

Introduction

The twelfth volume of *Ars Educandi* is devoted to imaginary worlds. Many of us associate the imaginary with something unreal, sometimes insignificant or trifling. The imaginary is contrasted with the “here and now”, the daily and the significant. The texts collected in this volume offer a different look at the imaginary world. In his introduction to the book *Socjologia światów wyobrażonych: fantastyka, gra, rekonstrukcja jako obszary transgresji* [Sociology of Imaginary Worlds: Fantasy, Games, Reconstructions as Areas of Transgression], Arkadiusz Peisert points out that “society is an imaginary construct, but one to which we refer in our attitudes, choices, and behaviours” (Adamski, Krzywdziński et al. 2015: 11). We live surrounded by a variety of fictions – we are in contact with literature, video games, and advertising. But this is not solely about the media. The imaginary also applies to many other issues, such as social expectations, stereotypes, and – what is important in particular for pedagogues – education (both formal and informal).

Through contact with fiction, we may distance ourselves from our own experience or the current reality. This lets us tidy up our experiences, allows a creative reflection on them, and, finally, equips us with tools of critical thinking about the existing *status quo* (Rodziewicz 2011: 19). The imaginary is an intellectual springboard which introduces a new perspective into one’s life – and as such is worthy of the attention of the representatives of the social sciences. Various fictions accompany our life, becoming – often unnoticeably – an important element of our social life. Novels, films or video games are not only a form of entertainment or artistic expression, but also a way in which the society pictures imaginaries of itself – diagnoses its problems, anxieties, and hopes. Different imaginary worlds may also serve as an important tool for critical analysis of the surrounding reality, a manner of designing new ideas and solutions.

In true Gdansk pedagogical tradition, reflection on the issue of fiction has its source in Romana Miller’s works (Rodziewicz 2011: 13). In her article *Wychowanie przez świat fikcyjny dla świata rzeczywistego* [Upbringing through the Fictitious World for the Real World], the researcher highlighted the significance of the problems and indirectly signalled their vitalness not only from the point of view of pedagogy, but also sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Interpretative possibilities do not end at this point, however. It can be easily demonstrated that the experience of stepping beyond our reality impacts almost every area of human life: from daily matters to extensive historical and political processes.

The researcher’s reflection has its continuators. In December 2006, on the occasion of Professor Romana Miller’s one hundredth birthday, a scientific conference

Upbringing through the Fictitious World for the Real World was held at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Gdansk. It was an opportunity to meet scholars interested in the problems of fiction and the imaginaries, as well as to recall Gdansk research traditions in this scope. We believe that our publication makes a creative contribution to this current of reflection, developing the direction of studies and research set out by Romana Miller and her continuators.

This volume has also been directly inspired by another event: the first scientific conference *Imaginary Worlds and Social Sciences* held at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Gdansk on 12 May 2015. The texts collected herein are the product of this event and result from the reflections of its participants – researchers.

The very event was to constitute an impulse for a reconceptualization of the notion of the imaginary worlds and for an extension of the perspectives of their examination. In consistence with these expectations, the speeches had the character of interdisciplinary invitations to pursue research and analyses, to extend one's research fields. They represented various methodological and disciplinary traditions, and they discussed different threads pertaining to collective, cultural, and artistic life, the junction of science and fiction, as well as the phenomena of broadly understood narration.

Everything was underpinned by the belief that there exists a wide spectrum of connections between the sphere of the imaginaries – symbols, meanings, and tales – and the world normally referred to as real. The contemporary development of new media, in particular computer technology and the internet, additionally strengthens these phenomena, enabling an intense immersion in the virtual space, at the same time facilitating broad and almost unrestrained access to all sorts of products of the spiritual culture: literature, music, film or the visual arts. Never before has such a vast number of people had such an easy access to the global cultural heritage – which we, actually, seem to abundantly take advantage of.

In this way, the twelfth volume of *Ars Educandi* gathers important papers concerning the state of education and the symbolic sphere of the contemporary world.

Artur Jabłoński's text concentrates on the crucial importance of literature for the identity and development of local culture. Analysing Kashubian literature, the author accentuates its role in the process and system of education. At the same time, he turns attention to the use of regional language as a distinguishing trait of a community and its cultural autonomy.

In her paper *Obcy jako inny: różne oblicza obcego w literaturze science fiction* [The Alien as an Other: Various Faces of the Alien in Science-Fiction Literature], Anna Mojsiewicz analyses the quality of being alien as a social category. The author shows social contrasts between the categories of otherness and normality through on the example of the contemporary science-fiction literature, simultaneously carrying out a synthesis bordering on sociology, philosophy, and literary studies.

In his text *Marvel kręci filmy. "Shared universe" jako nowy trend w kinie hollywoodzkim* [Marvel Makes Films. The *Shared Universe* as a New Trend in Hollywood Cinema], Bartosz Murawski analyses a model of film productions that is popular to-

day – especially among the film adaptations of comic books – and its position in the film industry.

Two subsequent articles focus on problems related to human sexuality and its construction. Joanna Pacewicz-Biegańska's text is devoted to one of the manifestations of sexuality present in culture: pornography. The author describes its representations of gender roles and the expectations related to them, and performs an analysis of the social presence of pornographic materials and their importance for contemporary culture.

Subsequently, Maria Woźniak shows human sexuality in the context of late modernity, as a construct developed individually from elements that are readily available in the modern culture. She simultaneously turns the readers' attention to the role of new media as a channel providing alternative models for the building of an individual experience of one's own sexuality.

Paulina Urbańczyk reinterprets the traditional, psychoanalytical approach to the analysis of dreams. Comparing dreaming and the creative artistic process, she demonstrates an analogy between them, proposing that the ability to dream be recognised as one of the basic functions of the human mind – one directly connected with the ability to create and design.

Our (Piotr Prósiniowski and Piotr Krzywdziński's) text concerns the topic of dreams in the context of video games. We demonstrate in what way this particular medium reformulates the representations of dreams available in the symbolic culture, adjusting them to their own channels of transmission and the poetics that mark games.

Małgorzata Siupik undertakes an analysis of stereotypes concerning gender roles in children's literature. She analyses young readers' favourite books in this respect, indicating the role of the ways in which they show gender roles that are also present in the institutionalized forms of education.

Martyna Weilandt – a co-organiser of the conference *Imaginary Worlds and Social Sciences* – analyses the imaginary world in the fan/music idol relation, touching a crucial element of pop-culture: pop music.

The topic of music is continued by Tomasz Lesicki in his text *Proces rytualny i świat wyobrażony na festiwalach muzycznych* [The Ritual Process and the Imaginary World at Music Festivals]. The author describes such events that are important from the point of view of culture as *Przystanek Woodstock (Pol'and'Rock Festival*, formerly known in English as *Woodstock Festival Poland*) and the *Heineken Open'er Festival*, discussing them as a part of the anthropological and phenomenological paradigm.

The text which is one but last is authored by Ewa Kubicka, who discusses her research concerning the controversial skinhead subculture. She shows skinhead's social perception and the role media coverage plays in its development. At the same time, the author turns particular attention to the way in which sources of knowledge may create a negative image of a community and construct a specific manner in which it is perceived.

The volume is closed with Klaudyna Mikulewicz's review of the book *Digital Literature for Children* edited by Mireia Manresa and Neus Real.

We wish to encourage you to read our texts. We are convinced that the articles creating this volume are an interesting and valuable collection, opening the readers to new ways of perception of the social sciences, culture-related subjects, the imaginary worlds, and the related issues.

Piotr Prósiniowski
Piotr Krzywdziński

Literature

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English translation: Anna Moroz-Darska

Tłumaczenie sfinansowano ze środków Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego na podstawie umowy nr 661/P-DUN/2018 z dnia 13 lipca 2018 roku w ramach realizacji zadania 1 – stworzenie anglojęzycznych wersji wydawanych publikacji w 2019 roku.
The translation was financed with funds made available by the Ministry of Finance and Higher Education under contract No. 661/P-DUN/2018 of 13 July 2018 as a part of the execution of task 1: the creation of English-language versions of the issued publications in 2019.