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## **“A cage without a door and a key”. Analysis of cognitive and ethical aspects of selected film and literary depictions of people with disabilities**

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The aim of my paper is to analyse the cognitive and ethical aspects of selected literary and film depictions of disabilities. Based on theoretical and methodological assumptions of sociology of literature and critical discourse analysis, I set out to demonstrate how selected literary and film works depict situations and problems related to social inclusion of people with disabilities. I focus on two questions: 1) How do artistic creations build able people’s knowledge of the social situation and position of people with disabilities? 2) What ethical problems can such depictions involve?

**KEY WORDS:** disability, literature, film

### **Introduction**

I wish to present a perception of the issues related to disability and the social situation of disabled people through an analysis of selected film and literary depictions. It seems obvious that artistic

depictions of people with disabilities in literature or films contribute to changes of social attitudes towards disability and social inclusion processes, if only by drawing attention to the problem, generating positive feelings in the audience and breaking the established stereotypes. However, positive affections towards disability or disabled people and the cognitively revealing description of their social situation do not exhaust the interpretative potential of such works. The concept of inclusion also comprises the recognition of a disabled person's subjectivity. Therefore, it can be assumed that the works with a message promoting inclusion (regardless of the intentional/unintentional nature of this message or the comprehensive/fragmentary representation of inclusion) follow the principle of respecting the subjectivity of people with disabilities.

### **Theoretical and methodological assumptions of the discursive analysis of the artistic depictions**

The theoretical and methodological starting point in my approach to literary and film depictions of disability is the social constructivism and the critical analysis of discourse as the research method directly related to social constructivism. I also refer to the assumptions of the sociology of literature that justify the use of literature (or art in general) as an object of study by indicating its deep insights and, sometimes, prophetic qualities in depiction of social phenomena<sup>1</sup>. Literature has always been an area of interest for sociologists, even in periods when the positivist paradigm and the quantity-based methodology dominated. S. Ossowski wrote that "a literary description of real or fictional events can considerably enrich our general psychological or sociological knowledge by pointing to hitherto hidden categories of phenomena or their significance as well as cause-and-effect relations and new aspects of reali-

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<sup>1</sup> More information on this topic: P. Ćwikła, *Kilka uwag o związku socjologii z literaturą*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2006, Issue 2, pp. 127-158.

ty."<sup>2</sup> The actual extension of the field of social sciences by such artefacts as literature and art occurred only after the paradigm change related to the interpretive turn in humanities.<sup>3</sup> M. Rouche, a supporter of this change, justified the inclusion of art works into the scope of social studies similarly to S. Ossowski: "Stories, scripts and plays always accentuate an aspect of a social situation in which they were created, but they can also (...) intensify the features of a real social situation (...) that we usually do not see or do not realize."<sup>4</sup>

The critical analysis of discourse (CAD) is a method of quality-based research that focuses on texts and their interpretation. Discourse is understood as a way of conceiving the social reality in language and the emphasis is put on the role of language in this process. A discursive analysis is an analysis of the discursive/significatory aspects of the social reality. N. Fairclough and A. Duszak define discourse as semiosis, i.e. "The production of meanings through the broad variety of semiotic means that cover the verbal language as well as the visual language (and body language)."<sup>5</sup> They also adopt two assumptions: a) "discourse is an inherent and irreducible element of all social processes"<sup>6</sup> and b) "there exist other

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<sup>2</sup> S. Ossowski, *O osobliwościach nauk społecznych*, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa, 1983, p. 243, quoted in P. Ćwikła, *Kilka uwag o związku socjologii z literaturą*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2006, Issue 2, pp. 127-158.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C. Geertz, *O gatunkach znaczących. (Nowe konfiguracje myśli społecznej)*. Trans. Z. Łapiński, [in:] *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*. Ed. R. Nycz, Kraków 1998.

<sup>4</sup> M. Rouche. *Fenomenologiczny zwrot w socjologii*, [in:] *Fenomenologia i socjologia. Zbiór tekstów*, ed. Z. Krasnodębski, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa, 1989, pp. 458-474, qoted in P. Ćwikła, *Kilka uwag o związku socjologii z literaturą*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2006, Issue 2, pdf, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, *Wstęp: Krytyczna analiza dyskursu – nowy obszar badawczy dla lingwistyki i nauk społecznych*, [in:] *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej*, ed. A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2008, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, *Wstęp: Krytyczna analiza dyskursu – nowy obszar badawczy dla lingwistyki i nauk społecznych*, [in:] *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej*, ed. A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2008, p. 9.

elements that are non-discursive".<sup>7</sup> Therefore, one can assume that, in a sense, the social reality can be seen a text to read due to its embedded discursive aspect. The critical element in CAD refers to the awareness of the limitations of the research perspective, the awareness of the subjectivity of interpretation and the open engagement in the drive for social changes. Importantly, CAD takes into consideration the historical context and the social functioning of the analysed text.

In this context, artistic creation is a specific area of producing significations: extremely individualised and autonomous. This autonomy is expressed in the compliance with art principles and rules and in the entire specialist framework, i.e. in the traditional studies focusing on art (aesthetics, literary studies, film studies etc.). Representatives of social sciences who do research within the constructivist paradigm and use the quality-based method approach the artistic creation from a different angle. Leaving aside the aesthetic values and specific qualities of a literary text<sup>8</sup> or a film, they treat a work of art as a statement on the social world, an element of the social discourse wherein numerous coercions and limitations connected with the point in history, the social context or power relations are revealed. A work of art is perceived not only as an original artistic creation, though it can be seen as such from other vantage points, but also as an element in social communication. When the social science researchers interpret a work of art, they are not interested in its originality or uniqueness, but in its relations with a specific way

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<sup>7</sup> A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, *Wstęp: Krytyczna analiza dyskursu – nowy obszar badawczy dla lingwistyki i nauk społecznych*, [in:] *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej*, ed. A. Duszak, N. Fairclough, UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2008, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> "A part of what we understand as a literary work is the dimension where what is said must be seen through the aspect of how it is said. It is that kind of writing in which the content cannot be separated from the language that is used to present it. Language is more constitutive for reality or experience rather than just a means of expression" (T. Eagleton, *Jak czytać literaturę*, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warszawa 2014, p. 15).

of conceiving the social reality. Therefore, a researcher, e.g. a sociologist, approaches a work of literature (art) not only to enjoy its aesthetic aspects, but also to extract meanings related to the research problems formulated within his or her field of study. It must be underlined that any reading of a text is, by definition, subjective and no interpretation can be complete or ultimate, but these features are in fact constitutive for quality-based studies in general. A subjective interpretation of any text can be confronted with the subjectivity of another perspective. As put by R. Wodak, the leading representative of the Vienna school of CAD, "a researcher does not announce the truth, but only suggests interpretations and solutions to the problem."<sup>9</sup>

In line with the above assumptions, I perceive the artistic depictions of disability as constructs that bear the mark of historical or social conditions determining their form at the moment of creation. In my interpretation, I consider the contemporary educational and social discourse that accentuates inclusion/integration of people with disabilities. In general, I am interested in the relation of an artistic work and social practices, particularly the issue of inclusion/integration of disabled people.

I understand disability in line with the constructivist approach and the assumptions of the social model of disability as a quality of one's relations with the environment, not as an inherent feature. "It is not objective, physical or mental limitations that cause the inability to participate in various life activities by the persons who suffer from these limitations, but the social organisation that creates barriers of accessibility than cannot be overcome by such persons."<sup>10</sup> (...) "The recognition of disability as a social construct means that in

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in K. Sztop-Rutkowska, *Meandry dialogu. Polacy i Żydzi w dyskursie prasowym międzywojennego Białegostoku*, [in:] "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 2007, vol. III, Issue 2, p. 65, [www.qualitativesociologyreview.org](http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org)

<sup>10</sup> B. Gąciarz, *Przemysłość niepełnosprawność na nowo. Od instytucji państwa opiekuńczego do integracji i aktywizacji społecznej*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2014, 2 (213), pp. 21-22.

contemporary societies the resolution of disability problems must include macro social activities, creation of proper institutional solutions and the inclusion of disabled people in ordinary mechanisms of social life, including economy, politics or culture."<sup>11</sup>

I use the polysemous notions of inclusion and integration in three different contexts which affect the interpretation of these key terms. I speak of inclusion in its broad meaning, as a concept referring to the social consolidation processes covering country policies in various fields of social life, institutional activities and transformation of attitudes and behaviours of social entities. The goal of all these activities and initiatives is equal treatment of all individuals regardless of their particular features as well as elimination of marginalisation and social exclusion. A synonym of inclusion thus understood may be the concept of integration. Both notions, though they mainly refer to the change of the social status of marginalized groups, cover the quality-related transformation of the entire society, since they reject the dichotomy of normativeness/non-normativeness and criticize the idea that the dominating group has the right to implement social solutions, while minorities should simply accept and adapt to such solutions. The second use and understanding of the concept of inclusion refer strictly to disabled people and postulate changes in their social functioning. Inclusion as the process of including disabled people to the mainstream social life is one of the conditions of social integration of all individuals living in a given society. The third context is related to the consistently separate types of education (schools) designed for people with disabilities and based on different disability models as well as on different axiological assumptions, i.e. integrative education and inclusive education.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> B. Gąciarz, *Przemysłać niepełnosprawność na nowo. Od instytucji państwa opiekuńczego do integracji i aktywizacji społecznej*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2014, 2 (213), p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. G. Szumski, *Edukacja inkluzywna – geneza, istota, perspektywy*, "Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny", 2006, Issue 1.

## Analysis of selected artistic depictions of disability

My analysis will focus on two contemporary works where the main protagonists suffer from cerebral palsy. One is the Polish film entitled *Chce się żyć*<sup>13</sup> (“You want to live”) released in 2013 and directed by Maciej Pieprzyca, the other is a book for teenagers by an American writer, Sharon M. Draper: *Tylko w mojej głowie* (I use the 2016 Polish translation of *Out of My Mind*).<sup>14</sup> I selected these two examples, because they both depict the same type of disability, but also to show various ways of construing disability and the subjectivity of people with disabilities. These ways are important for the reception of the analysed works of art and, in consequence, also for how the audience (viewers, readers) will see and understand the social situation of disabled people. The analysis will be preceded by an attempt at a more general reflection on literary and cinematographic depictions of disability, with several examples from the world of literature and film. I underline that it is only a preliminary reflection that serves to provide a basic classification (which is, by definition, simplified and cursory) of artistic depictions of disability in literature and film. My point of view in approaching all analysed depictions is an able person’s point of view. It does not include the experience of disability and as such it coincides with the perspective of able viewers/readers of the two analysed artworks.

In the below analysis of selected artistic depictions of disability and disabled people, I focus on the cognitive and ethical aspects of those constructs. I ask the following questions:

- what understanding of disability is included in the analysed depictions?

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<sup>13</sup> *Chce się żyć* – a Polish feature film directed by Maciej Pieprzyca. The leading part of Mateusz Rosiński was played by Dawid Ogrodnik (the part of Mateusz in his childhood was played by Kamil Tkacz). The film was released on 11 October 2013. (Wikipedia, [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chce\\_si%C4%99\\_%C5%BCy%C4%87](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chce_si%C4%99_%C5%BCy%C4%87) [access: 30 May 2017].

<sup>14</sup> S.M. Draper, *Tylko w mojej głowie*, trans. R. Pucek, Linia, Ożarów Mazowiecki, 2016.

- what understanding of social inclusion/integration of disabled people is shown in the analysed depictions?
- do the analysed depictions construe the subjectivity of disabled people, and if so, how do they do it?

### **Two categories of artistic depictions of disability**

When reviewing the artistic depictions of disabled people in literature and film, one can distinguish two basic categories/models of such depictions, leaving aside the genres and other formal definitions.

The first model is revealed in novels (literature) and films alongside an artistic statement on other topics. Disabled people and their problems are not in the foreground and do not constitute the main theme. Sometimes, such a depiction can, inadvertently, provide an image of the actual social situation of disabled people, because it is construed without any special assumptions regarding its accuracy and without any intention to engage to the benefit of disabled people. If we consider a superior work of art, even a limited subplot or a supporting role can create a successful message about a disabled person and by "successful" I mean an image that is not idealised on the one hand, but capable of expressing universal ethical values on the other hand.

I will give two examples from different time-periods and representing different forms of artistic expression. What they have in common is that they are famous and recognized as universal. For this reason, they can be set against the above thesis.

In the first half of the 19th century (1831), Victor Hugo wrote the novel titled *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in which one of the protagonists is the malformed and mute bell-ringer, Quasimodo. The story reflected the medieval fear and disgust of any physical and mental non-normativeness. On the other hand, the relation of empathic friendship between the two social outcasts, i.e. the beautiful gypsy Esmeralda and Quasimodo, who is physically repulsive but has

a moral law within him, to use Kant's famous dictum, alludes to the archetype of the beauty and the beast and expresses the conviction of the period of Enlightenment that it is not appearance and communication skills (assigned features) that create the value of a human being. However, Hugo did not write this novel to bring up the problem of physical and mental disability. He used the medieval setting the stand up for the socially marginalized groups of paupers vegetating in the centre of a rich city. Both Esmeralda and Quasimodo live on this social margin.

My second example is the film by Miloš Forman based on Ken Kesey's novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Ken Kesey, an American writer of the Beat Generation and a hippie, wrote a novel (1962) that had a clear anti-establishment drive; it was a protest against all forms of social and mental restriction of the individual. Miloš Forman, who emigrated from the Communist Czechoslovakia after 1968, slightly displaced some meanings of the novel, so his film and the depiction of the psychiatric ward with the demonic nurse Ratched can be seen as a metaphor of a totalitarian system. In both cases, the conflict goes along the line of individual vs. system. B. Sułkowski emphasised that

*"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is not only a satirical and offensive portrait of psychiatrists. It uses an extreme case to study general laws of collective life, rules of switching from conformism to independence as well as mechanisms of controlling and subjugating people."<sup>15</sup> The fact that the oppressed patients suffer from various mental disorders, including intellectual disabilities (the character of the native American dubbed the Chief), is generally irrelevant to the overall message of the film. However, a significant part of the plot is the integration of the group of mental patients of the ward under the leadership and upon the initiative of McMurphy, a rebel who is

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<sup>15</sup> B. Sułkowski, *Hamletyzowanie nasze. Socjologia sztuki, polityki i codzienności*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1993, p. 140; quoted in P. Ćwikła, *Kilka uwag o związku socjologii z literaturą*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2006, Issue 2, pp. 127-158.

mentally able and healthy. This integration is the only positive element in the story. McMurphy manages to achieve what pharmacology, electric shocks and the violent model of relations between the medical staff and the patients fail to achieve. The real therapy for the patients starts with the direct and friendly relations inspired by McMurphy. Perhaps this type of relations without the stereotypical, fear-based approach to mental patients and without the experts' paternalism should be recognized as ground-breaking in the context of contemporary rules of social inclusion of disabled people and other groups.

To conclude this topic, I wish to underline that artworks in this category depict problems of disabled people in terms of a more general problem, perhaps a more basic social conflict between those who have power and those who are subjected to this power. As part of the practice of artistic expression, one can observe a spontaneous social inclusion and (considering the time when the book and the film were released) a sort of anticipation of contemporary models of inclusion. The point is to include the problems of disabled people in the category of problems of other marginalized and suffering groups. It can be said that the moral rights of all oppressed and marginalized groups, including disabled people, expressed in the claim to treat all as empowered and free individuals, are in the foreground, although the specificity of the particular oppressed groups is less visible.

The above conclusion corresponds with the juxtaposition of two historically different models of treating people with disabilities: one is the individual model typical for earlier historical periods, while the other is a more contemporary social model. "The individual model accepts the existing social mechanisms and aims to adapt a disabled person to such mechanisms, leaving no choice whatsoever to such a person. The only goal (external in relation to disabled people) covers the attitudes, the subjective approach to disabled people and their presence in a social setting. On the other hand, the social model criticizes and questions the social mechanisms which are seen as causes of problems in the lives of people with disabilities

(...). Disabled people are recognized as empowered agents. (...) Therefore, the policy related to disabled people must make it possible for them to use their rights of empowerment.”<sup>16</sup> The solidarity of the able protagonist and the patients of the psychiatric ward and their joint rebellion against oppression in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* can be seen as the first sign of replacing the individual model with the social model that forms the basis for the contemporary inclusive activities related to disabled people.

The second category/model of artistic depictions focuses on disabled people, making their specific situation the main theme for the artistic expression (e.g. *Rain Man* by Barry Levinson, *The Elephant Man* by David Lynch, *Forrest Gump* by Robert Zemeckis). Usually, these depictions are construed in such a way as to break stereotypes or other established and mythologised images of people with disabilities and to portray them not only as worthy of compassion, empathy and help, but also as individuals whose potential can be developed in conducive conditions with benefits to themselves and other members of society. This approach is cognitively valuable and focuses on problems of people suffering from specific types of disability, but it seems that in the case of some of the contemporary artworks, deconstruction of stereotypes and evoking compassion or empathy are not sufficient goals and can give rise to ethical doubts. I would like to focus on such problems in the last section of my paper.

### **Constructs of the cerebral palsy and people suffering from cerebral palsy in the film *Chce się żyć* and the book *Tylko w mojej głowie***

I will analyse two contemporary artworks. One is the Polish film entitled *Chce się żyć* (“You want to live”) released in 2013 and di-

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<sup>16</sup> B. Gąciarz, *Przemysłać niepełnosprawność na nowo. Od instytucji państwa opiekuńczego do integracji i aktywizacji społecznej*, “Studia Socjologiczne”, 2014, 2 (213), p. 27.

rected by Maciej Pieprzyca, the other is a book for teenagers by an American writer, Sharon M. Draper: *Tylko w mojej głowie* (I use the 2016 Polish translation of *Out of My Mind*). They are fictional depictions of the life and social interactions of people with cerebral palsy. The book *Tylko w mojej głowie* provided me with the metaphor of “a cage without a door and a key” which is a pertinent description of the social situation of people with this type of disability. I selected these two examples, because they depict the same disability and the stories are set in similar time-periods. Another reason was the similarity of the narrative structure in both cases. They are subjective stories of people who are mentally healthy, but cannot communicate with others due to an innate physical disability. The situation of people with a similar problem, but living in different social and cultural environments can be used to compare institutional solutions and attitudes towards people with cerebral palsy in Poland and in the United States. However, when I confront these two artistic depictions, I am more interested in their different ethical messages. The book by S.M. Draper causes no ethical dilemmas that would result from the structure of the novel, but the film by M. Pieprzyca, though artistically professional in terms of acting and directing, contains some ethical ambiguities. This is my thesis that I will try to demonstrate.

*Chce się żyć* is a feature film (fiction) that tells a story of Mateusz who suffers from cerebral palsy. He is a typical victim of diagnostic mistakes and the lack of systemic solutions in the late Communist era in Poland. As a result, he is perceived as someone incapable of thinking and learning, so he spends his life in a special institution. He is surrounded by people (mainly his parents) who know that he understands and reacts correctly, but it is only an accidental encounter with a more “enlightened” physician that gives Mateusz adequate help in facing the challenge of the communicational barriers, i.e. Bliss’s logographic language. The story told in the film evokes emotions mainly in able viewers. This is achieved by the polarity of two narratives: one is the objective story showing how people surrounding Mateusz act and react, unaware of his thoughts

and emotions, while the other is the subjective voice-over of Mateusz himself, who comments all the events depicted on the screen and addresses the viewer directly. One should certainly appreciate the emotional dimension of the film and the popularization of the problem (making people with cerebral palsy more visible socially), but one cannot leave aside the context before and after the film was made, especially that the publicity in the media turned it into a part of a marketing promotion. This context, however, changes the ethical message of the film. Maciej Pieprzyca directed a fictional film, but his main inspiration was a story of a real person, Przemek Chrzanowski, who was a hero of a documentary directed by Ewa Pięta in collaboration with Pieprzyca. The title of the film was *Jak motyl* ("Like a butterfly") and it was released in 2004. The authors of *Chce się żyć* met Przemek Chrzanowski before they started working on their film. After the film was released, some media relations informed about negative emotions on the part of Przemek who felt used and forgotten by the film-makers. He still makes use of Blissymbols and stays in a special institution.<sup>17</sup> The director rejects all accusations: "I was making a feature film, not a socially engaged documentary. How could I promise anything? All I could promise was that I would make a good film on a difficult subject. It is not a sure-fire hit, it is not a commercial film. How can you make a commercial film about disability? I just said that if the film was successful, people would start talking about this problem."<sup>18</sup>

This is the paradox: the film-makers released a film about disability and their motivations were, among other things, to publicise the problem of disability, but when the film brings fame and awards, it changes nothing in the situation of those for whose sake it was made in the first place. This ethical problem has a wider scope and concerns the treatment of people whose life stories be-

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<sup>17</sup> <http://natemat.pl/79681,filnowcy-mnie-wykorzystali-bohater-chce-sie-zyc-oskarza-tworcow-filmu> [access: 21 March 2017].

<sup>18</sup> <http://natemat.pl/79729,maciej-pieprzyca-niczego-nie-obieczywalem-tworca-filmu-chce-sie-zyc-odpowiada-na-zarzuty-bohatera-filmu> [access: 21 March 2017].

come inspirations for artistic creations, especially films (more on this subject below), and moreover, it remains a problem also (or perhaps all the more so) when such persons give their consent or collaborate with the artists. Can the final effect, the finished artwork, be attributed solely to the makers? Should the claims of the inspirer for at least partial recognition with respect to the final effect of an artistic creation be deemed legitimate? How to measure the honesty of the artists' intentions? Considering that their work promotes the treatment of disabled people as empowered individuals, should not the artists take special care to treat the inspirer of the story as an empowered individual, i.e. to appreciate this person in a symbolic dimension and support him or her in solving life problems?

Another issue related to the structure of the feature film is the insurmountable gap between the representation and the represented. In its cognitive layer, representation is a generalization, a synthetic expression of many individual cases, where no individual case is fully and accurately represented. In its ethical layer, the problem of representation and the represented (individuals) is expressed in the question whether the subjectivity of those in whose name you speak is not damaged in the process. An analogous problem in the colonial context is brought up by G.C. Spivak in her famous question: "Can the Subaltern Speak?"<sup>19</sup>. To reformulate this question for the purposes of his paper: "are disabled people condemned to being represented by able people?" This question is posed in different words by B. Zając, the author of an insightful analysis of Pieprzyca's film: "For whom such films are made? Why tell those stories in this way? (...) The director used the actors to create a fiction that is subject to the same rules as any other feature film. He took no effort to overcome the communicational barrier between us and the actual protagonist of the film. He failed to give us the opportunity to meet the person that remains hidden some-

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<sup>19</sup> G. C. Spivak, *Czy podporządkowani inni mogą przemówić?*, Trans. E. Majewska, "Krytyka Polityczna", 2011, 24-25: 196-239.

where behind the door of an alienating institution. If the function of this film and similar productions is to give the voice over to people who have been denied that voice so far, who were hidden in social margins, then the film industry must open to such people, mainly in terms of casting.”<sup>20</sup>

In her book, S.M. Draper uses the same narrative method as M. Pieprzycyca in his film, i.e. she hands over the narrative voice to Melody, an adolescent girl suffering from cerebral palsy. The entire book is written in the first person singular, so there is no “double” narrative. The storyline is very similar to *Chce się żyć*, as it concerns the determined efforts of the main protagonist to get outside the “cage without a door and a key”. With the help of her parents and other friendly people, she finally succeeds. However, there is no doubt that Melody is a fictional character without any reference to any specific person in real life. She refers to all people suffering from this disability. Her character is a synthetic image of many possible cases, but it does not portray any concrete real case. It is not a representation. In a cognitive sense, it is a construct similar to the ideal type (as defined by Max Weber), which certainly results from differences between film and literature as various forms of artistic expression. Literature uses words, i.e. symbols which require individual transformation into images by each reader, so the readers’ perception in fact translates words into a countless multitude of images. On the other hand, a film imposes specific images on all viewers and thus creates the problem of representation (an actor always represents or impersonates someone else), though in the case of *Chce się żyć* this problem has an additional dimension that I tried to demonstrate. It results from the direct inspiration taken from the life of a real person.

The Polish film and the American novel differ significantly in terms of the cognitive layer. The film does not speak about the so-

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<sup>20</sup> B. Zając, *Etyka fabularzysty. Uwagi na marginesie „Chce się żyć” Macieja Pieprzycy*, <http://edukacjafilmowa.pl/materialy-edukacyjne/analizy-filmow/item/545-chce-si%C4%99-%C5%BCy%C4%87> [access: 18 March 2017].

cial inclusion of people suffering from cerebral palsy, through the historical background is the change of the political system in Poland as well as the new approaches to disability in educational theory and practice. Mateusz from *Chce się żyć* spends his entire life in a special institution and there is no suggestion that he could live and learn anywhere else. His attempts to have a sort of relationship with the volunteer fail. He quits such attempts and recedes into the safe circle of friends from the institution and the safe role of being a ward.

The book by Draper broadens out knowledge about the experiences of school integration or inclusion of people with disabilities. The protagonist grows up in a loving family, she has an elder healthy sister and gets support from a neighbour (a carer, a volunteer and a student). She goes to a standard school. The novel depicts the integrative and inclusive education in the United States in two respects: the education of disabled children in a standard generally accessible school and peer relations in an inclusive classroom. The integration in Melody's school can be summarised as follows: children with various disabilities attend separate special classes, while only selected classes are for all the pupils; children spend their breaks together in a school yard (usually in separate groups). The main protagonist's intelligence is well above average, but she suffers from a serious physical disability. She uses a special computer for communication to convince her peers that is an intelligent and skilful girl. However, her personal and educational success does not change her social position in any of the peer groups. She is bored when attending the special classes and she is rejected by her healthy peers during the integrative classes. However, the narrative turns the tables in the end. It is suggested that Melody, faced by failures in her peer relations, decides to write down her own story of getting out of the cage of disability and that she is the author of the book we have just read. This narrative turn is very optimistic, since it sheds a new light on Melody's story and points to the area of individual artistic creation as a potential way to develop and reinforce the social identity.

## Conclusion

The comparison of the two artistic depictions of person suffering from cerebral palsy shows that, though being superficially similar, they show us two very different worlds. Both the film and the book speak about friendships and romantic relationships between disabled people and healthy people. No matter whether the society facilitates the access to social life for people with disabilities, their social integration in the sphere of informal relations encounters some obstacles. However, the significant difference in the reactions of the film protagonist and the book's main character to such obstacles reveals how disability is actually understood by the artists themselves.

The book by Draper is directly concerned with the problems of inclusion of people suffering from cerebral palsy. It indicates that at present in the United States it is not a problem of overcoming the communicational barrier or inclusive education of such people. The urgent and unresolved problem (the one that is most difficult to solve) of inclusion/integration lies in the sphere of informal peer relationships: is it possible, and if so, how is it possible to include a disabled person in relations of friendship and love with her healthy peers?

*Chce się żyć* differs from the book in that it fails to ask new questions or show new solutions. It focuses on evoking emotional reactions in able viewers: compassion, empathy, admiration for the efforts of the main protagonist. The confusion of the fictional and real-life aspects in the main character may give rise to ethical doubts. Perhaps the film reflects the actual situation of people with cerebral palsy in Poland where their socio-economic status allows only for communication with the logographic language and spending their life in an institution. If so, the optimistic title of the film should be associated only with the individual success of the main hero in overcoming his innate communicational difficulties and gaining a social identity. The film does not imply that these individual achievements can change the protagonist's social position or allow him to extend and deepen his social interactions. For this reason, I believe that this manner of depicting this particular disability en-

closes the film-makers and the viewers within the sphere of compassion, help and the culture of dependence: in the “cage” of the individual model of disability.

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