

In pursuit of pop culture: Reception of pop culture in the People's Republic of Poland as opposition to the political system – Example of the science fiction fandom

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Piotr Siuda

Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland

Abstract

Researching the fans of pop culture texts, it is worth considering a direction that has been neglected in fan studies: the treatment of fan practices as opposition to the polity of a country. Such considerations are particularly crucial in the context of fan communities functioning in non-democratic countries. The author describes the conditions of reception of pop culture texts in Poland under communism. It was in this era that access to such transmissions was restricted, and since fans sought to get access to those rationed cultural assets, their reception ought to be viewed as a symbolic opposition to the politics of the country. The article illustrates this using the example of science fiction fans functioning in the 1980s. The mechanism that governs their community is discussed as exemplified by issues of the literary magazine *Fantastyka* between 1982 and 1989. The fans' opposition to the political system has been presented as an escape from the everyday difficulties connected with functioning in a communist polity. The fans facing the conditions of the time strived to get their favourite texts and overcame some institutional obstacles connected with organising their activities.

Keywords

Fan subversiveness, fans, *Fantastyka* magazine, pop culture in communist Poland, science fiction fandom in Poland

Corresponding author:

Piotr Siuda, Department of Sociology, Kazimierz Wielki University, Ul. Choloniewskiego 51/6, 85-127 Bydgoszcz, Poland.

Email: piotr.siuda@gmail.com

Fans – between reception, community and re-production

In this article, the term fan is used as developed in literatures on fandom, especially in the works of authors such as John Fiske (1992), Henry Jenkins (1992a, 1992b, 2006a, 2006b) or Matt Hills (2006). According to these and many other researchers, conspicuous consumption fans constitute a specific group of pop culture recipients; however, there are additional other features that distinguish them from the average acquirer of popular culture.

These differences were shown by Henry Jenkins (1992a) in one of his articles in which he discussed fans' features. First, fans are always selective in determining their passion, which means that they consciously define what interests them and what does not, choosing only certain things out of a large number of cultural products available on the market. Moreover, a fan aims at being in contact with other fans and together they form communities whose members discuss pop culture texts incessantly negotiating the meanings they apply to them. Participating in the interactions within the community is a crucial part of fans' lives. Jenkins considered this issue as exemplified by fans of science fiction TV productions:

[...] [F]ans are motivated not simply to absorb the text but to translate it into other types of cultural and social activity. Fan reception goes beyond transient comprehension of a viewed episode toward some more permanent and material form of meaning-production. Minimally, fans feel compelled to talk about viewed programs with other fans. Often, fans join fan organizations or attend conventions which allow for more sustained discussions. [...] It is this social and cultural dimension which distinguishes the fannish mode of reception from other viewing styles which depend upon selective and regular media consumption. Fan reception cannot and does not exist in isolation, but is always shaped through input from other fans. [...] Given the highly social orientation of fan reading practices, fan interpretation need to be understood in institutional rather than personal terms. Fan club meetings, newsletters, and letterzines provide a space where textual interpretations get negotiated [...]. (Jenkins, 1992a: 210)

According to Jenkins, another feature of fans is that they build the so-called Art World, creating new amateur works based on what the fans are fascinated with. Fans may create fan films (Brooker, 2002: 129–171), fan fiction (Pugh, 2005) or fan art, to name a few of their works. All these help fans create their own rich and vibrant culture and are a manifestation of manipulating and remixing the original narratives. However, the Art World consists not only of cultural texts, but also of a system of values and norms, including those which regulate the evaluation of amateur works and their circulation within the community. In short, fans are extremely involved and productive consumers may fully enjoy their fan lives only within an active community of people similar to them.

Fans' opposition to political systems – need for research

In his other text, Jenkins (1988) notes that being a member of a fandom may serve many, seemingly unnoticeable, functions for its members. Based on the ethnographic analysis of the *Star Trek* series fans' community, the researcher concluded that

For some women, trapped within low paying jobs or within the socially isolated sphere of the homemaker, participation within the national, or international, network of fans grants a degree of dignity and respect otherwise lacking. For others, fandom offers a training ground for the development of professional skills and an outlet for creative impulses constrained by their workday lives. Fan slang draws a sharp contrast between the mundane, the realm of everyday experience and those who dwell exclusively within that space, and fandom, an alternative sphere of cultural experience that restores the excitement and freedom that must be repressed to function in ordinary life (Jenkins, 1988: 474).

Fans' activity may therefore be perceived as a specific gate that allows one to express himself or herself in a multitude of ways, and in a sense, oppose the everyday ordinary life. What is important is that depending on who the fan is, participation in a fandom allows for one's distancing himself or herself from those elements of everyday life that are most worrying. Thanks to being involved in pop culture reception and thanks to other fans, one may minimise the impact of those elements so that life becomes more bearable.

Although Jenkins discussed *Star Trek* fans, there are more examples of ethnographic analyses of the escape from what annoys us and what we dislike in everyday life. There are many analyses on women who, thanks to their involvement in popular culture reception, may 'free themselves' from the patriarchal nature of contemporary society. They do it frequently through the already mentioned process of negotiating the meanings offered by the producers of popular culture, as well as through various forms of meaning production, including the creation of amateur texts such as fan fiction (Baker, 2004; Fiske, 1989a: 98–99, 1989b: 149; Garratt, 2002; Harrington and Bielby, 1995: 137).

As was shown by Bacon-Smith (1992), who investigated female *Star Trek* fans, the non-professional works shift the point of interest from the elements of the original productions, which are of the adventurous nature, onto those focused on interpersonal relations. The official text can be altered in a way that the marginalised characters play the leading roles – the weak, lost, vulnerable women in the men's world are now presented as powerful, independent and successful in their professional and sexual lives. Many researchers note that a particularly evident example of 'grabbing' pop culture products for female use are stories under the genre of slash fiction, in which the characters known from the screen or books are presented as entangled in homosexual relationships. According to research, the women writing slash fiction long for a change to question the previous perceptions of femininity and masculinity (Kustriz, 2003). Mirna Cicioni (1998) explained that by creating, female fans participate in a worthwhile and liberating process, and identify and verbalise their own – sometimes problematic and contradictory – needs and desires (p. 175).

Setting aside the analyses on female fans practices, without questioning their significance, it is worth paying attention to the often ignored notion that fan activity may also pertain to political systems. Fans are able to symbolically oppose state authorities or political systems of their country. Such opposition ought to be understood in the same categories as discussed above, namely, in the categories of distancing oneself from the conditions of everyday life. Therefore, if subversiveness to the state is referred to later on in the article, what is meant is not opposing the authorities in an overt way but 'escaping'

from the burden of everyday life, which is the consequence of the political system of the country.

Unfortunately, fans are very rarely perceived in this way, which is easy to explain given that fans have been and typically are described by researchers from the United States and Great Britain. They publish their findings in English, and moreover, their reference point is the escape from the burdens of their own socio-cultural milieu. These reflect the 'use' of pop culture that occurs in democratic countries where the political fight against the authority is public and expressed mainly by means of citizen society institutions.

Under certain conditions, mostly connected with restricted economic and political freedom, fans' need to escape from everyday life may have the features of opposition to a non-democratic polity. This happens when the fans' distancing from conditions in which they have to function is at the same time an escape from the conditions of life resulting from the totalitarian nature of the political system. In this sense, a fans' activity may be perceived as opposing the political authorities. This form of subversiveness definitely ought to receive more attention, since in totalitarian regimes where people are deprived of the ability to form legal political opposition, fan subversiveness may be the only form of opposition directed at the authorities of a country.

Fans' opposition to political systems – example of Poland

To illustrate what subversiveness directed at the state and polity may look like, this article analyses science fiction fan activity during the era of the People's Republic of Poland (PRP) during the communist period. The analysis pertains to science fiction fans operating in the 1980s.

In the PRP, there was little research on fan communities, although such groups functioned quite dynamically. Significantly, there were analyses focused on young people who were strongly involved in the reception of music (for example, rock), but they were not treated as fans in the sense defined at the beginning of this article. The youth fascinated with music were referred to as a subculture, and if they were characterised, the focus was primarily on the members' dress and on the superficial description of the group's culture (Gwozda and Krawczak, 1996). To state that in communist Poland there was no research on fans at all would be an overstatement; however, the fact is that there were few analyses that described them. Moreover, those analyses cannot be used because of their approach to the subject which is completely different from the one taken in this article (Kowalski, 1988). Additionally, the topic of science fiction fans has been totally marginalised in Polish scientific literature.

The situation has not improved since the fall of communism in 1989; the issue of fans has long been ignored and has only been considered in recent years. However, these studies are of contemporary fans functioning in a democratic country. There are no fandom analyses of communist times for two main possible reasons. First, Polish academics wish to keep up with the times; in their research, they refer to the latest trends in fan studies, that is, recognising fans as part of the transnational community made of similar members. It is ignored that describing fans as they used to function may cast some light on the current condition of the phenomenon and its local colour. Second, there are almost no

empirical data available. Finding fans of the PRP era, constructing a comprehensive and representative sample or interviewing the so-called veteran fans of the PRP era is extremely difficult, if even possible. Another method is needed to discover the mechanisms governing the pop culture participation of sci-fi fans under communism.

An analysis of the content of media in the PRP era proves to be relevant. The quasi-governmental documents, which are manifestations of the official attitude of the communist party towards the phenomenon of fans, may be studied. Such materials, although not numerous, exist in various magazines and newspapers; radio and television programmes also reported on fans. However, the analysis of such transmissions would not be advisable, and their inadequacy is best explained in an example.

In *Nowe Drogi* [New Ways], an ideological monthly magazine, which was a 'theoretical and political organ' of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party and obligatory reading for party activists, there is an article on the 'social movement' connected with science fiction literature:

There are several active centres that function in the PRP: the All-Polish Fantasy and Science Fiction Lovers Club in Warsaw, SF clubs in Poznań, Toruń, Lublin. The SF clubs in Gliwice, Koszalin, Przemyśl and other cities are under construction. The Socialist Union of Polish Students and the voivodship branches of the Polish Writers' Association are patrons of these activities by science fiction works fans. The SF clubs programmes include seminars, meeting with writers and scientists, events aimed at popularising literary, artistic and film works, and international cooperation. (Chruszczewski, 1976: 8)

Chruszczewski (1976) presents a mawkish picture; he dwells on the advantages of the genre as well as on its capabilities connected with shaping adequate social attitudes. However, Chruszczewski's article is not reliable due to the kind of periodical in which it was published. *Nowe Drogi* was one of those social and cultural magazines in the PRP era which were meant to be a source of information on plans and intentions of the authorities, but which failed to present the full picture of their realisation, and most of all, they did not mention the lack of social acceptance for their policy. The institution of censorship that was completely dependent on the authorities watched to ensure that proper things got through to the social consciousness (Jakubowska, 2012). The descriptions of many phenomena were distorted in an attempt to show how much those phenomena would contribute to strengthen the polity. These characteristics of the *Nowe Drogi* magazine make one doubt the comprehensiveness and reliability of their fan descriptions.

Many scientific or journalistic articles on Polish pop culture published in the era of communism ought to be taken with a pinch of salt, bearing in mind that they were supposed to serve the propaganda of success. The articles presented Polish pop culture as one which fulfils pro-social functions, as a 'bridge' for workers giving them a sense of social advancement (Idzikowska-Czubaj, 2006). More interestingly, such a picture was built in spite of pop culture shortages (which are discussed later on). The PRP's positive policy was contrasted with the activities of the Western cultural industry which was portrayed as oppressive and exploitive, and based on imposing pop culture onto the passive consumer masses (Kowalski, 1988: 1–52).

In search of a reliable report, it is worth considering the materials that were not under the direct control of the state authorities (although, they had certainly gone through censorship). One of them is *Fantastyka* (*Fantastic*), a currently legendary literary monthly magazine, issued since 1982. The magazine continues to be published (since 1990 functioning under the title *Nowa Fantastyka* (New Fantastic)), although its contemporary profile is largely different from that of the 1980s. *Fantastyka* was the first periodical in Poland devoted to the popularisation of the science fiction genre. It published short stories and novels of Polish, and most often, Western writers, film or book reviews, as well as articles and columns on popular science. The magazine may shed some light on the sci-fi fans as it published reliable information on conventions and important events within the fandom. This is the only magazine of the communist era which pertains to the issue of fans in an independent manner.

It is worth noting that building a picture of fans of the PRP era using *Fantastyka* entails a research difficulty, namely, the limitation of the material under analysis. The monthly magazine was exclusively concerned with science fiction fans and was published since 1982, as mentioned previously. It is reasonable to predict that the available material allows one to draw conclusions pertaining exclusively to sci-fi fans functioning in the 1980s, rather than in the previous decades. Polish communism did evolve, with its various periods starting with the most repressive, Stalinist times (the 1950s). Poland of the 1960s experienced the so-called little stabilisation when public life was liberalised, amnesty for political prisoners was announced, public feeling improved and dependence on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) decreased. The 1970s was the time of relative auspiciousness and technocracy of Edward Gierek's era, which was followed by the crisis of the 1980s. It was in this period that the country experienced dramatic economic deterioration, which resulted in mass strikes and the emergence of the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) trade union, as well as caused the introduction of martial law. Poland of the 1980s was a country of permanent shortages where the access to basic goods and services, such as food and petrol, was rationed.

In accordance with its methodology, this article pertains exclusively to science fiction fans functioning in the 1980s. However, as indicated below, it is reasonable to consider to what extent the conclusions may be applied with regard to fans operating earlier and those interested in other media genres.

In subsequent sections of this article, the analysis of the *Fantastyka* magazine will be supplemented by several figures showing the cover pages and other selected pages from various issues of the magazine (Figures 1–4). It is worth noticing the graphic designs of the magazine, most of all its covers, which reveal their independent nature. In the PRP era, Western graphics, for example, those promoting films, were ridiculed by the authorities and the critics who served them not only for their politically incorrect origins but primarily for their artistic mediocrity and triviality (Dydo, 1993). The editorial staff of the *Fantastyka* magazine had no qualms about printing Western graphics, including posters from the United States or western Europe and thereby promoting the works of those cinematographies.

Fans in *Fantastyka* monthly, 1982–1989

The magazine was divided into several thematic sections; however, it seems purposeless to name them all or precisely describe their content. Every issue was devoted to foreign



Figure 1. The cover of *Fantastyka* monthly, October 1984.



Figure 2. The cover of *Fantastyka* monthly, November 1989.

and sometimes Polish fantasy literature, and comics were published as a supplement. Every issue always contained several short stories, as well as instalments of

a novel published in several parts. In addition to these, there were announcements on competitions and award winners, reprints of scientific articles on science fiction as a literary genre, letters from readers and popular science articles (Figure 3).

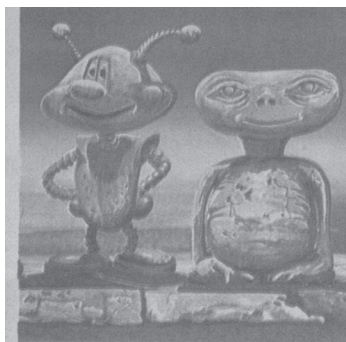
This article analyses one of the most important features of the magazine – the *Wśród fanów* (*Among Fans*) section (in issues of 1982 and 1983, the section was entitled *Fan Movement*). It is considered crucial in the context of discussing the fandom of the 1980s; however, it is essential to note that the section did not appear in every issue. The situation was different in subsequent years – at the beginning, little attention was paid to fans; this changed significantly in the mid-1980s to their advantage, however, closer to 1989 fans fell into disgrace again. Generally, the section appeared in 38 issues (it was longer than one page only twice), which is presented in Table 1 (in 1982 there were only three issues published; the magazine has been published since October 1982).

The section *Among Fans* was written by both the editorial staff, whose members were fans themselves, and by decision-makers of the Polish Association of Science Fiction (SF) Lovers (PASFL), the organisation grouping clubs from the whole country, called Voivodship Branches. Within the PASFL, there were also tens of clubs established at the so-called Cultural Centres and various student or youth organisations, such as the Polish Students' Association, the Polish Socialist Youth Association or the Rural Youth Association. The PASFL has been disbanded since 1989, as have its many branches.

Despite the fact that under the auspices of PASFL *Among Fans* considered the general issues of fans, not favouring any clubs within the Association, and the presented information was usually in the form of short articles, with one exception being the listing of club details presented in a frame that clearly stood out from the main body of the text – each club was listed in a separate line (see Figure 4). The section had the form of a longer essay four times. To organise the themes discussed in the section, several categories have to be identified, and Table 2 presents a brief description of each. Also, the table shows the number of issues of *Fantastyka* in 1982–1989 in which these categories appeared (when-ever clubs are mentioned, they are both the ones within the PASFL and those beyond).

To establish that in the 1980s in the PRP, the science fiction genre fans distanced themselves from the difficulties of everyday life, and by doing so, symbolically opposed the communist regime, the conditions in which they functioned will be described. The conditions are to be observed by analysing the *Among Fans* section which seems useful as it frequently mentions that there were shortages significant for fans, and the shortages may be understood in many ways. The hardships of a fan's everyday life ought to be identified with the very shortages, which will be described below, the greatest of which being the restricted access to popular culture.

Indeed, accessing Polish or Western texts on the market was the major problem for fans, although in the reading of the magazine one may also point out some other issues, which are presented in Table 3. It is worth noting that as a result of the censorship which *Fantastyka* had to undergo, the editors probably could not write about everything over which the fans were losing sleep. For example, only occasionally one may find references to institutional difficulties connected with functioning in the context of highly politicised organisations, even the mentioned socialist youth associations or Cultural Centres. These were state institutions which were to promote the development of culture and art and they were subordinate to the Party.



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Filmy fantastyczne zdobywają światowe ekrany i wypierają z repertuaru wiele innych popularnych gatunków. A jak wygląda to u nas? Na to pytanie stara się odpowiedzieć Maciej Parowski, pisząc o sytuacji kina fantastycznego w Polsce w 1985 roku.

Gremlin-ssy atakują!!!

Opowiadania i nowele

Harry Harrison
Kontrakt za miliard kredytek

4

„...Musimy przechytrzyć komputer, a więc maszynę, a choć to niełatwe, jednak może być wykonane. – Odwrócił się i uśmiechnął do admirała Djukicha. – Podejmujemy się. Ale cena została podwojona...”

André Carneiro
W ciemnościach

12

„...Płomyki ognia stawały się coraz bardziej anemiczne i zarówno też nie świeciły jak poprzednio. Nie mogła więc to być zbiorowa halucynacja ani epidemiczna choroba oczu. Przysuwano dłonie do płomyków ognia, które przestawały parzyć. Ludzie zaczęli odczuwać strach...”

Powieść

Gene Wolfe
Pieśń łowców

21

Tym razem mikropowieść zamykająca się w całości w jednym numerze. Autor jest już znany naszym Czytelnikom (por.: „Fantastyka” nr 10/84, 12/85, 5/86), teraz się chyba też nie zawiodą.

Z polskiej fantastyki

Short stories po polsku

50

Trzeci już (por.: „Fantastyka” nr 9/84 i 12/85) zestaw miniatur literackich. Autorzy: Paweł Tomczyk, Tomasz Małkowski, Grzegorz Babuła, Zofia Beszczyńska, Maciej Gałaszek, Antoni Korek, Zygmunt Jazukiewicz, Teresa Truszkowska, Marek Hemerling i Agnieszka Taborska.

Zygmunt Jazukiewicz
Mamo, mamo, ile kroków?

55

„...Jak dotąd największym osiągnięciem Alfa było dotarcie do drzwi gabinetu. Następnego dnia musiał zaczynać od początku. Taka była reguła gry...”

Krytyka

Gremlin-ssy atakują!!!
Słownik polskich autorów fantastyki

45

Maciej Parowski: „...Fantastyka mocno rozepchała się w polskim repertuarze, ale pokazujemy ją od strony wcale nie najlepszej...”

56

Najwybitniejszy przedstawiciel polskiej fantastyki naukowej – Stanisław Lem (ur. 1921) Na „pożółtych kartkach” fragmenty „Obłoku Magellana”. (Patrz też wywiad z pisarzem na str. 59)

Recenzje

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Leszek Bugajski o „Filozofii science fiction” Zdzisława Łekiewicza, Sławomir Kędzierski o „Laboratoryjnych wyobraźni” Jerzego Grundkowskiego, Krzysztof Sokółowski o „Spekulacjach” – antologii opowiadań fantastycznych zestawionej przez Isaaca Asimova i Alice Laurance

Spotkanie z pisarzem

Stanisław Lem

59

„...Nigdy nie miałem szczęścia obracania się w kregu, gdzie moje rozważania i problemy spotkałyby się z zainteresowaniem intelektualnym...”

Nauka i SF

Wzór na Wszechświat

62

Cztery sily rządzą wszystkim, co istnieje! (?) – Maciej Iłowiecki o poszukiwaniach teorii jednolitego pola (por. felieton „Świat, jaki jest”, „Fantastyka” nr 8/86)

Wśród fanów

Polcon’86

64

Na przełomie maja i czerwca do Katowic zjechali się ze wszystkich regionów. Poiski miłośnicy fantastyki. Przedstawiamy sprawozdanie z konwentu oraz wypowiedzi kilku jego uczestników.

Figure 3. The table of contents of *Fantastyka* – issue of September 1986.

Table 1. Frequency of the *Among Fans* section occurrences in *Fantasyka* issues, 1982–1989.

Year	Number of issues in which the <i>Among Fans</i> section occurred and months of their publication
1982	3 (October, November, December)
1983	5 (February, March, May, June, August)
1984	4 (February, June, September, October)
1985	10 (February, March, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December)
1986	9 (January, March, April, May, July, August, September, October, December)
1987	4 (January, March, June, December)
1988	2 (March, September)
1989	1 (April)

Source: Author's own study.

Fantasyka almost never overtly considered the political events which had an impact on fans, and there were many such events. No article contains a note that shortages on the market increased as a consequence of introducing martial law in Poland in December 1981 – only once was there a note on the ‘activity stagnation’ experienced by fans at that time. Certainly, the picture of difficulties experienced by fans was misrepresented due to the censorship – one may only guess that institutional and political adversity occurred more often than was mentioned in the magazine. However, there is no doubt that fans often complained about not having access to pop culture texts; the reports included in *Fantasyka* on this aspect of shortages were not ‘hushed up’ by the censors.

In order to illustrate the types of shortages in a more detailed manner, it is worth quoting several examples from published articles. At the end of each quote, there is the title of the article (if available) and the issue number where it is to be found. The page, the author and the category (according to Tables 2 and 3) to which it can be assigned are also provided. The examples were selected so that they can be assigned to different categories, which are meant to show the varied content of the *Among Fans* section.

To start with, it is worth looking at an example of a report published in one of the 1984 issues which presents the activities of a science fiction club in Poznań. The cited article is full of complaints about the hardships which the fans (not only from Poznań) were facing, as well as descriptions of attempts to overcome those difficulties. Those include shortages of publications, problems with access to premises (lack of space for the club to function) and problems connected with gaining permission to operate:

In accordance with the announcement of issue 3/83, today we are going to shoot up into *Orbit*. In the beginning, we had some difficulties localising the target, but with the help of our friend Paweł Porwitow we received the proper address: the Poznań Branch of the Polish Association of SF Lovers *Orbit*, address: os. Kosmonautów number 118 in Poznań. Along with geographic-administrative coordinates, the editorial staff received an invitation to take part in the seminar: *The Position of Fantasy in Contemporary Literature and Film*. [...]

wśród fanów

POD ZNAKIEM VIDEO

Okres między końcem kwietnia a początkiem lipca br. obfitował w wiele ciekawych wydarzeń w polskim Fandomie. W numerze czerwcowym „Fantastyki” pisaliśmy już o wcześniejszych imprezach. O ile w zeszłym roku przeważały seminaria i warsztaty twórcze, o tyle w tym roku absolutny prym wiodą przeglądy filmowe. Sprawcą tego jest coraz bardziej dostępne video, które mimo mniejszego komfortu oglądania, zapewnia rzecz dla miłośników SF najważniejszą – aktualność i dużą różnorodność pokazowanych filmów. Chociaż jestem wielkim zwolennikiem video, mam jednak nadzieję, że imprezy typu seminarijnego nie zostaną przez nie całkowicie wyparte.

Dość interesujący zestaw filmów zaprezentowano na imprezie zorganizowanej przez Wrocławski Klub Fantastyki w dniach 4–6.05.84 r. Można tam było obejrzeć oprócz żelaznych pozycji, czyli „Powrotu Jedi” i „Ciemnego kryształ”, takie filmy jak „Blekingi Grom”, „Laserowy miotacz”, „Bramy piekieł” i „Władca Bestii” – obrazy nie-często spotykane, stanowiące pewien ewenement na tego typu przeglądach.

Nie zabrakło także we Wrocławiu spotkania z redakcją „Fantastyki”, która reprezentowali Jacek Rodek i Dariusław Toruń. Do potknięcia organizacyjnych należy zaliczyć przede wszystkim kompletny brak informacji o programie, jak również rozróżnienie miejsc posittów po różnych częściach miasta, co wprowadziło pewne zamieszanie. Całość mogła jednak sprawić sympatyczne wrażenie i imprezę należy zaliczyć do udanych.

Impreza Poznańskiego Klubu Filmowego „NOSTROMO” (18–20.05.84 r.) mimo że również była przeglądem filmowym, nosiła nieco odmienny charakter. Nie królowało tu wszechwładne video. Wszystkie filmy były prezentowane z taśmą 16 mm. Oprócz bardzo starych już obrazów w rodzaju „Młajce gwiazdy” czy „Sygnałów MMXX”, organizatorzy zapewnił absolutną nowość: „Shining”. Już choćby ze względu na ten film poznańska impreza należy zaliczyć do interesujących.

Filmy, filmy, filmy – tak chyba można określić imprezę zorganizowaną w Starej Miłośnie pod Warszawą w dniach 25–27.05.84 r. przez Warszawski Oddział Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Miłośników Fantastyki. Organizatorzy okazali się prawdziwie „bezbożni” dla przybyłych fanów. Przegląd był maratonom, który mogli wytrzymać jedynie zagorzali miłośnicy X Muzy. Pokazy rozpoczynały się rano tuż po śniadaniu i trwały z przerwami na posittki nierazko do drugiej w nocy. W ciągu niecałych trzech dni pokazano 12 filmów, co dało łącznie około 24 godzin projekcji.

Oprócz standardowych na tego typu imprezach filmów, takich jak „Powrót Jedi”, „TRON”, „Conan” czy „Ciemny kryształ” – można było obejrzeć mniej rozpowszechnione obrazy: „Blade Runner”, „Władca Pierścieni” wg Tolkiena, „Rollerball” i „The Thing”.

Nie obszedło się niesłyszalnymi potknięciami technicznymi ze sprzętem, ale mimo wszystko myślę, że ci, którzy wytrzymali te kilkanaście godzin projekcji, nie żałują swojego przyjazdu na imprezę.

W tych samych dniach, w których odbywała się impreza warszawska, Rada Uczelniana ZSP Politechniki Łódzkiej przy pomocy Łódzkiego Klubu Fantastyki zorganizowała spotkanie pod nazwą „Dni Fantastyki”. I tutaj nie zabrakło filmów. Faniowie mieli możliwość obejrzeć tam między innymi: „Powrót Jedi”, „Ciemny kryształ”, „Przekok w czasie”, „Conan”. Oprócz tego odbyła się giełda książek SF, prezentacja nagrań muzyki elektronicznej, dyskoteka oraz wspólne posiedzenie przedstawicieli niektórych klubów miłośników fantastyki, na którym postanowiono ufundować nagrodę dla najlepszego polskiego pisarza roku w dziedzinie SF. Nagrodę ma stanowić statuetka o nazwie „Slinks”, na której projekci plastyczni rozpisałi konkurs.

Nie mogę się tu powstrzymać od pewnej refleksji. Myślę, że warto, aby na przyszłość organizatorzy poszczególnych imprez uzgadniali między sobą ich terminy. Pozwoli to uniknąć jednoczesnego przeprowadzania spotkań o charakterze ogólnopolskim, tak jak było w przypadku Warszawy i Łodzi.

Wspomniane tu imprezy to oczywiście tylko część tegorocznych zamierzeń. Trudno jest pisać artykuł informacyjny z 3,5-miesięcznym wyprzedzeniem. To co dla mnie jest jeszcze przyszłością, dla czytelnika będzie w chwili ukazania się tego numeru, w części przynajmniej, dość odległą przeszłością. Dlatego też wypunktuję jedynie poszczególne zamierzenia, bez większego zagłębiania się w ich treść merytoryczną.

● W ramach corocznej studenckiej „Famy” Oddział PSMF w Świnoujściu i Rada Główna mają prowadzić przez tydzień (9–16.07.84 r.) klub SF. Przewidziano liczne spotkania autorskie, pokazy filmowe, zabawy, jak również stałe stoisko z wydawnictwami wewnątrzorganizacyjnymi, znaczniki, pamiętkami, itp.

● W „Fantastyce” nr 2/84 pisaliśmy o Dniach Fantastyki, przygotowanych przy współudziale naszego miesięcznika i PSMF. I znów przy polaczeniu sił „Fantastyki” i Stowarzyszenia zostanie zorganizowane na początku października seminarium poświęcone czterdziestolecu powojennej science fiction w Polsce. Tym razem miejscem spotkania profesjonalistów i fanów z całej Polski stanie się Staszów w woj. tarnobrzskim. Trzeba w tym miejscu podkreślić ogromną pomoc organizacyjną i finansową tamtejszych ośrodków kultury i Staszowskiego Klubu Fantastyki.

● Kolejna impreza jest przygotowywana na początek listopada. Będzie to Konwent Klubów. Organizatorem jest Oddział Częstochowski i Rada Główna PSMF. W programie dyskusje i spotkania z zaproszonymi gośćmi, pokazy filmowe, wspólne dyskoteka i wiele niespodzianek.

● Ostatnie tegoroczne spotkanie ma charakter czysto rozrywkowy. Będzie to przygotowany przez Poznański Oddział PSMF Ogólnopolski Kosiumowy Bal Sylwestrowy. W programie między innymi konkurs na najciekawsze przebranie w konwencji SF.

● Polskie Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Fantastyki rozpoczyna wydawanie dwóch periodyków: dwumiesięcznika „Sfera” (format A–3, objętość 16 stron) i kwartalnika „Feniks” (format A–5, objętość 120 stron). Na treść obu czasopism złożą się opowiadania krajowe i zagraniczne, krytyka, paranauka, przedruki z łaninów i prasy, zapowiedzi wydawnicze, informacje o ruchu miłośników SF, grafika. Oba periodyki z racji swojego niskiego nakładu (3000 egz.) będą rozprowadzane głównie na zasadach prenumeraty. Blizsze szczegóły będzie można uzyskać pisząc pod warszawskim adresem PSMF. Pierwsze numery „Sfery” i „Feniksa” powinny się ukazać na początku października.

Maciej Makowski

KLUBY SF W POLSCE

Polskie Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Fantastyki

- Rada Główna: 00-973 WARSZAWA, ul. Ziwicki i Wigury 30, skr. poczt. 77
- oddz. białostocki: Śródmiejski Klub Fantastyki „UBIK”, 15-872 BIAŁYSTOK, ul. Dąbrowskiego 3
- oddz. bydgoski: Klub „BEANUS”, BYDGOSZCZ, ul. Chodkiewicza 30a; Klub Miłośników SF przy Pałacu Młodzieży, BYDGOSZCZ, ul. Jagiellońska 21
- oddz. częstochowski: 42-200 CZĘSTOCHOWA, ul. Ractawicka 2 (SKS „Wakansy”)
- oddz. gdański: 80-395 GDANSK-PRZYMORZE, ul. Olsztyńska 8i/12
- oddz. lubelski: Lubelski Klub Fantastyki, 20-010 LUBLIN, ul. Podgórz 3
- oddz. plotkowski: 97-300 PIOTRKÓW TRYBUNALSKI, ul. Belzacka 66
- oddz. poznański: „ORBITA”, 61-641 POZNAŃ, Os. Kosmonautów 118
- oddz. szczeciński: Klub „WAŻ MORSKI”, 72-600 ŚWINOUJŚCIE, ul. Batalionów Chłopskich 2
- oddz. warszawski: Klub „SFERA”, 00-973 WARSZAWA, ul. Ziwicki i Wigury 30, skr. poczt. 77
- oddz. zielonogórski: ZIELONA GÓRA, ul. II Armii 36/38
- Klub PSMF w Pruszkowie: „SFINKS”, PRUSZKÓW, ul. Prusa 8
- Klub PSMF w Staszowie: 29-200 STASZÓW, ul. Parkowa 6
- Klub PSMF w Żyrardowie: 96-300 ŻYRARDÓW, ul. Marchlewskiego 18/3

Kluby nie zrzeszone w PSMF

- Gliwicki Klub Miłośników Fantastyki: 44-100 GLIWICE, ul. B. Bieruta 14b/11
- Gorzowski Klub Miłośników Fantastyki Naukowej: 66-409 GORZÓW WLKP, 12, ul. Chelmońskiego 6
- Klub Fantastyki: 31-002 KRAKÓW, ul. Poselska 9 (przy klubie śródmiejskim „Zaufek”)
- Klub Fantastyki „PHOENIX”: 91-471 ŁÓDŹ, ul. Łagiewnicka 118c
- Klub Miłośników Fantastyki „SOKIBUS-F”: 45-084 OPOLE, ul. Strzelców Bytomskich 8 (WDK Opolo, Dział śródmiejski)
- Śląski Klub Fantastyki: 40-956 KATOWICE, ul. Manacka 17a, skr. poczt. 502
- Wrocławski Klub Fantastyki: 50-306 WROCŁAW, ul. Parnota 18/7

Figure 4. The section *Among Fans*, September 1984.

Table 2. Contents of the *Among Fans* section in *Fantasyka* issues, 1982–1989.

Category of the contents	Example content of articles in the category	Number of <i>Fantasyka</i> issues (1982–1989) in which the category appeared
Fanzines	Information on new fanzines, profiles of editorial staff or description of fanzine content	9
Information on clubs	Addresses, quantitative data connected with activity, history, number of members, names and surnames of members, planned future activity and objectives, and news on newly established clubs	19
Information on the Polish Association of Science Fiction Lovers	Information on the regulations of the Main Board (the legislative body), other communication on the Association, praise of particular Voivodship Branches, reprimand of Voivodship Branches, planned activity and objectives	12
Awards	Announcements on the PASFL competitions and prizes awarded by fans	4
Reports on club events	Video shows, club meetings, meetings with scientists, meetings with writers and seminars	13
Reports on conventions	For example, Banachalia fantastyczne, Nordcon and Polcon	23
State of fan movement	Articles summarising overall activity and relating to problems and successes of the community, and overall evaluation of the state of the fandom	4
Club events announcements	Information on the forthcoming events organised by the club	6
Conventions announcements	Information on the forthcoming conventions	5

Source: Author's own study.

PASFL: Polish Association of Science Fiction Lovers.

The ambitions of the Poznań movement leaders were satisfied only by the biggest exhibition of books and science fiction periodicals in Poland organised by them in May 1978. The exhibition attracted not only fans. It was also popular even with foreign visitors who happened to attend the International Fairs. A side effect of the exhibition was the disappearance of several of the most interesting SF books and ... the Club's Visitors' Book. This was both another proof that

Table 3. Analysis of the contents of articles of the *Among Fans* section with regard to shortages.

Category of shortages	Example type of shortage in the category	Number of articles pertaining to the shortages
Lack of texts	Lack of books and periodicals in the Polish market, lack of films at the cinema or on video cassette	15
<i>Fantastyka</i>	Problems connected with publication of the <i>Fantastyka</i> magazine and poor quality of what the readers are presented with (for example, small number of pages of the magazine and low quality of paper)	3
Institutions	Public institutions' reluctance to support fan movement – exemplified by negative attitude of Cultural Centres or offices which hindered the establishment of a fanzine or organisation of conventions	5
Quality	Poor quality of texts which appear on the (official and grass-roots) market – for example, books printed on bad paper and video tapes with illegally recorded films are of poor quality	10
Politics	Difficulties in organising fan movement caused by events of a political nature, for example the martial law of 1981 – 1982	3

Source: Author's own study.

the passions of real collectors had no barriers or limits, and a confirmation of the chronic lack of SF books in our country. Our friends from Poznań decided to do their best to fill this gap, but this aspect of their activity deserves a separate note. [...]

In the meantime, to make things worse, the year 1979 began with misunderstandings between the Club and its previous patron – the Municipal Public Library in Poznań. Finally, the *Orbit* Local Community Cultural Centre became the Club's new patron (and sponsor) whose managers kindly allowed the Club to use not only its name, but also its hall where book exchanges, readings and lectures, films shows, as well as meetings with writers were held. [...]

The period 1980–1982 was the time of a relative stagnation in the activities connected typically with events. The only significant event seems to have been the seminar in Wągrowiec organised in May 1980 and devoted to the developing trends in contemporary science fiction. Apart from

that, there was only the monotonous and tiresome visiting of all possible offices fighting for the permission to publish their own fanzine. [...]

Perhaps this description of activities by our friends from Poznań sounds a bit like a puff; however, it is difficult not to agree about facts. Certainly, as in any other fan club there occur violent arguments, hard discussions, or even quarrels due to organisational problems or purely personal issues. However, this does not disturb the *Orbit*'s operations in accordance with its guidelines, which has resulted not only in the mentioned countrywide events. The other areas include systematic publishing activities, monthly book exchanges and the Branch's book auctions announced twice a year, cooperation both with the *Nostromo* club and with other clubs [...] from all around the country [...] and systematic purchases of books for Branch members. All these take massive amounts of time and energy, and it must be stressed that the *Orbit* is not at all the biggest club. It has 34 staff members being involved activists, 8 correspondents and ... very many supporters; that is, people who participate in the events at least passively. [...] [title: Dwa dni 'Orbitowania' {*Two Days of 'Orbiting'*}; issue and page number: *Fantastyka* 2(17), February 1984, page 59; author: (ARK); contents categories: information on clubs, reports on club events, announcements on club events; shortage categories: lack of texts, institutions, politics].

The next example shows the difficulties referring to publishing the *Fantastyka*, which were most of all connected with the availability of the magazine and its quality. These kind of accounts by editors appeared in three issues of *Fantastyka*:

The representatives of our editorial staff participated in an interesting meeting at the Silesian Fantasy Club in Katowice. At the beginning, as is usually the case, the fans attacked the magazine's editor-in-chief for autographs. Then, for long hours, they launched an assault against *Fantastyka*. They mainly criticised the unbalanced level of the layout. They did not like the selected poetic works (they were surprised that we publish contemporary ones alternately with works from our country's tradition). They were interested in technical issues of publishing a periodical, as the majority of Readers, complaining about a small number of pages, the paper quality, a small number of editions in relation to the market demand, and delays in publishing. Additionally, the criticism was not only directed at us, but also at some publishing houses and the books they presented [issue and page number: *Fantastyka* 6(21), June 1984, page 2; author: (alk); contents categories: reports on club events; shortage categories: *Fantastyka*, quality].

The third example comes from an account on fan parties. The article pertains to the difficulties in the access to science fiction films which the fans tried to overcome by getting Video Home System (VHS) video players and cassettes. Many well-known titles were available only at conventions where video shows were organised:

The period between the end of April and the beginning of July this year was abounding in interesting events within the Polish fandom. In the June issue of *Fantastyka* we already wrote about the previous events. [...] film shows are absolutely in the lead. The reason for that is the growing availability of video which guarantees the most important thing for the fans – current films in a great variety, although the comfort of watching is lower. [...]

Films, films, films – this is perhaps the best title for the event organised in Stara Miłosna near Warsaw on 25–27 May 1984 by the Warsaw Branch of the Polish Association of Science Fiction Lovers. [...]

Apart from films which are a standard during such events, like *The Return of the Jedi*, *TRON*, *Conan*, or *The Dark Crystal*, the participants could also see the less popularised pictures: *Blade Runner*, *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien, *Rolerball* and *The Thing* [issue and page number: *Fantastyka* 9(24), September 1984, page 61; author: Maciej Makowski; contents categories: reports on club events; shortage categories: lack of texts].

The last example comes from an article by Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz on Polish science fiction fanzines. The author evaluates both the existing and the already out of print periodicals, focusing on various difficulties connected with their publication (low quality of fanzines). Also, Ziemkiewicz discusses the general content of fanzines and mentions the incessant attempts to start new ones:

Publishing their own fanzine has always been the ambition of any club almost since the very beginning of the SF lovers movement. Thus, also in Poland the non-professional SF magazines have their own history. [...]

The fourth fanzine that started to be published in 1980 was the Poznań quarterly – *KWAZAR*. It was worse than *SFANZIN* as regards the texts attractiveness, and also compared to *RADIANT* as regards the level of debuts, but it was much better than any fanzine as regards the size (100 A4 pages, hardback), price and the editorial staff's determination. The fans received the periodical cautiously, they pointed out editorial drawbacks, terrible print technology, poor layout and unfair practices such as the habitual publishing of American and English short stories translated from Russian. [...]

In 1981, the *WIZJE* fanzine (which was supposed to be a quarterly), issued in Białystok, joined the group of the mentioned periodicals. I am inclined to argue that *WIZJE* has been the best Polish non-professional SF magazine. It specialised in American literature [...]. Unfortunately, after the second issue, the release of the fanzine was stopped for unknown reasons. [...]

The boom has not come until 1983. Since January, the Silesian club has been publishing the *ŚKF FIKCJE* monthly. The publication of the A5 format hardback, precisely designed, with a poster included in each issue, has probably reached the largest circulation among fanzines – of 3000 copies. In spite of imperfect graphics, too great tolerance for debutantes who have terribly lowered the level of the fanzine, as well as frequent publications on ufology and demonology (of a rather gutter press nature), the monthly has been successful and gained a lot of popularity. [...]

The currently published fanzines include: *KWAZAR*, *FIKCJE*, *KURIER FANTASTYCZNY* and *XYX*. Is this many or few for the seven-year-long history of the Polish fanzines? [issue and page number: *Fantastyka* 10(25), October 1984, page 2; author: Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz; contents categories: fanzines; shortage categories: quality].

Discussion

What is the picture of sci-fi fans presented in the *Among fans* section of the *Fantastyka* magazine? The type of events organised by them was no different from those today, although certainly the biggest events had to be approved by the authorities. Nowadays, in the era of the Internet, many restrictions of an organisational nature obviously have been eliminated. However, it is not essential to focus on differences in the event agendas or to compare previous fanzines with those currently distributed via the Internet. What is more important is that they were functioning under the conditions of permanent communist shortages. Factors such as too little scope, meagre availability, little access to books, bad paper quality, other printing deficiencies, difficulty in getting films on video and problems with obtaining permission for club operation highly influenced the climate of the fandom and fan activity.

The American fans opposed the imposition of patriarchy, for example, writing slash (Bacon-Smith, 2000; Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995: 195–212). In Poland, being a fan was an escape from the hardships of everyday life and at the same time an escape from the political system that caused those hardships. In the articles of the *Among Fans* section, one may find complaints about shortages, as well as a description of repeated attempts to overcome them, for example the attempts to get the unattainable popular culture texts or to improve the quality of available ones. The quotes also referred to the necessity to overcome some institutional restrictions (for example in obtaining permission to publish a fanzine, or finding a place where a club could function).

What is worth noting is that in the fragments of the *Fantastyka* magazine under analysis, it is useless to look for any indication of feminist subversion manifested in changing the favourite universes so that they could serve the needs of women. In no issue of *Fantastyka* under study was there even the smallest note on erotic stories or such fanzines. Furthermore, in the articles of the *Among Fans* section, one may sense a general reluctance to hear from amateur producers. In the cited article, Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz argues that fanzines contained rather professional stories, most frequently translations of Western writers. From this angle, publishing those fanzines appears to be an attempt to overcome the shortage of texts, since the novels and short stories found in fanzines were not available on the official market.

The activity of the sci-fi fans of the 1980s may be considered as symbolic opposition to communism which 'prohibited' gaining access to both Polish and Western pop culture. It is important to note that while there was no official prohibition of anything in the sense that there was no legal ban on the access to the Western popular culture, the unavailability ensured that there was a covert restriction. It has to be noted that the situation in Poland was still better than in other countries of the region. People from other communist countries looked to Poland for access to Western pop culture since access there was relatively easy. Yes, the access was restricted, but mildly given the context of the Soviet umbrella (Kenez, 2008).

Is this analysis of the *Fantastyka* magazine sufficient to establish that fans tried to overcome the hardships of living in a communist country? The articles of the *Among Fans* section demonstrate that well as they were written by editors who actively

participated in the fandom life; they were not only journalists who would report certain facts in a dry and unemotional way. The editors were at the same time fans, and that is why the articles they wrote are their individual diaries.

Additionally, the thesis that science fiction fans opposed the political system that caused permanent popular culture shortages is established by the literature on general patterns of popular culture consumption in communist Poland. As Adam Komorowski rightly pointed out in his text *O popkulturze i humanistach* (*On Pop Culture and Humanists*),

[...] the access to rationed products of the pop culture, rather than exploring the works of the highbrow culture, has become the criterion for the elites self-definition. To put it simply, it can be said that the one who watched films on James Bond in those times, could assign oneself higher cultural competences than a reader of poems by Tadeusz Różewicz (a well-known Polish writer and poet – P.S.). That was also the way that the person was treated by their environment. Thus, this was a situation contrary to the one described by José Ortega y Gasset: art for masses (rather than the elitist one) created the mechanism of elites emergence. (Komorowski, 2006)

Looking at science fiction fan activities in the 1980s, described in *Fantastyka*, one may in fact treat them as a manifestation of evading the political control of the media. Some examples of activities which made Poland's borders more open to pop culture by challenging the entertainment monopoly of the state authorities include politically incorrect lectures during conventions, the circulation of one's own translations of foreign books publications or organising video sessions showing pictures not available in the official circulation.

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the *Fantastyka* magazine may only be generalised as regards the fans described in this periodical, namely the science fiction fans functioning in the 1980s. However, apart from the main considerations, it is worth considering how this analysis could inspire the research on fans operating in other decades or fans of other genres. If one wished to treat the presented analyses as their starting point for investigating other Polish fan communities of the communist period, they could base their research on the hypothesis of the popular culture shortages. It is only this hypothesis that allows one to extend the conclusions from investigating science fiction fans of the 1980s, so that they would refer to all fans of the communist era. In the PRP, access to popular culture was always restricted and that very shortage can be assumed to be the fundamental factor in determining the picture of pop culture consumption (including fan purchasing). This can be exemplified by pop and rock music, which people listened to using illegal copies of the originals brought unofficially from western Europe or 'picking up' foreign radio stations, barely audible in Poland. It is worth mentioning that the most active fandom in the communist period was the science fiction one (Rychlewski, 2005).

Conclusion

Describing the social situation in contemporary democratic Poland, Katarzyna Marciniak (2009) proposed the concept of post-socialist hybrids, according to which many

socio-cultural phenomena have resulted from the communist history mixed with the impact of globalisation processes that intensified after the fall of the Iron Curtain. She provided some specific examples, one of them being *Radio Maryja* (*Radio Mary*), a Catholic broadcasting station owned by Tadeusz Rydzyk, a priest of radical right-wing political convictions. Another exemplification refers to post-communist tourism, including tours of the former workers' district of Nowa Huta by Trabant (a car popular in the PRP era). The examples are numerous and the conclusion is that the spirit of the former system is perceptible and it influences the overall shape of public life.

Considering the presented fans' 'fight' with communism, one may pose the question: Does the spirit of the previous era also influence today's Polish fan communities, including the science fiction fandom? The answer is positive – the historical context determines the shape of contemporary fandoms (Siuda, 2014). Obviously, their present state differs from what there was once, and it is often difficult to find automatic references. Searching for post-socialist hybrids (using Marciniak's term), it is worth paying attention to amateur works by contemporary Polish fans. If compared to American fans, there are definitely fewer works by Polish authors that may fall within the category of the feminist use of a popular culture text (Siuda, 2012). The fact that the communist legacy may result in a lack of feminist popular culture interpretations was proved by Ksenija Vidmar-Horvat (2005) in her article where she discussed the *Ally McBeal* series' reception by female teenagers in post-communist Slovenia. Conditioned by a history devoid of any feminist subversiveness of the Western type, the girls relate to what they watch in a different way than their counterparts in the United States do. To determine whether the same applies to science fiction fans in Poland has not been the objective of this article; however, it is worth noting that such a research question would prove worthwhile.

The description of sci-fi fans functioning in the 1980s in the PRP, using the analysis of the *Fantastyka* content, is to suggest that fans are able to manifest their opposition in a completely different manner than is typically shown in the literature. The pop culture fans' consumption is most frequently presented as part of the general efforts by groups escaping from some depriving aspects of social reality. They may be groups deprived of influence and power, and of a worse position with regard to their members' socio-demographic features. Fan practices connected with popular culture are presented as a specific form of creativity of 'the weak'. Fan culture is described by means of metaphors: of struggle and antagonism, hegemony faced with opposition, of power rising from the bottom against the power of the top, of social discipline and of control confronted with insubordination. This is all true, but what about when fans live under a polity that hinders their access to their object of admiration? As shown in the Polish example, the activity of fans seeking maximised contact with their favourite texts must then be treated as symbolic opposition to the political system.

It is clear that the picture of fans presented in this article ought to be treated as entering a broader research field connected with the analysis of media consumption that promotes the erosion of autocratic rule. Consumer opposition to non-democratic polities does not always occur in the conditions of permanent pop culture shortages. Certainly, in other autocratic countries, many different elements of such insubordination may be identifiable. Some publications, for example, show that video recorders were instruments of opposition in the Arabic world. Douglas Boyd (1982) indicated how this technology enabled one

to evade the state transmissions in the countries of the Persian Gulf in the 1970s. In Saudi Arabia, where public cinemas were illegal, the informal video industry was functioning in the underworld, and to a certain extent was accepted by the authorities. This industry popularised the American pop culture which was ignored by the official media. The situation was similar in other countries, for example, in Pakistan or Iran (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1994). In both these countries, and in communist regimes, video recorders were a source of the influx of content which did not necessarily match the official ideology, showing another, 'better' Western world. This content as such might have contributed to inspiring actual political activism (Mattelart, 2009).

The subversive use of popular culture and technology that popularised it in the autocratic countries has already been stated. However, analyses of the subversive fan activity in the Arabic or communist world are a rarity, and consideration on this issue ought to be systematically extended. Investigations pertaining to the past are non-existent, and ones indicating present fan opposition to non-democratic polities are few and far between.

An indication of such opposition may be the activities by fans in the People's Republic of China, although their situation is different from that of the fans of the PRP era presented in this article. In the case of the Chinese, it is hard to refer to any kind of specific shortages, and the opposition pertains to the official ideology of the Party propagating collectivism and criticising the Western lifestyle. Interestingly, as was pointed out by Anthony Fung (2009), the party line is not threatened by fan involvement in consumption or their textual productivity that is in accordance with the economic policy of the state. What would turn out to be dangerous is the creativity that relies on generating new meanings that reject the assumptions of communism or question the authorities' decisions. A good example of such subversiveness was given by Lifang He (2010) in his article where he described fan fiction by the Chinese fans of the film *Avatar* by James Cameron, which, for them, contained an oblique criticism of demolishing Beijing's housing estates and the consequent population resettlement for the sake of organising the Olympic Games in 2008.

As is evident, fan opposition may be directed at the political system. The case of science fiction fandom discussed in this article proves this clearly, and at the same time, it is a type of opposition to communism which received little attention. Contemporary academics are most willing to focus on the analysis of direct protests, that is, the oppositional operations by activists from the intellectual and workers' circles. The 1980s were the time of operations of *Solidarność* (*Solidarity*) – the social movement which was fundamental for fighting the system. It constituted the most serious impulse of protest in the PRP; it was a manifestation of hope for society's revival, for winning subjectivity, for openness and freedom (Bendyk, 2012: 193). As it turned out, *Solidarność* led to the collapse of the communist system not only in Poland, but in the whole soviet bloc. Therefore, it is not surprising that investigations on opposing communism are most frequently connected with the actual political activities which were embodied, for example, by *Solidarność*. This does not mean that one should forget about the 'everyday', indirect opposition, the one which refers to the symbolic use of cultural resources. Within the very framework of such subversiveness is where the fans activity in the PRP era lies as their opposition relied on the pursuit of maximising the contact with the objects of admiration which was what the political system had refused them.

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Biographical note

Piotr Siuda is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz (Poland) and a member of both the European and Polish Sociological Associations. Author of *Religion and the Internet* (2010), *The Cultures of Prosumption* (2012), *Japonisation. Anime and its Polish Fans* (2013) (all books in Polish) and the pop-culture blog piotrsiuda.pl. His research interests are the sociology of culture and social aspects of the Internet.