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The Anxiety of Social Influence

The paperostensibly refers to Harold Bloom's categories of the anxiety of influence. Bloom's theory is treated as an immanentist one, i.e. text/aesthetics/personality -oriented, which is specific to the period in which the theorywas developed. However, at least from the 80s of the XXth century, there occurs a visible change towards sociologization of all the human sciences. The paper appropriates and resignificates Bloom's categories and intermingles them with the concepts of social psychology in order to enable a description of the condition of writers in the current social context.

Keywords: social influence, psychoanalysis, social psychology, sociologisation of humanities, queer literature

Does *The Anxiety of Influence* have any influence on thinking about literature 40 years after its publication?[1] Harold Bloom's claims are universal, therefore he would answer "yes" to that question; that is, "yes, if there are strong poets". The discussion between universalists and contextualists (to provide a heuristic and handy label) is a paradigmatic and paradogmatic misapprehension, probably always inconclusive. After all, what conclusion can there be, if I say that the definition of "strong poets" is arbitrary and historical, and the effect of the so-called "universalism" is, as usual, a rhetorical effect on the part of a strong critic, while the cultural conditions – I might also say, the literary field – have changed and those claims do not apply to the contemporary situation in literature? Such a claim would imply, certainly, that Bloom's theory has never been universal; to which the universalist would reply that the theory has been universal: it is just the times that are weak and there are no more strong poets.[2] Yet this is the kind of discussion I want to draw Bloom into.

However, I need to emphasize that, despite the text being split into two large parts, the first one being a commentary on Bloom, the second one my own methodological contribution, I do not see this essay as a commentary on Bloom. The things I have to say about his theory are not too innovative and I am aware of that; I rather recapitulate some of the discourse on Bloom, yet treat this part as heuristic. My main aim is to offer the tropology of the anxieties of social influence, which is done in the second part. Overwhelmed neither by the grandeur nor the beauty of Bloom's theory, I nevertheless see his chart of tropes as useful to extend or open to social contexts. Bloom for me is primarily a literary critic or theoretician, not a philosopher or anthropologist, or a religious thinker, as some read him (and justly). I am using Bloom and his chart of tropes (perhaps reducing his theory to the latter) not to diminish the philosophical importance of his thought, but simply because I want to elaborate on a handy set of social situations that writers face, having felt the need of such a scheme during my interpretative work on queer

1 The research was subsidized by the Polish National Center for Sciences grant nr DEC-2012/04/S/HS2/00561.

2 See e.g.: "yet it seems just to assume that poetry in our tradition, when it dies, will be self-slain, murdered by its own past strength" (Bloom 1997, 10). Bloom would rather say, then, that the golden age has become bronze. However, he uses the phrase "in our tradition". It is contradictory to speak of "universalism" and "our tradition" at once, but here is the conservative solution: instead of assuming that the "tradition" (or "paradigma", or "field", because this is what Bloom means, not simply "the past") might change, it is suggested that the times might change, but not the tradition; that its appeal – its challenge – stays always the same, and/or that it should.

literature, and preferring to use a settled and recognizable terminology instead of inventing my own neologisms.

Bloom's aim, as revealed in the prologue, is to bring literary criticism onto the right track, which he calls the study of "intra-poetic relationships" (Bloom 1997, 5), and three pages later more specifically the study of "intra-poetic relationships as parallels of family romance" (Bloom 1997, 8). I will stick to this image in a moment. If we were to locate Bloom's project on the map of literary criticism's historical tendencies, we should say that it represents the high modernist ideal of ergocentric criticism, proving the highly autonomous (at that time) stage of the literary (artistic) field. Bloom's move in this subfield was, firstly, to focus this ergocentric interest not only on the object, that is, the literary text, but also on its producer, or more precisely, on the object as it reveals the producer in a double operation – reading the object through the producer and the producer through the object; and secondly, but still in ergocentric mode, to duplicate the producers and their objects respectively, asserting a metonymical relationship between them. This metonymy is necessary to remain in the ergocentric paradigma. A metaphorical relation between two poets could involve, e.g. history of genres, history of literary processes, and, most horribly for Bloom, social contexts (and it was not a novelty in Bloom's times, of course; this metaphorical relation is usually the basic figure of thought in many and varied comparative literature studies), and this is what he, at least in theory, tries to avoid. Let's take the Freudian image of the "family romance". I don't think it would be going too far to assume that Freud, and Bloom respectively, connect the image of the "family" with the image of "home". Bloom's vision of ergocentric criticism, then, would mean staying in a closed and homely space, in the inside, as opposed to being "outside", among people accidentally encountered on the streets, within the institution of houses etc. I take it as an invitation to use Freud's category of *Heimliche* and *Unheimliche*, homely and unhomely (and "uncanny").[3] If, allegoric-

3 Mark Edmundson says Bloom's *Anxiety* depicts a gothic story of "spectral posession" of the ephebe (Edmundson 1999, 164). Bloom's theory is gothic if – nowadays a commonplace in gothic studies – Freud is a gothic writer (and Edmundson shares this view), for Bloom is utterly Freudian. The spectre of a dead poet certainly is uncanny and to some extent "unhomely". But in my "gothic fable" the difference between "homely" as "literature-influenced" and "unhomely" as the "social" is this: the spectre of a dead poet does not come through the window, it comes from the books which are in the house, while the "social" comes from the outside and haunts differently. I should say, then, that the spectral possession by a dead writer is not so much "unhomely" as "uncanny" – it is the ghost in the attic; while the "social" is "unhomely" and probably "uncanny".

ally speaking, the ergocentric study of literature is homely, is something that happens at home with all its dark family secrets, then the main anxiety is about the intrusion of the unhomely, of the outside, of sociological, political, economic etc. contexts, that once were thrown out through the door, but came back through the window. This is what I take to be Bloom's anxiety: the anxiety of social intrusion, or less dramatically, influence, the great comeback of the repressed. And Bloom is only one example of those olden-days-ergocentrics (and "universalists") who are now so horrified by the sociological turn(s) in literary criticism. As I see it, the contemporary sociologization of the humanities, or – in Gianni Vattimo's expressions – "the sociological impressionism of philosophy or sociologizing approach to philosophy or the slide of philosophy into sociology" (Vattimo 2003, 4, 5, 8),[4] which is a paradigmatic change that started somewhere in the 80s, is this great comeback of the repressed. Alain Finkielkraut also diagnoses and laments such a sociological slide, albeit, contrary to Vattimo, with explicit concern and criticism. In his *Nous autres, modernes,* e.g. in the chapter *La post-culture,* he quotes both Mallarmé and Jakobson. The former represents the ideal of pure poetry, or, translated into a different language, the stage of high autonomy of the literary field (in fact, Bourdieu quotes Mallarmé as an example; while in turn, Finkielkraut quotes Bourdieu critically) (Bourdieu 1995, 276–277). The latter with his definition of the poetic function of language represents golden-era criticism as opposed to sociologized cultural studies (Finkielkraut 2005, 165–176). But "cultural studies" is not the only field of sociologized humanities, and Finkielkraut is not the only one in the humanities to lament it. Bloom's new preface to the second edition of *The Anxiety of Influence* speaks against cultural studies and the "current School of Resentment" as an attempt to eradicate the uniqueness of art (exemplified by Shakespeare).[5] But Bloom's argument is weak and relies mostly on a rhetorical trick that could be called "paradigmatical blackmail". We all agree, says Bloom, that Shakespeare is the greatest author ever, that he created modernity, and that he represents the universality of literature. This problematic "we" is spread over the whole new preface. However, Bloom notes, the French don't appreciate Shakespeare

4 Although Vattimo speaks of postmodernity, he traces such "sociological slides" throughout the whole XXth century tradition.

5 E.g.: "We are now in an era of so-called «cultural criticism», which devalues all imaginative literature, and which particularly demotes and debases Shakespeare. Politicizing literary study has destroyed literary study, and may yet destroy learning itself" (Bloom 1997, xvi). Another – yet idiosyncratic – example of the lament is Stanley Fish in his *Professional Correctness* (1995).

sufficiently; no wonder, Bloom thus jumps to the conclusion, that it is they who created all those horrible schools of resentment. Then Bloom shows that he is not against multi-culti, only that there are "real" and "misapprehended" multiculturalists:

> The French have never valued originality, and until a belated Romanticism came to France, they never much cared for Shakespeare's plays. They still esteem Shakespeare rather less than do the Indonesians or the Japanese or the Americans. Real multiculturalists, all over the globe, accept Shakespeare as the one indispensable author, different from all others in degree, and by so much that he becomes different in kind. Shakespeare, as I have argued at length elsewhere, quite simply not only is the Western canon; he is also the world canon (Bloom 1997, xvi).

Bloom uses another kind of "paradigmatic blackmail". He states (without proving; but how could you prove, except by writing an *Encyclopedia of world culture as influenced by Shakespeare*?) that modernity is Shakespeare's language – made, Shakespearized. Therefore one cannot historicize or sociologize or materialize (etc.) Shakespeare; moreover, in doing so, one must use Shakespeare's dictionary. Trying to polemicize with this malevolent argument is like trying to convince a religious fanatic that god does not exist.

But if we go back to the original *Anxiety of Influence*, there are still many dubious moments of proclaiming both autonomous criticism and universalism, and I shall pinpoint them now. There is a similar universalizing trick that should be questioned if we don't want to fall into playing Bloom's game on his own playground. Is the whole of Bloom's book normative towards poets or critics? Critics, obviously, is the answer. It tells them how to read, not the poets how to write. But of course, by this operation, Bloom's critical ephebes will look at the poets through his definition of a "strong poet", who necessarily feels anxiety towards, again necessarily, his "father". If he doesn't, if he is not a strong poet, then we should keep silent about him. In fact, then, Bloom's theory is normative towards the poets: "write as I want to read you". But this also shows the kind of social influence that Bloom ostensibly ignores: the writer's anxiety about a social institution which is represented not only by one strong critic, but by the whole institution and/or paradigma. Of course the answer could be that this writer is not strong enough if he fears someone from outside the house, as the only justified fear is of the homely father. Should we take a psychoanalytic step and suggest

that one of the reasons for Bloom's neglect or contempt for social influence is the very obscurity of his commitment to it? This is a common argument in debates between the contextualists and purists, by the way, and in my opinion reinforces the thesis that autonomy is found in repression. I move on to another dubious moment in Bloom. By the end of the book he suddenly states that the canonical poetry he studies must be Protestant: "Poetry whose hidden subject is the anxiety of influence is naturally of a Protestant temper, for the Protestant God always seems to isolate His children in the terrible double bind of two great injuctions: «Be like Me» and «Do not presume to be too like me»" (Bloom 1997, 152). But the characteristics Bloom gives allows the question, why the Protestant temperament, not the Jewish,[6] if the image of God is so much Abraham's God, albeit filtrated through Kierkegaard? We are back to the question of Bloom's own misreading of himself through "strong poets". Bloom must say "Protestant" – if he wants to say anything on religion – because the poets he describes were Protestant (or at least raised in a Protestant culture). To say that it is ratherm a Jewish religious archetype would imply that the whole book is Bloom's projection of his own problem with strong male figures. And this means, in consequence, that it is the institution and the subject that influences the writers, directly or indirectly, as is the case here. And above all, most obviously, to suggest that to be canonical one must be Protestant makes a mockery of the claim to universality. I'm approaching perhaps my most important argument. Although Bloom evokes the Freudian *gestalt* of a family romance, he rather escapes the consequences of the romance. In the Freudian version the basic archetype is the Oedipal triangle consisting of father, mother and child. Obviously Bloom's romance is restricted to only two males, as this is an exclusively male-oriented theory. Incidentally Bloom evokes the "Muse" as the woman who is the object of trade between two men, but first of all, he never traces her, and secondly, although most of us literary scholars are fancy-oriented and appreciate imagination, to speak of a Muse in a rather serious literary theory is a kind of joke, more or less like the printing gremlin. Although Bloom wants to keep the Freudian version of the romance, comprising father and son, in a queer manner he calls the older one the precursor and the younger one the "ephebe" (Bloom 1997, 10). Although Bloom, then, wants to stay within the Freudian frame of rivalry, he implies rather

6 Only a few years later, in *Poetry and Repression,* Bloom, referring to Vico's ideas, speaks of "the true God that founded the Jewish religion", or "Hebrew-Christian theology" (Bloom 1976, 7,5). Later in the text Bloom uses Lurian Kaballah which also lies latent beneath *The Anxiety of Influence*.

the image of *paedicatio,* i.e., the influence as a kind of insemination, and a struggle of the younger *eromenos*, the passive lover, to become the active lover, *erastes*. The critic's inconsequence is clear when he speaks of the misreading as falling in love with a literary work (Bloom 1997, xxiii), while in the entire theory it is not only the object, but also the subject in question, so it is also falling in love with the author through his work, and in a different moment, when Bloom discusses the Freudian theory of sublimation, he denies the importance of the sexual impulse in favour of the aggressive one.[7] So, after all, are we in the (so called) positive or negative Oedipus complex? Does the ephebe desire the absent mother and fight for her with the father, or, rather, does he fall in love with the father (or just with some "random" male?) in a Greek pedagogical way, and in that case is (or isn't!) his rival the absent mother? And where is this mother? Is she at home? Or is she, rather, in the outside, unhomely, realm, of which there lies a ban on representation? Or maybe the third side of the triangle, if it is indeed a triangle, is another man, the strong critic?[8] I move to the last dubious moment in my account.

7 Compare: "Whether sublimation of sexual instincts plays a central part in the genesis of poetry is hardly relevant to the reading of poetry, and has no part in the dialectic of misprision. But sublimation of aggressive instincts is central to writing and reading poetry, and this is almost identical with the total process of poetic misprision" (Bloom 1997, 115).

8 I am not the first one to "queer" Bloom's theory. There are two approaches to reading Bloom – the one I share sees Bloom's theory as already "homosexual", only "ashamed" of it; the second sees Bloom's romance as straight, but needing completion by a different mode of relationships between two men, inspired by Greek pedagogy or different homosexual kinds of relationships. I think the difference comes from understanding the Oedipal triangle – if we assume it might only have a heterosexual outcome, then Bloom is describing the straight romance; if we accept the theory of two different results of the complex, we might find in Bloom the "homosexual outcome". Another point of difference is whether Oedipus must include three actors (and there are three in Bloom indeed). But even if I claim that in Bloom we have the "queer outcome" of Oedipus, it doesn't mean I don't see the place for a call for a different kind (less paranoid e.g.?) of relationality between men (which might, why not, be gay). Jan Potkański shares this second view and quotes works that interpret Bloom this way – Stephen Guy-Bray's, Stephen da Silva's, Mark Bauer's and Piotr K. Gwiazda's. I was not aware of this tradition of reading while writing my argument, which, I think, proves the point that it is such an explicit context (Potkański 2008a, 262–278). The text includes the section "Queering Bloom" and an interesting interpretation of "homoinfluence" in Jerzy Andrzejewski's selected novels. My interest in queering Bloom is, however, different from that of Potkański and the tradition he quotes, for in each case the authors studied (as did Bloom) individual influences, while I am thinking of social influence in general, but, for the purpose of my reading, current gay literature in particular.

While discussing *askesis*, Bloom uses the Freudian theory of sublimation and Lou Andreas-Salomé's remark that "elaborating ourselves, we become both Prometheus and Narcisssus; or rather", Bloom comments, "only the truly strong poet can go on being both, making his culture, and raptly contemplating his own central place in it" (Bloom 1997, 119). The narcissistic moment is understood according to tradition, e.g. we might cite André Gide's *Le traité du Narcisse* from 1891 where the myth of Narcissus is the proclamation of the autonomy of art for art's sake, or, moving a little towards social psychoanalysis, Karen Horney's account of contemporary individualism as narcissistic; or, from a sociological perspective, we could recall Bourdieu's concept of "hermeneutic narcissism",[9] which characterizes Bloom perfectly. However, he understands the sacrifice of Prometheus as the sacrifice of writing poetry – in an intrapoetic meaning, that is, first, as a sacrifice before the precedent poem which evades, and also, secondly, before the possibilities of the very poem being written, that is, the possibilities that are rejected (Bloom 1997, 120).[10] Obviously this sacrifice does not mean anything like the not quite sublime poet's hypothetical admission that he sacrifices time which he could spend on earning money but instead chooses to produce something beautifully *gratuit.* Bloom's Prometheus is completely univocal, then,

9 Compare: "In the manner of Bachelard, who spoke of "cosmic narcissism" with respect to an aesthetic experience of nature founded on the relationship "I am beatutiful because nature is beautiful and nature is beautiful because I am beautiful", one could call **hermeneutic narcissism**, that form of encounter with works and authors in which the hermeneutic scholar affirms his intelligence and grandeur by his empathic insight into great authors" (Bourdieu 1995, 303).

10 However, in the article *Prometheus Rising: The Backgrounds of Romantic Poetry* (Bloom 1988, 3–16), Bloom studies romantic poetry, Blake and Wordsworth especially, in the light of European revolutions and the Puritan movement, although he confesses: "No intelligent, thoroughgoing Marxist critic has yet studied all of English Romantic literature in any detail, and I shudder to contemplate a reading of Blake's epics or Byron's "Don Juan" in the light of economic determinism alon [alone?]. Still, such a study would reveal much that now is only a matter for speculation (...)". (p. 3). In this text Bloom also elaborates on his distinction between Catholic poets (conservative) and Protestant (reactionary ones). Yet in another famous Bloom's text we read that the Prometheus figure for Romantics was Milton's Satan who "stands finally, quite alone, upon a tower that is only himself, and his stance is all the fire there is. This realization leads neither to nihilism nor to solipsism (...)". (Bloom 1988, 24). In the same text Bloom (p. 27) suggests that Prometheus was at first interested in social issues and involved in satire, but then internalized his quest romance and directed his view on himself. But shouldn't we rather say, then, that by that turning his gaze on himself he ceased to be Prometheus and became Narcissus?

with Narcissus and sacrifices nothing for any community. There is the half-consumed liver, but where is the fire?

I shall swerve from Bloom's ergocentric theory, but keep the double challenge for the writer to become at once Narcissus and Prometheus. It describes well, in my opinion, the anxieties experienced by contemporary writers after the paradigmatic shift into a more social-oriented culture. After that change the anxieties have also changed. Or, rather, to the narcissistic anxiety of intra-poetic influence there is added the new anxiety of social influence, the Promethean challenge, and the contemporary writer is in a double bind. This double agency dovetails with the Freudian description of the formation of a sadomasochistic super-ego, which at once is masochistic (narcissistic) and punitive (Freud 1963); using our image of Prometheus, as Narcissus converts his repeated pain of having his liver eaten into a spectacle of masochistic pleasure in "getting what he deserves" (Savran 1998, 23–24). Perhaps this is a transitory moment (but for that reason the more interesting) on the way to a complete change of understanding art and its producers and consumers, which might be the way leading to total erasure of Narcissus in favor of the wing of Prometheus: or a Ganymede, who knows? At present there still remain residual expectations of the writers, products of the stage of high autonomy of the field, that they should be individuals who bring innovative and illuminated insights to the matter they elaborate on in their work, who are independent of fashions and short-lasting tendencies, because they are farsighted. They see more; like prophets, they have the courage or strong will not to be influenced by the quotidian, the cliché, and also by other artists, etc. Certainly I am discussing here social (and/or institutional) expectations, not intra-poetic ones, although in their content they might be perceived as a-social, intra--poetic. But there are new expectations also. The writer should became "engaged", "committed", should be aware of the community for whom he or she writes and negotiate the message with them in an interaction. These two expectations, apparently contradictory, result in a demand for an artistically self-conscious writer with his or her own stylistic stamp and signature, and a social prophet who participates, understands the social problems of a community, and is able to foresee or at least to give a queer (in the sense of non-obvious) point of view, which means also a somehow independent one. In short, if his one leg is held by the community, the second is expected to take a step in a direction that only special individuals are able to choose. This is not an indecisive or inconclusive situation. But it requires a new figure between Narcissus and Prometheus, namely, Hermes the negotiator, the god of practical

intelligence who can swerve back and forth, prevaricate, and, while stealing fire for the people, convince the gods that they have always wanted to get rid of it. But this new role produces new anxieties that are worth examining. The question is, however, can Bloom's theory be of any help, can it be modified? Can it be, in a process of an antithetical *tessera,* supplied or complemented with a more up-to-date dictionary, and if so how? I shall look for such solutions in the social psychology which elaborated the theory of social influence.

Bloom's insistence on ergocentric reading might be interpreted as the result of the fundamental attribution error. To some extent the same could be said of other ergocentric theories. This attribution error consists in accentuating the character or personality in interpreting somebody's behaviour and neglecting situational factors (Gilbert, Malone 1995, 21–38). The whole sociological slide as a paradigmatic change might be perceived as a general change in attribution from persons or objects (e.g. texts) to social (situational) or political conditions (Sobolczyk 2013a, 81–111).[11]

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(Of course, in order to avoid falling into the same error, it should be noted that the very appearance of this theory with its fundamental attribution error might also be the product of some situation, of some shift in psychology and science in general; that is, the situation might have enabled change and instantly "produced" – made participants produce – tools to grasp it.) Performativity theories, e.g. that say we have no stable identities or personalities (how can you attribute the cause of something that only "happens" temporarily?), either confirm the fundamental error, are the products of the theory, or both. Fredrick Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious* speaks of something worse than an error, although he does not refer to social psychology:

> From this perspective [his neo-Marxist perspective, not social psychology's – P.S] the convenient working distinction between cultural texts that are social and political and those that are not becomes something worse than an error: namely, a symptom and a reinforcement of the reification and privatization of contemporary life. Such a distinction reconfirms that structural, experiential, and conceptual gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the "individual", which – the tendential law of social life under capitalism – maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself.

11 First printed as a separate article in 2009.

> [...] The only effective liberation from such constraint begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical – indeed, that everything is "in the last analysis" political (Jameson 1988, 20).

Jameson's "political unconscious" is in Freudianized language what the effect of the attribution error is in social-psychological language. The emergence of social psychology is also the result of – and an attempt to overcome – the blurring of the gap between the social and the psychological. This is also the reason why I prefer to use it and not "just" sociology, because social psychology describes social interaction between two and more persons (which is what Bloom likewise does, but in a different way), and also the person in a group or confronted with a group (groups); and this is how I see the situation of the contemporary writer. But there is another aspect, related to the fundamental attribution error, in which Bloom's theory of being "strong" might serve in its original shape. It has been observed that the attribution changes depending on whether one is a participant (actor) or the observer, and it depends also on the result of an action. Namely, the participant of an unsuccessful enterprise has a tendency to explain his failure in terms of situation, while the observer of this situation tends to find the error in the participant. Bloom (as an observer) does the latter when he explains artistic failures as a result of not being strong enough. But the unexpected positive outcome of his theory for, precisely, writers, might be that they overcome this tendency towards attribution error, and are heroic (strong!) enough to acknowledge their failure without blaming anything but themselves. This is what happens in Bloom's "regressive" phases, *kenosis* and *askesis*, but, as Bloom suggests, it is never the final result, but is rather a call to withdrawfor a moment for reparation and stand again to fight. We are not introducing social explications here, contrary to what some people believe, because it helps reattribute the cause of an artistic failure to difficulties with literary institutions or to conflicts with reading communities. Narcissus might be a little ugly, but also, people might be too greedy towards Prometheus; each case needs an idiographic (which is not the same as ergocentric!) interpretation, and this indication is directed this time to the critics.

Social psychologists (such as Solomon Asch or Morton Deutsch and Harold Gerard) distinguished two types of social influence, normative and informative (Deutsch, Gerard 1995, 629-636). The normative influence occurs when a person agrees or harmonizes with the group or the dominant explanation for ego-safety reasons, i.e. to avoid experiencing the pains of becoming an outcast, or because it is pleasurable to fit in or to be liked. In short, this is a narcissistic motivation. The informative influence

occurs when a person feels that he has not got enough information, while at the same time there are people in the group with authority (of knowledge), or who argue reasonably, so that the person becomes influenced. It would be a mistake to exclude the narcissistic motivation in the case of artists, yet one has to bear in mind that most probably in many cases the traces of such normative influence are sublimated, i.e., can be read only symbolically, not allegorically. I shall venture right now into Bloom's six phases, armed with some social psychology tools and the analysis of the contemporary literary field, in order to resignificate the figures of influence.

Clinamen. If we understand it as the anxiety of being invaded by a dictionary which is "extimate"[12] (Lacan's word for something at once "intimate", a part of the person, and unaccepted), that is, the stage of experiencing one's own inner poetry only in others' poems, on the social linguistic ground this is the anxiety of being spoken, of repeating current banal clichés on social issues as well as on the writer's role. This is a stage "after Babel" – or "after Bakhtin", or "after Rorty". Rorty, resignificating Bloom, drew the conclusion that a person who manages to introduce a change in the vocabulary, this change being understood as a metaphor – and this is Bloom's "strong poet" – is the one most able to experience his/her own contingency (Rorty 1993, 28). But in Bloom what is at stake, obviously, is not "contingency", but "universality". The anxiety might be felt towards some hypostasis of a "global contemporary language" as well as towards some particular "ultimate language" of a person (e.g. authority figure), group (e.g. LGBTQ community), the dominant (media) discourse or the economic conditions of publishing. "Language" or "dictionary" obviously means not only the vocabulary and idioms or catch-phrases, but also dominant tropes, allegories, examples and narrative coherences (I do not distinguish between so-called "content" and "form"). We might imagine a writer who "has his novel inside him" on queer sexualities, but who gets no result beyond a banal parable about how some people are victimized, which in the end is not much different from a tabloid cover story. While some normative-influential impulse might be satisfied (a group or an authority is satisfied because the product fulfills their expectations), the narcissistic part of the super-ego might not be pleased with the stylistic effect as insufficiently "artistic".

12 Compare in Bloom: "When a potential poet first discovers poetry as being both external and internal to himself, he begins a process that will end only when he has no more poetry within him, long after he has the power (or desire) to discover it outside himself again" (Bloom 1997, 25).

Or the other way round. While the writer might have the feeling that he or she was influenced informatively, i.e. wrote about important things somebody experienced (e.g. a case of gay-bashing) or some groups keep reporting, the person might at the same time feel the lack of acceptance in terms of normativity from the literary field that values the so-called artistic side. Bourdieu showed also that popular writers in the early stage of the formation of the literary field aspired to some kind of social critique.[13] We must certainly not neglect the anxiety described by Bloom as well, namely, that of a preceding artistic work that the newcomer falls in love with. After all, what he or she is trying to succeed at is literature, not journalism, so they try to imitate the idealized text which occupies a position in the literary field. *Clinamen* is also a decisive point for the subject, whichever choice he or she makes between the two states described by social psychologist Stanley Milgram: the agentic state or the autonomous state (which should not be mistaken for literary autonomy, the esthetical form). In the first state the individual sees him- or herself as a representative of other people, e.g. of a specified group, as a synecdoche, and acts on behalf of them, or according to some phantasmatic demand ascribed to that group. (The psychology of social groups indicates many symptomatic errors of judgement that might arise in such a case, such as unquestioning faith in group morals, rationalization of counterarguments, stereotyping of the enemy, stress on conformity, autocensorship, the illusion of unanimity, etc.) (Turner, Pratkanis 1994, 254–270). For instance, an aspiring gay writer might feel under pressure to give a good representation of a gay person as demanded by either the dominant social group (dominantly heterosexual), or the integrationist gay movement. The corrective movement of a new poem which Bloom describes, on social influence grounds, is the movement from the agentic state to the autonomous state, which means that the writer acknowledges his or her right to disagree in some respects on social

13 Compare: "But there is no better proof of the effectiveness of the calls to order inscribed in the very logic of the field as it moves toward autonomy than the recognition that the authors who appear to be the most directly subordinate to external demands or exigencies, not only in their social behaviour but in their work itself, are more and more often forced to grant to the specific norms of the field; as if, in order to honour their status as writers, they must manifest a certain distance from the dominant values. Thus, if one only knows them through the sarcasms of Baudelaire and Flaubert, it comes as something of a surprise when one discovers that the most typical representatives of the bourgeois theatre offer, far from unequivocal praise of bourgeois life and values, a violent satire on the very foundations of that existence and of the «lowering of manners" imputed to certain personages of the court and the imperial bourgeoisie» (Bourdieu 1995, 69–70).

and esthetical issues, even if he or she agrees in many other respects with the influential "vocabulary".

Tessera. Once given the right to disagree, the writer tries to justify the social value of his or her antithetical position to create the sentiment of ingratitude of which Bloom speaks (Bloom 1997, 62). There is an effort to conceal antithesis as supplement, completion. In the theory of cognitive dissonance there arises the attempted justification effect. It occurs when the subject's big effort to achieve something is not subjectively rewarded enough, not recognized externally; the subject then attributes greater value to the effect. In our case, the writer's effort to take an "independent", but in fact metonymically close, position, and his or her efforts to create a justification for it, are socially neglected. The effort is not perceived as distinctive enough. Although performed in good faith that it is society or a group that has not gone far enough – is, to use Bloom's word, "truncated" (Bloom 1997, 66) – so that the writer has complemented it, the agent of influence likewise sees the literary outcome of this process as "truncated": neither a rupture nor a confirmation. *Tessera* might adopt the form of completing the social discourse with "better language", or a more elaborate one. The writer, in this case, remains a kind of esthetical adornment, a nice supplement, while the antithetical position still confirms the division between the social and political and the artistic, instead of problematizing it and blurring the boundaries. *Tessera* might also make the subject realize that there is a difference between the normative and the informative influence and, in consequence, adopt an antithetical position to one of them, depending on which one the person attributes to him- or herself. That is, if the subject considers the influence that is being overcome as normative, he or she might take the position of still being socially influenced, yet now more by expert theory rather than folk theory, or simply by conformist pressure. This is an optimistic variant, but certainly the opposite is also possible. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's ironical catchphrase about the 1990s fashion in literary scholarship, inspired by queer theory, for describing texts as "kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic"[14] might be paraphrased for *tessera*, which is neither subversive nor hegemonic. And yet there is a possible positive way of moving from this position. A supplement cannot by definition be hegemonic. But it can (and how!) be subversive. As Hermes. Therefore, in the end, going through this phase makes the anxious writer realize how the influence might be reworked into becoming, possibly, influential.

14 I quote after Edwards (2009, 107).

Kenosis. If we understand this position as a temporary and apparent submission to the influential force and the will to modestly mime it (Bielik-Robson 2002, 219), which in the end becomes distorted or displaced, then we might say that on the writer's road to subversiveness this phase represents a kind of parody which recognizes the political potential of parody, but does not achieve this political outcome. I refer to Judith Butler's distinction between effective parodies and failed ones. Not every parody is subversive. But in *kenosis* the writer is closer than in *tessera* to the state of being "kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic". Kinda narcissistic, kinda Promethean. Kinda influenced, kinda influential. Kinda artistic, kinda socially committed. But precisely this "kinda" is the effect of blurring the distinction between literary and political, between social and psychological, between private and public. In terms of attribution theory this phase represents the cognitive crossroads – that kind of cognitive dissonance where everything seems to be a *double entendre*, but the subject, out of apparent weakness, celebrates for a moment this state and learns perspectivism. According to Harold Kelley's model of attribution factors, there are three questions that identify mental processes before the attribution is performed effectively: does the subject always behave this way in this situation? Does the subject behave differently in different situations? Do the others behave likewise in this situation? (Kelley 1973, 107–128). For the attribution to be successful, questions must be answered either "yes" or "no". But with the "kinda" of *kenosis*, the modality changes into "rather yes", "probably", "sometimes", "to some extent". As a result, there is no attribution error. The parodist subject is neither fully actor nor fully observant – although he or she observes and acts (mimes). The outcome, both in Bloom and Butler, weakens the source of influence: Bloom says that the precursor becomes less divine and more human; Butler says that the imitation shows that the apparent original was always a copy and that there are no originals. Some queer critics and critics of queer theory, such as Leo Bersani[15] or Moya Lloyd,[16] discuss examples of dubious parodies, such as gay male skinhead, lipstick lesbian, Barbie slasher, gay S-Mist in a Nazi costume etc. While some argue that it is exclusively the agency, i.e. intention, that makes a gay male skinhead a subversive parody of hypermasculinity, the others point to the social misfire such a figure might produce in a context that lacks

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15 Leo Bersani discusses "gay Marines", "gay soldiers", and "gay machos in the gym" in a different way from Butler in the latter's subversive parodies (Bersani 1995, 17–19).

16 M. Lloyd, *Performativity, Parody, Politics*. I quote after Sullivan (2006, 87–89).

sufficient information. After all, even a queer theoretician, making his or her most revolutionary and subversive claim at a conference, might be taken to be a straight homophobe. In the case of the gay male skinhead as analyzed by Lloyd, without taking into account the social associations of Nazis with racism and homophobia, the successful subversion might happen only in very specific conditions, and precisely those conditions that do not fully depend on the agent's intention. So Butler finally said of subversiveness that it is unpredictable, "the kind of effect that resists calculation".[17] This is the very place where, I think, attribution theory might play a crucial role in the effort to calculate the outcome by shifting the perspective from the actor to the observer and asking attribution questions. Moya Lloyd polemicizes with Butler in this respect, when she "claims that it is possible to gauge the likely outcomes of particular actions if one examines the ways in which similar activities performed in similar contexts have functioned in the past. She stresses that this will not necessarily guarantee success, but will make political action viable, if somewhat unpredictable" (Sullivan 2006, 92). But is it subversion or rather the kenotic "kinda subversion" (kinda assimilation)? I fully agree with Butler when she says "I am not interested in delivering judgments on what distinguishes the subversive from the unsubversive" (Butler 2006, xxii) and "the effort to name the criterion for subversiveness will always fail, and ought to" (Butler 2006, xxiii).[18] This is not a call to stop using this word, but is perhaps a call to give up, at least partially, using it as an ethical/aesthetical (and both at the same time) judgement for normative reasons. It might be, I believe, still used for descriptive reasons and on this ground as a possible, albeit contingent, indication (not prescription – I follow Butler in this respect). Subversiveness is a very manipulable concept and ought to be. Like other dialectical concepts, it might be applied both as an averse and reverse of the same performances – by manipulating their temporality. For example, one might challenge the judgement that a given performance is subversive, because it transcends the social and/or aesthetical situation at this time; but through the manipulative use of metalepsis it might also be said that, for this very reason, the same performance is not subversive, because

17 This phrase appears in the text *Critically Queer*, but only in its first printing in Butler (1993, 29), not in its reprint in *Bodies That Matter* (1993).

18 And also: "subversive performances always run the risk of becoming deadening clichés through their repetition and, most importantly, through their repetition within commodity culture where "subversion" carries market value" (Butler 2006, xxii-xxiii), the same being true of literary, artistic and academic cultures, where "subversive" becomes equated with "innovative" and, generally, "positive" ("desired").

it does not transcend the situation that, on the first view, it has just created! Since all is in permanent movement and in the process of (un)becoming, there is no state of ever-successful subversiveness, and this is why it might always be manipulated. The task of the critic, or reader, but also of the writer, then, is to describe as precisely as possible the conditions in which the performance is being produced. In the attribution theory we find the difference between Kelley's theory that to make a successful attribution one needs to repeat the same observation over time – and the Heider & Simmel theory that in many contexts the subject deals with a new, scheme-breaking situation and thus needs to perform the attribution without recalling the preceding situations (Heider, Simmel 1944, 243–259). This leads, further, to the Hilton and Slugoski model of "abnormal" attributions as breaking the "attributive schemes" (Hilton, Slugoski 1986, 75–88). In this theory, "automatic" attributions are not "real" attributions, just mechanical behaviour, but a strange, decontextualizing situation is a call for attribution. This is exactly the job of planned or intended subversions: they are planned on the basis of the recognition of what is schematic in the social thinking and an attempt to defamiliarize the context. The reader and the critic should precisely distinguish both moments of "planning", the first, which includes the intentionality factor (that is, reading the actor's perspective from the actor's perspective, if one is the performer of the utterance, or from the observer's perspective if one is in the position of a "critic", "reader" or "audience") and the descriptive moment of the situation, including the characteristics of available "attributive schemes" (which itself is the attributive reading of the situation – or objects); and then, the second moment, which describes how the "abnormal" (or, in Kuhn's language, "anomaly") cracked with the schemes and how the effect was attributed, and to what or whom, and whether it has been cited (iterated), thus becoming the new scheme, *resp.* a new social convention out of an individual attempt, which is the third moment to distinguish. In *kenosis* we are in the first moment, and the travel through time follows Bloomian phases, offering in each one a different metaleptic manipulation.

Daemonization. This phase is, as follows, the radicalization of the "kinda" modality, and the increasing self-awareness of the writer as independent of normative influence above all on both levels, the artistic ("I create my style and I might be the influence for others, not the other way round"), and the social ("my opinion on social issues is able to ascend above the dominant and show the future direction"). But still those two levels are not fully integrated (where integration means interlacing).

The daemonization effect is more complex, regarding the informative influence, than the normative one. In Bloom the demonic effect means making the precursor more "human" and the ephebe more "demonic". In terms of (social) informative influence I could show this difference as a shift from the image of the writer as a kind of journalist who is nosing around his theme within the society, to a vision of a writer to whom the society voluntarily delivers themes on the assumption that he or she can make them clearer and more comprehensible. Instead of being on the street for investigation, the demon is on a throne as a judge. (Bloom stressed the at times grotesque realizations of this phase). The informative influence is not a source of anxiety, then, if the writer has the illusion (creates the illusion) that he or she graciously accepts it or rejects it, that is, the illusion of control (every lord has informers and councillors in the court). In terms of the phases of subversiveness, this is the second moment and the first metalepsis: what in the beginning was the writer's intention on the basis of the recognition of "attributive schemes" and only a plan, now, after recognizing its positive (i.e. subversive) effects, is re-told as having been calculated. Social psychology calls it the "I knew it from the start" effect. Just to make more things clear: social psychology studied the devilish halo effect or the Lucifer effect, as Zimbardo calls it, which in this case is rather confusing than clarifying, since what Bloom means is either the Miltonian Lucifer or the gnostic Lucifer, and both these Lucifers, as well as Byron's Cain and a gallery of worshipped literary characters, represent the positive effect of subversion; and social psychologists adopt those terms in their popular (Christian) meaning, wherein the Luciferian side of a man means that he is able to do bad things in certain social circumstances. This discrepancy at the same time shows the difference between dictionaries in the literary field and the common folk discourse, but also, in this case, the attribution fallacy itself (Zimbardo and other social psychologists attribute the signification of Lucifer to the folk code, Bloom and most writers and critics to the historical convention of literary rebels).

Askesis. In Bloom the ephebe in this phase manipulates the precursor so that the initial ephebe's falling in love with him now becomes the precursor's desire for ephebe which was there already from the beginning, as the desire of the precursor to have a disciple.[19] In social terms this manipulation means that the writer who at the beginning felt a part

19 There are different interpretations of *askesis*. I follow Potkański (2008b, 267–268).

and was seen as a part of social discourse, just a voice in it, now manipulates this discourse so that it appears that from the beginning, from the *clinamen*, the writer was an original voice who actively shaped the discourse and that his or her original social views expressed in artistic form influenced this very discourse. The writer also manipulates the situation to say that the situation (social situation, i.e. the discourse) needed him from the beginning, because it was too stagnant. Therefore it might also take the shape of the argument that the writer had to become what he or she became (the individual stylist with original social views) because there existed the demand for it on the part of society, or that the society "pushed" him or her to occupy this specific, both outcast and integrated, position. (This is the last phase and the second metalepsis, if you follow my somewhat complicated distinctions.) In social psychology terms, this effect could be seen as a conscious manipulation with actor and observer perspectives as in the fundamental attribution error: if in *clinamen*, as I have described it above, the writer is rather the observer, or a "medium", a "passive" interpreter – or, rather, interpretant – then in *askesis* he manipulates this condition, claiming that he was an "actor" from the beginning, except that, as all good spy novels instruct you, at the beginning he had to work undercover: because sub-version starts as sub-terranean or under water and works by tricking (manipulating) the dominant view through irony and metalepsis, pretty much as in Bloom. This manipulation is very comfortable for the writer, because it might be manipulated to explain both artistic and social risks: according to the fundamental error, the observer has the tendency to underscore the role of the agents while ignoring the "circumstances", and the actors attribute it to themselves in case of success, but to the circumstances in case of failure. While in *clinamen* the writer was in the position of neither (neither only observer, nor full actor), in *askesis* he or she might manipulate, depending on the charge or demand, his position as an observer who could not adequately recognize the role of circumstances (i.e., paid too much attention to the "artistic" part, his language etc.), or the other way round, the charge or demand being the opposite, might manipulate his or her position as an actor who was too focused on the circumstances (i.e. too "socially engaged"), to spend too much time on elaborating the form. In *askesis,* then, if the writer accuses or revisions him- or herself, it always has the positive effect of self-defence.

Apophrades. In this phase both levels are fully integrated in the writer so that he or she becomes at once the artistic master and the social prophet in such a way that nobody can precisely separate these aspects.

The social outgrowth of subversion is effective because it is artistic; the work is artistic because it is so socially innovative and provoking. It is not exactly that external final dictionaries do not influence the writer at all in this phase – rather he or she ironically and contingently uses them at his or her will, or at his or her play, if you like; the effect is the common (external) belief that it is precisely this writer who organizes the social dictionary and creates new entries to it, which acquire a social life. But what is most important is that this is not a definite and final stage. Subversiveness as it is rooted in queer theory, which in turn is modelled perhaps most similarly on romantic irony (Sobolczyk 2013b), is a never-ending process of displacements and apophatic un-becoming. And in this respect my account pretty much departs from Bloom, who preferred to avoid this kind of ironic negativity, rendering his *apophrades* problematic (Bielik-Robson 2002, 237–238). In *Poetry & Repression* Bloom ascribed his phases to rhetorical tropes, but in his vision irony is not a "master trope" (as I see it after e.g. Vico, Burke, de Man and White); therefore it is not the final trope, but is the very first trope of *clinamen,* while the final phase is assigned to *metalepsis* (Bloom 1976, 1–27). I see it as exactly the other way round.[20] Or, rather, *metalepsis* as a simple trick of representing the later as though it were earlier, contains irony as one simple technique alongside *antiphrasis* for instance, but irony cannot be reduced to either of these tropes. Bloom's description of what is ironical in *clinamen* – "expressing the opposite of the instinct it battles" (Bloom 1976, 16) – is precisely the reduction of irony to *antiphrasis*,[21] which means that Bloom is not speaking of irony in this case. On the contrary, Bloom's description of *apophrades* in psychoanalytic terms, as a "balance between introjection (or identification) and projection (or casting-out

20 Potkański (2008b, 389–390) also says that *metalepsis* either is the first stage trope (in *clinamen*), or might be seen as any ephebe's move, which means that it works on each level; which – this is my addition – means that it is just a "simple" word-trick, not a Master Trope, that might serve "bigger masters" (Master Tropes). As *Poetic Crossing* [1976] (Bloom 1988, 150) attests, Bloom was aware that irony might be a master trope. On Master Tropes see Burke (1962, 503–517).

21 In the text quoted above, Bloom assigns irony to Freudian "reaction formation" (as it appears in *clinamen*). In *Poetic Crossing* (Bloom 1988, 145) he claims that reaction-formation in rhetoric is "**illusio** or simple irony, irony as a figure of speech" (my emphasis). We might assume that Bloom for some reason abstains from different understandings of irony, but his use of the word is not always precise. I persist in maintaining that what he calls "irony" in fact "is not" irony. William R. Schutz says that Bloom's irony is the same as the "parody" studied by Russian formalists (Schutz 1994, 150–152). Once again I should say that "parody" is less "ironic" (and more "antiphrastic" or "hyperbolistic") than "pastiche".

the forbidden)" (Bloom 1976, 20)[22] – which suits exactly my description of what is going on between the actor and observer perspectives as well as between the Narcissus and Prometheus sides in the subject – I see as ironic and this balance is never full or everlasting. Bloom's vision is problematic if one imagines a circle that has a closure. But romantic irony, queer and the process of ongoing subversive challenges might rather take the form of a spiral, or, in its campier version, of a garland. But this garland is not to be confounded with the laurel crown donated by the grateful society.

In the final paragraph I want to offer a brief analysis of a few examples of Polish queer and gay novels as they situate themselves on the map of "phases".[23] This part might perhaps be less understandable for my potential international readers not oriented in Polish literature or its social contexts. The writers I take as examples all made their debuts after 2000, and I refer to their first or second books.

Clinamen. Mikołaj Milcke's two novels, *Gay and the City* (2011) and *Or I'm gonna be a pain in the ass!* (2013; all titles in my translation), play with the "chicklit" genre adapted as – contradictorily since it might (or might not) sound "girl" – "gay chicklit". "Chicklits" were considered subversive among literary genres addressed to women, for they were more radical than the patriarchy-embedded popular "romances", and likewise "the glamorous female press" and "female junk press", and yet were not as artistically and socially subversive (i.e., also, hard to read) as feminist artistic novels. However, this subversive edge gets erased in Milcke when adapted for a gay audience. There was no considerable tradition of "gay pulp" in Poland at the time of publication, only the high artistic tradition of (socially and artistically) complicated prose. Milcke fails to achieve the latter (although he probably aspires to it), and from "chicklit" he is able

22 Bloom says that "metalepsis or transmutation [is] the only trope-reversing trope". Obviously this is a manipulation, because the "trope-reversing trope" is irony. Metalepsis is "just" a "word-reversing trope". I do not wish to become too submerged in situating Bloom's thought in the history of literary theories, which has already been done, but shall just recall that, first, Bloom was trying to conceal Kenneth Burke (who wrote about *Four Master Tropes*, with irony as the "trope of tropes") as his predecessor and, secondly, Bloom was in constant polemic with Paul de Man, who re-constructed the understanding of romantic irony as an all-encompassing trope.

23 For the exemplification of my thesis on this double bind of influences upon contemporary writers, see also my earlier text, a discussion of an anthology of seven short stories "written on demand" about AIDS. In this text I do not refer to Bloom (although I do to Bourdieu), nor do I develop the theory of phases, but I do distinguish the social influence from the "literary" (Sobolczyk 2011, 175–204).

to take only the general "costume", with a significant inversion in the back- and foregrounds: while in the chicklits a woman (foreground) had a best friend who was gay (background), in Milcke it is otherwise. Thus his novels fall into the category of "pulp". One might also trace on numerous pages the moments when the "dictionary" speaks (via) the narrator, not otherwise. Whenever the narrator comments on any social aspect of being gay in Poland, he is reserved and offers press-clichés that in Polish press discourse are identified with the "liberal" press; however, for the LGBTQ organizations' standards – as well as for academic queer theory and also "artistic" narrative – they are disappointingly conservative ("adaptive"). There is little pictorial sex, because "people" associate gay people with anal sex (and this is bad), etc. From the literary style of the author one might get a whiff of his degree in journalism, which in this case means he is not good at creating even a well-made plot, not to mention artistic effects.

Tessera. Compared with Milcke's novels, Adam Mikołaj Zdeb's poetic prose (novel?!) *Love is, but badly made, because in pink* (2011) is at the opposite pole. It does not seek easy understanding on behalf of the reader, employing "artistic" dead clichés such as incoherent style, metaphors, loose composition etc. which in terms of the literary avant-garde evoke either the prose of the 30s, or the *nouveau roman*-influenced prose from the 60s; for example, in the Polish gay literature, *Gates to Paradise* by Jerzy Andrzejewski could be mentioned. As I have just stressed, however, these conventions are "dead" in the literary field, not innovative. Zdeb creates a kind of mannerist (not in the positive meaning) "artistic" adornment which ineptly covers up a weak plot about a broken heart. At the same time, also as a kind of supplement, he tries to introduce an "intellectual" value to his novel, embodied in an ejaculation of the narrator, who, after reading Judith Butler, happens to understand that people are cheated by the discourse on love because love is also performative. Intellectually this conclusion is utterly naive, since Butler claims that everything is performative: there is no distinction between performance and anything "real", "objective", "reified". Therefore the book falls under the heading of "based on false pretences". It is neither subversive nor "hegemonic", and satisfies nobody.

Kenosis. Marcin Szczygielski's *Pick-up sticks* (2010) is potentially successful simultaneously as a "gay pop" novel and as a "teenage novel". However this very combination, apparently based on a conformist attitude towards literary genres and conventions, offers a supplement on the sociology of literary forms level. On the surface it introduces gay sex and a queer family (as opposed to "traditional families", which are "bad"

in this fable) into the "teenage novel". But meta-artistically it does something more: it strips away the "pedagogical" conventions of reading and programming literary performances (as writing and reading acts); for in the literary education discourse there is an agreement that teenagers are supposed to read literary works for "adults", i.e. the "canon", yet the novels produced as an "alternative (contemporary) canon" for teenagers castrate themselves from (pedagogically) "undesired" content; Szczygielski calls for consistency in this respect. His social ambitions might fail, however, since the book gained popularity rather among gay adults, and by no means redefined the "alternative canon"; but perhaps this work is still in progress. There are also more "kinky", that is, subversive moments, but probably for the *cognoscenti*'s eyes only. The main character Paweł is gay-bashed by his older brother, so that "read straight" this is just a conventional story of "gay bashing" (in the family). However, the eye of the *cognoscenti* sees that the older brother employs many techniques used also on erotic grounds in the sneak subculture, such as smelling stinking socks etc. Therefore we are faced rather with a rape whose sexual nature is hidden but recognizable. The reader might speculate now on the repression of the queer desire of the older brother which results in aggression and so forth. Another example of kenotic "kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic" might be Bartosz Żurawiecki's debut novel *Three men in the bed (to say nothing of the cat)* (2005) and the discussion it raised. While some critics saw it as simply an "inversive" romance (its subtitle being "a passive romance"), that is, an adaptation of a "patriarchal" and "straight" genre only with gay characters instead of straight ones, the others, more queer theory-influenced, pointed out that, for example, it subversively opts for a "private space" for gay people which is denied by the political claims (such as visibility) of LGBTQ organizations. The very romance plot is indeed "kinda subversive" – a gay couple acquires a third party and constitutes a *ménage à trois* for a moment – and "kinda hegemonic", for finally it seems that threesomes are not good for either of the parties involved (it is better to have couples, then).

Daemonization. Michał Zygmunt's novel *New Romantic* "collected" the social anxieties of queer people and also of "leftish people" in Poland around 2005, after the installation of the conservative Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) government and transformed it into a political fantasy of Poland in (the near) future, where depressed and repressed queers take over the power. The anxieties are, then, daemonized even to the point of grotesquerie; however, the answer is neither a utopia nor a dystopia. It ironizes subversively the idea of "getting more power" on behalf of the LGBTQ organizations (if they really wish for it; or it is their "repressed" fantasy), which makes this argument

peculiarly close to the conservative rhetoric, but at the same time dismantles the conservative fantasies as well.

Askesis. Two novels by Bartosz Żurawiecki that followed *Three men...,* i.e. *I, or my 66 loves* (2007) and *The Unrepresented* (2011), might be seen as a manipulated auto-revision ("it was there from the start" – the thing you criticized me for its not being there). Both novels take up the motive of the defence of domestic yet still queer life, as sketched in *Three men...,* yet now package it in a refined, postmodern, abrupt form rather than a "soft" romance genre, making the social claim more poignant, and, ironically, more clear-cut, while at the same time everything in these novels, as in good postmodern and queer fiction, is more ambiguous (if "ambiguity" is a mode of communication understood more directly by those who criticized me, I shall give it to them, but making it a double-edged sword). The queer message is against exclusions inside the LGBTQ community: being queer is not restricted to walking in parades or sitting in on a sexchat; queer opts for various lifestyles and ought to be against forcing people to live so as to feel "not at home". In *I, or my 66 loves* this is obtained by a long description of virtual adventures on a sexchat which are finally bracketed; yet the idea that a couple consisting of two (men) is better for some lovers is not combined with a genre charged with dubious (patriarchal, heteronormative) associations, that is "romance" as in *Three men….* (Obviously the idea of combining a "conservative" genre with "progressive" issues might in itself be subversive, but in this case the effect was more of a misfire, ending in the kenotic "kinda".) Żurawiecki plays with the idea of unambiguity, finally manipulating the debut novel so that it seems to have been subversive in the beginning, only in a subtler manner which went unrecognized; while in the latter novels he either uses ambiguity to obtain unambiguity or the other way round, in the end ironizing the very situation.

Apophrades. There is no better queer example so far of a successful subversion which changed the dictionary than Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown* (many different editions starting from 2004). In fact Witkowski's work follows ironically (or simply metaconsciously) many phases of the anxiety of social influence. It starts with an ironic *clinamen* with a narrator who is an aspiring writer, but visits two old queens to write a press coverage for a popular weekly, and his descriptions of the setting and of the two heroines mock the idea of disengagement (for soon we learn that the old queens, as also the gay milieu, know "editor Michał" very well as "Michaśka" or "Snow White") and false language. Many different editions, with *Lovetown without censorship* (2012) at the forefront, which now is the basis for international

translations, are a project of ironic *tessera(s)*, in which the author adds material, throwing in new anecdotes about characters already present in the original edition, at times even having these anecdotes allegedly delivered by the very characters depicted in the novel (that is, their prototypes), who "correct" the narrator or "recall more" etc. This effect is not always successful, for the "final" edition in my opinion is overloaded. The *tessera* strategy is also the basic concept for another of Witkowski's books, *Lumberjack* (2011), which eventually surpasses the condition of a supplement (to *Lovetown*), and by the same token the phase of *tessera*, moving towards the phases of *daemonization* (when he exalts and diminishes his "demonic" and famous masterpiece, *Lovetown*), and *askesis* (when he completes *Lovetown* with a displacement which opens up his writing to a new genre, a pastiche of a crime story). However, Witkowski re-employed the *tessera* strategy once again in *Felon and the Girl* (2014), this time providing a supplement to *Lumberjack* (and only incidentally to *Lovetown*), and this attempt I place at the *kenosis* phase, for the result is less interesting artistically and stylistically than *Lumberjack,* not to mention *Lovetown*. The autoparasitic strategy tires and disappoints, while not many new themes are introduced and those are less interesting than in previous books. In the end it arrives at a "kinda" condition. It is not completely weak artistically, but not great; it has some social threads but they lose their potential in the whole construction. *Apophrades* originally in Bloom means the return of the dead which makes the living stronger through revision, but still nothing seems stronger than the "dead", which in this case is *Lovetown,* and the whole career of Witkowski seems to be a struggle with his own influence via escapes from it (with the novels *Barbara Radziwiłłówna from Jaworzono-Szczakowa* and *Margot* which both represent *clinamen,* try as they might to evade *Lovetown's* tropes) or completions. In *Lovetown* perhaps the most "apophratic" moment is when a group of gay activists tries to program Witkowski's "gay novel", in which he constitutes himself as an independent and queer (also queer versus gay) writer and social thinker who, instead of being captivated by an "external" language of "obligations", constitutes his own. Successfully. Originally a hyper-intertextual work collecting and mixing motives and allusions to numerous local queer tropes and codes, as well as to literary works (since Polish modernism abounds in queer literature), it changed the Polish discourse and dictionary on the subject completely. The dead come back, then, but Witkowski stands in line with them as a peer-to-peer.

In *Lovetown* perhaps the most "apophratic" moment is when a group of gay activists tries to program Witkowski's "gay novel", in which he constitutes himself as an independent and queer (also queer versus gay) writer and social thinker who, instead of being captivated by an "external" language of "obligations", constitutes his own. Successfully. Originally a hyper-intertextual work collecting and mixing motives and allusions to numerous local queer tropes and codes, as well as to literary works (since Polish modernism abounds in queer literature), it changed the Polish discourse and dictionary on the subject completely.

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Abstrakt: Tekst odnosi się do kategorii wprowadzonych przez Harolda Blooma w *Lęku przed wpływem.* Jego teoria zostaje uznana za immanentystyczną, tj. zorientowaną na tekst/osobowość (pisarza), nie na kategorie społeczne. Od lat 80. w humanistyce dokonuje się „socjologizacja", przez niektórych myślicieli obserwowana z trwogą (Finkielkraut), przez innych twórczo rozwijana. Bloomowskie kategorie zostają przechwycone i zresygnifikowane w kategoriach psychologii społecznej, aby umożliwić opis współczesnej sytuacji pisarza.

Słowa kluczowe: wpływ społeczny, psychoanaliza, psychologia społeczna, socjologizacja humanistyki, literatura homotekstualna