii procesu torowania na polu glottodydaktyki polonistycznej może stanowić skuteczne rozwiązanie wspomagające proces nauczania-uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego. Weryfikacji tego przekonania poświęcone zostały krótkie badania pilotażowe wykorzystujące paradygmat

prymowania strukturalnego wewnątrzjęzykowego i skoncentrowane na natychmiastowych, a nie długofalowych, skutkach odnośnego procesu. Objęto nimi dwie niewielkie grupy cudzoziemców: studentów ukraińskich i chińskich uczących się języka polskiego w Instytucie Glottodydaktyki Polonistycznej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Wstępne wnioski, zwłaszcza te dotyczące uwarunkowań wpływających na skuteczność torowania strukturalnego, stanowią punkt wyjścia do sformułowania konkretnych hipotez wymagających weryfikacji w badaniach na większą skalę. Artykuł zamyka próba nakreślenia perspektywicznych kierunków naukowego namysłu nad omawianym w tekście zagadnieniem.

Słowa kluczowe: torowanie syntaktyczne, torowanie wewnątrzjęzykowe, składnia, nauczanie gramatyki, uczenie się języka obcego

SUMMARY

The deliberate application of the priming mechanism, well established in psychological research, within the domain of Polish-language glottodidactics appears to be a promising tool supporting the teaching and learning of Polish grammar. A series of short pilot studies employing the paradigm of within-language structural priming was conducted in order to preliminarily verify this assumption. The investigation focused on the immediate effects of priming rather than its long-term impact. Two small groups of foreign learners participated in the study: Ukrainian and Chinese students acquiring Polish at the Institute of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University. The initial findings – particularly those related to the conditions influencing the effectiveness of syntactic priming – constitute a basis for formulating more detailed hypotheses that require validation through large-scale empirical research. The article concludes with an outline of potential directions for further scholarly inquiry into the phenomenon discussed.

Keywords: syntactic priming, within-language priming, syntax, teaching grammar, second language learning

1. WSTĘP

Współczesna rzeczywistość, zorientowana na skuteczność, szybkie efekty przy jak najmniejszym nakładzie pracy, nie pozwala o sobie zapomnieć nawet w salach lekcyjnych, w których uczy się języków obcych. Metodocy nieustannie poszukują nowych, lepszych, bardziej efektywnych rozwiązań – tak, by uczący się poznawali dźwięki, słowa i struktury szybko, niejako mimowolnie, bez setek żmudnych powtórzeń czy zapisanych w zeszytach stron pełnych reguł i szczegółowych wyjaśnień. Niniejszy artykuł czyni obiektem refleksji jeden z takich relatywnie nowych metodycznych pomysłów – wykorzystanie zjawiska torowania na polu nauczania-uczenia się języka polskiego jako obcego. Krótki wstęp teoretyczny stanowi wprowadzenie do opisu przeprowadzonych badań, mających na celu weryfikację potencjału świadomego wykorzystania prymowania strukturalnego w procesie nauczania-uczenia się gramatyki polszczyzny. Wnioski płynące z tych badań, stanowiące w istocie zbiór hipotez wymagających dalszej weryfikacji, prowadzą do zamykającego artykuł nakreślenia perspektyw badawczych w odnośnym zakresie.

2. POJĘCIE TOROWANIA SYNTAKTYCZNEGO

Od pewnego czasu w dyskusjach glottodydaktyków pojawiają się pomysły na wykorzystanie na polu nauczania-uczenia się języków obcych znanej z dziedziny psychologii koncepcji torowania. Zjawisko to w literaturze występuje także pod innymi nazwami: priming, poprzedzanie, prymowanie, akwizycja wstępna. Opiera się ono na dostarczeniu wskazówek pamięci utajonej, a zatem wykorzystuje procesy automatyczne, nieuświadomione, nieintencjonalne i niewymagające zaangażowania ze strony tego, kto tym procesom bezpośrednio podlega. W uproszczeniu chodzi o to, że pewne wcześniejsze bodźce „torują”, czyli ułatwiają, usprawniają i przyspieszają, w naszym umyśle odbiór i reakcję na bodźce późniejsze (Tulving, Schacter 1990). Innymi słowy – wcześniejsze doświadczenia mają znaczący wpływ na przetwarzanie późniejszych treści, wyraźnie je modyfikując. W pozadydaktycznej codzienności przejawia się to na przykład w indywidualnych preferencjach dotyczących określonych osób, miejsc czy przedmiotów; tendencji do unikania tego, z czym – w związku z jakimś nieprzyjemnym doświadczeniem – mamy negatywne skojarzenia; czy po prostu w szybszej reakcji na znane bodźce.

W kontekście przyswajania języka oraz wykonywania działań językowych¹ mówi się o torowaniu audytywnym

¹ Na temat neurobiologicznych uwarunkowań przetwarzania języka/mowy ułatwiających zrozumienie podstaw działania mechanizmu

(związanym z szybszym i/lub bardziej adekwatnym przetwarzaniem słyszanego już bodźca), torowaniu semantycznym (odnoszącym się do szybszego i/lub bardziej adekwatnego przetwarzania nowej leksyki w przypadku uprzedniego kontaktu ze słownictwem semantycznie powiązanym/podobnym) oraz torowaniu syntaktycznym (mającym ścisły związek z preferencją do sięgania po struktury składniowe, których niedawno mieliśmy okazję „doświadczyć”²)³. Niniejszy artykuł obiektem badań i refleksji czyni właśnie ostatni z przywołanych typów, czyli torowanie syntaktyczne, które bywa także nazywane torowaniem strukturalnym, primingiem syntaktycznym/strukturalnym lub poprzedzaniem strukturalnym. W centrum zainteresowania stawia przy tym torowanie wewnątrzjęzykowe⁴ oraz natychmiastowe, nie zajmując się długofalowymi skutkami torowania dla procesu uczenia się konstrukcji składniowych języka docelowego. W artykule przyjmuje się także, za Marion Coumel i in. (2023), iż uczący się języka obcego łatwiej przyswajają struktury w ich torowania (choć bez bezpośrednich nawiązań do odnośnego zagadnienia) por. Nowak 2016.

² W takim ujęciu torowanie syntaktyczne potencjalnie może być mechanizmem pozwalającym na implicytne przyswajanie struktur składniowych języka obcego (Jackson 2018).

³ Więcej na temat różnych typów torowania w kontekście nauczania-uczenia się języka obcego por. Trofimovich, McDonough 2011.

⁴ W tym paradygmacie zarówno struktura torująca, jak i struktura później przetwarzana prezentowane są w tym samym języku (Potter, Lombardi 1998). Istnieje także alternatywne podejście do badań wykorzystujących paradygmat poprzedzania syntaktycznego – koncentrujące się na torowaniu międzyjęzykowym. Na ten temat por. m.in. Loebell, Bock 2003, Chodorowska 2009.

wizualnej niż słuchowej formie. Zwłaszcza uczący się na średnim poziomie zaawansowania językowego wciąż mogą mieć problem ze zrozumieniem tekstu mówionego w całości, choćby w związku z pewnymi trudnościami wynikającymi z tempa słuchanych wypowiedzi czy specyfiki wymowy osoby mówiącej. Konieczność odkodowania mowy doprowadza do dekoncentracji (Kim, Godfroid 2019) i mimowolnego pomijania części słuchanego tekstu, podczas gdy pisemny charakter inputu stwarza możliwość wielokrotnych powrotów do poszczególnych fragmentów i analizowania konstrukcji składniowych we własnym tempie, co wzmacnia ich głębsze przetwarzanie (Gilabert i in. 2016). Ponadto znane są wyniki dwóch badań wykazujące lepsze natychmiastowe efekty torowania w przypadku interakcji pisemnych niż ustnych (Kim i in. 2019, 2020).

Przekonanie, że na przetwarzanie danej struktury składniowej ma wpływ przetworzona uprzednio struktura syntaktyczna (Bock 1986) niesie konkretne implikacje dla glottodydaktyki. Zakłada bowiem, iż po pierwsze – im bardziej składniowo jednolity tekst, tym mniejsze problemy z jego zrozumieniem powinni mieć obcojęzyczni czytelnicy, a po drugie – uczący się w produkcji w języku obcym powinni wykazywać tendencję do wyboru konstrukcji składniowych, z którymi niedawno mieli kontakt – mimo dostępności równoważnych znaczeniowo struktur alternatywnych. Jeśli tak jest, to nauczyciel języka, świadomie konstruując i/lub dobierając materiały oraz

prowadząc odpowiednio przemyślane monologi i dialogi z uczącymi się, może wpływać na tempo i skuteczność przyrostu kompetencji gramatycznej swoich podopiecznych (lub przyczyniać się do ich gramatycznego regresu) w jeszcze większym, niż zakładano dotychczas, stopniu.

3. BADANIA WSTĘPNE

3.1. ZAŁOŻENIA I CEL BADANIA

Wstępnej weryfikacji skuteczności świadomego wykorzystania zjawiska torowania strukturalnego w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego poświęcone zostały niewielkie badania pilotażowe. Ich celem było sprawdzenie, czy rzeczywiście uczący się – po intensywnym kontakcie z określoną strukturą gramatyczną – sięgają po nią częściej/z większą swobodą w później tworzonych przez siebie tekstach, nawet jeśli sama odnośna konstrukcja składniowa nie została ani przećwiczona, ani omówiona przez nauczyciela, ani nawet zaznaczona w materiale wyjściowym, żeby celowo nie kierować na nią specjalnej uwagi odbiorcy. Ważne było przy tym dobranie takiej struktury syntaktycznej, dla której poddani badaniu mogli bez trudu znaleźć synonimiczną, równie skuteczną komunikacyjnie, a przy okazji lepiej znaną konstrukcję alternatywną. W centrum zainteresowania znalazły się zatem wypowiedzenia z imiesłowem

przymiotnikowym czynnym, pozwalającym się dość łatwo zastąpić odpowiednim zdaniem podrzędnym przydawkowym.

3.2. UCZESTNICY I ZASTOSOWANA METODA

Badaniu poddane zostały dwie grupy uczących się języka polskiego jako obcego w Instytucie Glottodydaktyki Polonistycznej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w semestrze letnim 2023 roku. Jedna z nich obejmowała 12 studentów z Ukrainy reprezentujących w zakresie biegłości językowej w polszczyźnie przełom poziomów B1 i B2. Druga grupa składała się z 10 studentów chińskich na przełomie poziomów A2 i B1. W obu grupach autorka artykułu prowadziła zajęcia z gramatyki z komunikacją, co ułatwiło zaplanowanie i przeprowadzenie badań. Test wstępny, mający sprawdzić poziom znajomości i umiejętność użycia konstrukcji z imiesłowem przymiotnikowym czynnym, został pominięty. Przede wszystkim istniała obawa, że nadmierna koncentracja uwagi na odnośnej formie gramatycznej podczas takiego pomiaru mogłaby zafałszować wyniki samego badania. Poza tym uznano, iż w oparciu o realizowany program nauczania oraz obserwacje studentów prowadzone w czasie zajęć zarówno przez samą autorkę badań, jak i inne lektorki pracujące z poddanymi badaniu grupami, można z powodzeniem określić stan wyjściowy obu grup w zakresie znajomości i wykorzystywania w komunikacji imiesłowu przymiotnikowego czynnego. Dla wszystkich studentów

była to niewątpliwie struktura jeszcze w języku polskim nieznaną. Uczący się nie próbowali po nią sięgać, mimo że nie brakowało kontekstów, które uzasadniałyby wybór imiesłowu. Grupa słowiańska nie miała oczywiście problemów z identyfikacją i zrozumieniem imiesłowu przymiotnikowego czynnego jako konstrukcji analogicznej do tej znanej z własnego języka, jednak, co ciekawe, przed badaniem studenci ukraińscy nie używali odnośnego imiesłowu w produktywnych działaniach językowych.

Każda z poddanych badaniu grup została losowo podzielona na dwie jednakowe pod względem liczby osób podgrupy, z których jedna pracowała z materiałem zawierającym konstrukcje imiesłowowe, a druga stanowiła grupę kontrolną, mającą kontakt z bodźcem pozbawionym struktury gramatycznej istotnej z perspektywy prowadzonego badania. W przeprowadzonych badaniach – zgodnie z tym, o czym wspomniano już w części teoretycznej – zdecydowano, że bodziec będzie docierał do uczących się kanałem wzrokowym. Materiał miał formę relatywnie krótkiego tekstu pisanego i kilku pytań do niego.

Materiał zawierający konstrukcje imiesłowowe (określany w dalszej części artykułu jako *tekst trudny*⁵) składał się z około 120 wyrazów, operował bardziej skomplikowaną składnią, a imiesłowy przymiotnikowe czynne wystąpiły w nim 10 razy (6 razy w tekście i 4 razy w pytaniach do tekstu)⁶. Materiał przeznaczony dla grup

⁵ Tekst wraz z pytaniami do niego został zamieszczony w Aneksie I na końcu artykułu.

kontrolnych (nazywany dalej *tekstem łatwym*⁷) był nieco krótszy (około 100 wyrazów), przeważały w nim zdania pojedyncze rozwinięte i brakowało w nim imiesłowów. Obydwa teksty miały tożsamą tematykę – stanowiły opisy tej samej fotografii, przedstawiającej rodzinę spędzającą wspólnie poranek w kuchni. Pytania do tekstów także koncentrowały się na identycznych elementach/aspektach analizowanego przez uczących się zdjęcia. W grupie chińskiej działania objęte badaniem składały się z pięciu etapów, podczas gdy w grupie ukraińskiej tylko z czterech (zob. tab. 1).

⁶ W tekście wystąpiły następujące imiesłowy (w różnych rodzajach, liczbach i przypadkach): *leżące, wpadające, rosnąca, świecące, znajdująca się/znajdującym się, siedzące/siedzących, stojący* (x2).

⁷ Tekst wraz z pytaniami do niego został zamieszczony w Aneksie II na końcu artykułu.

Tabela 1. Etapy badania w poszczególnych grupach

Grupa chińska	Grupa ukraińska
1. Ciche czytanie tekstu.	1. Ciche czytanie tekstu.
2. Naszkicowanie opisanej sytuacji.	2. Porównanie opisu z fotografią.
3. Porównanie szkicu z fotografią.	3. Odpowiedź na pytania do tekstu.
4. Odpowiedź na pytania do tekstu.	4. Opis innej (podobnej) fotografii.
5. Opis innej (podobnej) fotografii.	

Dodanie uczącym się z Chin etapu szkicowania było podyktowane z jednej strony chęcią zintensyfikowania i wydłużenia kontaktu studentów z nieznaną im jeszcze formą imiesłowu (poziom biegłości językowej był tu niższy niż w przypadku grupy słowiańskiej, a dodatkowo w języku pierwszym studentów brakowało analogicznej formy), z drugiej – uwzględnieniem specyfiki tej grupy. Dla Chińczyków, częściej przetwarzających informacje prawopółkulowo (Prizel-Kania 2021), graficzne przedstawianie poznawanych treści nie jest bowiem bez znaczenia.

Ostatnim zadaniem dla każdej z grup było napisanie opisu fotografii podobnej do tej, z którą studenci zetknęli się na początkowych etapach badania. Wybrane zdjęcie także przedstawiało członków pewnej rodziny w ich czasie wolnym – tym razem jednak inna była pora dnia, pomieszczenie (salon), a w konsekwencji także czynności wykonywane przez poszczególne osoby. W czasie tworzenia opisów uczący się nie mogli korzystać z żadnych materiałów. Badanie prowadzone było bez przerw, a jego czas (uwzględniający rozmowę ogniskującą uwagę) wyniósł odpowiednio: 80 minut dla grupy ukraińskiej oraz 100 minut dla grupy chińskiej. Pisane przez studentów teksty nie miały określonego limitu słów, a każda z oddanych prac była podpisana imieniem i nazwiskiem autora, co pozwoliło na etapie analizy na wstępne nakreślenie pewnych zależności między czynnikami natury indywidualnej (np. motywacją uczącego się) a przebiegiem procesu torowania.

3.3. WYNIKI BADANIA

Najważniejsze wyniki przeprowadzonego badania przedstawiono w tabeli poniżej (zob. Tab. 2). Prezentuje ona dane dotyczące obu grup: studentów ukraińskich (U) i studentów chińskich (Ch), uwzględniając każdorazowo podział na podgrupy: pracującą z *tekstem trudnym* i grupę kontrolną, dla której materiałem wyjściowym był *tekst łatwy*. Zestawienie rezultatów

badania uwzględnia średnią długość tekstów napisanych przez uczących się, liczbę osób używających imiesłowów przymiotnikowych czynnych w tworzonych opisach fotografii oraz stopień skomplikowania składni (nazwany umownie *zgodnością w zakresie złożoności składni*) w pracach studentów w stosunku do budowy składniowej tekstu stanowiącego bodziec – wyrażony liczbą osób, których owa zgodność dotyczy. W przypadku długości tekstu podano średnią liczbę wyrazów oraz – w nawiasach – najmniejszą i największą liczbę słów w tekstach napisanych przez studentów z każdej z podgrup.

Tabela 2. Zestawienie wyników badania

	ŚREDNIA DŁUGOŚĆ TEKSTU		IMIESŁOWY		ZGODNOŚĆ W ZAKRESIE ZŁOŻONOŚCI SKŁADNI	
	U (wyrazy)	CH (wyrazy)	U (os.)	CH (os.)	U (os.)	CH (os.)
TEKST ŁATWY	93 (78-105)	91 (73-110)	0/6	0/5	3/6	5/5
TEKST TRUDNY	107 (93-123)	96 (90-100)	5/6 (14 razy)	0/5	6/6	3/5

Badanie wykazało zależność między długością tekstu wyjściowego a długością opisów autorstwa uczących się. Zarówno w przypadku studentów ukraińskich, jak i chińskich, podgrupy pracujące

z *tekstem trudnym* pisały dłuższe prace niż podgrupy, którym udostępniono *tekst łatwy*. Wprawdzie jedna z osób z grupy chińskiej mimo kontaktu z tekstem łatwym w swojej pracy napisała aż 110 wyrazów, jednak był to odosobniony przypadek.

W odniesieniu do użycia imiesłowów przymiotnikowych czynnych należy zauważyć, iż sięgnęli po nie jedynie Ukraińcy pracujący z *tekstem trudnym*. Aż pięciu na sześciu studentów wykorzystało konstrukcje imiesłowowe, a centralna dla przeprowadzonych badań struktura gramatyczna pojawiła się w pracach uczących się 14 razy. Warto zaznaczyć, że aż 8 razy utworzono imiesłowy od czasowników innych niż te w tekście wyjściowym, co wyklucza podejrzenie, jakoby doszło tu jedynie do zapamiętania i mechanicznego odtworzenia konkretnych form z opisu wzorcowego⁸. Ponadto dostrzeżono ważną zależność – najwięcej imiesłowów wykorzystały studentki, które świadomie zwróciły uwagę na konstrukcje imiesłowowe (podkreśliły je) w *tekście trudnym*.

W odniesieniu do tzw. *zgodności w zakresie złożoności syntaktycznej* zaobserwowano, iż ukraińscy uczący się pracujący z *tekstem trudnym* tworzyli opisy wykorzystujące ładną, bogatą składnię, zaś aż połowa ich kolegów mających kontakt z *testem łatwym* sięgała po struktury składniowe poniżej swojego poziomu

⁸ Imiesłowy w pracach uczących się, które (1) zostały utworzone od czasowników z tekstu wyjściowego: *znajdująca się, leżąca, stojący, siedzący/siedzącego/siedzącej*; (2) zostały utworzone od innych czasowników: *grający/grającego, patrząca, słuchający (x2), spędzające, trzymająca, czytająca*.

zaawansowania językowego. Innymi słowy – ci, którzy zetknęli się z uboższym syntaktycznie materiałem wyjściowym, mimowolnie uprościli składnię własnych tekstów, przez co prace tych studentów zostały ocenione przez lektorki pracujące z odnośną grupą jako słabsze niż można było oczekiwać. W przypadku studentów chińskich proporcje były odwrotne – 100% uczących się pracujących z *tekstem łatwym* sięgnęło w swoich opisach po składnię, w której dominowały zdania pojedyncze i pojedyncze rozwinięte. Co ciekawe jednak, trzy z pięciu osób mających kontakt z *tekstem trudnym* wykorzystywały struktury składniowe bardziej skomplikowane – czasami nawet takie, które można uznać za dość wymagające dla uczących się na poziomie zaawansowania językowego A2/B1. Dwoje studentów – mimo kontaktu z zaawansowanym syntaktycznie materiałem wyjściowym – pozostało przy prostej składni w swoich opisach.

4. WNIOSKI I PERSPEKTYWY BADAWCZE

W związku z ograniczonym zakresem badań oraz specyfiką poddanych im grup prezentowane tu wnioski stanowią w istocie zbiór hipotez wymagających weryfikacji w toku szerszej zakrojonych i systematycznych analiz. Wydaje się, że zjawisko torowania może być z powodzeniem świadomie wykorzystywane w nauczaniu gramatyki języka polskiego jako obcego. Bodziec torujący nie powinien jednak nadmiernie wykraczać poziomem

poza poziom biegłości językowej reprezentowanej przez uczących się, których mechanizm torowania dotyczy⁹. Z drugiej strony uczący powinni mieć świadomość, iż torowanie w umyśle uczącego się zachodzi i bez intencji nauczyciela, czyli nawet jeśli nie zostało zaplanowane jako proces wspomagający przyswojenie określonej struktury gramatycznej. Oznacza to, że dążenie do poszerzania kompetencji gramatycznej uczących się wymaga konfrontowania ich z odpowiednio dobranym materiałem. Kontakt z tekstami zbyt łatwymi może bowiem nie tylko zatrzymać rozwój językowy uczącego się, ale nawet doprowadzić do jego językowego regresu, co sugerują wyniki omawianych w niniejszym tekście badań.

Poza próbą weryfikacji przedstawionych wyżej przekonań w przyszłości warto byłoby także poddać naukowej refleksji wpływ czynników indywidualnych na skuteczność torowania strukturalnego¹⁰. Z wyników przeprowadzonych badań (dzięki brakowi anonimowości prac) można bowiem wyciągnąć na przykład wnioski, iż efekty odnośnego procesu są lepsze u osób z wysoką motywacją do uczenia się gramatyki języka polskiego¹¹.

⁹ Złożoność bodźca torującego nieznacznie wykraczająca poza poziom opanowania języka przez uczącego się jest zgodna z hipotezą zrozumiałego wkładu (*comprehensible input hypothesis*) Stephena D. Krashena (1985), choć pamiętać należy, że hipoteza ta dotyczy inputu w ogóle i nie odnosi się bezpośrednio do zjawiska torowania.

¹⁰ Wpływ czynników indywidualnych na aktywowanie i efektywność procesu torowania syntaktycznego sugerują w swojej pracy m.in. Chang i in. 2006.

¹¹ Na temat wpływu motywacji na proces przyswajania języka obcego, w tym także na poziom uważności uczących się (mający bezpośrednie

Niewątpliwie zbadania wymaga również znaczenie „dostrzegania” struktur przez uczącego się (Schmidt 1990) w procesie poprzedzania syntaktycznego. Świadome zwrócenie uwagi na nowe konstrukcje gramatyczne przekłada się prawdopodobnie na większą efektywność torowania, na co wskazują prace studentek, które podkreśliły imiesłowy przymiotnikowe czynne w czytany tekście. Interesujące wydaje się też znalezienie odpowiedzi na pytanie: czy/w jaki sposób omawiany w niniejszym artykule proces uruchamia transfer oraz jak style uczenia się charakterystyczne dla konkretnych kultur, a może nawet narodowości, wpływają na to, co podlega torowaniu.

Szczegółowej analizie powinna doczekać się także zależność skuteczności torowania od rodzaju wykorzystanego bodźca, jak również skuteczność torowania w przypadku próby wykorzystania struktury docelowej w zupełnie innym kontekście. Dla pełni opisu, po dokładnym zbadaniu natychmiastowej efektywności poprzedzania strukturalnego, warto byłoby sprawdzić potencjalne długofalowe skutki opisywanego procesu.

Prowadzona wielokierunkowo naukowa refleksja nad zjawiskiem torowania strukturalnego ma szansę stać się dla glottodydaktyków polonistycznych punktem wyjścia do tworzenia konkretnych rozwiązań wspierających uczących się w rozwijaniu kompetencji gramatycznej w języku polskim jako obcym.

przełożenie na stopień, w jakim dostrzegają oni pewne struktury językowe) por. m.in. Takahashi 2005, Ushioda 2016.

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Aneks I – tekst łatwy**Proszę przeczytać opis zdjęcia.**

Zdjęcie przedstawia czteroosobową rodzinę w kuchni. Kobieta w centrum fotografii to matka. Przygotowuje śniadanie dla dzieci, które siedzą przy stole. Dziewczynka i chłopiec są zadowoleni i uśmiechnięci. Czują się też głodni. Na stole leży pieczywo. Jest świeże i pyszne. Dzieci będą jednak jadły płatki z mlekiem, bo są zdrowsze. Zielona bazylia w doniczce będzie dodatkiem do obiadu. Przy oknie stoi mężczyzna. Ma koszulę w kratkę i zmywa naczynia albo obiera warzywa. Na kuchence znajduje się garnek z zupą. To może być zupa pomidorowa, bo dzieci taką lubią. Zdjęcie prezentuje sobotnie albo niedzielne przedpołudnie. Jest wiosna lub lato, ponieważ przez duże okno wpadają jasne promienie słońca.

Proszę odpowiedzieć na pytania.

1. Z ilu osób składa się ta rodzina?
2. Jak czują się dzieci, które siedzą przy stole?
3. Gdzie znajduje się pieczywo?
4. Do czego będzie potrzebna bazylia, która rośnie w doniczce?
5. Gdzie stoi garnek z zupą?
6. Co robi mężczyzna przy oknie?

7. Jaka jest pora roku i dlaczego tak myślisz?

Aneks II – tekst trudny

Proszę przeczytać opis zdjęcia.

Zdjęcie przedstawia czteroosobową rodzinę w kuchni. Kobieta znajdująca się w centrum fotografii jest matką. Prawdopodobnie przygotowuje śniadanie dla dzieci siedzących przy stole. Dziewczynka i chłopiec wydają się zadowoleni i uśmiechnięci, chociaż na pewno są już bardzo głodni. Leżące na stole pieczywo wygląda na świeże i pyszne, ale dzieci będą jadły płatki z mlekiem, bo takie śniadanie jest zdrowsze. Zielona bazylia, która rośnie w doniczce, będzie prawdopodobnie dodatkiem do obiadu. Mężczyzna w koszuli w kratkę, stojący przy oknie, być może zmywa naczynia albo obiera jakieś owoce lub warzywa. W garnku znajdującym się na kuchence jest już na pewno zupa na obiad – może pomidorowa, bo dzieci zwykle bardzo lubią zupę pomidorową. Zdjęcie prezentuje sobotnie albo niedzielne przedpołudnie – prawdopodobnie wiosną lub latem, o czym świadczą jasne promienie słońca wpadające przez duże okno.

Proszę odpowiedzieć na pytania.

1. Z ilu osób składa się ta rodzina?
2. Jak czują się dzieci siedzące przy stole?
3. Gdzie znajduje się pieczywo?

4. Do czego będzie potrzebna rosnąca w doniczce bazylia?
5. Gdzie stoi garnek z zupą?
6. Co może robić stojący przy zlewie mężczyzna?
7. O czym świadczy świecące słońce?

Urszula Swoboda-Rydz

ORCID: 0009-0007-1663-6571; urydz22@gmail.com

Uczelnia Łazarskiego, Warszawa

**SPEAK ENGLISH, DOCTOR! BETWEEN
ACADEMIC EDUCATION AND LABOR
MARKET DEMANDS**

**PROSZĘ MÓWIĆ PO ANGIELSKU,
DOKTORZE! POMIĘDZY EDUKACJĄ
AKADEMICKĄ A WYMAGANIAMI RYNKU
PRACY**

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest ocena roli języka angielskiego wśród przedstawicieli zawodów medycznych. Artykuł rozpoczyna się próbą poszukania odniesień w dokumentach do potrzeby “ciągłego kształcenia” lekarza, utrzymywania kompetencji zawodowych oraz komunikowania się w języku umożliwiającym współpracę z innymi specjalistami. Najpierw analizowana jest historyczna Przysięga Hipokratesa, i są śledzone stopniowo pojawiające się idee uczenia się przez całe życie w takich dokumentach jak Deklaracja Genewska, współczesna wersja przysięgi oraz aktualne kodeksy etyki lekarskiej. Ponieważ komunikacja zawodowa zawsze wymagała wspólnego języka naukowego, artykuł omawia również pozycję łaciny, niegdyś dominującego języka środowisk akademickich. Jednak przegląd programów uniwersyteckich i

podręczników uniwersyteckich pokazuje, że łacina w dużej mierze utraciła swoją funkcję, a angielski stał się *lingua franca* w medycynie.

Aby ocenić, czy akademickie nauczanie języka angielskiego odpowiada aktualnym potrzebom miejsca pracy, przeprowadzono ankietę wśród ordynatorów oddziałów, lekarzy i pielęgniarek. Wyniki ujawniają niedostateczną umiejętność komunikacji ustnej, czytania literatury specjalistycznej i pisania, a także zróżnicowane oczekiwania wobec wsparcia przez pracodawcę. Podczas gdy wszystkie grupy uznają konieczność znajomości angielskiego w pracy zawodowej, edukacja akademicka jest postrzegana jako niewystarczająca.

Słowa kluczowe: łacina, *lingua franca*, wymagania językowe w pracy, kompetencje językowe, język angielski w medycynie

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to assess the role of the English language among medical professionals. The article begins with an attempt to find a reference to physician's need for "continuous learning", maintaining professional competence and communicating in a language enabling collaboration with other specialists. Initially, the Hippocratic Oath is examined, tracing how the idea of lifelong learning gradually emerged in documents such as the Declaration of Geneva, the modern version of the Oath and contemporary codes of medical ethics. Since professional communication has always required a shared scientific language, the article examines the position of Latin, once the dominant medium among scholars. However, the review of university curricula and academic textbooks shows that Latin has largely lost its role, while English has become the *lingua franca* among in medicine.

To evaluate whether academic English-language training meets currently workplace needs, a survey was conducted among department heads, physicians, and nurses. The results reveal gaps in oral communication, reading of specialist literature, and writing, as well as differing expectations regarding institutional support. While all groups

acknowledge the necessity of English in their workplace, academic education is perceived as insufficient.

Keywords: Latin, *lingua franca*, labour linguistic requirements, linguistic skills, medical English

1. WHO SAID THAT PHYSICIANS MUST NEVER STOP LEARNING AND KEEP IMPROVING THEIR KNOWLEDGE?

The belief that physicians must continually learn and refine their knowledge is deeply rooted in contemporary medical ethics. However, it did not originate from the classical Hippocratic Oath from the 5th century BC. Nevertheless, the classical Hippocratic Oath, which remains a universal symbol of medical ethics, did contain commitments that indirectly referred to the need to maintain a high level of competence.

1.1. CONTINUITY OF TEACHING RATHER THAN “LIFELONG LEARNING”

Ancient logic emphasized not so much “continuous learning” as “preserving and handing down the art” in a spirit of loyalty and tradition. The oath required the student to honor their teacher equally to their parents and to teach his sons and the oath-

bound pupils, transmitting “precepts, oral instruction, and all the other learning.” Continuity of knowledge transfer formed the foundation of the ancient medical guild. “To hold the one who has taught me this art as equal to my parents ... to teach them [his offspring] this art—if they desire to learn it—without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else” [Stigall 2022, p. 277]. Modern interpreters often stretch this into an ethic of continuous growth because in today’s medicine, tradition alone is not sufficient.

1.1.1. PHYSICIANS’ COMPETENCE

The physician vowed to use appropriate dietary interventions for the patient’s well-being: “I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment...” [Stigall 2022, p. 281]. This requirement implies that the physician must possess sufficient competence to exercise sound clinical judgment.

1.1.2.DEDICATION TO THE ART OF MEDICINE

Another positive commitment is: “In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.” This passage suggests a form of dedication to medicine that required maintaining high ethical standards [Stigall 2022, p. 282].

1.1.3. MORAL DUTIES AS A FOUNDATION OF COMPETENCE

In the Hippocratic Oath, the physician formulates moral tasks, combining being a good person with being a good doctor. The physician undertakes the duty of caring for the patient, determines whom to treat, and what is best for the patient. Doctors are required to be competent, to do no harm, and to keep professional secrecy: “Things I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of treatment ... I will keep to myself” and “I will keep them [patients] from harm.” [Biesaga 2006, p. 23 cited in Brzeziński 2002, p. 22; Stigall 2022, p. 277, 284], For centuries the Oath was not significantly questioned. In the 19th century, with the rise of technology and science, greater emphasis was placed on medical knowledge and the duty to expand one’s competence [Edelstein, 1943, pp.10-15].

After the Second World War, during the Nuremberg Trials (1945–1947), the Oath underwent renewed scrutiny. The need to revise medical ethics arose directly from exposing inhumane experiments conducted on prisoners in concentration camps by the Nazi physicians. **The Nuremberg Code**, formulated in 1947, established principles governing research on humans. It was recognized that the traditional Hippocratic Oath possessed limitations [Nuremberg Military Tribunal 1947; Ghooi 2011, p.72].

Thus, in 1948, a new medical oath, or the Declaration of Geneva, was adopted.

DECLARATION OF GENEVA (EXCERPTS)¹

Adopted by the 2nd General Assembly of the World Medical Association, Geneva, Switzerland, September 1948 (amended 1968, 1983, 1994, 2005, 2006, 2017).

¹ <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-geneva/>

The Physician's Pledge:

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE to dedicate my life to the service of _____ humanity; ...
I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity and in accordance with good medical practice; ...
I WILL SHARE my medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare;
I WILL ATTEND TO my own health, well-being, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard...

The World Medical Association assumed responsibility for establishing global ethical guidelines. The modern Physician's Pledge contains elements that suggest continuous improvement. The physician pledges to "SHARE [their] medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare" and they commit to "ATTEND TO my [their] health, well-being, and abilities, in order to provide care of the highest standard." The clause concerning one's "abilities" may be interpreted as a commitment to care for one's own competencies, which indirectly implies continuous self-improvement [Parsa-Parsi 2017, p.1972]. The Declaration of Geneva constituted a step in formalizing the requirement of ongoing professional development in the post-war era.

In 1964, Louis Lasagna, US, wrote a modern version of the Hippocratic Oath, which is adopted by many US medical schools and organisations (Hajar 2017, p. 157). There was an explicit obligation to care for one's skills and pursue lifelong improvement.

The Hippocratic Oath: Modern Version 1964²

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

.....

I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

.....

I will not be ashamed to say "I know not", nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.

The formulation “respecting the hard-won scientific gains” suggest that a physician is obliged to constantly draw from the past achievements. Words about sharing knowledge show that learning is continuous and extends to future generations of doctors.

² https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/doctors/oath_modern.html

Admitting ignorance and calling on colleagues highlights self-education as humility. The reference to the “art as well as science of medicine” reminds us that a doctor’s growth involves not only technical skills but also empathy.

In Poland, the development of official ethical guidelines for the medical profession started in 1934. The latest version of the Code of Medical Ethics issued by the National Medical Association, effective as of January 1, 2025, emphasizes the necessity of continuous learning and self-development as a professional duty.

CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS³

Physician’s Oath

With respect and gratitude to my teachers, I accept the title of physician bestowed upon me, and fully aware of the obligations it entails, I solemnly pledge:

- to fulfill these duties conscientiously;
- to serve human life and health;
- [...]
- to continually expand my medical knowledge and to share with the medical community all that I may discover and improve.

³ <https://nil.org.pl/dokumenty/kodeks-etyki-lekarskiej>

I SOLEMNLY PROMISE THIS!

CHAPTER VI

Principles of Conduct in Medical Practice

Article 64.

It is the duty of every physician to continually update and improve their professional knowledge and skills. [my trans.]

2. THE CHANGING POSITION OF LATIN

Doctors from the beginning had to use a language assigned with their respected professional role. For centuries, Latin was the leading language among scientists. Before Latin assumed a dominant role in medicine, this function was fulfilled by Greek, partly due to the works of Hippocrates and Galen.

During the development of the Roman Empire (1st century BC – 5th century AD), the Romans began translating Greek scientific works, including medical ones to make them accessible to Latin-speaking scholars. Classical Latin was the language of the elite, administration and literature. After the fall of Rome (~476 AD), Vulgar Latin fragmented into the Romance languages.

Between the 6th and 10th centuries, medieval Latin remained in use among elites, the Church, and scholars, while spoken language shifted to vernaculars [Bering 2018, pp178-181]. Latin persisted mostly in written form [Kaczmarkowski 1986, pp. 484-485, 491]. Latin was taught in schools as the foundation of the *trivium*.⁴

In the 14th–16th centuries, during the Renaissance, Latin was extremely important and widely used, serving as a “world language” for scholarship, diplomacy, and literature in Europe. Humanists revived Classical Latin, especially in academic and religious writing, even though vernacular languages were becoming more common in daily life [Kaczmarkowski 1986, pp. 502].

During the Enlightenment (17th–18th centuries), national languages like French and English were promoted, replacing Latin in diplomacy, science and governance. Latin’s status declined in schools [Oz-Salzberger 2006, 387-388]. In the 19th and first half of the 20th century, Latin finally lost its role as a teaching language in favor of national languages and was removed from university requirements, though in some regions – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – it persisted longer [Bering 2018, p.176].

In the second half of XX century Latin was no longer mandatory in many secondary school, which led to a decline in a general knowledge of Latin. Medical students required to know

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_school

only anatomical and pathological terminology [Kucharz 2016, pp.5-6 za Mamzer 1986, pp. 422-425].

In the 20th century, Latin survived in Roman Catholic liturgy and legal terminology. In most universities, Latin lost its status as a language of instruction in favor of modern languages and lost ground as a language of science, remaining mainly in a fossilized form [Krukowska 2025, p. 241]. After World War II, English became a dominating global language, widely used in science and international discourse [Hamlet 2007, p. 69]. Since then, English has become recognized as *lingua franca* of medical sciences [Crystal 2003, pp. 1,6; Kucharz 2016, pp. 5-6 cited in Kucharz 2015, pp. 413-416, Olesiński 1974, pp. 795-797]. The 21st century has brought the supremacy of English, which has almost completely replaced Latin. The long-standing tradition of using Latin is over.

2.1. CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF LATIN

The primary reason Latin lost its status as a universal language in medicine and science was scientific progress and geopolitical change. Firstly, the growing political and economic dominance of Great Britain—and later the United States—made these countries leading centers of scientific and academic activity from the nineteenth century onward [Hamel 2007, pp. 56]. Secondly, independently of this, the English language proved better

suited to precise scientific communication because to its adaptability, conciseness, and rich vocabulary [Crystal 2003, pp.9,146-147, 158-161]

New, unusual linguistic phenomena in medical terminology also emerged at the end of the twentieth century. Latin failed to keep pace with rapid technological development and the introduction of new medical concepts [Kucharz 2016, p. 8]. This scientific progress required terminology that had not been previously used, which led to the creation of English–Latin hybrids and irregular Latin forms. Some modern terms did not exist in Latin or proper Latin terms were not used. For example, the English word “pacemaker” replaced the proper Latin term “stimulator artificialis.” This resulted in hybrid expressions such as “Status post implantationis pace-makeri”.

In other phrases, Latin words became substituted by English ones. Mixed Latin–English terms can be exemplified by:

- Status post implantationis drug-releasing stent
- Anastomosis end-to-end

On the other hand, English terms such as “block”, “shock”, “arrest”, and “stress” were converted into pseudo-Latin forms such as “blocus”, “shocus”, “arrestus” and “stressus”. Hence the

diagnosis was “Blocus completus atrioventricularis” (complete atrioventricular block) or “Arrestus cardialis” (cardiac arrest). However, such newly-created forms do not exist in actual Latin; for example, “arrestus” is incorrect, while the proper Latin expression “pausa cardiaca” was not adopted [Kucharz 2016, pp.8-10].

These few examples show that Latin could no longer function effectively in medicine. As a result, English as the international scientific *lingua franca*, has been widely adopted in the majority of scientific, medical and humanities publications [Hamel 2007, pp. 56-59]. At the level of terminology, there seems to be nothing to regret as many similarities between Latin and medical English can be found. Krukowska (2025, p. 246 cited in Janson 2006, p. 161) argues that Latin persists in modern terminology, but mainly “in English disguise”.

English	Latin	Polish
Alveoli	<i>Alveoli pulmonis</i>	pęcherzyki płucne
Ascending colon	<i>Colon ascendens</i>	okreźnica wstępująca
Biceps brachii	<i>Musculus biceps brachii</i>	mięsień dwugłowy ramienia
Calcaneal (Achilles') tendon	<i>Tendo calcaneus (Achillis)</i>	ścięgno piętowe (Achillesa)
Duodenum	<i>Duodenum</i>	dwunastnica
Epithelium	<i>Epithelium</i>	nabłonek
Femoral nerve	<i>Nervus femoralis</i>	nerw udowy
Frontal lobe	<i>Lobus frontalis</i>	płat czołowy
Humerus	<i>Humerus</i>	kość ramienna
Larynx	<i>Larynx</i>	krtań
Patella	<i>Patella</i>	rzepka
Renal artery	<i>Arteria renalis</i>	tętnica nerkowa
Superior vena cava	<i>Vena cava superior</i>	żyła główna górna

2.2. LATIN IN TEXTBOOKS AND ATLASES

When it comes to academic textbooks and atlases, an example is *Human Anatomy* by Adam Bochenek and Michał Reicher (2007). This work is considered “the bible” of anatomy for all medical students. The textbook is written in Polish and additionally includes Latin terminology both in the main text and in

the illustration captions. Besides Latin, the authors also refer to Greek expressions—for instance *anatemnein*, meaning “to cut up, to dissect,” or they explain that the term *cytology*, the study of the cell, derives from the Greek *kytos*. The same applies to *histology*, the study of tissues, where *histos* means “tissue.” Similarly, in a recent Polish edition of “Atlas of Human Anatomy” by Netter [2022], descriptions of illustrations are in Latin.

However, in other anatomy textbooks, such as the *Sobotta Atlas of Human Anatomy* (ed. Putz, Pabst 2006), both the text and the illustration captions are provided exclusively in English. Moreover, the anatomical plates accompanying recently the recent *Atlas of Human Anatomy* (ed. Jędrzejewski 2019), which serve as student exercises, include illustration captions in either Polish or English.

On the other hand, in the dentistry textbook *Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*, edited by Mansur Rachman (2024), the patient case descriptions include Latin terms such as *anamnesis morbi* (“medical history”), *status generalis* (“general condition”), and *status localis* (“local condition”).

Pharmacology textbooks have traditionally included drug names in both the nominative and genitive cases, the latter being necessary for writing prescriptions. Likewise, pharmacognosy textbooks list plant names in both Polish and Latin [Krówczyński 1997, p. 365].

Of note, in accordance with the Regulation of the Ministry of Health of December 23, 2020 (Journal of Laws 2020, item 2424), in Poland a prescription may be issued either in Polish or in Latin. However, the composition of a medicinal compound must be written in Latin. The name of each ingredient should appear on a new line, begin with a capital letter, and be given in the genitive case (*genetivus*). Among medical professions, pharmacists appear to be the group that most actively needs and preserves Latin for professional reasons.

Examples of substance names in the nominative and genitive:

Nominativus	Genetivus
Atropini sulfas	Atropini sulfatis
Kalii carbonas	Kalii carbonatis
Magnesii oxidum	Magnesii oxidi
Phenobarbitalum natricum	Phenobarbitali natrici

Latin abbreviations are still used in prescriptions e.g.: gtt. (“gutta”) — drop, Sol. (“solution”) — solution.

In *Goodman & Gilman’s Pharmacology*, numerous scientific terms appear in Polish with their English equivalents. Examples include “5-fluorouracyl” (5-fluorouracil) or

“deoksytymidyno-5’-monofosforan” (deoxythymidine-5’-monophosphate) [Brunton et al., 2010, p. 1318]. In *Antibiotics in the Era of Increasing Antimicrobial Resistance* by Zdzisław Markiewicz, Dorota Korsak and Magdalena Popowska (2021), we see a similar tendency: Polish terms are accompanied by English names in parentheses, for instance “białko wiążące jednoniciowe DNA” (single-stranded binding protein). It must be emphasized again that the scientific names of receptors or enzymes discovered in the twentieth century have no equivalents in classical Latin. This trend, however, does not prevent the occasional use of Latin expressions, such as *Omnia sunt venena, nihil est sine veneno. Sola dosis facit venenum* —“All things are poison, nothing is without poison. Only the dose makes the poison.”

2.3. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF LATIN AT MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES IN POLAND

According to the Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland of 21 August 2019, the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education⁵ laid down the standards of education preparing for the profession of a medical doctor. In terms of skills, the graduate [from the medical university] is able to:

⁵<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20190001573>

D.U17. Critically analyze medical literature, including publications in English, and draw appropriate conclusions.

D.U18. Communicate with patients in a foreign language at the B2+ level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 21 August 2019 on student record documentation.

There is no mention of Latin in this document. In the field of medicine, Poland remained the only country where Latin was still used until the late 20th century, but in June 2007, the Polish language was allowed for describing medical diagnoses: Decree of the Minister of Health, Journal of Laws 2006 No. 247 item 1819, entered into force on July 29, 2007.⁶

Here is a brief review of medical universities in Warsaw, which shows the number of didactic hours in English and Latin. At the Medical University of Warsaw, the Foreign Language Teaching Centre, established in the 1951/52 academic year, introduced Latin and Russian as compulsory courses. In 1976, English, French, and German were added. However, the 2022/23 academic year was the last one in which Latin was taught (30 hours) in the Faculties of Medicine and Medicine and Dentistry and in the Faculty of Pharmacy (60 hours). Dental students took Latin for the last time in 2023/24 (30 hours), while in Pharmacy the number of Latin hours was reduced to 45.

⁶ <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20062471819>

At other universities in Warsaw offering medical studies, English clearly dominates. Only at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the Medical University of Warsaw—and exclusively there—do medical students have the option, in addition to English, to take German or French. All other universities provide instruction only in English.

Table 1. Number of didactic hours in English language and Latin courses at medical universities in Warsaw.

University	English	Latin
Warsaw Medical University (WUM)	120	farmacy – only 45
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW)	120	-
Warsaw University (UW)	120	-
Lazarski University	120	-
Maria Skłodowska - Curie University of Medical Sciences (UM MSC)	120	-

A short survey was conducted to check whether this number of English language hours – usually 120 hours of language classes at the beginning of university studies – is sufficient, or is perceived as sufficient, for the professional work of medical staff.

3. RESEARCH

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to show whether there is a gap between academic English language education and professional workplace needs. To this purpose, opinions of medical professionals (physicians and nurses) as well as representatives of management staff (heads of departments and medical team leaders) were collected. regarding the current level of language competence, existing requirements, and preferred forms of language support.

The study focused on four main areas:

1. assessment of the adequacy of English-language skills (communication, reading scientific literature, preparing publications, presentations, international collaboration);
2. the role of English proficiency in recruitment and the differentiation of salaries;
3. the expected financial support for maintenance and development of English and preferred forms of linguistic support.

Additionally, the questionnaire evaluated the need to learn sign language and Ukrainian, as well as anticipated trends in the importance of the English language in the medical field in future.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

STUDY SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The survey was prepared and conducted in Polish between April and May 2025. The interviews were conducted at the Medical University of Warsaw and at a private medical facility in Olsztyn.

The study involved three groups of respondents: department heads and medical team leaders (n = 20; 50% men), physicians (n = 20; 40% men), and nurses (n = 10; 100% women).

The opinions of the heads of departments were considered representative of the employer's perspective.

According to their self-assessments, all participants knew and used English professionally. Four respondents also reported knowledge of other languages, including Russian, German, Italian, and Ukrainian.

DATA COLLECTION

All participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. The respondents were individuals personally known to the researcher. All questionnaires were delivered in person rather than distributed electronically. All responses were collected anonymously and the results were analyzed in aggregated form.

Pharmacists were not included in the study. One of the reasons was that, in relation to the topic “Speak English, Doctor,” they typically have shorter interactions with patients and less frequently conduct extended medical interviews.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The questionnaire consisted of 17 items; the full list of questions is provided in the Appendix.

The questionnaire included both closed-ended (multiple-choice) and semi-open questions, allowing respondents to provide their own answers through an “Other” option and additional comments.

Reliability was supported by formulating clear questions in Polish. To minimize potential misunderstandings, participants were able to clarify any questions with the researcher, who was present during the completion of the questionnaire. While completing the survey, participants also had the opportunity to add comments regarding specific questions as well as general remarks concerning the role of foreign languages in medical professions.

Control questions, including repeated or reverse-worded items used to assess response consistency, were not included. This decision was made in order to keep the questionnaire short and manageable. The survey took approximately 10–15 minutes to

complete, which helped maintain respondents' attention and reduce the likelihood of response errors.

A pilot study was not conducted.

DATA ANALYSIS

Most results were presented as percentages. To determine the most needed English language skills, the Borda count method was used. This method assigns points based on participants' rankings of the importance of specific of English language skills. Participants ranked skills such as speaking, reading, writing, conference communication, and those related to international relations. Points were assigned to each rank, summed for all participants, and averaged per individual to allow comparisons between groups of unequal size.

INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE

In the present study, each participant received complete information about the purpose of the research and the way in which the collected data would be used. This information was communicated verbally prior to participation. Participants confirmed that they understood the information provided and agreed to take part in the survey. They were informed of their right

to discontinue the questionnaire at any time without any consequences. All participants gave their consent before the start of the study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The author did not apply for approval from an ethics committee. The survey was anonymous, concerned opinions and attitudes, and did not involve any intervention affecting participants' health.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the study was the small sample size. Pharmacists and other medical professionals were not included, although they could constitute an interesting comparative group in future studies. Control questions, to check reliability of responses, were not included in the questionnaire.

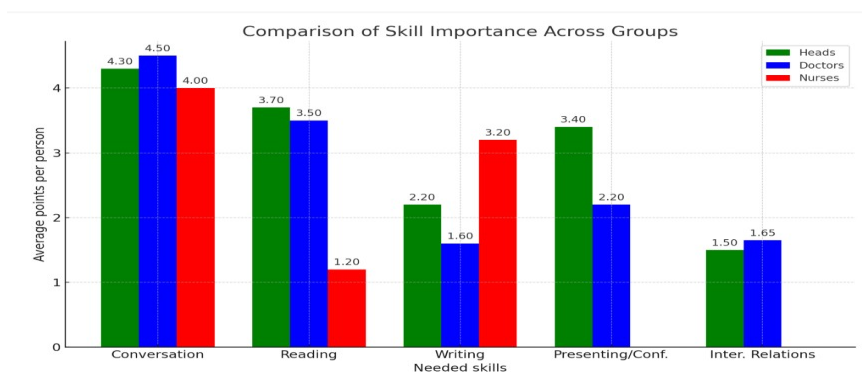
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION AND ADEQUACY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

The responses to the question *“Is the knowledge of English in your medical team sufficient for a 21st-century professional?”* were as follows:

- **Heads of departments:** 60% – Yes
- **Doctors:** 25% – Yes
- **Nurses:** 20% – Yes

The survey question of whether knowledge of English in their medical team is sufficient for a 21st-century indicates clear differences between professional groups. While 60% of department heads considered the level of English in their teams sufficient, only 25% of doctors and 20% of nurses shared this view. This suggests that managerial respondents tend to perceive the language competence of their teams more positively than clinicians themselves.

Figure 1. The comparison of skill importance across groups



Points according to the Borda count method.

When respondents were asked which specific skills are most lacking, the importance ratings presented in Figure 1 show the following:

- **Conversation skills** are rated as highly important by all groups (average ≈ 4.0 – 4.5 points), indicating that oral communication in English is considered a key linguistic competence.
- **Reading** specialist literature receives relatively high ratings from department heads and doctors (≈ 3.5 – 3.7 points) but much lower ratings from nurses (≈ 1.2 points), suggesting differences in exposure to or perceived need for literature-based tasks.
- **Writing skills** (e.g., preparing texts or publications) are rated moderately by heads of departments (≈ 2.2) and more highly by nurses (≈ 3.2) than by doctors (≈ 1.6), indicating that nurses in this sample perceive a greater need for support in written English.
- **Presentation and conference communication skills** receive relatively high importance ratings from department heads (≈ 3.4) but lower ratings from doctors (≈ 2.2), which may reflect a stronger managerial emphasis on scientific communication and external representation.
- **International relations and collaboration** are given comparatively lower importance (≈ 1.5 – 1.7 points).

The responses also reflect respondents' evaluation of their academic preparation in English. Only 15% of doctors and 20% of nurses reported feeling adequately prepared after university language courses, compared with 50% of department heads. This

suggests a substantial gap between university language training and the actual demands of medical English in the workplace.

This negative evaluation of university English courses may partly result from their structure. Such courses are typically offered during the first and second years of study, when students mainly learn the fundamentals of medical English. Later in their professional careers, when working as specialists in clinics and hospitals, they encounter a range of complex linguistic situations for which they have not been fully prepared.⁷

⁷ After reviewing available textbooks for learning medical English, to my best knowledge there are no publications that systematically provide a medical English course specifically designed for specialists. Most available books are textbooks intended for students and focus mainly on basic medical terminology. One textbook that may to some extent be useful for medical specialists is *English in Medical Practice* by Jonathan P. Murray, Jerzy Radomski, and Włodzimierz Szyszkowski (Warsaw: PZWL). Other potentially relevant titles include *Medical English in Practice* by Urszula Swoboda-Rydz (Warsaw: Akkademus Innowacje dla Edukacji, 2020) and *Angielski dla radiologów* by Ramón Ribes and Pablo R. Ros, translated by Magdalena Grzybek (Warsaw: Med-Media Bogdan Materna, 2011).

DEVELOPING ENGLISH SKILLS DURING MEDICAL PRACTICE

Half of heads (50%), 60% of doctors and only 20% of nurses reported that they continue to develop specialist medical English during practice. Moreover, the value of English competence at work is nearly universal: 100% of heads and nurses, and 95% of doctors, consider knowledge of English or another foreign language (mainly Russian and Spanish) important.

These results suggest three main points. Firstly, managers tend to overestimate team readiness compared with clinicians' self-assessments. Secondly, oral communication and reading of specialist literature emerge as widespread priorities, while needs in writing and presentation differ by the professional group, probably due to their practical needs. Thirdly, although most clinicians recognize the importance of English command, a substantial proportion (especially nurses) does not engage in the continuing development of specialist medical English.

ENGLISH IN RECRUITMENT AND REMUNERATION

A good command of English is seen as an advantage in the recruitment process in all groups, yet only half of the heads of departments (50%) consider English proficiency a significant asset when applying for a position, slightly more than doctors (45%) and nurses (40%). This suggests that while the importance of language skills is generally acknowledged, it is not universally treated as a decisive recruitment criterion.

Opinions on additional remuneration for language use at work are divided. While 60% of nurses believe that foreign-language competence should be financially rewarded, only 30% of heads and 30% of doctors agree with that, with many doctors (35%) responding "hard to say" and heads emphasizing that language learning is a personal obligation. These findings indicate that, despite widespread recognition of the value of English command, there is no consensus on whether such competencies should translate into higher pay.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Quite a difference emerges in attitudes toward financial support for English learning. Doctors (85%) and nurses (80%) expect institutional support for improving their language skills, viewing it as a shared responsibility between the employee and employer. In contrast, only 40% of heads of departments support

such funding, and perceive language learning as an individual responsibility. It may suggest that while employees recognize the necessity of language competence, they may feel insufficiently supported, which could inhibit the overall linguistic readiness of the workforce.

Main forms of linguistic support

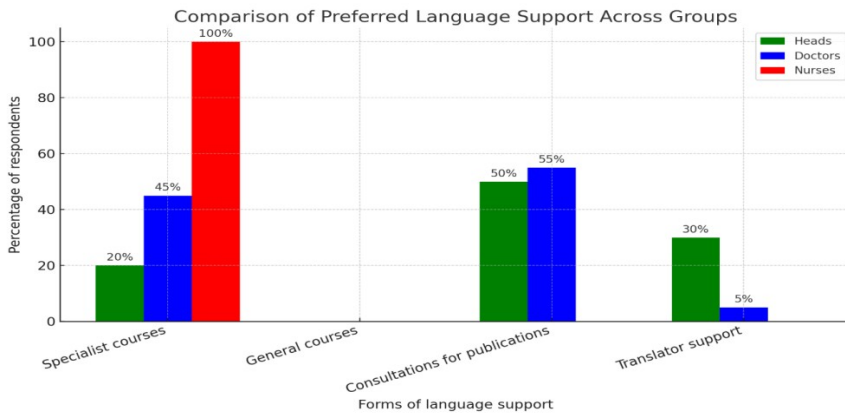
The participants were asked the question about preferred linguistic support:

What forms of the English language support would be, in your opinion, the most useful?

- Specialist courses in English (e.g., medical)
 - General English language courses
 - Language consultations during preparation of publications
 - Translator support in foreign contacts
 - Other (please specify):
-

The results are shown in Fig. 2.

Figure 2. Comparison of preferred language support across groups



The data on preferred forms of language support reveal different needs across professional groups. Specialist medical English courses were identified as the most valuable form of support, with 100% of nurses selecting this option, while general English courses were not viewed as necessary by any group. This reflects their previously reported gaps in reading and writing skills and underscores the need for profession-specific language training. Interest was also substantial among doctors (45%), whereas only 20% of heads of departments expressed the same preference, probably due to their higher existing proficiency and greater confidence in using professional English.

Linguistic consultations for preparing publications are considered useful by 50% of heads and 55% of doctors, reflecting

their engagement in scholarly work. Nurses, who publish infrequently, did not express interest in this form of support.

Finally, the need for translator assistance in international contexts was limited to heads and doctors, with 30% of heads and 5% of doctors selecting this option. No nurses indicated such a need.

NEED FOR TRAINING IN UKRAINIAN AND SIGN LANGUAGE

Given current situation on Polish labour market, the questionnaire explored needs beyond English. The necessity of learning Ukrainian differs. Doctors show the strongest support (75%), acknowledging the growing number of Ukrainian patients. In contrast, only 20% of heads consider such training necessary, and nurses showed no direct support (0%), with 20% undecided. This discrepancy may reflect differences in daily exposure to Ukrainian-speaking patients. While doctors need to understand very well patients' language during history-taking, nurses believe that they communicate well enough during performing nursing procedures.

The use of sign language interpreters is minimal across all groups (100% of heads, 95% of doctors, 100% of nurses report not using them), indicating limited institutional infrastructure for it.

Despite this, the need for learning sign language varies: 60% of nurses see a value in acquiring basic sign language skills, compared with 40% of heads and 20% of doctors, while the majority of doctors (75%) remain undecided. The strong interest among nurses may stem from their direct contact with patients and the challenges of communicating with hearing-impaired individuals. Doctors, on the other hand, would probably want to communicate via a professional interpreter in the process of history-taking, diagnosing and treatment in order to achieve necessary accuracy in communication with patients.

CONCLUSIONS

1. We are witnessing the gradual decline of Latin and its replacement by English in the 21st century. English has become *the lingua franca* among medical professionals and serves as a key tool to communicate internationally with both English-speaking professionals and patients.

2. Despite recognizing the leading role of English, all three groups critically assess university English language training as insufficient. More than 60% of doctors and only 20% of nurses attempt to make it up through self-learning.

3. The forms of support most frequently indicated include specialist language courses (100% of nurses), consultations related to scientific publications (55% of doctors and 50% of heads) , and

translator assistance (30% of heads, 5% of doctors). The gap between university courses and labour market requirements may therefore be an opportunity for universities to expand specialist language courses and introduce elective English courses for higher-year students of medicine and nursing.

4. At the same time, language skills are not perceived as a major advantage in terms of employment or salary. There was no consensus regarding the need to learn other foreign languages and no need to learn a sign language. The perceived need to learn Ukrainian or sign language appears to depend mainly on the range and context of professional communication. Although English is still expected to remain important in the future, the first doubts have been expressed due to the growing role of artificial intelligence in translation and communication.

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APPENDIX

Ankieta na temat roli języków obcych w zawodach medycznych⁸ skierowana do Ordynatorów, Kierowników Placówek Medycznych oraz lekarzy, pielęgniarek oraz farmaceutów. Szanowni Państwo - odpowiedzi w ankiecie będą stanowić istotny wkład do dyskusji podczas międzynarodowej konferencji „**Język angielski i inne języki na rynku pracy**” („**English and Other Languages on the Labour Market**”). Bardzo dziękuję Państwu za poświęcony czas.

1. Czy uważa Pan/Pani, że znajomość języka angielskiego w zespole medycznym jest wystarczająca dla pielęgniarki/pielęgniarsza XXI wieku?

Tak

Nie Jeśli nie, proszę zaznaczyć, jakich umiejętności brakuje najbardziej:

Komunikacja z pacjentem

Pisanie prac naukowych

Prezentacja i rozumienie konferencji

Umiejętność czytania literatury specjalistycznej

⁸ W wersji ankiety dla pielęgniarek słowo „lekarz” zostało zastąpione słowem „pielęgniarka”.

Komunikacja/budowanie relacji z kolegami z zagranicy

Inne (jakie?): _____

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

2. Czy pielęgniarki/pielęgniarze są – Pana/Pani zdaniem – odpowiednio przygotowani do pracy w zakresie języka angielskiego specjalistycznego po ukończeniu lektoratów na uczelniach medycznych?

Tak

Nie

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

3. Czy pielęgniarki/pielęgniarze – według Pana/Pani obserwacji – rozwijają swoje umiejętności w zakresie języka angielskiego specjalistycznego w trakcie pracy zawodowej?

Tak

Nie

Trudno powiedzieć

4. Czy dobra znajomość języka angielskiego stanowi istotny atut przy zatrudnianiu w Pana/Pani placówce?

Tak

Nie

Trudno powiedzieć

5. Czy znajomość innego języka obcego niż angielski może być również atutem przy zatrudnianiu pielęgniarki/pielęgniacza?

Tak

Nie

Jeśli tak, proszę zaznaczyć, które języki mogą być istotne:

Niemiecki Hiszpański Włoski Rosyjski Inny (jaki?): _____

6. Jakie umiejętności językowe uważa Pan/Pani za najważniejsze w pracy pielęgniarki/pielęgniacza? Proszę ponumerować od 1 (najważniejsze) do 4 (najmniej ważne):

Rozmowa z pacjentem

Pisanie prac naukowych

Umiejętność prezentacji i rozumienia treści konferencyjnych

Umiejętność czytania literatury specjalistycznej

Komunikacja/budowanie relacji z kolegami z zagranicy

Inne (jakie?): _____

7. Czy doskonalenie znajomości języka angielskiego lub innego języka obcego uważa Pan/Pani za ważny w pracy pielęgniarki/pielęgniacza?

Tak

Nie

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

8. Czy nauka języka angielskiego (lub innego języka obcego) jest wspierana finansowo w Pani/Pana miejscu pracy?

Tak

Nie

Chciałbym/chciałabym być wspierany/a finansowo

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

9. Czy uważa Pan/Pani, że istnieje potrzeba kształcenia zawodów medycznych w tym pielęgniarek w zakresie języka ukraińskiego, np. ze względu na rosnącą liczbę pacjentów z Ukrainy?

Tak

Nie

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

10. Czy Pana/Pani zdaniem rola języków obcych (w szczególności angielskiego) będzie rosła na polskim rynku pracy w sektorze medycznym w najbliższych 5-10 latach?

Tak

Nie

Trudno powiedzieć

11. Czy współpraca międzynarodowa (np. z partnerami zagranicznymi, udział w badaniach, konferencjach, projektach UE) ma miejsce w Pana/Pani placówce?

Tak – regularna współpraca

Sporadycznie

Nie dotyczy

12. Jakie formy wsparcia językowego byłyby – Pana/Pani zdaniem – najbardziej przydatne dla pielęgniarek/pielęgniarzy?

Kursy specjalistyczne z języka angielskiego (np. medyczny)

Kursy języka angielskiego ogólnego

Konsultacje językowe podczas przygotowania publikacji

Wsparcie tłumacza/lektora w kontaktach zagranicznych

Inne (jakie?):

13. Czy uważa Pan/Pani, że pielęgniarki/pielęgniarze znający języki obce i wykorzystujący je w pracy powinni otrzymywać wyższe wynagrodzenie?

Tak

Nie

Trudno powiedzieć

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

14. Czy uważa Pan/Pani, że pielęgniarki/ położne posiadają odpowiednie umiejętności językowe (np. angielski, ukraiński) w stopniu umożliwiającym komunikację z pacjentami obcojęzycznymi?

Tak

Nie

Trudno powiedzieć

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

15. Czy Państwo korzystają na oddziale/ w zespole z pomocy tłumacza języka migowego?

Tak

Nie

Czy widzi Pan/Pani potrzebę nauki języka migowego dla potrzeb zawodowych?

Tak

Nie

Komentarz (opcjonalnie):

16. Jakimi językami obcymi Pan/Pani włada i czy są wykorzystywane w pracy zawodowej?

_____ Tak Nie

_____ Tak Nie

_____ Tak Nie

_____ Tak Nie

Komentarz ogólny do pytań ankiety:



Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczno-Humanistyczna

University of Economics and Humanities

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