

Załącznik nr 3

1. First name and surname: Ksenia Olkusz

2. Diplomas and scientific/artistic degrees obtained, including the name, date, and year of awarding and the title of the doctoral thesis

2005 – PhD in Humanities with specialization in Literary Studies, awarded on the basis of the doctoral thesis entitled *Wiedza tajemna w dobie pozytywizmu i jej refleksy w prozie drugiego pokolenia pozytywistów (Esoteric Knowledge in the Age of Positivism and its Reflection in the Prose of the Second Generation of Positivists)* written under the supervision of prof. dr hab. Piotr Obrączka (reviewers: prof. dr hab. Piotr Kowalski, prof. dr hab. Tadeusz Żabski)

2001 – Master’s degree in Polish Philology with specialization in Serb-Croatian and Social Communication awarded by the Institute of Polish Philology, Faculty of Philology, University of Opole

3. Information regarding employment in scientific and artistic institutions to date.

2005-2006 – The Jan Kochanowski University campus in Piotrków Trybunalski

2006-2007 – University of Opole

2006-2013 – Public Professional College in Racibórz

2017-2018 – Jagiellonian University

2015 – Facta Ficta Research Centre in Kraków

4. Indication of the achievement resulting from art. 16

Ksenia Olkusz, *Narracje zombiecentryczne. Literatura – Teoria – Antropologia*, Universitas, Kraków 2019, pp. 326, ISBN 97883-242-3518-6

Publishing reviewers: dr hab. Rafał Szczerbakiewicz UMCS, dr hab. Dariusz Brzostek, prof. UMK

The monograph *Narracje zombiecentryczne. Literatura – Teoria – Antropologia* (*Zombie-centric Narratives. Literature – Theory – Anthropology*) presents a novel approach to the problematics of narratives located in worlds infected with zombie epidemic. The aim of my research was to illuminate the narratives that I have termed zombie-centric, presenting them as works that refer to multiple postmodern paradigms and that constitute a polemical voice, or a creative answer, to present pains, fears, and traumas resulting from lack of economic security, crisis of trust towards the authorities, and suspicions raised by the growth of corporations, which leads to dynamic transformations of the previously accepted reality.

I have proposed the term “zombie-centric narratives”, which I have been using consequently in my research. Creation of this terms has allowed me to avoid awkward and inadequate characterizations that either refer to specific genre aesthetics or that suggest, quite inappropriately, that zombies are the heroes of these stories. Already the title of the monograph includes the term that I am using to describe the plots in which the construction of the fictional reality is determined by the presence of animated dead, pandemics of zombism, and reorientation of the previously existing rules for the survival of both a civilization and individuals. Zombiecentricity would therefore solve the problem of inadequate and overly restrictive aesthetic labeling of genres that is currently in use.

Genological questions are an important element of my investigations. This is because my aim was to indicate that the figure of a zombie can be made use of in many different genres, and that the element which determines zombiecentricity is exclusively that of world-building rather than being a distinct characteristic of particular aesthetics.

In order to further specify and more forcefully presented the premises of my research, I have referred to the problematics of narratology, pointing out that the strategies of relating events chosen by many authors do not diverge from those used outside of popular literature. Narrative practices employed by writers of zombie-centric literature clearly attest to their striving towards the breaking out of the accepted models and moving towards the creation of a distinctly immersive literature capable of impacting in various ways both the readers’ imagination and their emotional engagement in the authenticated text.

Another important issue addressed in the monograph was the indication of the discursive capacity of zombie-centric plots as a critical tool for discussing contemporary

economic, social, political, cultural, and moral phenomena. A recurring motif of utmost gravity, which is presented by the authors of zombie-centric narratives, is also lack of trust in media; a firm belief that they are a tool of an oppressive system of power, which aims at the diminishing of social knowledge through manipulation of news and even procurement of fake information. Writers also pose questions regarding the human condition in the age of crisis, using the motif of an epidemic as an exemplification or a subject of analysis of behavioral patterns. Not without significance are also bio-political aspects and the discourse of otherness.

In the penultimate chapter of the monograph I present, using a concrete example, the possibility of realizing a zombie-centric plot in texts for younger readers. I summarize my reflections by considering the subject of fashion for zombiism itself as a result of disappointment with, and at the same time fears of, the humanity and its collective actions. To this attests, for instance, intrinsic to the zombie topos anthropophagy, which seems to carry many meanings referring not just to this concrete cultural taboo but also to external aspects, where it functions as an anticipation of profit-hungry corporations, ruthless banks devouring debtors, refugees supposedly storming the gates of European paradise. All this, after all, takes place in the context of satisfying hunger, ingesting, consuming individuals. Is it not the case, then, that the resultant of civilization's existence is a threat of dysfunctionality within its bounds? – the exhaustion of its capacities for self-maintenance and the appearance of a threat not external, but precisely internal, which in itself may be an ironic summary of self-promoting and self-referential behaviors within the space of social media.

All the concepts presented in the monograph were discussed in very broad contexts, thus making it not only an analysis and interpretation of zombie-centric works, but also – as the subtitle of the work itself suggests – a theoretical and anthropological study of discourses present in zombie-centric literature.

c) discussion of the scientific/didactic aim of the aforementioned work, including the achievements attained, and a discussion of their possible employment

Monograph *Narracje zombiecentryczne. Literatura – Teoria – Antropologia* (*Zombie-centric Narratives. Literature – Theory – Anthropology*)

A growing popularity of zombie-centered narratives invites to ponder on the aesthetic intentions of its creators. Additionally, many and more zombie stories start to transgress the context usually ascribed to horror and gothic fiction. Therefore, while analyzing artistic representations of the walking dead one has to acknowledge not only a macabre of visualization, but also a metaphorical meaning of corpses devouring the living.

Though in many zombie-centered narratives there is an apparent prevalence of gore (anti)aestheticism, zombie monstrosity is aimed at showing not only external, but also internal transformation. It is not, therefore, a mere change in appearance, but a sign of the potential abjectal otherness. Intersections between zombies and otherness are unavoidable, which is a clear consequence of associating this figure with the issues of death and anthropophagy. This correlation seems to have been founded by the fear inscribed into the very reception of zombies which is full of dissent, objection, abomination, or disgust—and, thereby, close to philosophical and ethical problems discussed by Martha C. Nussbaum and German phenomenologist and xenologist, Bernhard Waldenfels. In zombie-centered narratives a category of the inhuman becomes predominant as it realizes itself in the dehumanized corpses, raised from the dead and craving for the living. From this perspective, zombie is and simultaneously is not a man—it is, rather, a creation that has managed to keep a deformed human shape but, at the same time, lost what had previously defined his identity: free will, creativity, and expression.

Many works evoke a current context as well, like for instance the issue of obesity, usually embodied in the most monstrous of zombies, but also foracknowledged in the times from before the fall of the known world. Similarly, zombies may be understood as a figure of pollution (anthropophagy, corporeal decomposition) and polluting (epidemic imperative), thereby serving as an embodiment of all the things harmful, ill-willed, and all the more transgressive in reference to the very existence of mankind. One way or another, neo *danse macabre* of zombies may contribute to the better understanding of the human corporeality and its transgressive capacity as well.

5. Discussion of the remaining scientific/artistic achievements

a) Scientific activities

Within the bounds of my scientific work one may distinguish several, closely connected areas, which result from the acquisition of new knowledge and research tools. From the very beginning, the core interest has been constituted by the theme of fantasy, initially tightly connected to the themes that I have pursued in my doctoral dissertation, that is the secret knowledge and esotericism present in the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. The result of those studies was the publication, between the years 2005-2015, of 10 scientific articles in multi-author volumes and academic journals, and of a book *Materializm kontra ezoteryka. Drugie pokolenie pozytywistów wobec "spraw nie z tego świata"* (*Materialism Against Esotericism. Second Generation Positivists' Attitudes Towards the Matters "Not of This World"*; first edition 2007, second, open access edition, 2017; both editions peer-reviewed). I have also participated in three international conferences where I presented the outcomes of my research.

Presence of prose that could be characterized as fantasy in nineteenth century literature and the scientific exchange with prof. Tadeusz Żabinski and prof. Anna Gemra induced me to explore in a systematic manner contemporary polish fantasy, particularly that connected to horror and weird fiction. The result of this research amounts to over 40 articles published between the years 2005-2019 in multi-author volumes and scientific journals. The summary of this research was also presented in the book *Współczesność w zwierciadle horroru. O najnowszej polskiej literaturze grozy* (*Modernity in the Mirror of Horror. About the Recent Polish Horror Literature*; Racibórz 2010, publishing review: dr hab. Anna Gemra). In connection to this research, between the years 2005-2018, I have also participated in numerous polish and international conferences.

The outcome of my work at the Neophilology Institute, Public Professional College in Racibórz was the broadening of my interests to include also world fantasy, including classical horror literature. This resulted in several research papers, relating mostly to the oeuvre of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (and occasionally that of Algernon Blackwood), and the publication of a thematic issue of "Creatio Fantastica. Zagadnienia i Problemy Fantastyki" dedicated to the works of the American writer.

The interest in horror had also gravitated towards the genres of paranormal romance and bizarro fiction.

Research within the domain of horror fantasy included also the theme of zombies as a presentiment of postmodern fears. As part of my research into this subject I have co-organized a conference *Zombies in Culture* (Katowice 2015) and edited a peer-reviewed volume under the same title published in 2015. I am also the author of the volume's introduction.

In connection to the international project organized by Facta Ficta Research Centre entitled *His Master's Voice* which was aimed at preparation of publications and organization of conferences (a cycle of conferences between 2014-2017 and a book entitled *More After More. Essays Commemorating the Five-Hundredth Anniversary of Thomas More's Utopia* co-edited by me and published in 2016) I have taken up research into utopias and dystopias in various media. Following an analysis of literary and non-literary plots I proposed the term "microdystopias" to describe the post-apocalyptic constructs bringing together small communities and having a well-functioning system of rule, often characterized as dystopian. I dedicated to this subject four articles, two of which were published in English language. I am also the author of an entry "utopia" in *Ilustrowany słownik terminów literackich (Illustrated Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2018, ed. Z. Kadłubek, B. Mytych-Forajter, A. Nawarecki)*. Since 2015 I have also been a member of the Utopian Studies Society, which organizes yearly conferences where I have given talks.

As part of the activities of Facta Ficta Research Centre I have also organized and co-organized several conferences dedicated both to horror and broadly understood fantasy. These meetings resulted in peer-reviewed, multi-author volumes edited and co-edited by me. In my research I aim to show, i.a., high artistic quality of horror narratives, their engagement with contemporary discourses, and consequently their significance for the shaping of modern literary landscape. As part of the conference *Fantastyczne tryumfy wyobraźni (Fantastic Triumphs of Imagination, Pedagogical University in Kraków and Facta Ficta Research Centre, Kraków 2018)* I co-organized a talk given by professor dr. hab, UMK Dariusz Brzostek, which was recorded and is made available on the website of the Centre under the tab "Wykłady".

The broadening of my fantasy-related research interests was also connected to seeking inspiration in oriental literature of this kind and further in literature more generally. The original source for this was my interest in culture and literature of Japan, and more specifically in their influence on Polish haiku poetry, as this was the subject

matter of my Master thesis. The examination of influences on popular art and fantasy was based mostly on tracing the inspirations with Japanese art, history, customs, and literature. As a result, I have published around 10 articles. I have also given several presentations between 2008-2012.

The next significant area of my research developed under the influence of analyzes of hybrid genres and more specifically the introduction into fantasy of conventions from other genres. Since horror and crime share a common ancestry and have developed through mutual influence, my interest in crime became a natural extension of the parallel research into horror. These fascinations are attested to by articles published between 2011-2019.

The second thematic field I focused on in my work on crime literature was the motif of a serial killer as a modern cultural fetish. The results of this research can be found, i.a., in the articles published in "Studia Slavica" and "Prace Literackie". I have also presented my ideas at Polish and international conferences taking place between 2012-2016.

An important element, which often recurs in crime stories (and in horror fiction), is the character of a depraved killer-artist. The relationship between art and homicidal inclinations, explored most eagerly, though not exclusively, in crime fiction, prompted me to take up the subject of artists' representations in different literary conventions and later also in various media, especially TV series. This fascination resulted in numerous articles. I am also the author of the entry "illusion" in *Ilustrowany słownik terminów literackich (Illustrated Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2018)*. I am also currently working on a book, in collaboration with Wiesław Olkusz, entitled *Artyści we współczesnej literaturze popularnej (Artists in Modern Popular Literature)*, which is, i.a., an analysis of fictional biographies of actual painters, such as Rembrandt, da Vinci, Botticelli, Caravaggio, or Bosch.

The research on fantasy and crime, and the expansion of my research field to include also new media, induced me to engage in a more comprehensive study of popular culture phenomena as a space resonating with current moods, trends, and social fears. I have consequently engaged myself in the preparation of conferences and publishing projects connected to this subject matter. Among the several conferences dedicated to popculture one must mention in particular the international project *50 twarzy popkultury / 50 Shades of Popular Culture*, which took place during 2016-2017,

international conference *Music Across Media* (in cooperation with The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, Warszawa 2017), and the conference *Registers of Culture /Rejestr kultury* (2018). As part of the conference *50 Shades of Popular Culture* I organized a presentation of dr. Mikołaj Marcel (University of Silesia) entitled *5 or 50 faces of popculture? Pop as a remix culture* (20.02.2016). I also co-organized a talk given by prof. Kristin McGee (University of Groningen) entitled *From Resilience to Participation in Music Video* (21.04.2017), and that of Gregory Claeys (Royal Holloway University of London) entitled *Monstrosity and Dystopia: An Overview* (23.03.2017), all of which were recorded and are available on the website of Facta Ficta Research Centre under the tab “Wykłady gościnne”. It is also worth mentioning the peer-reviewed, multi-author volume *50 twarzy popkultury (50 Shades of Popculture, 2017)*, to which I wrote the introduction entitled: *Wszechkultura jako dziedzina badawczej stygmatyzacji (All-culture as a discipline of research stigmatization)*.

Realization of the research projects connected to popular culture allowed me to establish contacts with foreign researchers who got me interested in transmedial narratology. Analyzing literary texts through this lens I have focused mainly on multimodality. Furthermore, and in reference to my involvement in fantasy and new media, I grew interested in transfictionality. Here I studied both literary texts and TV series. To this subject I dedicated 8 articles, of which 4 have already been published (one of which in English), and the entry “transfictionality in literature” in “Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” (2018). I also participated in Polish and international conferences between 2015-2018.

My contributions include also reviews, which I have published in journals “Literatura i Kultura Popularna” and “Śląsk”. I have also written publication reviews for journals “Fragile”, “Znaczenia”, “Literatura i Kultura Popularna”. In 2018 I published 4 translations of English texts by such distinguished scholars as Elana Gomel or Gregory Claeys. I have also carried out interviews with Mikołaj Marcela (University of Silesia), and, together with Krzysztof M. Maj, with prof. dr. hab. Artur Blaim (University of Gdańsk) and dr hab., prof. UG Ludmiła Gruszewska-Blaim (University of Gdansk) for “Creatio Fantastica. Zagadnienia i Problemy Fantastyki” (both in 2014).

In summary – my accomplishments include 3 peer-reviewed monographs, 125 research articles, of which 113 were published after I obtained my PhD, 12 edited or co-

edited multi-author volumes, 14 edited or co-edited issues of Polish and international journals, 3 academic reviews, 4 translations, and 2 scientific interviews.

I have participated in 70 conferences, both Polish and international, of which several deserve special attention. These are, i.a., the two congresses of Utopian Studies Society (Newcastle 2015, Lisbon 2016), conference *Mind-Media-Narrative. Exploring the Nexus of Transmedial and Cognitive Narratologies* (University of Warsaw 2016), or congress *GFF 2017: Realities and World Building* (Vienna University 2017). During the years 2015-2019, as part of Facta Ficta Research Centre's activities I organized 41 Polish and international conferences. To realize these various projects I have collaborated with many educational and cultural institutions in Poland.

I am the scientific editor of the "Perspektywy Ponowoczesności" ("Perspectives of Postmodernity") publishing series, which is made available in open access by the Research Centre. During the years 2012-2014 I was the editor-in-chief of a scientific-literary journal, "Creatio Fantastica. Zagadnienia i Problemy Fantastyki", where, since 2014, I am the content editor for scientific papers. In 2017 I have established a bilingual scientific journal, "Facta Ficta. Journal of Theory, Narrative & Media". The journal collaborates with Polish and foreign scholars, thus realizing my vision of inclusive and freely accessible research on broadly understood culture, contributing also to the creation of an academic community independent from affiliation and nationality.

b) Didactic and popularizing activities

An important element of academic work is the education of students. Up to date, I have carried out teaching in four academic institutions: University of Opole, The Jan Kochanowski University campus in Piotrków Trybunalski, Public Professional College in Racibórz, and Jagiellonian University. High marks in student evaluations attest to the appreciation of the effort I invested in my didactic work.

I have taught history of Polish literature, including also literary classics, children's and young adult literature, and popular literature. I can include here also seminars and lectures on contemporary literary life in the English-speaking countries, world popular culture, and moreover an introduction to and a methodology of literary studies. I have also given thematic lecture courses focusing on popular culture and literature, and research information.

It is worth underlining that at the Public Professional College in Racibórz I have supervised more than 40 bachelor students, and that I was a reviewer for many bachelor theses. In 2008 I founded a Student Society for Literary Studies at the PPCR's Institute of Neophilology, of which I was the leader during 2008-2013. As part of the Society's activities I organized meetings and guest lectures and also edited a multi-author volume entitled *Studenckie szkice o literaturze i kulturze popularnej (Student Sketches on Popular Culture and Literature, 2013)*.

Since 2015 I am the CEO of scientific foundation Facta Ficta Research Centre, where I organize and co-organize conferences and publishing projects, meetings with authors, and lectures. The aim of the foundation is a comprehensive academic collaboration with Polish and foreign scientific institutions.

In promoting the Centre I am responsible for developing the agenda for publishing and conferences. Thanks to my initiative the Centre also offers many internship opportunities, and so the possibilities for self-development, ranging from editorial and proofreading work at the two journals affiliated with the Centre, "Creatio Fantastica. Zagadnienia i Problemy Fantastyki" and „Facta Ficta Journal of Theory, Narrative & Media”, through reviewing, through to co-organization of conferences and publications. I teach my mentees responsibility, work ethics, and communication skills.

I also oversee, in the capacity of a scientific editor, the series "Perspektywy Ponowoczesności", where I ensure high quality of publications and the maintenance of legal standards during all stages of the publishing process.

Another important element of scientific work is participation in broadly understood dissemination of scientific knowledge to the society. Here one must mention my critical work, which I have been carrying out since 2011 by writing reviews of literary works, TV series, and cinema productions for web portals. To date I have written around 300 opinions. I have also written popular scientific texts for web portals Carpe Noctem, Katedra.nast, Creatio Fantastica and for popular-scientific ("Okolica Strachu") and cultural ("eleWator") magazines. I am also the author of afterwords in the books from the City cycle (*City 3* and *City 4*), and I wrote many blurbs and recommendations for publishers such as Zysk i Ska, Videograf SA, and POCISK.

I collaborate with many publishing houses and thanks to these contacts, and as part of the activities of Creatio Fantastica web portal, since 2019 I have co-organized

many reader competitions. This activity is directly connected to the promotion of readership.

As part of the activities carried out for "Creatio Fantastica. Zagadnienia i Problemy Fantastyki," my contacts with important members of the world of culture, especially writers, but also with organizers of fantasy festivals, resulted in many public meetings and interviews that took place between 2012-2017.

My engagement in literary life has been appreciated by the scientific and literary communities. In 2013 I was a jury-member for the Jerzy Żuławski Literary Award. I have also been a jury-member for the Stefan Grabiński Horror Award since 2017, and since 2018 for the best crime novel competition "Golden Bullet". In 2017 I was in the commission evaluating literary works submitted for the competition accompanying the conference *Robots' Emotions*, organized by the Humanities Department of Kraków University of Technology.

My research interests have also attracted attention of the media, which between 2015-2017 resulted in interviews for "Gazeta Olsztyńska", "Dziennik Polski", and Radio Kraków that focused on the character of a zombie and its presence in culture.

Promotion of science is achieved also through open lectures, which between 2010-2017 I have given at cultural festivals, in libraries, and at universities.

Ksenia Oltusz