



EDYTA M. NIEDUZIAK

University of Silesia in Katowice

The Art of the Other – a new value in the art and society?

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This article deals with the issues of creativity of people with disabilities and their social values. The starting point is the category of Another as saturated with pejorative meanings - in a social but positive context in the study of creativity. The combination of these contradictory approaches is reflected in the art brut, represented by artists with mental incompetence. Their creativity dictated by internal compulsion is presented as the work of marginalized people. The social context, as well as the type of disability that determines the way in which this art is treated: from the rejection of, for example, the early time of Nikifor's works, to the complete recognition of, for example, F. Kahlo's painting. The basic question, however, comes down to the question of the value of this art for man. Referring to the philosophy of E. Levinas, the author seeks to show that despite the assumption of the unknowability of another human being, the greatest value of the Other art is the ability to experience, to see through a fragment of the world of artists determined by the disability.

KEY WORDS: creativity of persons with disabilities, art brut, E. Levinas, Another

From a strictly medical perspective, a mental illness is an adverse phenomenon that often degrades and inhibits creativity, but from the perspective of the history, psychological cognition and cultural values, it has extended human knowledge to such areas that, if they were to be deleted from the history of humanity, we would perhaps regret it.

A. Keipiński¹

¹ A. Keipiński, *Schizofrenia*, PZWL, Warszawa 1981, p. 80.

The term “the Other” in the title of the article requires some explanation. The Other first of all brings to mind the philosophy of dialogue, especially the concept of E. Lévinas, for whom otherness was an absolute value, the expression of human subjectivity and a deep respect for it. But at the same time it is not so much a consent to but rather the imperative of the unknowability of the other person². “The philosopher believes that outside the whole, there is the individual I, which, however, rather than a copy of a universal I, is an autonomous and incomparable to anything being”.³ I will return to this idea further on in the article. Meanwhile, “the Other” is commonly understood according to the dictionary definition of the term, as “the other person”, “not this one, the second, further apart, the remaining, not like this one, distinct, different, new”, “another”⁴. H. Żuraw, when analysing the linguistic contexts of the word, observes that it has four synonymic categories, in which “the other” means: weird, different, ambivalent and abnormal, aberrant and deviated⁵. Thus, the Other is one who does not have the features typical of the majority and does not fall within a standard but is either above or below it. Such interpretation is often used by special educators in the discourse on persons with disabilities. Sometimes, unfortunately, the discrepancy between a standard and pathology legitimated by research results adds a pejorative note to the term⁶. J. Glodkowska writes that “in the case of disability, two types of otherness overlap: other as another person and other as disabled. Because of this intensification of otherness, a disabled person is perceived not only as dif-

² E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN S.A., Warszawa 2014.

³ H. Żółkowska, *Ja, Ty, Inny – dialog?*, „Studia Edukacyjne” 2013, No. 28, p. 23.

⁴ *Słownik języka polskiego*, entry: inny <https://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/inny.html> accessed on 15.03.2017

⁵ H. Żuraw, *Inność, obcość w perspektywie pozytywnej. Wielokontekstowość studiów nad innością i obcością*, [in:] *Miejsce Innego we współczesnych naukach o wychowaniu. W poszukiwaniu pozytywów*, ed. I. Chrzanowska, B. Jachimczak, K. Pawelczak, Wyd. Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2013, p.15.

⁶ See A. Wojnarowska, *Inny „uwięziony” w charakterystykach – o językowych uwiłkaniach profesjonalistów i ich konsekwencjach dla egzystowania człowieka z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* [in:] *Miejsce innego...*, *ibid.*, p. 127-140.

ferent but also as alien”⁷. In this context, the Other is both the one who opposes the majority and the one who for whatever reasons does not fit either the majority or its rules. Such otherness has its synonym – other means special⁸, alien, that is not-belonging, not-known or maybe even hostile. With such distinctive features, it may be assumed that an able person will also be the Other for those living in an environment dominated by persons with dysfunctions. Otherness and strangeness have always caused social distance because of the inability to understand and communicate using typical means. The other, just because he is other, requires different treatment. In many cultures, Otherness and distinctness cause oppression and social exclusion, the most radical of which was and still is discrimination on the grounds of skin colour or religious affiliation.

A completely different approach to the Other is represented by research and deliberations in the area of the psychology of creativity or art criticism. The other is a synonym for non-trivial, equivocal, untypical, a phantasy, something that breaks conventions, provokes thinking, astonishes, shocks; it is an antonym of casualness, commonness, explicitness⁹. “Nobody has ever written the biography of a creative person just because he was completely normal [...] Creative individuals who are weird and misfit or suffer from a mental disorder are a much better material for a fascinating story than creative individuals who are boring, work hard and live in a happy marriage” wrote J. Kaufman¹⁰. Physical otherness has been a typical subject of visual arts, to mention but the classical examples of “The Blind” or “The Cripples” by Peter Bruegel the Elder, or the “Blind Wit Stwosz with Granddaughter” by Jan Matejko, or numerous biblical illustrations of miraculous healings of the ill and handicapped. In the literature, there is, for example, the *Poczwarki* by

⁷ J. Głodkowska, *Autorstwo życia a niepełnosprawność – ponawiane odczytywanie idei normalizacji*, „Człowiek. Niepełnosprawność. Społeczeństwo” 2014, No. 1(23), p. 76.

⁸ H. Żuraw, *Inność, obcość...*, *ibid.*, p. 16-17.

⁹ See J. Górniewicz, *Kategorie pedagogiczne. Tolerancja. Twórczość. Wyobraźnia*, Wyd. UWM, Olsztyn 2001, p. 77-80.

¹⁰ J. Kaufman, *Kreatywność*, Wyd. APS, Warszawa 2011, p. 105.

D. Terakowska or *Oscar and Miss Rose* by E. E. Schmitt¹¹. K. J. Szmidt claims, however, that creativity is a positive category and its social value ought not to be associated with exclusion or weirdness. "Creativity is associated with the activity of an individual who tries to go beyond the limits of what now and create, with his general or special abilities, a valuable novelty"¹². Otherness, when understood to be characterised by newness and originality¹³, becomes the reflection of creativity. Despite numerous discussions on how to understand creativity, it is generally defined by reference to such characteristics as equivocality and astonishment or, as J. Bruner wrote, provoking "effective surprise", which he understood as a mixture of shock and acceptance or astonishment and consent. In other words, otherness, even if controversial, is positively valued. Thus, the Other is not only another person, distinct because of not having its place among those who represent so-called standard alien because outgoing or not having the qualities that would enable him to be in the majority, alien because functioning and living away from his own and finally the Other – unique and original.

Do these characteristics of the Other translate into his activity? By this, I mean a special type of activity – artistic creativity. Research into the biography of famous artists and their personalities confirm a relationship between creativity features and personality features, especially uniqueness, originality, sometimes also defiance, extravagance or intransigence, which make social functioning difficult¹⁴. This

¹¹ D. Terakowska, *Poczwarka*, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 2002.

¹² K. J. Szmidt, *Pedagogika pozytywna: twórczość – zdolności – mądrość zespolone*, [in:] *Zasoby twórcze człowieka. Wprowadzenie do pedagogiki pozytywnej*, ed. K. J. Szmidt. M. Modrzejewska-Świgulska, Wyd. UŁ, Łódź 2013, p. 35.

¹³ In the light of the definition proposed by M. Stein, *creativity is a process leading to a new creation that is recognised as useful or acceptable by a certain group in a certain period*, E. Necka, *Psychologia twórczości*, GWP, Gdańsk 2005, p. 17.

¹⁴ See M. Arana, *The Writing Life: Writers on How They Think and Work*, Public Affairs, New York 2003; G. Greengross, G. F. Miller, *The Big Five personality traits of professional comedians compared to amateur comedians, comedy writers, and college students*, „Personality and Individual Differences” 2009, No. 47(2); K. Łukasiewicz, *Cechy osobowości młodych twórców podejmujących próby literackie*, „Terazniejszość. Człowiek. Edukacja” 2016, No. 3(75).

research often emphasises the importance of external factors, in particular social, for the development of creativity or for its recognition¹⁵. Thus, otherness as a feature associated also with the effect of creative activity, remains by all means desirable. However, otherness as a human feature, is often the source of problems. When describing the creativity of disabled persons, it is difficult to evaluate their work. "What is difficult is to decide to dismiss disability as a determinant of the perception of a person and evaluation of the effects of his work and functioning"¹⁶ – writes D. Baczała. On the other hand, the Otherness is an argument for excluding an individual even from his own group. One example is Papusha, a brilliant Gypsy poet who was cursed and rejected by her own community¹⁷. However, by recognising the Other's creativity, people look more keenly on his Otherness. If it was not for the involvement of A. Banach and the risky decision of D. Vierna to organise an exhibition of Nikifor's paintings in Paris, he might have remained forever a "local attraction" and never have gained world fame. "Nobody bought the paintings. We tried to say something to Nikifor, ask him, have a look at his watercolours. It was impossible. Children and passers-by fenced him and prevented access. The more we asked, the stronger the fence, the louder the noise and screams, we saw a wall between us and Nikifor. Children started nudging him and blocking us out, for fear that we would spoil their fun. The locals also feared that we would take their weirdo away [...]. The only way to help the man was by making him recognised as an artist. Here, we encountered an equally strong wall surrounding the master. The wall was built by painters and professional critics. Nikifor's discovery, problematic and ridiculous recognising a beggar as

¹⁵ S. Popek, *Człowiek jako jednostka twórcza*, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin 2001.

¹⁶ D. Baczała, *Twórczość niepełnosprawna intelektualnie*, [w:] *Stymulowanie potencjału twórczego osób z różnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi*, ed. E. Lubińska-Kościółek, K. Plutecka, Oficyna Wyd. Impuls, Kraków 2011, p. 82.

¹⁷ See J. Ficowski, *Cyganie polscy*, PIW, Warszawa 1953; id. *Cyganie na Polskich drogach*, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 1986; id. *Demony cudzego strachu: wspominki cygańskie*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1986; id., *Cyganie w Polsce. Dzieje i obyczaje*, Wyd. Interpress, Warszawa 1989; A. Kuźniak, *Papusza*, Wyd. Czarne, Wołowiec 2013.

an equal or even excellent painter would shake the foundations of the hierarchy of official art and art sciences"¹⁸. Today, however, the concepts of naive or primitive art, or art-brut exist in common language and the works of this kind of art are recognised by critics. It should be noted, though, that this kind of art was born "through the need for discovering the authenticity of the truth of expression in the artificially created world around us"¹⁹. The recognition of art-brut enables appreciation of the art of self-educated, non-professional artists who feel compelled to create and are rebellious of standards and common values, and do not care about the opinion of others, especially art critics. The value that has profited the most on the recognition of art-brut is the freedom of creation, the more so if it is dictated by an internal need, or even compulsion.

Undoubtedly, the art of the Others is very individual, but by being such, it breaks the frames of mediocrity and, by being independent of critique, is not limited by economic factors. This independence of the opinion of critics and audiences enables experimenting with the means of expression and searching for the right form of representation. "Artists are extraordinarily ordinary in their authenticity and earnestness of expression, naive and not driven by the temptations of elaborate strategies, faithful only to their internal imperative"²⁰. Their work arouses the Bruner's "effective surprise", as it often does not reflect what the audiences are used to, provoke a distance but at the same time attract the attention, absorb and allure. Brut-art artists add a timeless aesthetic value to everyday reality, "create an art beyond time, although their time has evidently come and the creativity model chosen by them is now triumphant"²¹. One may not necessarily be an enthusiast of art-brut, Outsider Art, Visionary Art, self-taught art, art hors-les-normes, art

¹⁸ A. Banach, *Nikifor*, Wyd. Arkady, Warszawa 1983, p. 14, 17. It is worth noting that A. Banach's first book about Nikifor was five times rejected by publishers.

¹⁹ G. Borowik, A. Mironiuk-Nikolska, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Gorzki smak art-brut. Badania - kolekcje - wystawy w Polsce na przełomie XX/XXI wieku*, Państwowe Muzeum Etnograficzne, Warszawa 2016, p. 9.

²⁰ G. Borowik, *Czas sztuki art-brut*, [in:] *Gorzki smak...*, *ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

singulier, naive art, primitive art – whatever name we choose for it, but this is currently only a matter of taste. It is no longer eliminated or called degenerated²², and the trends it inspired, such as expressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, cubism or fauvism have also been accepted. However, in this article, the artistic creativity of the Other is not limited to visual arts only, or to a group of persons experiencing mental disorders, which was the case at the beginning of brut-art.

It is worth noting that various forms of artistic expression created by the Others were and still are of interest for psychologists and psychiatrists. “Psychologists and psychiatrists tried to examine the normality of Nikifor. He concluded that he was abnormal, that his intelligence was low, or simply none. He does not react to average stimuli. The word imbecile was often repeated”²³. However, the “imbecile” proved to be a talented painter whom we could call today an excellent example of the savant syndrome. The discrepancy between social and intellectual qualities and artistic qualities formed the basis for the research into the psychopathology of expression – a scientific discipline dating back to the second half of the 19th century. However, as one of its Polish pioneers, M. Tyszkiewicz, writes: “From the moment the psychopathology of expression began to emerge as a scientific discipline aware of its focus, researchers have been specifically interested in the formal peculiarities of the graphic creations of mentally ill patients [...] Also, two different questions of cognitive nature started to be posed. One concerned the *specificity* of the world in which the patient lived. The other explored the particular way of the *imaging* of what the patient intended to present”²⁴. Today, the second trend covers numerous publications by psychiatrists, psychologists, art critics, educators – in particular special educators and cultural studies specialists. We know a lot, for example, about the paintings of schizophrenics²⁵ and there are increasingly numerous descriptions of the

²² In 1937, the Degenerate Art Exhibition was organised in Munich, as a critique of trends that were contrary to the official German ideals of art and beauty.

²³ A. Banach, *Nikifor*, *ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁴ M. Tyszkiewicz, *Psychopatologia ekspresji*, PWN, Warszawa 1987, p. 10-11.

²⁵ A classical reference is the book by A. Kępiński, *Schizofrenia*, *ibid.*, where the author makes reference to an earlier work by H. Rennert *Die Merkmale Schizophrener*

visual art of persons suffering from other mental disorders²⁶, some of them supported by quantitative research materials²⁷, persons with intellectual disability²⁸, with sensory disabilities²⁹, threatened by social exclusion³⁰ or with chronic diseases³¹.

Bildnerer, Jena 1962. See also N. Madejska, *Malarstwo i schizofrenia*, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 1975; a series of articles by M. Tyszkiewicz: *Tematyka wypowiedzi plastycznych a postać defektu schizofrenicznego*, „Psychiatria Polska” 1973, nr 3; *Tematyka i forma malarstwa i rysunku chorych na schizofrenię*, „Psychiatria Polska” 1980, No. 6; A. Grzywa, K. Kucharska-Pietura, *Dynamika obrazu rodziny w pracach plastycznych chorych na schizofrenię paranoidalną*, „Psychiatria Polska” 1998, No. 1 (32); H. Welcz, *Motywy sakralne w twórczości plastycznej chorych na schizofrenię*, „Badania nad Schizofrenią”, 2000, No. 2; H. Welcz, *Schizofreniczna ekspresja plastyczna*, „Current Problems of Psychiatry” 2010, No. 1 (11); E. Nieduziak, P. Dec *Twórczość plastyczna schizofreników – studium przypadków*, [in:] *Twórczość jako forma dialogu ze światem*, ed. E. Nieduziak, WSH-P, Sandomierz 2010, p. 139-161.

²⁶ Np. A. Chmielińska, *Twórczość „tych, którzy czują więcej”*, [in:] *Zasoby twórcze człowieka...*, *ibid.*, p.43-82.

²⁷ E. Głowacka, *Artediagnoza: psychologiczna specyfika twórczości plastycznej dzieci neurotycznych*, Wyd. UJ, Kraków 2006.

²⁸ E.g. K. Krawiecka, *Od znaku graficznego do rysunku. W poszukiwaniu twórczości osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] K. Krawiecka, E. Śmiechowska-Petrovskij, M. Żelazkowska, *Sztuka/twórczość dostępna. Osoby z niepełnosprawnościami i chorobą psychiczną w kręgu recepcji i ekspresji sztuki*, Wyd. Naukowe UKSW, Warszawa 2016; E. Nieduziak, *Aktywność twórcza uczestników Warsztatu Terapii Zajęciowej przy Stowarzyszeniu „Integracja” w Sandomierzu*, [in:] *Człowiek z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną* Vol. 2. *Wybrane problemy społecznego funkcjonowania oraz rehabilitacji osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, ed. Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, Impuls, Kraków 2004, p. 231-240, id. *Twórczość plastyczna osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną, uczestników Warsztatu Terapii Zajęciowej – studium przypadku*, [in:] *Kreatywność osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną – czy umiemy myśleć inaczej?*, ed. J. Głodkowska, A. Giryński, Wyd. Naukowe Akapit, Kraków 2009, p. 191-197;

²⁹ E. Nieduziak, *Rzeźba osób głuchoniewidomych – zjawisko artystyczne, zjawisko terapeutyczne*, „Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo” 2011, No. 1 (13).

³⁰ E. Nieduziak, *Projekcja jakości życia w ekspresji twórczej dzieci – uczestników zajęć w świetlicy socjoterapeutycznej*, [in:] *Jakość życia młodzieży ze środowisk zagrożonych patologią społeczną*, red. Z. Palak, M. Piątek, A. Róg, B. Zięba-Kołodziej Wyd. Naukowe PWSZ, Tarnobrzeg 2011, p. 167-185; id. *Wartości i uczucia w swobodnej ekspresji plastycznej i w pracach arteterapeutycznych uczestników zajęć socjoterapeutycznych*, [in:] *W kierunku autentyczności. Twórcza ekspresja i artyści z kręgu art brut*, Wydział Sztuki Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny, Kraków 2011, p. 66-72.

At the same time, attempts to systematise and characterise the general and typical features of the art of marginalised persons are accompanied by practical measures and development of therapy through art (art therapy). Research in this domain requires analysis of overlapping and at the same time coherent and interrelated dimensions: creation, often associated with a fictional, non-existent world, and the real life. Consequently, one of the fundamental questions the researcher must answer is: what is the object of the research: therapy or creation? The problem is the more complicated that various forms of art the their compilations may be applied³². However, it is worth focusing on the therapeutic aspect of the creativity of the Other, if not for any other reason than at least because numerous definitions of art therapy emphasise that creativity is the essential, necessary and indispensable condition in the process³³. Thus, not every kind of contact with means of artistic expression deserves to be called therapy through art. Also, it should be noted that not every creativity, even if it has a therapeutic potential, is therapy or is understood as such by the author of this article. The most difficult aspect of art therapy research seems to be distinguishing the world of fiction from the reality. The space between the worlds houses great therapeutic potential used by art therapists as well as – often unconsciously – as self-therapy by artists. It should be noted here that, in its theoretical background, art therapy often draws from humanistic psychology, psychoanalysis, psychodynamic concepts or Gestalt psychology³⁴.

³¹ A. Stawecka, *Rozwojowe walory twórczości plastycznej dzieci przewlekle chorych w okresie późnego dzieciństwa*, [in:] *Barwy twórczości*, ed. M. Kuśpit, UMCS, Lubin 2013.

³² The equivocality of art-based study and relying on the classical classification of art forms that seem archaic in the context of of the changes the art is undergoing was discussed by Professor E. Rewers during the 6th Interdisciplinary Symposium of Qualitative Research in Wrocław in her speech *Rywalizacja założeń ontologicznych w badaniach nad kulturą*.

³³ See A. Chmielnicka-Plaskota, B. Łoza, W. Szulc, *Definicje arteterapii*, [in:] *Arteterapia* part 1, ed. A. Chmielnicka-Plaskota, B. Łoza, Wyd. Difin, Warszawa 2014.

³⁴ *Arteterapia. Podręcznik*, ed. C.A. Malchiodi, Wyd. Harmonia Universalis, Gdańsk 2012, chapter *Arteterapia – podejście kliniczne*, s. 79-176.

Engaging in art is linked with constructing a separate world, where its creator feels confident. The world is familiar to him and gives him a sense of security, because it is he, the author-creator, who brings it to life. He creates whatever he wants and however he wants. This world, visualised through paintings, literary works, performances or music, manifests the Otherness, and those manifestations are conditioned by the psychophysical condition of the author. They are detected through formal analysis of the work, paying attention to the colours used, the light-and-shade effect, proportions, perspective, texture, material, etc., i.e. the various means of artistic expression. But there exists also another area of the creation of the Other that is little known – the inside world. This does not concern its artistic manifestations but the opposite direction of analysis. A contact with the art of the Other makes it possible to experience his personal world. This is covered by the first research trend, associated with the psychopathology of expression, and at the same time a journey and effort almost metaphysical – to once again quote E. Lévinas. “«Tere is no real life in here». But we are in the world. [...] The metaphysics focuses on the «somewhere else», the «somehow else», the «other» [...] it is a motion from the world that we know – even if there are, on its edges or deep into it, lands still unknown to us – from the «here» that one inhabits, towards a strange outside-oneself, towards a «there»”. Thus, if we come into contact with the art of the Other, for example looking at the pictures of, e.g., the above-mentioned Nikifor or watching the performances of Lubelska Teatrotterapia, or reading *Kokoryny*³⁵ or *Obłąd*³⁶ do we get access to the inside world of their authors? First of all, we must assume that these are authentic works. It is a *sine qua non* condition. Secondly, that, despite numerous formal analyses, there is no universal guide to interpret the work of the Other. “That the vision apparatus is the same does not mean that the perception of the world is the same, too. The driving force of the process of creation is

³⁵ <http://www.teatrotterapia.lublin.pl/>

³⁶ J. Krzysztoń, *Obłąd*, PIW, Warszawa 1980.

imagination and intuition. Depending on the emotional state, the environment and various other stimuli, each individual experiences the reality in a different way and, consequently, has a unique and characteristic of himself only ability to create. Thus, one should be aware that there exists no universal key to understand the meanings contained in respective works. What is more, creators usually do not care about others interpreting their work and they themselves are often unaware of any interpretations. The problem is made more complicated by the nature of the means of expression: from literary through visual to their conglomerate in performing arts (theatre and para-theatre). How are we supposed to read them? After all, it is not about how we interpret or perceive the works, but how we assume the perspective of someone, who under the surface of colours, shapes, words, gestures, etc. speaks about himself.

R. Kapuściński wrote that “every meeting with the Other is a mystery, an unknown, is [...] a secret”³⁷. Metaphorically, a meeting may also be referred to as “getting familiar with the Other”³⁸. Nonetheless, a meeting with the art of the Other is not a direct meeting, *de facto*, it is a meeting with his traces and the signs created by him. After all, artistic creativity may be regarded as a form of communication, assuming that it is a “meaningful message, an information about an individual and how he perceives and understands the world”³⁹. G. Borowik uses the term “testimony” to describe the art of “common artists, artists of the dull life”, pushed by fate and their specific talent to the margin of life and art⁴⁰. Thus, in the face of the Other’s art, the recipient may nonetheless feel lost and defenceless, not having the tools to understand the meanings contained in it. In the case of literary art, identification with the fictional hero may be helpful, as well as openness, empathy, sympathetic reading of journals, memoirs or epistolography. No medical description of a disfunction will ever reflect the way it is experienced, like it is

³⁷ R. Kapuściński, *Ten Inny*, ibid. p. 11.

³⁸ R. Włodarczyk, *Oswajać się z Innym. Kapuściński – Lévinas*, „Odra” 2009, No. 3.

³⁹ G. Borowik, *Czas sztuki...*, ibid. p. 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid., s. 18-19.

presented in the books of J. Krzysztoń or J. D. Bauba: "My heels hurt, my head weighs a ton, and something like a giant invisible diving bell holds my whole body prisoner. [...] No need to wonder very long where I am, or to recall that the life I once knew was snuffed out out Friday, the eighth of December, last year"⁴¹.

A completely different code is used by visual artists. However, if they choose a particular form of expression, this is the path we should follow to meet the Other. And we have to accept the fact that "not [...] all may be read, deciphered, understood as logical"⁴². However, it should be noted that many artists do not limit themselves to only one form of expression. The painter F. Kahlo speaks about her illness not only through her paintings but also in her journals; the paintings of Ch. Brown are accompanied by his prose and poetry. Furthermore, as J. Głodkowska observes, the Otherness of an individual "shifts" to his relatives and friends, whose life is connected with his life⁴³. We would know little about the Others, if it was not for the journals of I. Bergman's relatives, the essays of S. Sontag's son⁴⁴ or the web blogs of the parents of caregivers of the disabled. The word is often a necessary addition to images – we can find it in the journals of F. Kahlo or A. Artaud, but also in the paintings of M. Wnęk. "An artist speaks about the art both as a professional and as a creator. He speaks about the art like something that he has approached with all his existence. He speaks like a practitioner who knows the resistance of a material and the technique of transforming a creative idea into a specific work. He speaks like the one who has experienced creative processes and talks about something he has fully lived through"⁴⁵. So, his word may help read the

⁴¹ J.D. Bauby, *Skafander i motyl*, Słowo obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 1997, p. 7.

⁴² G. Borowik, *Czas sztuki...*, *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴³ J. Głodkowska, *Autorstwo życia...*, *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ See E. Nieduziak, *Literackie dzienniki umierania jako forma oswojania ze śmiercią* [in:] *Człowiek w sytuacji granicznej. Filozoficzne, kulturowe i historyczne wymiary refleksji i jej implikacje pedagogiczne*, ed. S. Jaronowska, Wyd. APS, Warszawa 2015, p. 154-169.

⁴⁵ S. Szuman, *Wstęp*, [in:] W. Lam, *Twórczość przejawem instynktu życia*, KAW, Gdańsk 1977, p. 7.

indicators contained in the visual form and better understand real problems, conflicts, fears, dreams or impressions. He unveils the secret of the artist's life and creative work.

The image and the word may be united in the film art, which, in some circumstances, may be regarded as a record of experience enveloped in filmic fiction. If I watch, for example the *33 sceny z życia*⁴⁶ by M. Szumowska and if I know a little about the director's personal experience contained in the scenario, as a viewer, I find myself also in the position of a witness, not only the audience, an interpreter, a spectator. An even more complicated network of traces, signs and meanings is contained in performing arts, especially if the Otherness is not concealed from the audience, becoming a visible and meaningful sign. Awareness of the Otherness – real, not invented, affects the understanding of the work and makes one wonder how important if the value of that sign in the context of the entire composition. When watching on stage the deaf-blind actress B. S. Revensari of the Nalaga'at Theatre, the spectators, apart from an aesthetic experience, may also become a part of her experience, her personal history⁴⁷. Also, when watching k. Globisz as *Wieloryb (the Whale)*⁴⁸, when listening to the actor, quoting, for example F. Pessoa: – "It happens that I feel everything./For a moment, I am more varied/than a random crowd./For a moment, all the eras belong to me./For a moment, all the spirits are/within me./But there are waves,/there are storms and squalls/that separate/an entire ocean from me./Then, I am left with nothing." – one may understand these words as a monologue by the sea mammal – and remain

⁴⁶ *33 sceny z życia*, directed and written by M. Szumowska, produced in: Poland, Germany, first screened on 10 August 2008.

⁴⁷ Nalaga'at (meaning to touch) is a theatre group consisting of deaf and blind actors. The name refers to the basic means of communication, i.e. the touch. The group visited Poland twice, recently for the Brave Festival in Wrocław, with the performance "Say «Orange»" directed by S. Sibony, more information at <http://nalagaat.org.il/en/theater-2/> and <http://nalagaat.org.il/en/theater-2/say-orange/>

⁴⁸ *Wieloryb the Globe*, directed by E. Rysova, text and dramaturgy by: M. Pakuła; first staged on 9.12.2016. See: J. Kopciński, *Globisz, „Teatr” 2017*, No. 2, p. 6-9.

on this level of reception, but one may also relate them to the personal sphere of the actor's life struggling with the effects of a stroke.

Now, the question is whether the recipient (spectator, reader, viewer) has the right to such form of reception? First of all, it should be emphasised that in the proposed way of coming into contact with the art of the Other, it is not the usual reception or interpretation of the work that matters, but rather an unusual meeting with another person. Thus, the experience is completely different, it is the Levinas's "event" that is possible only in deeply authentic art. For example, as M. Pakuła, the screenwriter of *Wieloryb*, says: "For some, the performance is nothing more than therapy. They think it is not art, so they are not moved by it. Or they are moved in such a way that they are irritated – they are unable to accept [...] various transgressions that go beyond the aesthetics and the idea of coherence in the theatre"⁴⁹. The proposed encounter with the art of the Other goes beyond the sphere of aesthetic conventions, beyond psychological interpretations and regarding it as a therapy.

R. Kapuściński wrote that an encounter with the Other is based on duality: that, which is common and typical and that, which arises from the race and cultural background. "The problem is, however, [...] that the relationship between a human as a person, individual and personality and a human as the carrier of race and culture that exists in us all is not immobile, stiff, statistical, given once and for good, but, to the contrary, it is characterised by dynamics, mobility, changeability, varying tension, depending on the external context, the conditions of the current moment, expectations of the environment and even one's own mood and age"⁵⁰. The same may be applied to the relationship with the art of the Other, which should not be treated as unequivocal, the more so regarding it as an encounter with the Other. There are no two identical encounters, as two parties are always involved. However, encountering the art of

⁴⁹ K. Kusinowska, *Modlitwa wygnańca*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” 2017, No. 28, p. 65.

⁵⁰ R. Kapuściński, *Ten Inny*, *ibid.*, p. 10.

the Other, one should assume that he “knows nothing”, “is ignorant”, assume a humble and open attitude. Thus, we should take as a warning what E. Lévinas said about dismissing pedagogical or psychagogic discourse, which he defined as “speaking from the position of someone who wants to outwit his neighbour. [...] It [the rhetorics] does not stand face to face with the Other, but approaches him sideways, and although does not treat him like an object, as it remains a speech and, despite all its tricks, addresses the other, seeks his «yes». [...] To give up the psychagogy, demagogy, pedagogy that the rhetorics includes is to face another individual in as situation of a true discourse”⁵¹. One of the conditions for a successful encounter is to accept the freedom of the Other, his independence in the world that he creates. On the other hand, it is necessary to accept the uniqueness of that world. As it is an expression of freedom, it was created not through a desire to be seen but through a desire to create. Thus, a work of art as a message is secondary to the internal imperative of creation.

But why should such encounter be important for a non-Other? Because by getting to know others, one gets to know oneself better, because the Other is one’s reflection, and “to understand oneself better, one must understand better the Others, be able to compare and confront with them”⁵². However, it should be emphasised that the encounter takes place in unusual conditions, where the word often loses its prevailing power, replaced by other means of expression. The word may be a supplement, a hint how to follow the Other. Such arrangement stresses Lévinas’s asymmetry of relations with the other, where, for example, “I perceive the Other as a teacher, a master. The equality of persons is meaningless in itself. [...] It involves recognition of the superiority of the Other and his mastery, it is a contact with another individual above rhetorics [...]”⁵³. The Other is always different than Me, he is non-replaceable and non-

⁵¹ E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność...*, *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵² R. Kapuściński, *Ten Inny...*, *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵³ E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność...*, *ibid.*, p. 70.

transferable, which means that Me cannot become the Other⁵⁴. As B. Skarga writes, an encounter creates a certain framework that needs to be filled up with one's own experience and observations, "the other and me are not positioned in the same dimension; the other speaks as if from above and calls me to rise above myself [...]"⁵⁵. Confronted with the artistic activity of the Other, it is important to be sensitive to other, non-verbal forms of communication: "Someone is coming. Unannounced. A fragrance, a taste, a line, a gesture, a word, a detail, a fragment are a thread that leads back to oneself, at the same time making it possible to step out of time, of who we are at the moment [...] The Other in me resonates with the Other beyond me. The two demand to overcome the resistance of safely inhabiting the here and now, my repeated effort to familiarise with them"⁵⁶. Thus other, non-verbal roads leading to an encounter are so important. Many creators of the Others do not use words, which in themselves are defective and insufficient compared to what can be expressed through an image, sound or gesture or their combinations. And this, too, is a dialogue.

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⁵⁴ R. Włodarczyk, *Lévinas. W stronę pedagogiki azylu*, Wyd. UW, Warszawa 2009, p. 176.

⁵⁵ B. Skarga, *Wstęp*, [in:] E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność...*, *ibid.*, p. XX.

⁵⁶ R. Włodarczyk, *Oswajając się...*, *ibid.*, p. 32.

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