

# **POLISH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**Journal of the Polish Association for the Study of English  
(PASE)**

**No. 4.1**

**Guest Editor**

**Prof. Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska**

**Polish Association for the Study of English**

**Warsaw 2018**

**Publisher:**

Polish Association for the Study of English  
ul. Hoża 69, 00-681 Warszawa

**Editorial Board:**

**Editors-in-Chief:** Prof. Jacek Fabiszak, Prof. Krzysztof Fordoński

**Heads of Thematic Sections:** Prof. Danuta Gabryś-Barker (Applied Linguistics),  
Prof. Henryk Kardela (Linguistics), Prof. Ryszard Wolny (Studies in Culture),  
Prof. Jacek Fabiszak (Studies in Literature), Prof. Jadwiga Uchman (Studies in Literature)

**Managing Editor:** Dr Anna Wołosz-Sosnowska

**Language Editor:** Dr Marcin Tereszewski

**Technical Editors:** Dr Weronika Szemińska, Dr Łukasz Karpiński

**Advisory Board:**

Prof. J. Lawrence Guntner (Technische Universität Braunschweig)

Prof. Nicoleta Cinpoes (University of Worcester)

Prof. Jan Jędrzejewski (University of Ulster)

Prof. Adriana Biedroń (Pomeranian University, Słupsk)

Prof. Cem Cam (Cykrova University)

Prof. Jean-Marc Dewaele (Birkbeck College, University of London)

Prof. Hossein Nassaji (University of Victoria)

Prof. Sarah Mercer (University of Graz)

Prof. Terence Odlin (Ohio State University)

Prof. Rebecca Oxford (University of Maryland)

Prof. David Singleton (University of Pannonia)

Prof. Jorge Bastos da Silva (University of Porto)

Prof. Séllei Nóra (Debrecen University)

Prof. Irene Gilсэнan Nordin (Dalarna University)

Prof. Bożena Rozwadowska (University of Wrocław)

**Reviewers:**

Prof. R. Bartnik, Prof. K. Bazarnik, Prof. D. Brady, Prof. D. Drewniak, Prof. L. Drong,

Prof. J. Fabiszak, Prof. M. Fabiszak, Prof. L. Gruszewska-Blaim, Prof. P. Jędrzejko,

Prof. A. Kielkiewicz-Janowiak, Prof. B. Klonowska, Prof. D. Krzyżaniak,

Prof. E. Kujawska-Lis, Prof. R. Kusek, Prof. E. Lorek-Jezińska, Prof. Z. Maszewski,

Prof. D. Oramus, Prof. B. Piątek, Prof. E. Piechurska-Kuciel, Prof. A. Rzepa, Prof. A. Setecka,

Prof. M. Sokołowska-Paryż, Prof. P. Stachura, Prof. J. Uchman, Prof. A. Wicher,

Prof. R. W. Wolny, Dr A. Bendrat, Dr Ch. Berberich, Dr K. Burzyńska, Dr W. Dług,

Dr D. Gutfeld, Dr A.-L. Iancu, Dr U. Kizelbach, Dr S. Kozioł, Dr A. Kwiatkowska,

Dr M. Lachman, Dr A. Rogos-Hebda, Dr A.-K. Schneider, Dr S. Shurma, Dr T. Skirecki,

Dr P. Śniedziewski, Dr M. Świetlicki, M. Jošić-Milinović, MA

**Cover Design:**

Dr Łukasz Karpiński



# Contents

From the Editor .....	5
The Communication of Luxury: A Semiotic Analysis of a Luxury Brand's Perfume Commercial.....	7
Brygida Hurek	
Evolution of the Mary Sue Character in Works by the Wattpad Social Platform Users.....	35
Patrycja Biniek	
The American Tradition of Social Satire in <i>South Park</i> Television Series .....	57
Przemysław Komsa	
Online Grooming as a Manipulative Social Interaction: Insights from Textual Analysis.....	79
Mariia Horskykh	
Representations of Polish Migrants in British Media from the Perspective of "Moral Panic" Theory .....	113
Alicja Portas	
27 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Polish Association for the Study of English Conference Report .....	143
Authors' Biodata .....	145

## From the Editor

Dear Friends and Readers,

Academic Twitter has recently exploded with a heated debate on the condition and character of “young people today,” with a special focus on young adults studying at universities. The majority of complaints addressed the impression that students today tend to be disillusioned and cynical: they seem to do the minimum of work and demand the maximum of rewards. They are neither mature nor literate individuals who would be interested in the modern world, save the very narrow subject they have chosen to study, presumably to qualify quickly and get a well-paying job. Worst of all, they are not critical thinkers and can be easily manipulated. Needless to say, there are also many misconceptions about students of the humanities and social sciences. In terms of academia, the stereotype is that they are incapable of hard work and reasoning; they have to be spoon-fed unit content; they do not know what they want to do when they graduate.

On the other side of the debate there are strong voices defending young people as victims of certain circumstances: a degraded schooling system, media technologies that have undermined human relationships and diminished the trust in science (through fake news and conspiracy theories), a precarious job market and the highest ever mortgage rates that make it difficult to prosper, a polluted and depleted environment that is on its way to a catastrophic climate change...

This volume is devoted exclusively to showcasing the work of young people, who, despite being “victims of certain circumstances,” have proven that they are not strangers to doing critical reading, to analyzing socially relevant issues, to delving into history, theory and methodology, and to presenting their reasoning and conclusions in a lucid and academically appropriate way.

The five articles collected in this volume have been methodically and meticulously developed from diploma papers submitted in a partial fulfillment for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 2019 following a few rounds of internal and external reviewing. The students whose work is publicized here graduated from English in Public Communication (some with honors) and English Philology. The two programs are offered by the Institute of Linguistics (formerly Institute of English) of University of Opole and are distinguished by different

foci: whereas EPC students explore the domains of culture, communication, journalism and public relations, EP students follow a more “classical” philological course of literature, linguistics, culture and history.

The articles in this collection explore contemporary issues based on a variety of types of data, both textual and visual: documentaries, press coverage, literary texts, a video commercial, an interview, a cartoon series. In the process of making their argument, the authors demonstrate a proficient application of a selected recognized methodological perspective: content analysis, semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis, ideological criticism, literary criticism and film/narrative analysis. These students, now graduates, show that they have indeed been involved in contemporary political debates and are aware of the dilemmas that arise from the dominance of media-saturated consumer societies and the preponderance of technological advancements that make it increasingly difficult to follow the well-trodden intellectual paths of the previous generations of commentators and researchers.

As a guest editor of this issue, I hope that the readers of the journal will find these articles interesting and insightful, and will appreciate the attempts of these junior scholars to contribute to our understanding of the phenomena they have chosen to explore. Please mind that there are their very first independent published projects. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the reviewers who helped me to guide these young people through the meanders of academic publishing and gave them constructive advice and professional assistance much beyond the scope of what is considered to be routine peer review. You are the mentors who continue to ensure that the youngest generations do not end up the way the above Twitter conversation participants described them!

Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska

# The Communication of Luxury: A Semiotic Analysis of a Luxury Brand's Perfume Commercial

Brygida Hurek

University of Opole

**Abstract:** This study explores the mode of communication of luxury in the case of Chanel. It includes a review of theories regarding the cultural concept of luxury. It discusses the psychological, historical, cultural and sociological aspects of luxury in order to explain its dynamics and significance. It also elucidates the discourse of advertising, and the practice of luxury branding and communication. The methodological base for the study is semiotics with its structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to meaning, and its emphasis on the complexity of cultural systems through discourse. The analytical section is an in-depth description of a Chanel commercial, deconstructing the component parts according to semiotic and discursive categories. It offers an interpretation of the commercial's intended (preferred) reading concerning this particular luxury brand of perfume and conclusions regarding the distinguished modes of communicating luxury.

**Keywords:** luxury, commercial, communication, meaning, brand, value

## 1. Introduction

The luxury market is currently enormous as it rose to an estimated value of \$1.2 trillion around the world in 2017; however, it has experienced a considerable upsurge since the 1990s. In the period between 1996 and 2017 it rose 6% annually on average (D'Arpizio, Levato, Kamel and de Montgolfier 2017). What is more, the market is expected to be on the rise in the near future. Thus, it is worth devoting special attention to the increase in digital luxury advertising, which is currently largely made of video commercials and posts ("Hospitality leads digital transformation of the luxury category" 2018). *Business Insider* noted a staggering and rapid 63% growth in digital luxury

expenditures in 2016 (since 2013), while pointing towards some newly emerging phenomena, for example the amount of money for promotion of luxury brands in magazines decreased 8%, which suggests only a modest but steady shift and the luxury brands do not lavish their money on digital channels yet (Gallagher 2017). Yet it has been projected that all luxury purchases will be online-influenced in 2025 (D'Arpizio et al. 2017). These numbers imply the rising power of digitalization in luxury consumption, as this special segment of shoppers is digitally engaged and "the Internet is the only medium that can reach all luxury buyers in all markets" (Chehab and Merks-Benjaminen 2013).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that luxury brands have always been more cautious and slower in entering the digital environment, in contrast to other businesses. Luxury is a complex meaning container that possesses various intangible characteristics and forms a very distinct part of the market. Its management has struggled to face the challenges of communicating its essence through easily accessible online channels (Okonkwo 2009). From the very beginning, luxury brands have been questioning the appropriateness and effectiveness of the digital media to transmit their exclusive values. However, since the digital environment started to advance, there comes a question: how do the brands manage to transmit their "luxuriousness"? That is why the exploration of digital luxury advertising seems essential to obtain a deeper insight into the ways of communicating luxury, which helps comprehend the luxury advertising's unique position in the marketing world.

The study considers a one-minute-long Chanel N°5 perfume commercial as a case study.<sup>1</sup> A commercial is considered as a purposeful text built of signs and susceptible to analytical deconstruction (Gottdiener 1995). Therefore, the study provides a semiotic perspective that aims at analysing many techniques of communication embedded in the commercial ranging from language, to pictures and music and attempting to investigate systematically how these semiotic elements work with each other within the text to create luxury meaning (Kress and Leeuwen 2006). Additionally, in order to explain how the meaning is created, the study draws on media semiotics (Chandler

---

<sup>1</sup> Available from official Chanel You Tube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkKROkzYdXs>.

2002). It elaborates on the very specific role of luxury advertising in brand strategy, symbolic consumption and the significance of multimodality in the transmission of meaning.

## 2. The Fundamentals of Luxury

The word luxury is frequently incorporated in people's everyday speech to name or describe certain material objects, services or some ways of living. Interestingly, this often happens without the awareness of how rich the notion really is and how differently the concept is realized (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebel 2007). Although it has been recognized that luxuries as products fall into four distinct categories including: fashion items, fragrances, pampering goods and alcoholic beverages (Fionda and Moore 2009), there has not yet been an official agreement on what determines a luxury brand, product or service (Hudders, Pandelaere and Vyncke 2013). Essentially, the challenge of capturing the definition of luxury lies in the ever-developing and highly relational nature of the idea of luxury that depends on many cultural variables. There are a number of aspects that strongly articulate the very basic traits of luxury. First of all luxury has always revolved around the notion of exclusiveness, or scarcity and a high price. In the past, costly fabrics and other pricey materials that were hard to come by caused the luxury products to be rare, because not every-one could afford them. The experience of possessing something exclusive is now cultivated by luxury brands that launch limited editions, carefully choose places of distribution and generally avoid production on a large scale, which gives the owner a feeling of privilege of belonging to a special, very narrow group (Hudders, Pandelaere and Vyncke 2013).

Uniqueness is another facet of luxury that falls within the exclusive category. Luxury brands are meant to be exceptional and distinctive as much as it is possible (Hudders, Pandelaere and Vyncke 2013). It is about being so special that one does not even think of comparing it to something else. In pursuit of originality of design and unusual external beauty, luxury brands sometimes tend to decrease the product's practicality to a minimum to achieve the outstanding aesthetics (Mortelmans 2005). Finally, luxury brands live up to their very demanding quality standards. In the past, only the most affluent people could afford luxuries, as their production was time consuming and relied on work of highly skilled artisans doing almost everything by hand

(Amatulli, De Angelis, Pichierri and Guido 2018). That is why the world of luxury does not except middle-of-the-road solutions, as the price that one pays for luxury goods should always stand for the product's durability and excellent craftsmanship (Mortelmans 2005). Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that a cluster of luxury features is not sufficient to define this broad concept, so it seems essential to elaborate on more abstract dimensions of luxury.

According to Kapferer and Bastein (2009, 5), "luxury is a culture" and thus a key element when attempting to grasp the modern identity of luxury is getting to know the fundamental rules of its "inner dynamics", which finds its roots in the historical background. The researchers track the first representations of luxury and its social practices. Believing in immortality, in some ancient cultures people started burying their relatives, equipping them with everything they needed in the afterlife; however, with time the objects became not only better crafted and sophisticated, but also stood for symbols of the power of the dead. That is why expensive body decorations, fighting gear, horses and even things as precious as ships were found in some graves. The emergence of the first civilizations, such as the Egyptian Kingdom, showed a direct correlation between luxury and socialization. The religious and ritualistic traces of luxury in the past are the reasons for one of its most important characteristics: "Luxury is about elevation" (Kapferer and Bastein 2009, 7).

Another significant part of the discussion about luxury that expands our understanding of it revolves around the opposite functions of use and waste: fulfillment of basic needs versus something that goes beyond the category of necessity, which is (pointless) excess (Mortelmans 2005). The "needless" characteristic is present today as well and is a major issue when considering the identity of luxury. To illustrate this, Kapferer and Bastein emphasize that the core idea of luxury is "needlessly superb, rewarding, expensive," which is key to distinguishing a luxury brand from a premium brand where everything is logically justified. In the meantime, luxury does not need any functional argumentation, facts and proofs (Kapferer and Bastein 2009). For instance, luxury dining is only about pleasure, not a meal, because one is left hungry, and wearing a scarf on your shoulder is luxury as your shoulder is not going to catch a cold (Rapaille 2015). However, there is more to luxury than going beyond utility.

One may ask what is the added value that makes precious, unique, rare and superb-quality things luxury. Mortelmans (2005, 508) explains that luxury

objects are “meaning-producing devices circulating in a specific cultural environment.” The world of tangible things possesses a socially grounded life in which people rate the objects in line with the meaning that they attach to them. Objects can be categorized according to their utility, their economic worth or they can be used to carry symbolic value, such as birthday presents. The sign-value category, according to the author, separates the object from its straightforward, factual meaning-giving place to a vast range of unfixed connotations. Purchasing luxuries falls predominantly within sign-value correlation, as it does not limit itself to mere functional or even symbolic motives. A good instance is the acquisition of a brand new luxury vehicle not for its speed or technologies, but for its ability to mark social position, status, membership or splendor. Advertising discourse is one of the most powerful players in the construction of such sign-values. Mortelmans (2005) states that luxury connotations are ascribed to objects that are used as a sign of differentiation. In other words, luxury meaning is added when material culture is harnessed socially to distinguish the owners from the rest, whose mutual knowledge about luxury is an essential component. Mortelmans (2005) stresses that the abstract dimension of luxury might cause some ordinary things to switch to luxury in some circumstances and become a demonstration of refinement and style, as coding a product as luxury will fail if the object is not put to use as an indicator of social position.

Luxury goods have the power to answer people's psychological cravings. The ability of luxury to carry value on the psychological level is considered to be one of the most differentiating factors from products not belonging to the luxury model (Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000). According to Hennings, Wiedmann and Siebel's (2007) conceptual model, the overall luxury value is realized through its pricing and functional dimension, but, more importantly, it lies in individual and social value. The researchers point out that people not only make use of the symbolic meaning of luxury goods to manage their actual or desired self-identity but also use luxury objects to communicate that image to other people. Moreover, consumers highly appreciate the emotional side of luxury, whose consumption provides such comforts as sensual enjoyment, elation and the experience of beauty. The pursuit of self-indulgence triggers a feeling of completion and reward (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebel 2007).

In brief, the definition of luxury ought to embrace a holistic approach, since it is highly perceptual and operates on different levels. The idea of luxury is a network of connotations that refer to tangible things, such as vehicles,

fragrances, accessories or clothing items, as well as to abstract elements such as time or experiences. In the face of quickly transforming world-wide markets and various globalizing consumption cultures, it seems that luxury can be grasped as a peculiar “transnational type of culture” (Hudders, Pandelaere and Vyncke 2013, 3). Luxury-related concepts also stand for elements such as a required way of behaving, norms and a rich set of practiced cultural values (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebel 2007).

### 3. The Discourse of Advertising and Branding

In the modern world, advertising is omnipresent: it pops up at us from every corner. In spite of its prominence, it seems to be profoundly marginalized in comparison to others less present forms of culture in our daily live. At the same time, people recall a commercial’s words and images with greater ease than those of more highly appreciated forms like poems or art. It is a controversial genre too, as it evokes emotion, grabs attention, provokes discussions and, more importantly, it is so strongly entrenched in society that it is considered as an indispensable element of everyday life (Cook 1992). This strange position of advertising implies its complex nature and the significant role it plays as social practice.

According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, advertising is a business whose core function is to talk the audience into making a purchase of products or services, or to make things to be purchased known to others. Advertisements are characterized as highly purposeful texts that are deliberately crafted to carry the preferred reading (Barthes 1977; Bignell 2002). However, there is much more to advertising than pure selling. Modern advertisements do not openly urge us to consume and to go on endless shopping sprees. They seem to be more focused on entertaining us. From a semiotic point of view their objective is to make us actively take part in deconstructing their messages while plunging us into the pleasant game of decoding what we can see and hear. Bignell (2002) stresses that advertisements are sophisticated meaning constructions based on already used signs, codes and social myths.

It is crucial to mention that advertising is not limited to advertisements understood as isolated texts within the pool of various circulating messages. Advertising is also a discourse, which means that ads work best with the context of communication, which takes into consideration vital factors that make

up the meaning as well. Thanks to a discourse perspective on advertising, apart from sheer analysis of language, the approach takes notice of music, images, medium of delivery or participants. It recognizes reasons of the communicative act, functions of the text; it takes into account the situation and all different variables that go with language: voice, behavior, gestures, face expressions even feelings and intentions. The blending of context and a text gives a holistic view and thus also gives birth to a model of analysis of advertisements defined to be the sum of intertwined signs represented in various modes (Cook 1992).

Advertising is closely related to branding. Okonkwo (2016) asserts that branding has transformed into one of the most vital business segments. Brands are not essentially the goods; they are not an economic institution, not even the services. The author defines brands as "a name, term, sign, symbol" or a constellation of these various elements that serves to distinguish the brand from its rivals (Okonkwo 2016, 9). A brand is a distinguishable body of everything that the maker has to offer, which stands for the reassurance of quality and high standards. It is an indicator for the clients that what they intend to acquire is going to fulfill the brand's commitments (Room 1989). The immediate recollection and interpretation of particular goods is predominantly the consequence of effective branding capable of bringing about an emotional and mental bond with the brand. For Okonkwo (2016), goods are just raw materials that were given some characteristics and qualities which make them physical, whereas brands come down to the total of all encounters and messages experienced by consumers, which leads them to develop a differentiating image of the brand rooted in the psychological and material advantages. This implies that branding and its connotations are placed in the subconsciousness of the purchaser, which turns all consumers into inevitable elements of the branding structure.

Laura R. Oswald, the author of *Creating Value* (2015), suggests looking at branding from a semiotic and cultural perspective. She stresses that culture and marketing are reciprocally connected and the recurrent encounter of messages makes for the consumer's knowledge of various circulating codes:

Brands are sign systems that consumers associate with the brand name, logo, and other proprietary assets. Brands, like consumers, are products of their environments. They draw meaning from their positioning in the competitive set, from the perception

of value in the product category and from trends in popular culture. Brands also contribute to the cultural system because the relationship between culture and brands is dialectical. Through the repeated contact with marketing messages, consumers come to associate certain symbols with specific product categories, and incorporate these codes in turn into their repertoire of cultural codes (Oswald 2015, 114).

Brands penetrate the thinking of society, specifically its awareness, through omnipresent communication that creates links by joining clients with marketing symbols in the social domain. In turn, the participants of the market play a part in the generation of brand definition when they make use of the marketing sign in life contexts, behaviors, activities as well as self-produced advertising promotion. A meaning of the brand brought to being by consumers then travels within culture through different modes (Oswald 2015).

Successful luxury brands exist thanks to extraordinary, purposeful marketing plans. Okonkwo (2016) points out that luxury brand managers are aware that the external pleasantness, sophisticated execution and artistry of the offerings mean nothing when they exist alone. The products can only be successfully represented through powerful brands that are able to allure the psyche of the client. While the products form a solid base for the luxury brand, branding is what keeps them alive. The author suggests that creating a luxury brand and its successful direction turns out to be a tremendously lengthy procedure. It needs a steady coherent plan, inventive approaches, strict supervision and persistent evaluation. In spite of a great number of brands aspiring to become luxurious as well as some struggling to launch their own luxury brands, only a few manage to make it work out. The top luxury brands are those that can find equilibrium between being never out of fashion through stable brand philosophy and long tradition; being present and pertinent among competitive brands and lastly being original in creation of the time to come (Okonkwo, 2016). The author also stresses that luxury buyers anticipate unconventionality and freshness in crafting new fashions. Purchasers are not interested in brands which, before production, ponder about what the consumers might want. Luxury shoppers value those that comprehend the psyche of the consumer, grasp the dynamics of fluctuating styles and even modes of thinking faster than the clients do.

Kapferer and Bastein (2009) report that luxury's chief function is the management of social position, that is what one conveys to others, particularly in terms of refinement. That is why it has to be dynamic in the cultural sphere. This facet of luxury is extremely ingenious and diverges from other non-luxury products. That is the cause of a remarkably contrasting way of communication employed by the luxury world that is far from hard selling. Within luxury advertising, something is expressed to construct the dream and to fuel the brand's worth, not to make a classic market exchange. Luxury communication takes place away from the actual purchase. The narration, the language used to speak about the brand and its offerings is imaginary. Moreover, it has to be indefinite enough so that many consumers can relate to it and discover their individual involvement in the dream. This, according to Kapferer and Bastein (2009), suggests a sophisticated and creative communication with the power to establish social codes. It must not appear too old-fashioned, explicit or straightforward, but should revolve around being figurative and emblematic. The consumers are somehow given a free hand to construct their own meaning out of the subordinate text and thus satisfy their need to dream. This technique turns out to be especially in tune with the aim of giving prominence to the spiritual and experiential feature of luxury expression and consumption.

The aim of producing lasting experiences and strengthening the client's hopes, wishes, expectations and urges (facets that are representative of luxury products) can be effectively achieved by means of visuals. The reason behind this is that imagery has a projective potential. It provides the consumer with more space and freedom to make sense of some information in comparison with a linguistic text. Therefore, it is highly possible that this encourages the consumer to direct their thinking towards his aspirations or visions - and ultimately to dream (Amatulli, Angelis, Pichierri and Guido 2018). That is why a visual commercial has been chosen as an object of analysis here; however, first, the methodological basis for this analysis will be explained.

#### **4. Basic Concepts and Approaches in Semiotics**

Semiotics is one of the crucial prerequisites to an effective analysis of any kinds of commercials, as they are texts that are deliberately crafted to achieve certain goals through various component messages. Therefore, it appears essential to discuss the inner workings of this discipline. Daniel Chandler (2002, 1)

warns the reader that semiotics, although it entirely comes down to “the study of signs”, is at the same time a ubiquitous and diversified subject. Umberto Eco (1976) provides an extensive explanation of semiotics, asserting that it has to do with everything that can be regarded as a sign. This means that semiotics relates not only to what we are used to name as actual “signs” on a daily basis, but essentially to anything that represents something else. Thus, signs when looked at from a semiotic perspective comprise of seemingly distant categories ranging from words both written and spoken, visuals, music, the way we use our bodies while speaking and tangible objects. However, modern semioticians do not investigate signs separately but analyze them as a unit of a much bigger network of signs belonging to, for example, one genre or medium. Their aim is to track the process of meaning production and expose the way the real life is depicted (Chandler 2002).

Ferdinand de Saussure developed a structuralist theory of linguistic sign (Saussure 1983). He claimed that a sign can be broken down into two component parts, which is a signifier and a signified. Modern authors most often define the signifier as a kind of form which the sign obtains, whereas the signified is the idea to which it relates (Chandler 2002; Oswald 2015). However, Saussure stresses that the linguistic sign is not a correlation between the name and the object, but it is a relation between the physical impression of sound and the idea brought to the mind of the speaker (Saussure 1983). That is also why he treats these two elements as sheer “psychological” entities. The interrelation between the signifier and the signified is called “signification” while the sign is everything that comes out from identification of the signifier with the signified (Chandler 2002). In semiotics languages split up the sphere of thinking, giving rise to concepts which form people’s experiences (Bignell 2002). For instance in French “mouton” is the equivalent of English “sheep” referring to an animal and “mutton” – to a kind of meat. This does not mean that the French do not differentiate these two things, but they attach more importance to lamb on account of their highly refined eating culture that takes precedence over wool and textiles, so valued in the case of England. That is why the lexicon naming kinds of lamb meat in French is so extensive in comparison to English. This case clarifies the way cultural codes shape the importance people attach to products and their categories and thus shape how these wares are portrayed in signs, emblems and habitual behaviour. This knowledge is crucial while looking closer at case studies on luxury, as it explains dissimilarities in the estimated worth of luxuries in different markets, justifying it with cultural

contrasts (Oswald 2015). For Saussure, signs generate meaning when they are an element of a systematic and conceptual organization: what constitutes "value" of a sign is the interrelation between other signs belonging to the structure (Chandler 2002).

Roland Barthes, a French critic, developed crucial semiotic concepts related to the semiotic-centered deconstruction of modern media (Bignell 2002). Barthes's brief essay on Italian food advertising for Panzani pasta (Barthes 1964) puts Saussure's ideas of semiotic deconstruction in language to use in the examination of images. The writer opted to inspect an advertisement on account of the conscious and purposive character of communication that this form contains (Stokes 2003) and provided an insightful analysis of a print advertisement across two dimensions: the denotative (literal) and connotative (interpretative) one (Barthes 1964). Firstly, Barthes delves into the linguistic plane, which is the label with the name of the brand. He notices that Panzani communicates more than just how the company is called, but more importantly its sound gives an impression of "Italianicity." The second function appears when the linguistic message is an indispensable element that accompanies the image and thus makes it possible to convey the intended message (like in comics). After this the author goes on to the study of pictures, firstly from the denotative perspective. However, he emphasizes that there is no way to come across a literal image with no undertones in the domain of advertising. It would be abstract to consider visuals in separation from symbolic meaning since each person participating in a society possesses some knowledge at hand that urges to see more than what is physically represented by the signifier (Barthes 1964). The next step, probably the most prominent, is to identify the hidden, non-literal message. The whole scene represents a conscious way of shopping and the matching of colors (yellow, green and red) symbolizes *Italianicity*. Interestingly, Barthes remarks that a native Italian would scarcely arrive at this connotation, while it is noticeable for the French that rely on reinforced tourist expectations. Finally, the entire organization of the image recalls a signified that has its place in art – still life paintings. The conventional realm of signifieds or connotations is defined by Barthes as an *ideology*. Lastly, the author also coins the term "rhetoric of the image" which stands for the whole arrangement of signifiers able to imply the signifieds (Barthes 1964).

While denotation is the exact, fixed, or simple message that one derives from a sign, that is, the utterances or images precisely about an object, connotation is an interpretation which the thing brings to mind: it is about

what it represents from a personal standpoint. In Barthes's essay, connotation enacts cultural significations, mythologies and beliefs. The meaning obtained on the connotative level embodies all the cultural definitions connected with the particular thing. They originate in previous encounters or recurrent attachments made between a symbol and certain object (Smith et al. 2004).

If one looks at advertisements, daily reports on TV and other media texts such as movies, it is obvious that verbal signs, images, and other symbols are not utilized merely to indicate something, but also in order to precipitate a variety of associations. Barthes dubbed this societal fact – the joining of signs and their symbolic meaning to form certain communication – the generation of “myth.” This term relates to modes of processing about individuals, goods, locations, or concepts that are constructed to convey certain messages to the receiver of the material. For instance, if the viewer watches a shoe advertisement, in which a person is getting out of a Rolls-Royce, the scene does not solely represent a pair of high heels and a make of car. It connects the overtones of luxury that are obtainable through the symbol “Rolls-Royce” with the footwear, implying a mythic signification – this wardrobe item is an element of socially advantaged lifestyle (Bignell 2002). The high heels and the car were deliberately arranged together so that they seem alike since they are both expensive and stylish – this reveals a metaphorical relation between these two. However, the fact that one can observe only a glimpse of the shoe is not important as this sign points to the whole figure, owner of the shoe. This unreal advertisement employs an elaborate mixture of signs in order to invest the identified things with mythic message. Bignell (2002) states that myth seizes an already used sign and causes it to operate as a signifier on another rank. The symbol of “Rolls-Royce” turns into a signifier with the signified concept of luxury, for instance. In this sense, myth resembles in its structure a certain type of language that puts to use already circulating signs and builds a brand new sign structure out of them. It must be mentioned that myth is not a made-from-scratch, pure and unbiased language. It picks up the operating signs and the ideas they evoke, and intentionally applies them to fulfill certain social function.

The idea of a code is pivotal to semiotic analysis (Dyer 2009). The codes provide a rationale for the social side of sign structures, as they control the linking of particular definition with symbolic portrayal in a specified culture, for example relating diamonds to social standing. Codes also explain the shared reading of such resources as body language, hues and shapes. They structure people's

reasoning about the world according to “prevailing meaning schemes” that differ across cultures and times. They frequently remain unquestioned and are assumed to “have always been there,” so are of high importance in people’s cognition when making sense of things or pondering about them. For instance, long blond hair interpreted through the frame of femininity points to the signified of woman (Dyer 2009).

Post-structuralist theoretical model of semiotics shifts the focus from the codes as ordering principles for signs to the reciprocal relation between codes and how they are used in the culture. The codes can be looked at according to structural elements of discourse; however, how they are put into action can be deconstructed by semantic categories of discourse. The semantic dimension studies the different roles of the code that develop while codes are utilized in social communicative acts. This perspective asserts that people do not solely depend on codes to convey a message, but also make changes to the codes, adapt them in order to individualize their communication (Oswald 2015). The marketing research emphasizes the power of placing in context any specific sample of text, regardless whether it is an advertisement, web page, or an interview with a client by looking at them as a part of a bigger composition of texts that characterize “the brand, the competitive set, the product category, or a consumer segment” (Oswald 2015, 24).

The meaning implied by a certain advertisement and derived by the receiver is obviously determined by what can be perceived in the material on a screen or page. Although people tend not to reflect critically on ads on a daily basis, it is crucial to precisely figure out what can be observed so that one can generate more well-grounded interpretations regarding the deeper level of signification. The investigation of text in advertisements requires delving into language components as well as pictures, concerning the pictorial representation to be as relevant as (if not more than) the words. Images are “faster” to read and exert more influence than language, and principally provide better tool for the expression of enthusiasm, emotions and creative power. An illustration is utilized to draw attention to and to guide the eye to the written piece in a journal and in a video advertisement; language frequently works as a mere strengthening of a picture or a commercial’s shot. Even though people generally look at pictures, especially photographs, as if they were mirroring the real-life world and therefore depict the actuality, one ought to be conscious that the intention of an image is not “clear” – in the contrary, just like the remaining elements of ads are deliberately created and controlled (Dyer 2009).

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006) in the book *Reading Images* present a framework for the systematic semiotic analysis of any kind of visual representations. Therefore, their ideas can be applied to the examination of advertisements, also moving images, so commercials seem to be the right sample to break down taking on their view on the deconstruction and understanding of image. There are many ways of visual construction: one of them is picturing the relation between two objects in an action. In a still image, it is realized through a vector created by for example a picture of a hand in a position that shows somebody else to come closer. In the moving image the same vector is controlled by movement, so the same scene would display a hand gesture in motion aimed at the other person. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also distinguish two kinds of participants – the interactive ones (e.g. the producer and receiver of a commercial) and the represented ones that makes up the substance, “everything” which takes part in a representation process ranging from people, objects to locations. The participants have semantic roles (e.g. “actor” or “goal”). If there are two characters interacting with each other, they are both actors, the relation between can be either transactional or non-transactional. When an image depicts just an occurrence and it is not known who or what is the cause of it, it is an “event.” The visuals are also capable of portraying reactions, which are marked by the line of eyesight and glimpse of the “reactor” while observing the “phenomena.” Reaction processes can also be transactional, when people react to each other, or not transactional. Other categories in the multimodal discourse analysis framework include: the description of attributes, participants taking part in a scene, the circumstances that comprise of setting. There should also be taken notice of the background and foreground, the scenery and objects embedded in it. Multimodality consists also of distance, angle of viewing and positioning of the viewer in relation to the scene represented. An important part is played also by colors and their hues; they are able to express certain meanings. When it comes to motion pictures, additional categories might be crucial to deploy, such as narrative and narrative devices: caption, dynamic and composition, Movement is capable of changing the position of the viewer and thus produce impressions that cannot be evoked by still images (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

## 5. Case Study – Chanel Luxury Brand Advertisement

The example chosen for the study of luxury communication is the Chanel perfume commercial of the iconic scent N°5, released on the official YouTube channel of Chanel on the twenty-eight of February in 2018. In the commercial the main character is played by Keira Knightley – a prominent British actress. The video represents a sequence of actions by a young woman who is leaving an apartment after an all-night party, interspaced with flashbacks of her recollections of some significant moments of that party. One by one, she recovers her shoes, scarf, handbag and blazer (all Chanel branded) and leaves the place leaving the man she had met there behind. The story seems amusing, captivating and free-flowing, but as it turns out, the commercial is a lavish, meaning-charged luxury branding production. An in-depth analysis of the commercial requires a detailed description of the video in the first place.

The story starts at a dark but elegant entrance leading to a glamorous living room in which we can see a greyish round sofa in the middle, grey, gold and brownish pillows scattered around, a black piano in the back and a huge white window with creamy, translucent drapes. The whole white interior is in a mess as if after a party: there are white and pink balloons with glittering white and gold ribbons attached to them, and white fluffy feathers and pieces of glimmering confetti. The viewer sees a shot of a woman from the back striding into this room and looking around a bit. She is wearing a long, greyish dress revealing her back. When she walks in, there is a delicate glimpse of a light beam coming from the left. Straight away there is a shot of her hand picking up a black high-heeled sandal from Chanel, but after that we see the woman holding it and looking somewhere in the direction of the room with a reflective gaze as if trying to recollect something.

Immediately after this, we get to watch a quick flashback of what happened the previous night at the party – in a sequence of quick shots lasting a few seconds. We see people dancing, having fun in the apartment's living room with their hands up in the air, the confetti and ribbons falling down reflecting light. We can hear that they clap their hands twice, then there is a brisk, warm woman's smile, with Keira among the guests and lastly we see just the bottom of the lady's dress and a moment when she throws off her shoe with a light kick while dancing, throwing the confetti into the air. That is the way she had lost her shoe the previous night, which she has just now grabbed into her hands. The mental picture of the flashback is topped off with a glimpse of the party

from above. We can also notice in this scene two huge, crystal chandeliers above the guests' heads. As the action in the commercial continues, the viewers find themselves back in the empty living room, however, on the other side of it.

In the background there are two massive balcony windows with curtains in dusty pink colour. The walls are covered with creamy-white moldings. It can be observed that the floor is dark, probably made of wood. This area of the room is free from any furniture but there are balloons as if surrounding the central part of the scene. Keira climbs on a chair and stretches up to reach her light pink scarf that is hanging from the crystal chandelier, then we catch a glimpse of Keira's face: she looks up with enjoyment as he pulls the scarf down from the lamp. In the next shot, she holds the scarf in her hands, tangles it and pulls it slightly closer to her chest, and looks to the side – again as if trying to recall the situation in which she lost, this time, the scarf. After this we step right into the scene narrating the course of events the night before. We see Keira again in her own recollection. The bit of her memory is pictured again in several rapidly shown shots. The scene takes place among guests during the party, on the dance floor. It can be said that it happens in the middle of the dancing crowd. Keira turns towards the viewer with a mysterious look and a mild smile, and with a dynamic gesture made with her scarf.

Later we see a situation from behind the actress's back: there is a brown-haired man approaching her, he is wearing a navy blazer paired with a striped T-shirt. He looks at her with a direct, calm and mystifying gaze. Then we observe Keira, first from the front and then the whole scene from the side when they stand in front of each other as she wraps the scarf around the man's neck. She pulls the man closer to herself, which we see from behind the man's back, from a distance as well as from the side, when they are facing each other. As they get really close in front of each other, we see their faces in profile: they exchange deep glances, and then the woman releases the scarf and with one move throws it back dynamically in the air, where the light-weight scarf lands on the chandelier. The confetti flows in the room and glitters in the dim light of the scene.

The viewer is taken back to the empty apartment the morning after. Keira makes a few steps towards the "camera" as if looking for something more, then we see her feet as she puts them together in two audible "bangs" against the floor. Then she snaps her fingers twice while staring somewhere thoughtfully, once again, as if attempting to bring back certain pictures to her mind. Each moment of snapping is seen from two different perspectives – from

the front showing the whole figure and closer from the side. From this point the viewer jumps into the scene that has happened the night before. People at the party are having a good time: they dance, fight using the pillows, and the feathers are drifting in the air. We can see that the actress is among them trying to force her way through the crowd with a green quilted Chanel bag on a chain clutched in her outstretched hand. We see the bag falling on the floor among feathers and confetti and, then right after it, a shiny copper pillow falls on it. The moment the pillow hits the floor covering the bag from view, the viewer sees Keira back in the morning. She notices the bag, uncovers it and grasps it in her hands. Then, we see her face in close-up, as she starts to smile with a certain spark of delight in her eyes and from this point on we delve into her next remembrance of the past night.

We see her hand reaching for the microphone; she grabs it from the floor and lifts up above her head in a gesture of victory. She opens her mouth smiling, shouting something. Around her we can observe a pillow-battle, feathers drifting in the air from one direction to the other. We watch Keira's hand as she turns up the volume of music with a golden knob. She is wearing a black nail polish and a silver ring. Then the viewer watches the room full of guests who are enjoying themselves, at the back of which Keira sings to a microphone. The man that approached her before makes a jump and lands on top of the crowd, which holds him. Keira sings with a gentle voice "Coco" to the microphone and the memory cuts off.

Keira appears from behind the door frame and walks along the hallway to look at the mirror on the wall, which is made of small square mirrors in gold frames put together. We see her reflection in the mirror as she passes, also her look focused on lipstick stains from kisses. Straight away we observe what happened in the hall during the party. We see girls, women jostling in front of the mirrors fixing up their makeup. Keira can be seen in the reflection of the mirror taking a look in the direction of the camera's eye. The man, whose shady figure outline can be distinguished in the right side of the shot, stands at the door frame and watches her. The viewer observes closely (from three different angles) as she kisses the mirror softly leaving a mark on it. Then she looks into the man's eyes, and he looks at her with a slight mysterious smile. When she turns away to go, she continues to keep the eye contact, so he follows her into the bedroom.

The bedroom walls are covered with sea-blue patterns, which look as if they were painted carelessly. There is a huge gold decoration on the wall, white curtains

and a big bed in the middle. The classy furniture is black with polish and gold ornaments. The bed is dishevelled, there are olive-green pillows on a modern navy blue sofa and a piece of creamy wrinkled silky fabric laying on the bed. When she walks in, there is a male hand emerging from the duvet. She takes her black Chanel blazer and holding the blazer and her Chanel bag she comes across a white chess pawn laying on the turquoise carpet. She picks up the pawn and lifts it on the level of her eyes and glances with deliberation. This way we move on to the next recollection. The bedroom is dim, there is just a yellow-gold light leaning against the bed. The actress is lying on the bed in a reclining position facing the man and there is a chessboard between them. A black pawn is being beaten by the white pawn with Keira's delicate push, and she sees him as he takes off his striped shirt showing off his muscular body with tattoos. Then the man strikes Keira's pawn and we see that she is about to untie the knot from the top of her dress still looking into the man's eyes. The recollection finishes in mid-movement.

While walking through the living room on her way out and putting on her blazer, Keira glances at the wall where the words are written with a gold spray: "COCO FOREVER." Just as she smiles to herself there starts another memory of what happened the past night. We see a shot when someone's hand touches a golden light switch. As the people dance, we see and hear a boy whistling. Later, we see a shot in which the man goes forward and guides Keira: he holds her arms with both hands. She looks into his eyes with an intrigued facial expression. As they stride, we can listen to a clear sound of their foot steps. When the man turns her around to see something, she opens her mouth in admiration and surprise. The man stands next to her, rests his arm on her shoulder and also watches the view with content. On the wall there are words: "COCO FOREVER," people are cheering and holding cold sparklers. Both Keira and the man are happy and laugh. This way the last mental image comes to an end.

We follow Keira as she takes a last look at the apartment. Her hand touches the handle and opens the door. We see her with a pleased smile, already going down the street. Behind her we can admire the creamy-coloured facades of Paris's decorative tenement houses. They are shown from the perspective that reveals how they stretch along the road. The sunrays are leaning against the high buildings with wrought balconies. The man rushes to the balcony door shirtless and shouts "Coco!", but she does not look back. We can still hear one more echoed "Coco!" as the light pink bottle of Coco Chanel N°5 perfume shows up against a black background. On the label big letters of different size

and thickness spell: "Coco Mademoiselle Chanel Paris." At the bottom of the bottle we can read "Eau de parfum intense." The narrator says what is displayed underneath the bottle "the new eau de perfume intense" then she adds "Coco mademoiselle Chanel."

## 6. Meanings and Myths in Chanel Advertising

The 2018 commercial from Chanel, although it aims at advertising the iconic scent Chanel N°5, obviously communicates far more than a bottle of perfume. Following the course of the narrative in the video material, one realizes that there is actually nothing that directly or indirectly refers to perfume. The receiver is not flooded with elaborate commentaries on what the product is like, what it does or why it is a better option than something else. The viewers are not forced to decide whether to make a purchase or not, nor are they provided with bits of persuasive information, but are encouraged to relax, take their time and derive their own meaning out of the multitude of images, narrative sequences and intertextual references. The commercial seems to captivate one in a pleasing process of meaning making on account of the heavily edited sequence accompanied with music. The unquestionable supremacy of images makes this advertisement a great semiotic specimen and, for the sake of moving images, the multimodal perspective can produce interesting insights when other modes of communication are taken into consideration. Even though the commercial lasts only sixty seconds, it is increasingly rich in meaning-generating elements that build up the implied interpretation. What the viewer is offered in the first place is a certain identity produced by the brand that entails a luxurious lifestyle.

Although Keira Knightley is a world-renowned actress starring in this commercial, one can easily recognize that she does not play herself in this short brand material. Instead she impersonates "Coco Chanel," yet not personally the famous woman that founded the brand and launched the production of the promoted perfume. Keira represents the "Coco Chanel woman" that any woman can become. The commercial focuses to a greater extent on what such a woman is like and what she does, than on what she has got in terms of material objects, even though those things are a prominent part of the material (playing a subordinate role). The observer is presented with brand identity that is represented as an inspiring and powerful female personality that is carried and reinforced

in the story. First of all, Keira is dressed comfortably, but she is also undeniably elegant and classy, as there is nothing over the top or excessive in her look. She has her hair tied in a messy yet a good-looking bun, she has got a powerful and stylish grey smoky eye makeup, a grey tulle dress, black leather sandals with unique decorative heels. Keira's look seems to be an essence not only of "French" attachment to simplicity and quality but also of creativity of design and uniqueness.

The starring of Keira Knightley brings additional connotations that the consumers associate with the brand and the scent. The consumers start to attach the qualities of the character Keira plays as well as the characteristics of Keira as a person to the brand's identity and its luxurious propositions – clothing items, accessories, makeup products, cat walks and different sorts of events. The mental bridging between the woman's lifestyle and the brand results in the creation of myth. The brand logo takes over all the facets of Keira's personality that people commonly identify her with and turns them into signifieds of the luxury brand. This way Keira adds to the way the consumers define the brand. As Keira is one of her kind – a classy, beautiful and incredibly gifted person – the same qualities get associated with the brand.

For the viewer the woman may appear to be an embodiment of femininity, self-confidence, mystery, joy and power. These characteristics are realized on the screen through meaningful actions, gestures and behaviours of the main character in critical situations. Coco presents herself as a complex, strong and inspiring woman's personality. Coco is truly self-confident; she communicates purposefully, often nonverbally. She consciously uses eye contact and her gaze expresses more than words. Coco is also powerful, decisive, free and takes the initiative – she decides on her own to leave the building; she is the one that initiates the flirt on the dancefloor and controls it; she strides confidently through the crosswalk without turning around when being called by the man from the balcony. The personality which the main character embodies is not only bold but also full of happiness, joy and appreciation for life – Coco seizes the moment at the party, embraces meaningful moments; she starts to sing in front of others, is able to express her emotions in various ways.

While looking closer at the young lady played by Keira Knightley, it is worth placing her figure in the perspective of contested roles of femininity and masculinity, and analyse which codes emerge from the personality the main character represents. A common, reinforced female archetype takes for granted such characteristics as vulnerability, fragility, weakness, passiveness and tendency

to hesitancy. "Coco" breaks the dominant model of femininity that joins women with all the qualities regarded as "not strong," especially when set beside men. The young woman that the viewer gets to observe in the commercial presents the opposite – she exhibits all the traces that point towards the inner strength of character. She does not wait for the things happen to her; on the contrary, she takes on a proactive position, she is the decision maker, controls the course of action. Coco chooses a partner and initiates the interaction with the man without hesitation, sings at the party with hardly any bit of stage fright, abandons the man with no feeling of guilt. She looks happy with herself, independent and free while not being afraid to reveal her emotional side or enter a romantic relation. Coco proves that it is possible to bridge everything that makes a true woman with incredible inner strength. On the other hand, the viewer sees a man, although not central to the story, but a complementary figure showing gentleness, obedience and slight disorientation. The man is left behind empty-handed, the symbol of which might be the sleeping man's hand emerging from the duvet.

Interestingly, for the most part of the story, the "Coco Chanel woman" has a mild, mysterious smile. She communicates deeply with her gaze, leaves the apartment in the morning without warning and in full control of her attire. That is why her figure may bring about intriguing questions that probably are going to remain unanswered or that will trigger the reader to imagine even more. We might have an impression that the woman keeps certain secret as we can only deduce her intentions and thoughts from what she does. We have also no idea of what happened in the bedroom that night. Moreover, we know nothing about her romantic relationship with the man. These are the elements that create a mysterious atmosphere, provide a lot of space for self-interpretation as specific aspects are left for the imagination of the viewer. Mystery is also constructed through the use of different tools. That is for example: the shade of a figure's outline, a dim lightning of a scene, dark colours, smoky eye makeup or blurred shots of the crowd when the people are shown as a mass and, lastly, when we see Keira's reflection in the mirror. These components are not mystery in themselves but they strengthen the experience of indirectness and implication which is pivotal for a luxury brand so that it can stir consumers' imagination and thus remain an object of constant desire.

With the motive of mystery comes a prominent factor of dreaming that cannot be omitted in the analysis. Apart from the signifiers presented so far that leave the imagination to its own devices, it should be explained how dreams

are embedded in the storyline, which has much to do with the organisational and technical side of the commercial. Dreams are central in the construction of this story. While the apartment and what can be observed in the interiors are the remains or evidence of the last night's party, the mental pictures that Keira brings to her mind are the second reality in which the most important part of the action happens. The viewer goes back in time getting to know Keira's personal sense of the party experience. The images of Keira's recollections are dreamlike. If one tried to describe images of night dreams, the ways of capturing them would most probably largely coincide with the modes of portrayal of the dreamlike scenes in the commercial. Recollections, like dreams, appear to enclose just the most prominent moments, often symbolic or emotional. The parts when Keira pictures the memories are short, dark, frequently with close-ups of meaningful objects or actions and are displayed in a dynamic sequence of quick shots combined with music that supports the multisensory experience of dreaming. It is also worth noticing that the dream-like recollections that take the viewer to the vital points of the party are highly emotional, which means that they attempt to express what the character felt. The use of dreams underlines the added value of luxury that comes down to its intangible worth – it caters to the emotional and projective potential of people's nature.

The reader of the commercial is not shown just retrospections but increasingly emotionally-charged moments that touch upon a wide range of different sorts of emotions. The feelings that can be identified are: attraction, surprise, happiness, fun as well as the warmth of somebody else's presence. Also the emotional side of the dreams is realized through changing perspective and deliberately created close-ups – the viewers get to see the characters' interaction from behind their backs or observe their face expressions in detail. This way the receivers can more strongly experience the relation between the man and the woman, their nonverbal communication that needs no words, being therefore full of guesswork and, lastly, their meaningful exchange of glances that create an alluring tension.

Another significant subtopic to discuss is the implementation of elements of magic and symbolism into the story happening on the screen. The most important aspect of this point is the use of objects in the course of action. Firstly, the brand items and other things that Keira stumbles across make up the structure of the commercial (they are all captured in a close-up). However, they play a far more meaningful role. They are as if magic, they are capable

of bringing about mental pictures and recalling emotions. What is more, the branded items stand for all the experienced moments, revealing that there is more to them than mere functional, aesthetic or quality-bounded characteristics. They are depicted as entities which possess intangible, added worth, as containers of experiences and emotions. There are particular stories that stand behind these items. They are able to tell a story as they have personal signification. For example, the shoes recall the moments of a carefree and joyful dance. The light pink scarf reminds of the playful flirting on the dancefloor. The recovered Chanel handbag is the reminder of the cheerful, lively party. In the commercial there are also close-ups of non-branded objects and worthwhile actions, whose use is deeply symbolic. For example, the microphone Keira grabs from the floor is a sign of boldness, confidence and initiative.

Finally, there are two relevant symbolic moments - as Keira gently kisses the mirror leaving a lipstick mark on it (the viewer can even hear the kiss), which might be a sign both of self-love and flirtation, and when she plays chess with the men on the bed. The latter is undeniably not just a simple board game but, on the level of connotation, a signified of a "love game," attraction and flirting between two people. It should also be remarked that there are a few other components that create the atmosphere of magic. This is the gleaming confetti and fluffy feathers working as a kind of "magic dust," which makes the scenes appear elusive, unreal. The light beams leaning against objects, appearing and disappearing, reflecting light - build a mysterious, magical aura. Besides, Keira does "magic" with a hand gesture when she snaps her fingers in order to return to the party and recall the images of it. Symbolism brings figurative and emblematic language into the experience of luxury that is not about being direct and explicit. Lastly, the implementation of magic gives the consumer an experience of having to do with a miracle, something whose value cannot be explained with reasoning. At this point the luxury brand acquires qualities that are closer to religion.

What amounts to an increasingly powerful motive in the commercial is the broad meaning of the message "celebrating." First, the commercial is surely not exclusively about the glorification of the perfume, but it is essentially a clip that represents the "celebration" of the whole brand, more precisely its image, identity and the experience it offers to its consumers. This is mainly because of the fact that the receiver comes across a large number of brand offerings (scarf, shoe, blazer, lipstick, bag) entwined in the story line in a subtle, engaging way. Apart from these items there is the main character of Coco, and, as it can

be deduced, it all takes place in Paris. The viewer is told a coherent story with all necessary elements to pinpoint the experiences of a brand in a specific cultural environment, linking objects, identity, behaviours and emotions. Moreover, the viewer observes people virtually celebrating during the party. However, as the guests dance and cheer with cold sparklers in their hands, lightning up the golden inscription on a wall (COCO FOREVER), it becomes obvious that it is not just a simple party, but in a connotative dimension a celebration of brand's eternity, immortality, timelessness.

The apartment in a tenement house in which the party took place is not just a "stage," a decontextualized environment where something is displayed, or a scenic backdrop for the action. In order to visualize why the place plays such a pivotal role it is worth envisioning what would be the implied meaning of the commercial if the surroundings were changed (for a park, a city square or a meadow in the countryside). Therefore, the place, interiors and the objects should be regarded as active meaning constructors. For example, the crystal chandelier, the use of gold colour (elements of furniture – handles, ornaments, frames) or a silky fabric on the bed are clear signifiers of opulence and luxury. The books, graphics and paintings on the floor leaning against the walls as well as a huge black piano are connotators of class and refinement. There is a correlation between the meaning-generating elements of Keira's appearance and the appearance of the apartment. The interiors and objects are not only classy, in French style, but the furnishing is also full of creative and modern elements. The minimalistic sofa, a geometrical chest of drawers, or fancy pillows in the bedroom stand for an inventive design while being of top quality, even to the untrained eye. This points to the balance that needs to be kept by luxury brands between being original and being loyal to the tradition and timelessness.

## 7. Conclusion

The semiotic analysis of the commercial performed above clearly indicates that communication of luxury branding demands a multimodal approach, as the experience of the brand, which is of the utmost importance for the luxury sector, can only be transmitted this way. The characteristics of luxury brand's image almost wholly coincide with the interpretation of lifestyle qualities derived from the study sample. The motive of magic, dreaming, religion, femininity,

celebration and emotions are easy to distinguish, but require a close analytical look at each component and then another look revealing a synthetic interpretation in the perspective of the whole luxury brand.

Moreover, luxury communication utilizes people's projective thinking, their meaning-making nature, desire to dream, emotions and the need to experience beauty in a pure state. The analysis reveals that the communication of luxury is mainly constructed with the aim of transmitting the intangible worth, which is a really demanding task, because the experience of added value has to be realized through physical means. That is why the meaning is conveyed through various modes that range from images, sound, utterances to movement. This multi semiotic environment activates a whole variety of Barthes' lexicons to detect the meaning, which shapes the consumers' definition of the brand.

The example chosen for the study turned out to be rich on the connotative level, which reveals that communication constitutes a highly coded text, full of undertones and symbolic actions and objects. Almost every bit of the video has the capability to bring about certain connotations. The Chanel commercial exhibits a deep understanding of the nature of luxury brand. It successfully manages the relationship between being ahead of its time while keeping itself close to the core identity of the brand (Frenchness and the founder - Coco Chanel). The commercial creates an integral environment for the consumers to immerse themselves in the identity of the brand. However, the most influential choice is the use of Keira Knightley, herself a brand name. Her role in the commercial is a powerful impersonation of the chief person in the history of the brand and stands for the whole philosophy of Chanel. Last, but not least, it is worth mentioning that this commercial is one in a series of perfume and branding commercials that feature well-known European and American actresses who have a history of playing ambivalent characters in top-ranking artistic films.

## Works Cited

- Amatulli, Cesare, Matteo Deangelis, Marco Pichierri, and Gianluigi Guido. 2018. "The Importance of Dream in Advertising: Luxury Versus Mass Market." *International Journal of Marketing Studies* 10.1: 71-81.
- Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image, Music, Text*. Fontana Press.

- Barthes, Roland. 1964. *Rhetoric of Image*. Accessed January 10, 2019. <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Barthes-Rhetoric-of-the-image-ex.pdf>.
- Bignell, Jonathan. 2002. *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Chandler, Daniel. 2002. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Chehab, Mayssa, and Joris Merks-Benjamin. 2013. "A Look at Luxury Shoppers around the World." Thinkwithgoogle. Accessed December 11, 2018. <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/advertisingchannels/search/luxury-shoppers-around-world/>.
- Cook, Guy. 1992. *The Discourse of Advertising*. London, New York: Routledge.
- D'Arpizio, Claudia, Federica Levato, Marc-Andre Kamel, and Joelle de Mongolfier. 2017. "Report Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study, Fall-Winter 2017." Bain & Company. Accessed February 22, 2019. <https://www.bain.com/insights/luxury-goods-worldwide-market-study-fall-winter-2017>.
- D'Arpizio, Claudia, and Federica Levato. 2017. "Altgamma 2018 Market Monitor Worldwide Luxury. The Future of Luxury: A Look into Tomorrow to Understand Today." Accessed December 11, 2018. [https://altgamma.it/media/source/WORLDWIDE%20LUXURY%20MARKET%20MONITOR\\_BAIN.pdf](https://altgamma.it/media/source/WORLDWIDE%20LUXURY%20MARKET%20MONITOR_BAIN.pdf).
- Dyer, Gillian. 2009. *Advertising as Communication*. London, New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Eco, Umberto. 1976. *A Theory of Semiotics*. London: Macmillan.
- Fionda, Antoinette M., and Christopher M. Moore. 2009. "The Anatomy of the Luxury Fashion Brand." *Journal of Brand Management* 16.5-6: 347-363.
- Gallagher, Kevin. 2017. "Luxury Fashion Brands Shift Budgets to Digital." *Business Insider*. Accessed December 11, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/luxury-fashion-brands-shift-budgets-to-digital-2017-6?IR=T>.
- Gottdiener, Mark. 1995. *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and the Forms of Postmodern Life*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hudders, Liselot, Mario Pandelaere, and Patrick Vyncke. 2013. "Consumer Meaning Making: The Meaning of Luxury Brands in a Democratised Luxury World." *International Journal of Market Research* 55.3: 69-90.

- Kapferer, Jean-Noel, and Vincent Bastien. 2009. *The Luxury Strategy: Break the Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands*. London, Philadelphia: Kogan Page.
- Kress, Gunther R., and Theo van Leeuwen. 2006. *Reading Images: Grammar of Visual Design*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Mortelmans, Dimitri. 2005. "Sign Value in Process of Distinction: The Concept of Luxury." *Semiotica* 157: 497–520.
- Nia, Arghavan, and Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky. 2000. "Do Counterfeits Devalue the Ownership of Luxury Brands?" *Journal of Product and Brand Management* 9.7: 485–497.
- Okonkwo, Uche. 2009. "Sustaining the Luxury Brand on the Internet." *Journal of Brand Management* 16: 302–310.
- Okonkwo, Uche. 2010. *Luxury Online: Styles, Systems, Strategies*. London: Springer.
- Okonkwo, Uche. 2016. *Luxury Fashion Branding: Trends, Tactics, Techniques*. New York: Springer.
- Oswald, Laura R. 2015. *Creating Value: The Theory and Practice of Marketing Semiotic Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rapaille, Clotilde. 2015. *The Global Code: How a New Culture of Universal Values Is Reshaping Business and Marketing*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Room, Adrian. 1998. *History of Branding*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Saussure, Ferdinand. 1983. *Course in General Linguistics*. Michigan: Duckworth.
- Smith, Kenneth L., Sandra Moriarty, Keith Kenney, and Gretchen Barbatsis. 2004. *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Stokes, Jane. 2003. *How to Do Media and Cultural Studies*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Wiedmann, Klaus-Peter, Nadine Hennigs, and Astrid Siebels. 2007. "Measuring Consumers' Luxury Value Perception: A Cross Cultural Framework." *Academy of Marketing Science Review* 7.
- Zenith. 2018. "Hospitality Leads Digital Transformation of Luxury Category." Zenithmedia. Accessed November 19, 2018.  
<https://www.zenithmedia.com/hospitality-leads-digital-transformation-of-luxury-category/>.



# Evolution of the Mary Sue Character in Works by Wattpad Social Platform Users

Patrycja Biniek

University of Opole

**Abstract:** This article discusses the evolution and popularity of the Mary Sue character in the works by Wattpad social platform users on the basis of *Teenage Dirtbag* by SumNawaz. The study maps the relationships between the rise of fan-fiction on the social platform, characteristics of autobiographical genres and the idealized characters constructed subconsciously by young authors. The analysis of the sub-genre of Real Person Fiction reveals the elements binding the fiction genre and the Mary Sue character, presenting the differences and similarities between contemporary versions of the character and its archetype introduced in the 1960s. The study enhances the understanding of “imaginative reading” and reveals the variety of literary tendencies enabled by new social media technologies.

**Keywords:** Wattpad, fanfiction, Real Person Fiction, Mary Sue character

## 1. Introduction

Social media are the leading force of communication in mass culture. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have dominated the discourse; however, as the demand for social media centers around more specific purposes, Internet users seek alternative channels of communication. The aim of this study is to discuss one of such channels and analyse its significance in the process of experiencing current literature trends among youngsters. Some of the most favoured online trends include publishing fiction on a social platform called Wattpad. It has gathered an enormous number of followers throughout the years and its charts of popularity are constantly being dominated by literary creations containing characters from existing cultural products, such as movies, TV series and no-

vels. The trend is named *fanfiction* and it surfaced when the *Star Trek* series started to gain popularity in the 1960s.

One aspect focused on in this study is the tendency to incorporate numerous autobiographical inserts into fanfiction texts. Autobiographical elements are usually motivated by one's fantasises associated with a certain fictional character, a celebrity, or an actor who renders the character in a cinematic production. As the majority of such texts were produced by female fans, the inserts usually take shape of an idealized female character: an unrealistic avatar of the author. The journalist Paula Smith was the first person to spark the trend when she included another female character in her short parody of *Star Trek* (Smith 1973). She named the girl Mary Sue and portrayed her as exceedingly perfect, which started a trend applied later in numerous contemporary publications.

One of the most popular genres of fanfiction shared on Wattpad is RPF (Real Person Fiction). Such texts describe fictional stories about real people and focus on depicting relationships between Mary Sues and various idols, usually singers and actors. Through RPF, authors and readers engage emotionally in the process of "imaginative reading" (Barner 2016, 8–12). As a Mary Sue character goes through various adventures, writers subconsciously incorporate their biggest fantasises into the texts and attempt to represent themselves as someone more exceptional than they are in real life.

The process is worth analysing as not much research on the Wattpad social platform and the Mary Sue character has been conducted. Although Sophie Collins and Ashley J. Barner have offered brief descriptions of the literary characteristics of Mary Sue, their publications focus on exploring fanfiction in more general sense. They both examine fanfiction stories based on fictional characters and occurrences, such as fantasy novels, movies, comic series, etc. On the contrary, this study explores the ways in which specific works published on Wattpad depict imaginative relations between real people and their fans. The processes of composing the two types of fanfiction differ significantly. Although some elements of those fanfiction genres are similar, the way in which authors mirror real celebrities and fictional characters differ significantly.

The first section of this paper focuses on explaining the role of the Wattpad social platform among other contemporary social media. It describes the reasons behind it overshadowing other similar sites and explains the phenomenon of its continuous popularity. The second section proceeds to revisit the history

of the Mary Sue character. A general definition of the term is based on "A Trekkie's Tale" by Paula Smith. Then, the reasons behind its frequent presence in fiction written by youngsters are revealed and discussed. The third section describes specific contemporary trends associated with the character which can be found only in the texts published on Wattpad. The analysis is based on *Teenage Dirtbag* by SumNawaz. It also discusses the differences and similarities between the quoted publications, the very first Mary Sue and tendencies followed by young Wattpad users.

## 2. Social Media and Wattpad

In the last two decades, social media have become the dominating force of private and public communication and they have changed the way millions of people interact with each other. Although the majority would usually associate the phrase "interpersonal communication" simply with conversations between persons, younger generations, especially those who have experienced intense interaction with technology while growing up, might identify the act with conveying messages through various network tools. Those electronic instruments act as primary channels of communication. As stated in *Social Media: a New Way to Success*, Social Webs are Internet locations which bring together users with similar interests, so that they can participate in discussing current trends and affairs (Mustonen 2009, 8), for instance, publish factual information about one's life in a form of short messages (e.g. Twitter) or share one's works of fiction with other users (e.g. Wattpad). The later network, despite its niche status, is constantly gaining interest within diverse social groups.

Wattpad is a social web which grew into the largest literature-oriented Internet community among the contemporary social media. As Sophie Rochester writes, the platform was firstly designed to be an uncomplicated mobile application that could display only short fragments of texts and was prototyped in 2002 by Allen Lau. The co-founder of the network claimed that he was inspired to create an e-reading device as he faced a common obstacle while traveling; he could not read as much as he had wished. Since he already had experience with managing businesses related to IT discourse, he established cooperation with his partner, Ivan Yuen, and officially launched the network in 2007 (Rochester 2012, para. 6). As stated on the official Wattpad website,

the first works published in the service were actually free domain books, for example *Pride and Prejudice*, since, during that time, such applications were not well known to amateur writers (“About Wattpad” n.d). Fiction writing was limited chiefly to the works saved in the form of computer files or handwritten abstracts. Most blogs focused on presenting more factual, diary-like content. Wattpad’s CEOs decided to target less specific audiences by providing them with access to more inclusive reading and succeeded in gaining the interest of millions of registered users in later years, while easily hindering other platforms with similar aims from succeeding in the cyber marketplace.

One such network tool is *Blogger*, one of the earliest services provided for various types of writers and launched by *Google*. One could question why blogs in general have been overtaken by Wattpad, since they function as individual channels of communication, whereas Wattpad is more like an assemblage – a cluster of various stories that compete for popularity. It is easier to stand out among the mass if there is no crowd. Yet, despite the fact that Wattpad consists of thousands of published stories, the platform managed to overtake blogs. The reason behind this phenomenon is the complexity connected to searching the blogs for the content. Wattpad provides its users with an uncomplicated search engine, enabling them to explore not only varied genres of fiction (e.g. fantasy, fanfiction, comedy, etc.), but also more specific preferences, such as language, quantity of chapters and types of the audience the story would be appropriate for. By contrast, a blog is an individual piece of work without much specification on the genre, or the length of the story. There is no such Internet tool that clusters and analyses them for those interested, forcing the audience to go through the content, even if it is beyond their interest zone. Although functions of contemporary blogs have been enhanced, as in the past a published post could consist of textual content only and rarely was treated as a “two-ways communication channel,” the *blogsphere* – the entire connected community – does not fulfil the audience’s expectations (Mustonen 2009, 13). The same issue occurs when a writer considers publishing their works on discussion forums.

As stated by Piia Mustonen (2009, 14), discussion forums are not only among the oldest types of social media, but they are also established to focus on a specific area of interest. Whether writing in general, or just a particular genre of literature, they used to be a popular medium of communicating written stories to a wider audience. The main function of the medium is to allow users to participate in reviewing the content in a “linear fashion” – answering

messages that take the form of a thread (Mustonen 2009, 14). This means that a single story could become a thread, allowing, not only the audience, but also the authors themselves to comment on every message. The whole content would be considered a specific topic, thus becoming easy to search for via the engine. It is similar to the way Wattpad's search engine functions, yet, in practice, might be the cause of numerous issues even for the author. Since specific topics published on such forums are continuous strands of "discussion", the way particular chapters of stories can get combined and lost within the audience's feedback might actually prevent the content from reaching the readers, as they will be discouraged by the constant chaos. Such a form of publishing fiction might be deemed successful for some types of story-writing, for instance RPG-type stories, which require quick and constant communication between participants; however, when it comes to publishing more traditional literature, be it by an amateur or an experienced author, Wattpad is more reader- and writer-friendly.

Because of its significance for the Internet writing community, the social web is no longer considered only a writing network, but a whole company. The official website states that the CEOs have launched sub-applications of the social web, such as *Tap*, and gathered international investors who have raised more than \$117 million to develop the service into mobile writing and even publishing force. Wattpad's popularity is constantly increasing and as of today it generates more than 70 million monthly uses with an average 37 minutes spent browsing the platform ("About Wattpad" n.d.). The users come from around the world, and even though the headquarters of the company is located in Toronto, Canada, 63% of writers and readers come from outside North America, mostly Europe ("The International Language of Storytelling" n.d.). The largest number of the readers is fanfiction-oriented and it is one of the most searched-for genres of literature on the platform. The story *After* by Anna Todd, which was written as a fictional story based on a real band, has generated more than 477 million views on the platform alone and was republished as a physical book (Todd 2014). *Teenage Dirtbag* by SumNawaz, which is the main object of analysis in this paper, is also written as fanfiction about the band One Direction, and has been read more than 9.6 million times (SumNawaz n.d.). The plot follows a rather well-known schema, often associated with fanfiction, as it presents the story of Elena Carter, "the most beautiful and popular girl you'd ever lay your eyes on", and Harry Styles, "the school's bad boy" (SumNawaz n.d.). The direction the story takes is easily found

in most similar works of fiction. The female protagonist is also rather formulaic and represents the phenomenon called “Mary Sue”. This character type is considered a problematic self-insert, which mirrors the author’s inner fictional, but also equally autobiographical identity and symbolizes their unrealistic expectations.

### 3. Fanfiction and the Roots of the Mary Sue Character

Fanfiction is one of the most favoured story-types on Wattpad. There are numerous definitions of the term, as they are often transformed in accordance with particular types of the genre. Ashley J. Barner (2016, 12) sums up fanfiction as a literary work based on dynamics established in publications by other authors or existing characters and happenings. She also declares that, although the term is a twentieth-century invention, its history dates back to Ancient times. Greek tragedies, like for instance Sophocles’ *Antigone*, were often inspired by mythology and either followed the courses of action depicted in legends, or “borrowed” specific details from myths and evolved into new works of fiction (Barner 2016, 13). Instances of such derivative works can be found in every literary period, since people always enjoyed engaging imaginatively and emotionally with the text. Barner (2016, 8) emphasises that such practises result in the popularity of the genre. “Imaginative reading” allows the fan to visualise the settings described in the text and through mentally constructed images enter the universe. It often motivates fans to create their own avatars and involve themselves into the plot.

Such devices became extremely popular during *Star Trek*’s era in the 1960s. It incited Paula Smith, the creator of the very first Mary Sue character, to write her own imaginative take on the series. However, Smith’s “fanfiction” was not a work that would usually be associated with the term, as fans write their own stories to show support and commitment to the series. Whereas the majority of fanfictions are written as a form of worshipping the original title, “A Trekkie’s Tale” is a parody of the trend (Fanlore n.d.).

Paula Smith’s piece of writing was firstly published in December 1973 in *Star Trek* anthology *Menagerie*. “A Trekkie’s Tale” consists of a few paragraphs only, yet the author managed to summarize the archetype of Mary Sue perfectly:

“Gee, golly, gosh, gloriosky,” thought Mary Sue as she stepped on the bridge of the Enterprise. “Here I am, the youngest lieutenant in the fleet – only fifteen and a half years old.” Captain Kirk came up to her. “Oh, Lieutenant, I love you madly. Will you come to bed with me?” “Captain! I am not that kind of girl!” “You’re right, and I respect you for it. Here, take over the ship for a minute while I go get some coffee for us.” Mr. Spock came onto the bridge. “What are you doing in the command seat, Lieutenant?” “The Captain told me to.” “Flawlessly logical. I admire your mind.” (Smith 1973, para. 1).

Paula Smith’s Mary Sue was the youngest member of the crew. Despite her young age and lack of experience, Captain Kirk entrusted her with managing their ship. He abandoned his position because of a trivial reason, a cup of coffee. Not only does it seem absurd, as if the whole piece of writing is simply a joke; a mockery of the Captain Kirk’s character in the original series; it is also illogical. Even if someone was not familiar with the *Star Trek* series, thus did not know how Captain Kirk usually acted, the audience would consider such behaviour unreasonable. How is it possible that someone who bears such authority and responsibility for the whole crew decides to pass down the ship to a teenage girl? What can also be quite shocking for a reader who does not know the real purpose of “A Trekkie’s Tale” is that the rest of the crew consented to their captain’s will without any second thoughts. Mr Spock approaches the girl and even though he questions her presence in the command seat, after her vague explanation, he accepts her filling in for Captain Kirk. He deems the resolution an incredible idea and his final statement even implies that he believes the whole idea was devised by Mary Sue herself.

The first fragment of Paula Smith’s writing is already indicative of Mary Sue’s signature traits: incredible, almost miraculous capability of being the best among everyone she meets. She strikes everyone as being extremely skilful in any area of her existence, sharp-witted and so beautiful that anyone would fall for her charms. The following fragment portrays more of her virtues, surrounding her with an aura of a superhero:

Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott beamed down with Lt. Mary Sue to Rigel XXXVII. They were attacked by green androids and thrown into prison. In a moment of weakness

Lt. Mary Sue revealed to Mr. Spock that she too was half Vulcan. Recovering quickly, she sprung the lock with her hairpin and they all got away back to the ship. But back on board, Dr. McCoy and Lt. Mary Sue found out that the men who had beamed down were seriously stricken by the jumping cold robbies, Mary Sue less so. While the four officers languished in Sick Bay, Lt. Mary Sue ran the ship, and ran it so well she received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Vulcan Order of Gallantry and the Tralfamadorian Order of Good Guyhood (Smith 1973, para. 2).

Although Mary Sue did experience moments of vulnerability, just as any other self-aware being, she recovered quickly. Not only did she manage to overcome her oppressive secrets, she was also able to save everyone by using a simple hairpin. Typical characters are usually constructed in a way which incapacitates them to do so. On the other hand, Mary Sue's exaggerated exceptionality enables her to achieve uncommon goals. What is more, despite the fact that she did not stay immune to an incurable disease, she still headed up the ship. While suffering from the illness she managed to obtain numerous awards. She became an icon, an authority for everyone who knew her. Even after her tragic death she was still cherished by the crew:

However the disease finally got to her and she fell fatally ill. In the Sick Bay as she breathed her last, she was surrounded by Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, and Mr. Scott, all weeping unashamedly at the loss of her beautiful youth and youthful beauty, intelligence, capability and all around niceness. Even to this day her birthday is a national holiday of the Enterprise (Smith 1973, para. 3).

Mary Sue character deriving from "A Trekkie's Tale" is summarized as a girl as an exceptionally beautiful, capable and lovable adolescent character. Later on, Paula Smith broadened the depiction and made the girl even more "relatable" for the public. As stated in an interview conducted by Cynthia W. Walker, the author of the original Mary Sue added that the girl was gifted with such perfection that the whole universe, be it the literary universe from *Star Trek* or just a random story setting, was centred around her. Her mental and physical capabilities would often be strengthened by tragic past and the fact

that the character was able to overcome her trauma. What is more, a typical Mary Sue usually possesses an unordinary physical trait, for instance unusual eye colour, a birthmark, or unique hair colour (Walker 2011, para. 4). Yet, according to Sophie Collins, it is rather difficult to grasp one characterization of Mary Sue. The only characteristics that are definite while describing such characters are: female gender and lack of depth in the process of developing her character (Collins 2018). However, the phenomenon of the Mary Sue character evolved throughout the years and the issue regarding non-binary gender became apparent for the public, proving that the basic definition ought to be broadened.

If a female character's capabilities were even slightly more extraordinary than readers deemed appropriate, the character was still considered a Mary Sue. This resulted in misogynistic tendencies towards female characters and those authors who tried to stand by their creations. Trying to stop the community from going to extremes, the public attempted to note that some male characters that were highly appreciated by various fandoms could also be described as Mary Sues. Barner (2016, 77) explains that, for instance, Captain Kirk himself might be perceived as such an idealized character. If we take into consideration, for example, his achievement of defeating the *Kobayashi Maru* test as the only person in the Starfleet Academy, or his traumatic experience of witnessing a massacre of 4000 people, yet overcoming the trauma, he could easily be declared a male version of Mary Sue. There are numerous instances of such characters in pop-culture, although the majority of the public would not associate them with exaggerated traits and capabilities. An essay published on *Tumblr* summarizes that idealised male characters (superheroes) are considered more normal and people rarely view them as negatively as their female counterparts (Ladyloveandjustice 2011, para. 5). Ladyloveandjustice (2011, para. 6) names a few reasons behind such a bias. One of them is cultural domination of men. In literature a male character wins readers' acceptance much quicker than females, as they are naturally assumed to be likeable. Their female counterparts need to show that they are worthy of acknowledgement, yet, if they try too hard, they will be dismissed as inauthentic.

Ladyloveandjustice (2011, para. 10) observes that both genders tend to indulge in "power fantasies", which derive from a subconscious need of wish fulfilment. In *Who is Mary Sue?* Sophie Collins (2018) also associates the phrase with narcissism and a strong will to fulfil one's wishes. That is why the author is the only person who can fully identify with the character and often does not find any faults with the creation, even if confronted by readers (Collins 2018).

The process of constructing such characters might occur at any moment during which the author is exposed to their desired stimulus. The incentive affects the author's way of perceiving the context of the situation and often results in a creation of an autobiographical story. While having to imagine or describe a possible situation, people depict the happenings either from a point of view of their "possible self", or "wanted self" (Trzebiński 2002, 53). In these circumstances, an author of a Mary Sue character subconsciously envisions their wanted self as an element of a fictive course of actions.

Fanfiction readers usually identify a Mary Sue character right after being introduced to her description and since the phenomenon became so apparent and frequent, members of the fanfiction community often treat such characters highly negatively. For them Mary Sue's unreality is obvious. However, such autobiographical inserts are produced subconsciously and writers usually do not perceive them as such even after being directly confronted. They are either too inexperienced in writing or are simply too blinded by their desire to imaginatively fulfil their fantasies. Those fantasies usually include becoming a part of their idols' life and engaging intimately with them.

In addition, writers often sexualize their favourite celebrities and do not recognize the impropriety of such behaviour. Sexual fantasies are conditioned by the limbic system, thus humans cannot restrict them to what they consider moral. Allan N. Schwartz regards the phenomenon as "natural and positive elements of one's sexuality" and claims that it ought not to evoke guilt (Schwartz n.d., para. 4). Yet, although humans cannot control their imagination under certain circumstances, fanfiction writers are able to control what they describe in their stories. They also change specific characteristics to avoid experiencing guilt and the sense of crossing moral boundaries. Portraying juvenile idols as sexually involved characters is often perceived as sexual misconduct, thus authors attempt to change their age believing that manipulating the facts in their stories will result in a more positive response. However, Isu Mizumi (2017, para. 2) declares that adjusting facts to the plot does not change the reality. The sexualised minors are still underage in real life and even if some readers do not know the specimen behind the described avatar, someone will always be able to recognise them.

Many authors try to avoid improper associations by changing their RPF-type stories into texts that readers would consider typical fiction. Characters based on existing people get new names, surnames, occupations: their whole identity is changed. Yet, authors always abstain from changing their auto-

biographical inserts, as that would hinder their fantasies from being fulfilled. They do not limit their avatars' abilities, personality characteristics and looks, since, as mentioned before, they subconsciously imagine their "wanted self" as the main character of the story. Imagination is a form of providing pleasure to the mind and encountering idols is not the only method for satisfying one's fantasies. Mary Sue's creators often shape the character in a way that corrects their imperfections and allows them to indulge in the reality they desire. Writers can achieve goals they would never be able to reach in real life or experience adventures that the reality prevents from occurring. Although readers might view such creations as not believable and often inappropriate, the authors still perceive them as highly positive and reasonable. That is why the need for satisfaction is the main reason behind the popularity of the Mary Sue characters' existence in Wattpad stories and generally in fanfiction.

#### **4. The Mary Sue Character in the *Teenage Dirtbag* and an Analysis of Autobiographical Inserts in the Text**

*Teenage Dirtbag* by SumNawaz is a widely known instance of fanfiction centred around autobiographical tendencies. The story accumulated an enormous number of fans. The publication was read almost ten million times, 195,000 users voted for the text as a sign of acclaim and more than 32,000 readers follow the writer's profile (SumNawaz n.d.). The text is discussed on various social media and provokes detailed reviews. The majority can be read on Wattpad, but Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter are also used to share opinions about the story. For instance, the publication was often discussed in a Polish Facebook group associated with Wattpad and each post about the text was commented about 250 times. The community gathered around the publication is clearly divided, as many instances of both positive and negative feedback can be read on social media.

Numerous readers declare sympathy for the story as they enjoy the plot, language utilized in the text and its structure. For example, some users find the text pleasant, as the mere presence of their idols incite them to delve into the narration. Many similar opinions have been published on various social media and although the process of the publication of *Teenage Dirtbag* started a few years ago, it still arouses curiosity among new fans. On the other hand, numerous commentators state that the "fictitious" text is an apparent pastiche

of Paula Smith's parody and that it does not deserve its popularity. Those who oppose the story's popularity view the text as full of mistakes: poor structure and language, yet fans are often oblivious of the text's negative aspects. However, many readers, despite criticising the main character, point out that Elena Carter is not a typical example of the character prototyped by Paula Smith. Although the female avatar shows apparent similarities to the majority of Mary Sue characters, she possesses contradicting personality traits. Thus, the creation is in fact a combination of the original Mary Sue and the two types formed by Wattpad users: "a susceptible, highly intelligent introvert and a rebellious social butterfly."

The description presented in the first chapter indicates the nature of the main female character in *Teenage Dirtbag* and possible directions of her development. It also touches upon similarities between SumNawaz's creation and its archetype:

My name is Elena, I'm seventeen years old, and am in Year 12 here in Holmes Chapel. It's a small village, but really cosy, and I love it her. I live with my parents and older brother Tyler, and I pretty much tolerate my family. My mum is a doctor and dad is a professor in nearby college, so we're pretty well off. I'm a straight A student and never had a blemish in my record. It's weird to say, but I'm the most popular girl in school. I'm not like those stereotypical bimbo blondes who run the school. I have blue eyes and long, light brown hair and am fairly skinny. I also have a nose piercing that I love (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 1).

As usual, the main female character is a youngster attending high school. Numerous stories of this kind take place in American or British secondary schools, because authors are usually students themselves while writing their texts. SumNawaz's story and Paula Smith's parody start at a similar point in their creations' lives. The original Mary Sue was a teenager, too, and was "only fifteen and a half years old" (Smith 1973, para. 1). Both authors begin their texts with a precise description of the main characters. Such a method of narration is in fact a common element in fanfiction stories. Authors often highlight their character's most important traits right at the beginning in lieu of introducing them at a more moderate pace. This results in quicker recognition of the character's role. The descriptions often include their achievements and a clear declaration of their social status. Elena Carter is an exceptional student. Not only

does she always attempt to get the highest grades, but she also cares about her reputation. She is an ambitious character and perfectionist when it comes to the school sphere. The first type of Mary Sue characters constructed by Wattpad users is, as mentioned, highly intelligent person who often comes from a wealthy environment. Elena Carter is a member of an upper class and how she treats her school obligations is most probably a result of her family's background. The original Mary Sue also possesses so many abilities and such knowledge that every member of the spaceship crew deems her perfect. Although people might question such a young person's abilities and experiences, the original Mary Sue was approved immediately. It is not revealed whether Smith's character is a member of the upper class because of her ancestry, but her exceptionality allows her to be considered one.

In addition, as Paula Smith stated after publishing her parody of *Star Trek*, typically creators of Mary Sues combine their characters' beauty with extraordinary traits. In the case of SumNawaz, Elena Carter pierced her nose so that she would be distinguished from the crowd. That feature serves as a similarity between *Teenage Dirtbag's* main female character and its archetype. Paula Smith points out that such characters often have eyes in unusual colours, birthmarks or unordinary accessories. Elena Carter and the original Mary Sue are also considered physically attractive, which is one of the reasons behind their recognition. Elena Carter is aware of her physical appearance and popularity. She enjoys the attention, which makes her develop a high level of self-esteem. She willingly attends various social events, as other students often invite her because of her popularity. The original Mary Sue was also well known not only among her closest colleagues, but generally among the majority of characters. The popularity and the crew's trust strengthened her self-confidence and allowed her to become a national hero. Elena Carter's popularity with her schoolmates and her awareness of the fact contradicts with the first type of Mary Sues introduced in Wattpad stories. As the first type depicts a self-aware introvert, Elena Carter's behaviour clearly problematizes this portrayal. The traits mentioned above indicate that the main character of *Teenage Dirtbag* is a combination of "a susceptible, highly intelligent introvert" and "a rebellious social butterfly."

The second type of those characters, "a rebellious social butterfly," often resembles a delinquent. Although SumNawaz does not allow her creation to have direct contact with criminal environment, she still constructs her so that Elena Carter touches upon the topic of "bad girls." Piercings are often associated

with questionable characters, especially if they are seen on unorthodox parts of human body. Such characters are well known for trying to go against the grain and in further parts of the story Elena Carter follows such a dive. In addition, she opposes her parents' opinion on tattoos. Her family believes that "tattoos are a way of ruining your body. They are pointless" (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 1). However, the female character sees them as "a different, individual part of one's life" (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 1). The tension between Elena Carter and her family plays an important role in the process of her development. "Bad girls" either do not have families or are often conflicted with them. As stated previously, Elena Carter does not enjoy their company and the communication channel between the main character of *Teenage Dirtbag* and her family must be disrupted. Various fragments of the text describe the situation in detail:

I can't tell Tyler or my parents that I had detention. If my parents find out, I probably will be dead. To them, if their perfect daughter gets detention, then they would be so ashamed. I already feel pressured enough by my parents because they want perfect grades and have me get a scholarship to an amazing college. I do my best to please my parents, but it just seems like it's never enough. My parents are perfectionists, you could say. They want me to be the perfect daughter and do everything right, which puts a lot of pressure on me (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 2).

The quotation presents the reasons behind the character's complicated relationship with her family members. As her parents attempt to transfer their ambitions onto their child, it causes the main character to feel mentally unsettled. The fear troubles her. Although the original Mary Sue lost her family to a tragedy, which makes the circumstances different in SumNawaz's creation, the notion of tragic occurrences still binds these two characters. The original Mary Sue had to face the loss of her loved ones. There was a certain point in her existence when her mental strength was tested. Elena Carter is forced to overcome her insecurities and fears every time she faces her parents. When she enters her house, she transforms back into the first type of Mary Sue, creating a clear division between the main two environments she is a part of: the school and the household. At home, she becomes a self-conscious introvert, whereas at school she morphs into a self-confident, dominant girl whom no one really knows.

She pretends to be invincible in front of the other students, as much as she is embarrassed and scared of her father, who turns abusive in the further parts of the story. When Elena begins to stand up for her interests and relationships her father deems “toxic”, he loses his patience and hits her. The situation is described after the main character reveals that she became close with the main male character: “I was suddenly cut off when something came in contact with my cheek harshly. My head turned to the side as it happened, my hand immediately reaching up to the spot where my cheek was hit. My eyes widened when I touched my now warm and stinging cheek. He slapped me. My dad actually slapped me” (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 13). The female later states that aside from her boyfriend, she has only few people that she can share her fears with. She often underlines that only her closest acquaintances are aware of her situation.

Mary Sues frequently limit their social interactions to small groups of characters, usually people who have similar backgrounds. Authors construct their creations so that they are forced to overcome trust issues and doing so is possible only when interacting with similar characters. Not only do they come from the same social class, but they also possess similar qualities. In the case of SumNawaz’s story, the author constructed the plot in a way which generally follows the tendency. Elena Carter and her closest friends are alike. However, they also counterbalance the main character of the story, as some of their qualities differ. Elena Carter’s best friends are two girls, Rebecca and Candice. They are both well known among other students and aware of their popularity. It is written that Rebecca and Candice are really “funny and loud, but also a bit on the shy side in presence of strangers” (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 3). Although Elena Carter does not share her personal dilemmas with anyone but her closest acquaintances, she does not fear interacting with strangers, as if the author wanted to create an illusion of perfection. Since the situation was depicted before the author revealed Elena Carter’s family situation, she seemed more perfect in comparison with other characters. The fact heightens the character’s combination of personalities. The rebellious type of the Mary Sue character does not socialize with people who are not exactly the same as her, whereas the second type, the introvert, does not shy away from such forms of social interactions. The notion is usually highlighted while Elena Carter interacts with the main male character at the beginning of the story and later on when she falls out with her parents. The combination is used as a starting point for Elena Carter’s and the main male character’s relationship.

SumNawaz focuses the plot of her story on the relationship between Elena Carter and Harry Styles. As mentioned before, Harry Styles is considered “the most feared person in Holmes Chapel” (SumNawaz n.d., chap. 1). His character is supposed to counterbalance the Mary Sue and influence her development. The differences between these two characters are used as a powertrain of the plot. The author sums up the beginning of the characters’ relationship with “opposites attract” schema, but then continues to reveal that they are in fact similar. First of all, neither of the students is afraid to share their opinions about each other. The first type of Mary Sue characters, the intelligent introvert, usually refrain from sharing their feelings with their love interests, but when asked directly, Elena Carter admits that she finds Harry Styles attractive. Since the mutual attraction is revealed at the beginning of the plot, the development of the relationship is faster than in many similar stories. The pace allows the author to reveal numerous details of the characters’ personal lives, which are usually brought to light towards the end of such stories. One such detail is Harry Styles’ family situation. Similarly to Mary Sue’s, it is complicated, as his father is a criminal who abused his wife and children and thus was sentenced to a few years in prison. As a result, both characters do not have proper role models. The realization of the similarity strengthens the mutual fascination between the teenagers and incites the Mary Sue to follow Harry Style’s habits and share personal details of her life with him.

The mutual trust becomes a strong base not only for their relationship, but also for Harry Styles’ change. The process is depicted in a slightly different way than in most publications of this type. That is another reason for Elena Carter being an unordinary instance of Mary Sue character. The change of a “delinquent” character that completes the first type of Mary Sue character’s activity is usually described as something continuous and complex. It follows a popular schema of the male encountering the female and developing a strong fascination towards her, as she is considered “a forbidden fruit,” influencing her negatively and then realizing the mistakes. In the case of SumNawaz’s publication, “the change” is not actually a change, but rather a process of unravelling that Harry Styles is not in fact as antagonistic and negative as he was portrayed at the beginning. The Mary Sue’s influence on the male character does not impose a need for change in him, but rather an obligation to bring his real personality out into the open. The image of “a bad boy” that everyone in the story, but also readers, associate with him is an illusion. It does not conceal any dramatic

secrets, as Harry Styles does not even consider the relationship with his father as something tragic. The bad boy aura serves simply as an element of creating appearance, of being cool and feared. The method of exaggerating the negative qualities of the male's personality is a result of the mentioned fascination with "the Dark Triad of personality traits": narcissism, Machiavellism and psychopathy (Mehta 2013).

Young women consider a relationship with a "bad boy" thrilling. The notion seems rousing, thus many young authors create stories consisting of their fantasies. In this case, SumNawaz's fantasises centred around her favourite celebrity musician and resulted in writing the text composed with numerous inserts of biographical nature (Real Person Fiction). Elena Carter, undoubtedly the author's avatar, allows the readers to "experience" a relationship with Harry Styles, an idol and member of a popular band. Not only is such a relation exciting, because it grants SumNawaz and the audience access to ideas that the majority of societies view as too negative, but it also allows them to indulge in closeness to the idol himself, as having contact with him is impossible. As music fans, the readers of the story wish that they could start such a relationship with Harry Styles as well. Considering his bond with Elena Carter, they also want the support and warmth he offers her. They can imagine that the actual Harry Styles possesses similar personality traits as SumNawaz depicted in her publication and that he would behave similarly to his "fictitious" equivalent. The author of the *Teenage Dirtbag* might be in need of such relationship and support it provides due to her troubled family situation.

Elena Carter endures an abusive relationship with her father. SumNawaz's background might be the reason behind such occurrences in her text. The language she utilizes in the publication and other creations published through her Wattpad profile do not indicate that the author is being a victim of domestic abuse at the moment; however, she might have been or witnessed such happenings. Portraying a situation in which a father hits his daughter and his constant attempts at making her fulfil his own ambitions might come from SumNawaz's personal experiences. Those incidents imposed the need for perfection on the character of Elena Carter. Perfection is viewed as a necessity in every aspect of Elena Carter's life, starting from her reputation at school and ending with her physical appearance. As observed in the above fragments, the way in which the Mary Sue is described strikes as being both a knowledgeable, popular and beautiful person. In addition, the clear division between Elena Carter's domestic and school life is another element, which can be a parallel of the author's

situation. The Mary Sue possesses two different personalities depending on her environment. When she enters the school in Holmes Chapel, she assumes a persona of an independent and strong character, whereas while being at home, she is forced to act like a puppet controlled by her father. There is high likelihood that the autobiographical inserts described in the text were supposed to serve as an auto therapy for the author. The numerous forms of literary self-indulgence incorporated in the text vary from such examples as described above to less grievous instances from the author's real life.

SumNawaz introduces her profile on Wattpad with a declaration of her age. As it is presented on the front page, the author is currently twenty years old. The story was first published a few years ago, so the writer was still a teenager while developing the plot. SumNawaz incorporated her real age in the publication. The surroundings and the environment depicted in the text, the school and the mentioned house might be based on her own life as well, as the descriptions consist of highly detailed portrayals. The majority of such fragments contain complex characteristics, such as number of cracks on a wall or the amount of paint used to decorate a room. Such features do not play a crucial role in the story and authors would not usually focus on describing them if they were made up. They are too abstract to imagine in detail and too unnecessary. This indicates that SumNawaz might have witnessed them in her life. Moreover, the method in which the writer describes her avatar's acquaintances is similar to the way which was utilised to portray the surroundings in the story. While describing Rebecca and Candice, the author pays specific attention to even the smallest characteristics of the girls and often mentions, for instance, their birthmarks or the colour of their freckles. SumNawaz does not declare that the mentioned features are important for the character's development, thus, they are only other elements that the author attempts to base on actual people and transfer from her personal life into the text.

## 5. Conclusions

This study reveals that with time the phenomenon of the Mary Sue character transformed significantly. The character evolved, as it changed in parallel to the tendencies surfacing in Wattpad stories. Due to it being influenced by general trends followed by young writers since the *Star Trek* series gained

popularity in the 1960s, the contemporary versions of the character might be altered in various ways, some of them personalized and idealized. When it comes to the depictions utilised in publications found on Wattpad, authors focus on two types: “a susceptible, highly intelligent introvert” and “a rebellious social butterfly.” Although they differ significantly from each other, they possess various characteristics of the first archetypal Mary Sue. Because of the similarities between the types frequently present in Wattpad stories and their archetype, they are easy to identify.

Those characters are among the most popular schemas incorporated in Wattpad publications, as the fanfiction genre of literature they come from, is also the most favoured type of fiction on the social platform. Indeed, due to their frequent presence in numerous texts, the Mary Sue characters are now considered a strongly negative occurrence. Because of the repetitive development, inauthentic personality traits and unrealistic relationships with other characters, readers deem the character exasperating. In addition, as Mary Sues usually occur in Real Person Fiction stories, the link between their “fictitious nature” and an author’s idealization of self tends to be apparent. The obvious autobiographical nature of a Mary Sue allows readers to experience an imaginative approximation of an author’s real life, although, for the less knowledgeable audience, this fact might not be so straightforward.

When associated with Real Person Fiction publications, the existence of the Mary Sue character reveals young people’s fantasies related to their favourite celebrities. Those fantasies include a close relationship with an idol and the adventures that the writer cannot experience in real life. However, they also communicate the issues those young people conceal under the surface. A need for perfection and exceptionality are the less serious reasons hidden behind the Mary Sue character. Young authors compose their stories so that the main depicted character is an improved version of themselves, which serves as a confidence boost. Those autobiographical inserts in fanfiction are usually included in publications subconsciously and often reveal more severe facts about the writers’ lives.

Some authors do not realize that the facts they incorporate into their texts might come from their being mentally strained. Such issues might result from traumatic experiences in the past. Because their usual mental and behavioural processes are distorted, they cannot cope with demands of their lives. Thus, they attempt to relieve themselves by composing stories. The structure of their texts includes a seemingly unremarkable introduction, which later on changes

into a plotline that is full of obstacles. After describing the main events, the author concludes their story with a “happy ending” and transforms the fictional world so that their avatar and its love interest are the only characters that can influence the plot. Such structure mirrors the writer’s desired life course and need for control. Other significant characters in such stories are also designed in a way that helps the author to idealize their avatars. Meanwhile, antagonistic characters are usually depicted so that they counterbalance the Mary Sue. Their flaws are exaggerated. As a result, the Mary Sue appears as more perfect and the most unordinary and positive of them all.

No matter what is concealed by portrayals written by young authors, there is no doubt that they represent actual reality and mirror an author’s narcissism and egocentrism. Fanfiction stories that are centred around the Mary Sue character are worth detailed analyses, as they can reveal useful pieces of information about the young generations and sometimes even serve as a base for psychological therapies. After identifying issues represented in texts of a subconscious autobiographical nature, it would become less difficult to treat mental disorders in young communities.

## Works Cited

- Barner, Ashley J. 2016. “‘I Opened a Book and in I Strode’: Fanfiction and Imaginative Reading.” PhD diss., Ohio: College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University.
- Collins, Sophie. 2018. *Who Is Mary Sue?* London, New York: Faber & Faber.
- Fanlore. n.d. “A Trekkie’s Tale.” Accessed December 27, 2018. [https://fanlore.org/wiki/A\\_Trekkie%27s\\_Tale](https://fanlore.org/wiki/A_Trekkie%27s_Tale).
- Ladyloveandjustice. 2011. “Mary Sue, what are you?” *Tumblr* (blog). Accessed November 22, 2018. <https://ladyloveandjustice.tumblr.com/>.
- Mehta, Vinita. 2013. “Why Do Women Fall for Bad Boys?” *Psychology Today* (blog). Accessed March 16, 2019. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/head-games/201310/why-do-women-fall-bad-boys?amp>.
- Mizumi, Isu. 2017. “Obsession, Sexualization, and Selective Reactions.” *Isu Mizumi* (blog). March 29, 2017.

<https://medium.com/@isu.mizumi/weird-things-in-kpop-idol-fan-culture4f1630fdf519>.

- Mustonen, Piia. 2009. *Social Media: A New Way to Success?* Turku: Turku School of Economics.
- Rochester, Sophie. 2012. "Wattpad: Building the World's Biggest Reader and Writer Community." *The Literary Platform*. Accessed November 13, 2018. <http://theliteraryplatform.com/magazine/2012/10/wattpad-building-the-worlds-biggestreader-and-writer-community/>.
- Schwartz, Allan N. n.d. "Sexual Fantasy, The Brain and Guilt - Sexuality & Sexual Problems." Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/sexual-fantasy-the-brain-and-guilt/>.
- Smith, Paula. 1973. "A Trekkie's Tale." In *Menagerie 2*. New York: boojums Press.
- SumNawaz. n.d. *Teenage Dirtbag* (A Harry Styles FanFic). Accessed November 22, 2018. <https://www.wattpad.com/story/4417044-teenage-dirtbag-a-harry-styles-fanfic>.
- Todd, Anna. 2014. "After." Accessed November 22, 2018. <https://www.wattpad.com/story/5095707-after>.
- Trzebiński, Jerzy. 2002. *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Walker, Cynthia W. 2011. "A Conversation with Paula Smith." In *Fan Works and Fan Communities in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, edited by Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures* 6. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0243>
- Wattpad HQ. n.d. "About Wattpad." Accessed November 16, 2018. <https://company.wattpad.com/>.
- Wattpad HQ. 2014. "The International Language of Storytelling." Accessed November 16, 2018. <https://company.wattpad.com/blog/2014/04/11/the-international-language-of-storytelling>.



# The American Tradition of Social Satire in *South Park* Television Series

Przemysław Komsa

University of Opole

**Abstract:** The main objective of this work is to show how the authors of the animated series *South Park* use controversial humor to satirize people, habits, ideologies and mindsets within the American society. Although *South Park* is made in a cartoon style, it is definitely intended only for adults. In order to fully appreciate the show and understand all ironic references and satirical jokes, the viewer has to possess the general knowledge of American customs and institutions, as well as be aware of the tradition of satire and American humor. This work identifies and discusses satirical values in the chosen episodes of the show that relate to controversies around community values, homosexuality and racism. It relates them to three classical types of satire: Menippean, Juvenalian and Horatian.

**Keywords:** South Park, satire, humor, controversies

## 1. Introduction

*South Park* is an animated TV comedy series co-created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone for Comedy Central network in the United States. The show debuted in 1997 and since its first episode it has been widely appreciated by viewers. It is famous for using controversial humor and satire to address selected social and political problems. Since satire is a genre where the main purpose is not only to bring enjoyment but also to make viewers reflect on social reality and think critically, this study focuses on how *South Park* achieves this effect.

The first part of this article is devoted to the genre of satire by providing the definitions from well-established authors and literary critics. It reveals the origins of the genre and of the word "satire" itself. Although the first traces

of works with satirical elements could be found in Ancient Egypt, it was ancient Greece and the Roman Empire where satire as we know it today was developed. Then, three main types of satire are described, namely, Menippean, Juvenalian and Horatian with their distinct characteristics. The following section concerns the category of American satire and traces how American humor emerged by referring to such notable satirists as Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Joseph Heller, Washington Irving or Kurt Vonnegut. Finally, the section discusses satire in modern television and refers to the phenomenon of how animated TV series became popular among the adult audience.

The next part is devoted to *South Park*. It starts with the brief history of the series and how it developed from paper-cut technique to fully digitalised animation technology. After that, the article introduces *South Park*'s main characters, leading ideas and important aspects of representation. The central part of the analysis concerns chosen motifs that have been controversially presented and satirized. These are the images of the American society, the approaches to homosexuality and the issue of racism. In the course of the analysis, a description of the addressed problem by the authors in a given episode is followed by reasons that have motivated the authors in satirizing particular situations, and the reception of the discussed episodes.

## 2. Satire as a Genre

Satire is often defined in dictionaries as a use of humor, parody and irony to criticize individual or collective behaviour or ideas, with an intention to mock people's negative characteristics and expose vices. Satire differs from comedy in the way that, apart from enjoying the humor, the reader or viewer has to reflect on the social mores to understand the punchline and its implications. Satire often exposes people who have negative character traits, senseless ideas and who act irrationally and might be targeted at the audience itself. As Jonatan Swift (1891, 11) observes in *The Battle of the Books and Other Short Pieces*: "Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it." Yet, the aim of well-written satire is not to evoke the feeling of scorn and indignation, but rather of amusement and reflectivity. A satirist does not intend to do harm to an individual or cause damage to the society through mockery, but rather to expose,

either directly or indirectly, the defects of human nature that do harm to the social order. What is more, satirists use these emotions as a tool to encourage people to correct their flaws and improve themselves. As William Flint Thrall (2011, 436) observes “[satire] blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved.”

There are different value systems and customs that originate with various ethnic groups, social classes, religions, some of which involve abuses of power, gender inequalities and social habits or cultural practices, which divide and discriminate. Thus, if these negative phenomena exist in a society, it is likely that satirists will find and expose them. As Daniel Hooley (2007, 1) argues in *Roman Satire*: “Satire is simply one of the fundamental modes of human expression. [...] it is always about us, our habits, our manners, our leaders, our enemies, our sins, our absurdities. Humankind will stop satirizing only when it stops existing.” Satire is very old, since, as a literary genre, it flourished in the Roman Empire. Horace, Juvenal and Persius were the most famous Roman satirists along with such influential satirists as Ennius, Lucilius, Pacuvius Turnus, Varro, Seneca, Petronius, Martial, Gellius (Hooley 2007).

The Greeks did not have a word for satire, but works which resemble satire did appear in ancient Greece. The English term “satire” is derived from the Greek word “satura” which was used by the Roman scholar Quintilian for specific works he read from Greek authors. As Robert C. Elliott (2017) notices, “satura referred, in short, to a poetic form, established and fixed by Roman practice. [...] After Quintilian’s day, satura began to be used metaphorically to designate works that were satirical in tone but not in form.” The best-known Greek satirist was Aristophanes who wrote mostly political and social critiques, many of which survived to this day. Another famous satirical writer was Menippus of Gadara who was called “a joker of serious things” (Hight 1962, 36).

The Menippean satire is a subgenre that connects reality and fantasy; it mixes prose with verse and criticizes mental attitudes rather than individuals. It “uses narrative to lambaste, parody, or make ironic fun of its satiric objective, usually through dialogue between fools, knaves, or ironists” (Quintero 2007, 7). The sense of humor here does not consist in aggressive mockery, but rather in a subtle and intelligent ridicule. For Frye (2000, 309), “the Menippean satire resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization, which is stylized rather than naturalistic.” Other characteristics of this type of satire include a fragmented narrative, distinct types of parody, mythological burlesque, a critique of the mythology

derived from traditional culture, and a mixing of different styles and targets (Bakhtin 1984, 114–118).

Some influential examples of later works that can be classified as Menippean satire genre are François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1564), John Barclay's *Euphormionis Satyricon* (1605), Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1794), Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928), Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1843), Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* (1939), Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963), Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), Jacob M. Appel's *The Man Who Wouldn't Stand Up* (2012), Dave Eggers's *The Circle* (2013).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, Roman poet Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, known in English as Juvenal, wrote a collection of sixteen poems in five books called *The Satires*. The term "Juvenalian satire" is derived from his name. His works were more bitter in tone and contained sharp criticisms of society and a savage ridicule of targeted groups or individuals. Juvenal focused on contemporary public persons and current events and his general aim was to present those people and situations to exaggerate their monstrous and incompetent manner. "A Juvenalian satirist is much more likely to see the targets of his satire as evil or actively harmful to society, and to attack them with serious intent to harm their reputation or power" (Podzemny 2013–2019). What is more, the usual methods of this kind of satire include scorn, derision, irony and sarcasm to mock social flaws, society's vicious tendencies and people with power, such as politicians. Without a doubt, Juvenalian satire is the most hostile. It is targeted at a particular individual, a group of people, or a public institution, and it directly points out what is wrong about them.

The most famous authors and works of this genre are: Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729), George Byron's *Don Juan* (1824), Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of the Dog* (1925), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1952), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1953), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Julian Barnes' *England England* (1998), Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* (2011), or Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* (2015).

Similarly to Juvenalian satire, Horatian satire gained its name after a famous Roman poet. Horace lived in the 1st century BC and his full Latin name was Quintus Horatius Flaccus. He is considered to have been one of the greatest Roman lyric writers. He wrote many works and these which survived are two books of satires, a book of epodes, four books of odes, three books of letters or epistles, and a hymn. Rankin (2013–2019) notices that Horace’s humor was directed “at the dominant philosophical beliefs of ancient Rome and Greece. This approach, amused at human foibles but was generally warm toward humanity itself.” Horace’s aim was largely to “entertain with wry humor, wit and light-hearted mockery, avoiding negativity by refusing to place blame on others for any perceived misgivings. As such then, the objective of Horatian satire is to be clever and knowing, whilst evoking humor by exposing the peculiarities of human behaviour” (Edley 2017). Horatian humor is subtler and it tries to ridicule human follies, absurdities and habits. It does not intend to change people in the manner of enticing them to self-improvement, to eliminate their weaknesses or become aware of their bad habits. This type of satire intends to make people feel entertained and enjoy the light-hearted mockery and mild, gentle sense of humor. As Arthur N. Applebee (2002, 584) states, “Horatian satire is playfully amusing and seeks to correct vice or foolishness with gentle laughter and understanding.”

The most recognizable works written in Horatian style are: Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* (1717), Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) and Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Other well-known works of this subgenre are Daniel Defoe’s *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1842), Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* (1875), Ambrose Bierce’s *The Devil’s Dictionary* (1906), Matt Groening’s *The Simpsons*, Clive Staples Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* (1961).

### 3. American Tradition of Satire

The United States has a long political tradition; hence, a variety of political themes in satire have tended to be enormously popular. Also, the notion of freedom of speech is deeply rooted in the American culture. As a result, Americans have grown to be fond of making fun of themselves, their leaders, as well as those who represent different ethnic groups, social classes, religions, customs, views and ideas. The satirical mode of American humor emerged in colonial

times. Benjamin Franklin was one of the first writers in America who was considered a satirist. Another notable author was Washington Irving (1783–1859) with his book *Rip Van Winkle* (1918), where he “uses humor to comment on the profound change that occurred when America transitioned from colony to sovereign nation” (Ezell 2016, 41).

A writer who has made a crucial contribution to the American satire is Mark Twain (1835–1910). With his most notable books, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), he gained enormous popularity and became one of the best known writers in United States – the father of American satire. Twain's books can be put into the category of Horatian style, as he uses satire to criticize social norms, religion, classes, hypocrisy, education and government. For instance, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, he uses innocence and youth of the main character Huck to criticise the contradictions and follies of the adult world. To honor Twain, since 1988 *The John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts* has annually awarded individuals for their contribution to American humor and comedy with the “Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.”

Another author who produced influential satires is Joseph Heller (1923–1999) with his *Catch-22* (1961). The book is set during World War II and it depicts the pointless absurdities and insanity of war. Heller introduced the term “catch-22” into popular parlance to describe situations of a double bind from which an individual cannot escape unpunished because of the contrary or conflicting rules. Other notable writers include Kurt Vonnegut with his *Cat's Cradle* (1963), *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), and *Breakfast for Champions* (1973), Sinclair Lewis with *Babbitt* (1922), and Christopher Buckley with *Thank You for Smoking* (1994).

The idea that animated TV series are only for children is no longer valid, as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Rick and Morty* and many more productions have changed the general view on cartoons. The humor in those cartoon series is rather mature and it would be hard or even impossible to understand the jokes or puns without the specific knowledge of institutions, politics or social mores. The matter has been pointed out by Silas Kaine Ezell in his book *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television*: “After the 1960s saw the run of *The Jetsons* and *The Flintstones* end, many wondered whether or not animation targeted toward adults during primetime would ever again be viable. That mindset changed with the success of Fox's *The Simpsons* in 1989” (Ezell 2016, 1). Both *The Simpsons* and many other subsequent animated television series designed for older audiences proved that television programming based

on animation can very well sustain satire as a genre and allow scholars to start assessing the role of this technology “in the pantheon of American humor” (Ezell 2016, 1). It can certainly be claimed that television cartoons have by now been firmly established in the American satirical tradition.

#### 4. *South Park* as the Continuator of the American Satirical Tradition

*South Park* has been constantly on air since 1997, i.e. for more than 20 years. One can say that it is a notable example of American satire with an original and complex application of controversy and humor. Ezell indicates that “the show has become a phenomenon because of its willingness to critique numerous religious, cultural, and political shibboleths via satire” (Ezell 2016, 10). Robert Arp and Kevin S. Decker in their book *The Ultimate South Park and Philosophy* (2013, 1) opine that “*South Park* is one of the most important series on TV. Why? Because the show isn’t afraid to lampoon the extremist fanatics that are associated with any social, ethical, economic, or religious position. This is extremely important and necessary in our diverse society of free and autonomous persons who hold a plurality of beliefs and values.”

Almost the entire show of *South Park* has been developed by two men: Trey Parker and Matt Stone. They have voiced most of the characters and directed almost every episode. Trey Parker was born in 1969 in Conifer, Colorado, and since his childhood he has been interested in films and movies. Matt Stone was born in 1971 in Huston, Texas. They both studied at the University of Colorado at Boulder where Stone studied mathematics and Parker studied music theory, but never graduated. As Amber Petty reports, the two authors met in 1992 in a film class where they were so bored that they started doing silly voices to amuse each other. Though Stone was a mathematics major and Parker was a music major, they got along well and found out they had the same sense of humor. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Parker revealed: “We would always talk like these little kids and make each other laugh,” and, as the author of the interview reports, “They messed around with these kid characters for a full year before they ever thought to commit anything to film” (Petty, n.d.). Besides *South Park*, the duo also produced, directed or co-directed black humored musical horror *Cannibal! The Musical* (1993), sex comedy *Orgazmo* (1997), adult animated musical black comedy *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999),

comedy *Team America: World Police* (2004) and the Tony Award-winning musical *The Book of Mormon* (2011).

Before creating *South Park*, Parker made a student cartoon presentation called *American History*, where he used construction paper-cut style for the first time. This technique was further adapted in *South Park* to offer an original visual layout. The animation won a student prize at the University of Colorado in 1992 (Petty, n.d.). Using the same paper-cut style Parker and Stone made a short video *Jesus vs Frosty*. The animation is about four boys who make a snowman, which they bring to life by putting a magic hat on the top of its head. The evil Frosty snowman kills two of the boys, but the other two are rescued by baby Jesus who kills Frosty. Some of the motifs used here were later transposed into *South Park*. Parker and Stone were approached by a Fox executive Brian Graden who wanted them to produce a pilot for the network, and who hired them “to produce a holiday video for his industry contacts based on an animated short the boys had produced [...] about Frosty the Snowman. The result was the now legendary *The Spirit of Christmas*, a five-minute refined version of the Frosty story in which Jesus and Santa Claus duke it out over who has the bigger claim on the holiday while the kids cheer them on” (Weinstock 2008, 7). The video became an underground obsession that won them many high-profile fans. According to a 1997 *People Weekly* article, actor George Clooney dubbed 100 copies of the video, which catapulted Parker and Stone to stardom (Weinstock 2008, 7). Thanks to *The Spirit of Christmas* they were interviewed by different studios, but none of them wanted to have a show so vulgar except Comedy Central.

*South Park* aired in August 1997 and, according to Amber Petty, “the premiere got 889,000 viewers, and the show was pulling in over 5 million by the end of the season. It was an instant, insane hit. The show was on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Newsweek*” (Petty n.d.). A total of 297 episodes in 22 seasons aired since the show debuted and have received numerous awards and recognitions, such as Primetime Emmy Awards, Annie Awards, Online Film & Television Association Awards, Peabody Awards and it has been nominated for the Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program sixteen times (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004–2011, and 2013–2017).

The animation in the series plays a very important role. It emphasizes the satirical undertone and often helps the viewer recognize the role which the given character plays. Unsophisticated drawing is used deliberately: “Parker and Stone originally attempted to make their show look as primitive as possible,

thereby enhancing the possibility for satirical manipulation” (Cogan 2008, 27). The two-dimensional cut-out figures are devoid of visual complexity and highlight “the woodenness of the characters.” As a result, viewers can quickly “identify the characters as specific types” and read the satirical message (Cogan 2008, 27).

South Park is a fictional town placed in Colorado in the neighbourhood of Rocky Mountains. The show mainly focuses on adventures of the four potty-mouthed boys from fourth grade: Eric Cartman, Kyle Broflovski, Stan Marsh and Kenny McCormick. It also focuses on the town people and the town itself, which represents middle America. The show gained its popularity due to its usage of satire with respect to, among others, current events, religion, sexuality, celebrities, disability, culture, or politics. The show is also appreciated for pointing out important social and individual matters, as almost every single episode tries to reflect on a different issue. Since the show is currently digitally animated, it allows the creators to alter episodes days before airing allowing them to comment immediately on very recent developments (Cogan 2008).

*South Park* is also appreciated for not being associated with either strong libertarian or conservative views. When Parker and Stone were asked about the term “South Park Republicans” (center-right political beliefs apparently formed under the influence of the show) they responded: “Yeah, we have seen that. [...] And we’re both just pretty middle-ground guys. We find just as many things to rip on on the left as we do on the right. People on the far left and the far right are the same exact person to us” (Cogan 2008, 219).

Townpeople in *South Park* are presented very specifically. In order to address a particular problem sometimes specific individuals, families, organizations and their behaviour and actions are shown in a very exaggerated manner. For example, the seventh episode of season 7 “Red Man’s Greed” shows irresponsibility and greed of adults from almost the entire town. The townspeople are facing a big problem with Native Americans who are the owners of the nearby *Three feathers* casino. They want to buy out the town of South Park to tear it down and build a highway in its place. The aim is to attract more people to the casino. The townspeople try to stop the ruthless casino owners and raise the money themselves to buy out the town, but the mayor informs them that they have to raise \$300,000 which they are not able to get. They only manage to raise \$10,000. Afterwards, the kids come up with an idea to take the \$10,000 to the casino and bet it, which in the case of winning would give them \$350,000. They all agree it is a “long shot, but the only shot they have got

to save their town.” They all go to the casino and bet all the money. Surprisingly, they win and all cheer when someone notices that if they win again, they will get more than \$12 million. This person is Gerald Broflovski who previously lost \$26,000 to gambling in the same casino. However, the people get excited about the idea that they would be able to buy the city and be extremely rich, so they all agree to “let it ride” and, predictably, they lose all the money. The children cannot believe in the silliness and greed of their parents and neighbours. Trey Parker and Matt Stone depict a society that is reckless and irresponsible. Although the kids tried their best to save the town, they simply could not overcome the adults’ greed. This scene is a satire of people who cannot reason logically when the situation involves money and when people get a chance to get rich. Although the episode depicts Native Americans as greedy and ruthless and the society as silly and thoughtless, it received positive reviews with 7.7/10 on IMDb and 8.7/10 on TV.com.

Another example of striking social satire in *South Park* is the eleventh episode of season 6 “Child Abduction Is Not Funny” which presents American people as gullible and easy to manipulate. The episode starts with a boy named Tweek watching news on TV where every station provides information about children safety. Meanwhile, his parents call him for a talk. They want to warn him about the risk that comes from talking and dealing with strangers and tell him to never open his bedroom’s door except to his parents. The same night Tweek’s father makes the test knocking to his son’s doors pretending to be a police officer. He tells him that there is an abductor in his room and he has to open the door, which the kid obviously does. Behind the door, a frightened Tweek sees his father pointing a gun at his face telling him he had failed the test. The next day Tweek is so appalled that he is not able to buy a movie ticket from a stranger, assist an older woman across the road, and eventually help a paralyzed man on a wheelchair get off the train tracks to save him from death. He is so brainwashed by his parents that he thinks that all of this could be a trick to abduct him.

Later in the episode there is a real attempt to abduct Tweek. When the information is spread among other parents, they all go mad. Together with the mayor of the town they come up with the idea to close the town off from unwanted strangers by building a huge wall around the city. They all agree that the best person to do this would be the only Chinese living in the neighbourhood – Tuong Lu Kim. Obviously, because the Chinese built the Great Wall of China, the townspeople think that every Chinese can do it. To make

children even more secure they force them to wear special outfits with satellite dishes as helmets called "Child Tracker" and they follow the children everywhere, even to school. The situation gets even worse as parents hear on the news that a study has shown that the most likely abductors of children are parents themselves. They instantly go mad and start to look at each other with suspicion and eventually come to a conclusion that the children are not safe around them, so they banish the kids outside the wall. In this episode authors depict the townspeople as unable to think rationally. It also satirizes the impact of TV and media on common people, who believe in all they see and hear, no matter how silly and ridiculous it is. When there is one exceptional case of a kidnapping attempt, parents decisively exaggerate and eventually jeopardize their children. Although the episode shows the society in a bad light, it received high scores on the internet movie databases with 8.6/10 on IMDb and 9.2/10 on TV.com.

The American society has also been satirized in the sixth episode of season 12 named "Over Logging" where the whole country freaked out because the Internet was gone. The episode starts in Marsh's house where the whole family are performing some internet activities. Only Sharon (Randy's wife and mother of Stan and Shelly) does not use internet and sends everyone to bed saying that there is enough Internet for today and they all can use it the next morning. Apparently when they wake up in the morning, the Internet is already gone, and the whole family are shocked. They all go to the Broflovskis' house only to find out that there is no Internet in their home either. Now, the two families are frightened, as they cannot check e-mails, browse the news, or chat online, so they decide to head to Starbucks where the free wireless internet connection should be available. As soon as they leave the house, they see all neighbours wandering on the street in panic looking for the Internet. The scene looks as if a disaster struck the town. On arriving at Starbucks they see a frightened crowd in front of the building. It turns out there is no connection in the entire town. People decide to break into the local TV shop to watch the news and they find out that the lack of Internet is nationwide.

After eight days the Marsh family head out to California to the Red Cross "Internet refugee camp" but there are so many people there that each family is allowed to use internet only for 40 seconds a day. People from the entire country abandon their cities, friends, families only to get to that refugee camp. It turns out that the solution to fix the Internet is to un-plug and plug back the power cord of the main router, which provides internet for the entire country.

This episode is a satire on people who are attached to the Internet so much that they cannot live without it. It shows a society unable to function properly when there is no connection. But at the end of the episode there comes a lesson for those who pointlessly overuse the Internet: when the online access is eventually back, Randy Marsh gives a speech in front of the city that “We cannot take the Internet for granted any longer. We as a country must stop over-logging on. We must use the Internet only when we need it [...] To live with the Internet not for it.” Those last words especially sum up the behaviour satirized in the episode namely overusing the Internet and living only for it. “Over Logging” received relatively good ratings. On the Internet movie database IMDb this episode scored 8.6/10, on TV.com it scored 8.9/10; however, Travis Fickett (2019a) from IGN gave it a score of 7/10 saying that it “attempts to be a satire on our over reliance on and addiction to the Internet. However, it only raises the topic without actually having much to say or jokes to tell. This isn't a bad episode, but it will be a forgettable one.”

One of the factors which make *South Park* so appreciated by viewers is that it addresses many important issues that divide Americans, one of them being homosexuality and homophobia. In the fourth episode of season 1 “Big Gay Al Big Gay Boat Ride,” Parker and Stone depict social awareness of homosexuality. They show the extent to which people are prejudiced and how stereotypes can be harmful. The episode starts with Stan, Cartman, Kyle and Kenny waiting at the bus stop where Stan’s dog Sparky is about to fight with another dog, but instead he does something else. It turns out that Sparky is a homosexual and this is the reason for the school children to laugh at Stan. The confused boy tries to talk with his teacher Mr. Garrison (who is perceived as a homosexual and he turns out in later episodes to be homosexual indeed) asking him “what is homosexual?” and Mr. Garrison responds: “well, gay people are evil, evil right down to their cold black hearts which pump not blood but a thick vomitus oil which oozes through their rotten veins and clots in their pea-sized brains which becomes the cause of their Nazi-esque patterns of violence.” This type of extreme opinion from a school teacher who also represents adults is based on stereotypes and can create prejudices. As Weinstock rightly notices, “the portrayal of Mr. Garrison implies that children do not form these bigoted views out of thin air, but that they are taught by adults. In this world created by adults, however, the children have little opportunity to create their own set of representations” (2008, 118). This exaggerated scene in a satirical way points out that some harmful stereotypes are indeed instilled in children by adults.

After hearing his teacher's opinion, Stan tries to turn his dog into a heterosexual by commanding him simply "don't be gay" and presenting him to a female poodle, but all his attempts fail. Kyle suggests that perhaps there is nothing bad in being gay, but Stan is still confused recalling his teacher's words that "homosexuals are evil" so he decides to call Jesus during his TV show "Jesus and Pals" and ask about homosexuality, but by the time the question is asked his call is cut off. The frustrated boy shouts that "he does not want a gay dog; he wants a butch dog" and when Sparky hears that he runs away to the woods where he finds Big Gay Al's Big Gay Animal Sanctuary. This place is run by Big Gay Al and is a shelter for all homosexual animals who were left and rejected by its owners. Stan worries about his dog and eventually gets to the sanctuary where he meets Big Gay Al. In order to resolve the boy's confusion, Al takes him for a boat ride where he shows Stan the history of homosexuality and that there is nothing wrong with being gay. Stan's attitude towards homosexuality is changed and he apologizes to Sparky, confirming that he wanted to change him only because he did not understand the situation. This episode aims to satirize the very attitude of rejecting someone only because we do not understand certain issues and the attitude of being blind because of our prejudices. With the example of Stan and his dog we can see that ignorance can be harmful and that instead of following stereotypes we should question them and learn things for ourselves.

The episode aired on September 3, 1997 and although homosexuality was portrayed in a relatively stereotypical way, it received positive reception. On the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) the episode received a score 7.7/10, 8.3/10 at TV.com and 8.5/10 at IGN.com. Also the show was appreciated by the LGBT community as Howard Rosenberg states in his article "Yes, I Know It's Sick, but Still..." that "Comedy Central says that it brought overwhelmingly positive responses from viewers who identified themselves as gay and that *South Park* generally has received much less criticism than anticipated, given the show's distinctive raunchiness" (Rosenberg 1997). Alan Johnson from *Chicago Tribune* put this episode in top 10 episodes that have made the most provocative comedies on TV (Johnson 2003). This particular episode was also nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (1998) and for the GLAAD Award for Outstanding TV - Individual Episode (1998).

On the other hand, in the fourteenth episode of season 6 "The Death Camp of Tolerance" Parker and Stone address the problem of tolerance, or, more specifically, the difference between tolerance and acceptance. With the example

of homosexuality, the authors also try to emphasize the fact that when people sometimes do not accept certain issues, it does not make them intolerant. This episode begins in the school office with Mr. Garrison (homosexual) and Principal Victoria who offers him a new position as a fourth-grade teacher. Previously, Mr. Garrison was put off of this job because some people were “uncomfortable with his sexual preferences.” Mr. Garrison hesitantly asks Mrs. Victoria if this is for real and if “he is not going to get fired again for being gay tomorrow” to what the Principal responds: “with all the new laws we could never fire you for being gay, now you would be able to sue us for millions of dollars” and provides the case from Minnesota where a teacher was awarded \$25 million in a discrimination suit. In that moment Mr. Garrison starts planning to get fired from school and then file a lawsuit.

The next day, he performs outrageous sex acts with his assistant Mr. Slave, who is also a homosexual, wearing a leather bondage outfit. The concerned children complain to their parents, but when they describe the teacher’s inappropriate behaviour, the parents accuse the kids of being “discriminators” and send them to the Museum of Tolerance, where they are to be taught to be tolerant of any minority group. Helpless children turn to their school cook Chef who reports the scandalous behaviour of Mr. Garrison to Principal Victoria. This ends up with Chef being sent to the “tolerance seminar” as the principal points out he “demonstrated the lack of tolerance for Mr. Garrison’s behaviour.” The following day, when children refuse to attend classes, parents together with the school authorities decide to send them to an intensive and severe “seminar camp” which resembles a concentration camp. There, through hard labour, starvation and difficult tasks, they are taught to be tolerant of other people.

Meanwhile, Mr. Garrison talks with Mr. Slave saying that what the parents and the school authorities are doing is unbelievable. Instead of firing him, the parents feel so bad about their children being intolerant that they want to give Mr. Garrison the “courageous teacher” award. During the award ceremony Mr. Garrison wants to display to all the parents and school staff his outrageous behaviour in order to eventually get fired. He arrives at the ceremony dressed in a stereotypical gay manner riding Mr. Slave who is scantily dressed as a horse, and he keeps telling filthy jokes. Some people notice that this kind of behaviour is wrong but, so as not to be called intolerant, they all applaud and call the teacher “courageous.” Seeing that, Mr Garrison breaks down and shouts: “don’t you people get it? I’m trying to get fired here. Look, this kind of behaviour is not

acceptable from the teacher!" in response he hears "but the museum tells us to be tolerant." Mr. Garrison continues: "Tolerant but not stupid. Look, just because you have to tolerate something doesn't mean you have to approve of it. If you had to like it, it'd be called the museum of acceptance. Tolerate means you're just putting up with it... (but) it can still piss you off!" After this speech the parents realize that their children were not intolerant of homosexuality, but rather that they hated their teacher's behaviour.

This episode is a satire on how harmful excessive tolerance can be. In this case parents do not want to be perceived as intolerant, so when the children report to them that something is wrong with their homosexual teacher, they do not listen. At this time excessive tolerance of the parents exposes their children to inappropriate behaviour, which can be harmful and can lead to further prejudices. Robert Arp sums it up accurately in his book *You Know, I Learned Something Today* by saying: "In 'The Death Camp of Tolerance' Mr. Garrison breaks down at the end and screams at the townspeople for confusing a reasonable moral belief, that people should be tolerant to some extent of different ideas and lifestyles, with a less reasonable moral belief, that condemning or judging anyone for any behaviour, even blatantly degrading and harmful behaviour, is intolerant. The whole episode, including the title, is a satire of intolerance towards the perceived intolerance of others" (2007, 155).

Although very controversial and with many disturbing scenes the episode was received positively. On the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) this episode received a score of 8.8/10. The British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* in 2010 wrote about it: "The episode contains all the ingredients that have helped to transform *South Park* into the funniest, cleverest, most corrosive and watchable satire on television: not just outrageous tastelessness and (almost) fearless defiance of right-on liberal values, but also witty pastiche (in homage to Spielberg, the death camp scenes are shot in black and white), and a sense of surrealism and stylistic adventurousness bordering on the sublime" (Delingpole 2010). Bob Chipman describes this particular episode by saying: "[it] is considered one of the series' turning-point moments, where the most common target of Parker and Stone's ire was gradually switching from needling conservative bugbears to prodding the 'sacred cows' of their largely progressive-leaning showbiz contemporaries" (Chipman 2019). Meanwhile, Weinstock describes the episode as "perhaps the show's strongest assault on institutionally-compelled acceptance" (2008, 155).

There is no doubt that *South Park* gained its popularity also thanks to “saying what you are not supposed to say” which often means being politically incorrect. Yet, the creators of *South Park* do not always use the words “that shall not be spoken” to stir controversy, but also to prove some point and, with the example of such words, satirize certain behaviours. To illustrate, in the first episode of season 11 “With Apologies to Jesse Jackson” the word “nigger” was used more than 40 times, but not in a hateful reference to Afro-Americans, but rather to show the example of how some words could have a bad impact on a given community or individuals.

The episode starts with Randy Marsh taking part in the TV show *Wheel of Fortune* where his task is to solve the puzzle and give the answer to the category “People who annoy you.” He is given the letters “N\_GGERS” and with confusion and in a reluctant way he answers “niggers.” By uttering this word on national TV, he shocks his friends, family, thousands of viewers including Afro-Americans. The correct answer was (obviously) “naggers.” The episode addresses many factors but only one – the power of words – will be discussed here. After the incident, Stan (Randy’s son) talks with Token (the only African-American boy in school). Stan tries to defend his father explaining that his dad is not racist but only stupid and that saying the n-word is not a big deal. Token responds that it is actually a big deal and that a white person will never understand how it feels when this word is spoken, and if he thinks it is not a big deal he is ignorant. Meanwhile, Randy Marsh tries to rectify the situation and unite with African-American people by apologizing to Jesse Jackson, who is a self-appointed ambassador of the African-American community. The apology is accepted and it is published in all newspapers. Stan meets with Token once more to tell him that everything is alright now because his dad apologized to Jesse Jackson but Token repeats that Stan does not understand anything and yells: “Jesse Jackson is not emperor of black people!” This scene also shows a misconception of one person representing the entire group of people. Stan thinks that if Jesse Jackson accepts apologies, all is fine, but for Token it is obviously not.

As Olivia Cueva commented on this scene: “this satirical humor undermines the fact that many black people operating in all or majority white settings, like Token, are representatives of their entire race every day, not by personal choice, but because white people assign them these roles subconsciously” (2010, 5). Later in the episode, Randy Marsh tries to redeem himself and enters the comedy club where the Afro-American comedian recognizes him. He points

Randy out laughing at him with all the audience and calls him a “nigger guy,” which becomes his nickname. The stigmatized man is now rejected by society. People point fingers at him in the streets; he is not welcomed in the stores and there is even an attempt to kill him, but Randy survives. Tired of discrimination, he joins an organization which influences the Congress to pass a law banning the phrase “nigger guy.” At the end of the episode, Stan gets a revelation concluding that, as a white person, he will never understand how it feels to be called this specific word. Token finally agrees with him and from now on there is peace between the boys.

With this episode, Parker and Stone address the usage of racial slurs and its impact on the community. First, we see an argument between Stan and Token who is mad at Stan that he diminishes the offence of his father using the n-word. This scene satirizes the ignorance of people who do not take seriously the fact that some words can be very hurtful for given communities. Secondly, the authors use the situation of Randy Marsh, stigmatized as a “nigger guy,” to present how minorities feel when being discriminated against. Randy Marsh is a white male, which gives a satirical undertone to the whole situation. “The creators try their best to emulate what it would feel like to endure the racial discrimination African Americans face every day in order for people to better understand what it is like to go through life as a minority individual, but understand that as a white person it is impossible to actually feel it themselves” (Bruder and Leflein 2019).

In spite of the fact that the n-word was used almost 40 times in the episode, the show received positive reviews. Travis Fickett from IGN gave the episode 10/10 stating “There’s really no other way to explain how this show remains not only brilliantly funny, but more relevant and insightful than anything else on television” (Fickett 2019b). Furthermore, Kovon and Jill Flower, co-founders of the organization *Abolish the "N" Word* appreciated the episode for the educational part: “This show in its own comedic way, is helping to educate people about the power of this word and how it feels to have hate language directed at you” (Flower and Flower 2007). On the IMDb and TV.com the episode achieved the rates of 8.8/10 and 9.2/10 respectively.

## 5. Conclusion

*South Park* is an animated TV series, which probably would not be recommended to children, given its vulgar language, often shallow jokes, and dark humor that pushes the boundaries of good taste. However, in spite of these seemingly unpalatable features, *South Park* is strongly appreciated among the adult audience. Its successful reception is predicated on the fact that it is a great example of social satire where everyone would find something appealing. As Olivia Cueva notices, “as a provocative and anti-politically correct television series, *South Park* offers its viewers an alternative space to critically think about and discuss contemporary issues,” adding that “Trey Parker and Matt Stone, satirically tackle the issues of modern-day culture by allowing the viewer to observe these quandaries through the eyes of the (not so) innocent boys” (2010, 2).

This study allows the reader to better understand what is being satirized in the chosen episodes of *South Park* and how it fits in with the American satirical tradition. The American society is presented in the show as greedy, thoughtless, easily to manipulate and often unreasonable, but this presentation has a redeeming aim. The episode “Red Man’s Greed” shows how people can behave when they see the prospect of getting rich and how the worst human traits transpire when money is involved. Furthermore, the episode “Child Abduction Is Not Funny” presents people as thoughtless and easily influenced by sensationalist media. Parents blindly believe in the information related to child abduction threats magnified by the media, so instead of protecting their children, they jeopardize them by acting illogically and banishing the children out of town. The episode “Over Logging” shows the danger of overusing the Internet. The society that is cut off of the Internet can no longer function properly. Some people go completely mad abandoning all they have only to be able to use the Internet for a few seconds a day. *South Park* also addresses the problem of tolerance of homosexuality. In the episode “Big Gay Al Big Gay Boat Ride,” through the image of a homosexual dog, the show presents how much harm and damage can be caused by prejudiced opinion-leaders unable to renounce gender stereotypes. However, the episode “The Death Camp of Tolerance” addresses the reverse problem of excessive tolerance, where people should be aware of the difference between tolerance and acceptance. “With Apologies to Jesse Jackson” touches on the topic of discrimination. Although there is an excessive usage of racial slur in the episode, it is done only to present a harmful impact of the words on certain racial groups.

Considering that 297 episodes of *South Park* have already been produced, an enormous number of pressing social issues and pertinent matters have been tackled in each season. It gives this show an opportunity to fit into all three main categories of classical satirical genres. The whole concept of *South Park* as an animated series is an example of Mennipean satire – using simple animation and fantasy world to make it easier to imagine and understand complex and ambivalent issues. Without a doubt, the majority of the episodes can be put into the category of harsh and savage Juvenalian satire, but there are some parts in the episodes with subtle and gentle mockery, which fits into Horatian style category. The episode “Child Abduction Is Not Funny” can be definitely put into Juvenalian category, in which the society is mainly presented as thoughtless and gullible, but on the other hand the scene with the city wall and Mr. Kim ridicules the tendency for people to think stereotypically. Eventually, *South Park* makes fun of almost everyone and everything, regardless of race, belief, orientation or social class, exposing basic human flaws. This is because the authors believe in freedom of speech, which is rooted in the American tradition.

### Works Cited

- Applebee, Arthur N. 2002. *The Language of Literature. British Literature.* Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell.
- Arp, Robert, ed. 2007. *South Park and Philosophy: You Know, I Learned Something Today.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Arp, Robert, and Kevin S. Decker, eds. 2013. *The Ultimate South Park and Philosophy: Respect My Philosophah!* The Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series 83. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bruder, Hannah, and Jake Leflein. 2019. *Race and Intersectionality in South Park.* Accessed May 27, 2018. <http://diversityandmedia.com/race-intersectionality-south-park/>.
- Chipman, Bob. 2017. 15 South Park Episodes That Haven't Aged Well. *Screenrant.* Accessed May 2, 2019. <https://screenrant.com/south-park-old-episodes-aged-badly/>.

- Cogan, Brian. 2008. *Mosh the Polls: Youth Voters, Popular Culture, and Democratic Engagement*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books.
- Cueva, Olivia. 2010. South Park and White Privilege: An Examination of Racialized Messages and the Construction of the White Role in a Discussion About Racism. Accessed May 20.  
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/bcurj/pdf/CuevaOliviaART.pdfz>.
- Delingpole, James. 2010, May 3. South Park: The Most Dangerous Show on Television? *The Telegraph*. Accessed May 2, 2019.  
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/7671750/South-Park-The-most-dangerous-show-on-television.html>.
- Edley, Luke. 2017. 'Understanding Different Types of Satire'. *An Introduction to the Three Most Common Types of Satire: Horatian, Juvenalian and Menippean*. Accessed February 23, 2019.  
<https://thanetwriters.com/essay/technicalities/understanding-different-types-of-satire/>.
- Elliott, Robert C. 2017. Satire. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed June 26, 2019.  
<https://www.britannica.com/art/satire>.
- Ezell, Silas Kaine. 2016. *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television. Animation and The American Joke*. London: Routledge.
- Fickett, Travis. 2019a. 'SOUTH PARK: "OVER LOGGING" REVIEW'. Accessed May 5, 2019. <https://www.ign.com/articles/2008/04/17/south-park-over-logging-review>.
- Fickett, Travis. 2019b. 'SOUTH PARK: "WITH APOLOGIES TO JESSE JACKSON" REVIEW'. Accessed May 21, 2019.  
<https://www.ign.com/articles/2007/03/09/south-park-with-apologies-to-jesse-jackson-review>.
- Flower, Kovon, and Jill Flower. 2007. Transcript of 'Paula Zahn Now' from March 8, 2017. Accessed May 20, 2019.  
<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0703/08/pzn.01.html>.
- Frye, Northrop. 2000. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Highet, Gilbert. 1962. *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton University Press.
- Hooley, Daniel. 2007. *Roman Satire*. Malden MA: Blackwell.
- Johnson, Allan. 2003. Whoever Thought This Show Would Last 100 Episodes? *The Chicago Tribune*. Accessed May 3, 2019.

<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:0ycvwP2ETGQJ:https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2003-04-09-0304090091->

[story.html+%&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl&lr=lang\\_en|lang\\_pl](story.html+%&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl&lr=lang_en|lang_pl).

Petty, Amber. n.d. The True Story behind the Creation of South Park. Accessed April 1, 2019. <https://www.looper.com/51475/south-park-made-tv/>.

Podzemny, Todd. 2003–2019. “What Is Juvenalian Satire?” *Wisegeek*. Accessed January 12, 2019. <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-juvenalian-satire.htm#comments>.

Quintero, Ruben, ed. 2007. *A Companion to Satire*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Rankin, Alan. 2003–2019. “What Is Horatian Satire?” *Wisegeek*. Accessed February 23, 2019. <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-horatian-satire.htm#comments>.

Rosenberg, Howard. 1997, Oct 15. “Yes, I Know It’s Sick, but Still...” *Los Angeles Times*. Accessed May 3, 2019.

[https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-oct-15-ca-42773-story.html+%&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl&lr=lang\\_en%7Clang\\_pl](https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-oct-15-ca-42773-story.html+%&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl&lr=lang_en%7Clang_pl).

Swift, Jonathan. 1891. *The Battle of the Books and Other Short Pieces*. Accessed November 3, 2018.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Books\\_and\\_Other\\_Short\\_Pieces/The\\_Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Books](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Battle_of_the_Books_and_Other_Short_Pieces/The_Battle_of_the_Books)

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew, ed. 2008. *Taking South Park Seriously*. Albany: State University of New York Press.



# Online Grooming as a Manipulative Social Interaction: Insights from Textual Analysis

Mariia Horskykh

University of Opole

**Abstract:** This study explores the manipulative techniques used by online groomers to build relationships with minors. The introductory part explores the processes of grooming from selected perspectives, including its scope and risk factors. The study is informed by the model of Social Exchange Theory (SET), notably Rusbult's Theory of Investments, which is applicable to abusive relationships. To detect the controlling patterns of the grooming relationship, a thematic analysis of an interview with a victim of grooming is conducted. The thematic analysis has identified the main themes and constructed a map that depicts coherent connections within the grooming system. The analysis shows that even if children do not perceive grooming as exploitative, it is a manipulative and controlling relationship due to secrecy and social stigma.

**Key words:** child grooming, manipulation, abusive relationship, thematic analysis

## 1. Introduction

This study aims to explore the nature of a digital crime known as child grooming. The term is often described as the process of befriending children with the intention of sexual interaction (cf. Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). It is a very subtle process conducted via psychological manipulations that establishes a strong emotional connection between a victim and a groomer. Consequently, groomers gain access to the children and can exploit them. The scope of the crime is challenging to estimate; however, Reuters reports that about 750,000 sexual predators worldwide are online at any given moment according

to the U.S.-based International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.<sup>2</sup> This gives a better understanding of how massive the problem is and, unlike other digital crimes, how difficult it is to detect (Maloney 2018). The bond formed by the offender allows them to have enormous control over the child's actions, including keeping the relationship secret; however, this relationship is often very harmful to the child's mental and physical health in the end.

Articles such as "Victims' Voices: The Impact of Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse" reveal what techniques are used by groomers, particularly how they are able to control and manipulate victims (Whittle et al. 2013). Psychological analyses, such as Whittle et al.'s (2013; 2014), show what effects grooming has on victims of crime and how it influences the future of a child. Communication scholars and linguists (e.g. O'Connell 2003) try to describe the patterns of conversations and how groomers adapt their language to the styles that teenage children use. Social scientists attempt to capture the scope of a problem and the risk factors of victimization. Subsequently, this article will supplement the topic and expand on the understanding of a victim's perspective in cases of such interactions. Statistics show that 85 percent of households had access to the Internet in 2016 in Europe only (Statista). This means that every minor in these households may potentially be targeted by groomers. This creates an urgent need for exploring the field, since understanding wrongdoers' behavior and their methods will help to prevent this crime.

It is essential to highlight that the paper is not trying to acquit the groomers of wrongdoings, but to indicate what children demand in their social lives and how these needs should be satisfied by relatives and peers, not by groomers. The various research studies indicate behavioral patterns of grooming on social media, mostly with an aim to indicate that the child is being victimized or present useful statistics. These results are used in the thesis, as they provide the necessary background. For example, Cano et al. (2014) present an approach for automatic classification of online grooming. The patterns and ways of analysis make it possible to scan chatrooms and detect grooming stages. This helped to look at the interactions from a different angle and detect the social needs of children and how these are used to gain their trust.

This study focuses on the presentation of the aspects of grooming process from a child's perspective. It stresses that a child is the victim in the situation

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-trafficking-technology-youth/grooming-is-gateway-to-child-sex-trafficking-as-seducing-moves-online-idUSKBN1JD001>.

and groomers in most cases choose their victims very carefully. Children usually come from poor backgrounds, lack support from their parents, have few people to communicate with, and these factors make them vulnerable to manipulations, since they all create a solid ground for the initially supportive conversation (NSPCC 2013). In the communication with their groomer, they may find care, sympathy and even financial support that they lack in real life. This narrows the study to the specific question: "What traces of bonding/romantic relationship does child grooming have?" It is interesting to study this relationship not only as a set of manipulative techniques, but also to look for intimate features. The present study can also provide a practical application, as it will raise awareness of the dangers of grooming and how to raise digital literacy among the underage, to prevent the possible crime.

## 2. Grooming as a Social Interaction

According to the NSPCC statistics, in 2017-2018 in the UK only, there were 3,096 cases of sexual communication with children, which is considered illegal in the UK since 2017. The same overview states "sexual grooming has increased by 16.8 per cent since 2015" (Bentley et al. 2018, 29-30). It is important to highlight that these numbers do not present the whole perspective, as child grooming is a subtle crime that goes unreported frequently. However, it is possible to trace the growing trend of children's sexual victimization.

Child grooming is a very complex crime as it is difficult to detect; moreover, due to the diversity of techniques that are used to manipulate a child, it is problematic to analyze it. Therefore, for the sake of clarity it is useful to use a definition that was provided by Family and Community Development Committee in the Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Sexual Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organizations* (2013).<sup>3</sup> According to this report, grooming is a process in which a child (victim) is befriended by a groomer (predator) for the purpose of establishing an emotional connection. This close relationship allows a predator to influence and force a victim into sexual activity, using psychological manipulations that are subtle, calculated and controlling. The substance of grooming is quite simple:

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/justice/resources/ea484f74-feb7-400e-ad68-9bd0be8e2a40/failure\\_to\\_disclose\\_betrayal\\_of\\_trust\\_factsheet\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/justice/resources/ea484f74-feb7-400e-ad68-9bd0be8e2a40/failure_to_disclose_betrayal_of_trust_factsheet_2017.pdf)

an offender seeks sexual interaction with a minor, but the means that are used to achieve this result are based on building trust through a long-lasting interaction. A groomer finds out the interests of the child, their leisure time activities, their schedule, etc. These details are necessary to establish a connection, so that a victim will think that they are special friends or lovers. Later, using coercive techniques a groomer tricks a child into a sexual relationship. Also, the way of approaching a child depends on the background where the communication takes place.

Grooming occurs in two contexts: intra-familial and extra-familial. In the intra-familial context, a victim is approached by a person who is either a family member or at least a well-known person (Smallbone, Marshall and Wortley 2008). This scenario is described in the literature as “institutional grooming” and may occur in school, where the perpetrator often has a trustworthy position. This type commonly includes face-to-face interaction, which is the “off-line” mode of approach that occurs in real-life situations. In addition to the off-line mode, there is also an “online” one, which occurs on the Internet and limits the possibility of seeing the interlocutor to video-chat or photo or video exchange. On the Internet the term “peer-to-peer grooming” is also used with the rise of “sexting” (participants exchange sexual photos that later may be shared within a group of people without the consent of a person whose photos are shared). The extra-familial context is another case, when a groomer is a total stranger to a child from the beginning. It may be online, which means that the offender is unknown to the child and uses particular techniques to build trust in the Internet-based environment, which later will result in sexual abuse (McAlinden 2012, 28–31). This study will focus on the online context and how exactly groomers approach their targets. Moreover, this study intends to observe this whole process as a social interaction in which each side exchanges something and receives certain benefits in this form of communication, according to the classical tenets of Social Exchange Theory (e.g. Blau 1964).

It is possible to suggest that online medium gives more freedom in communication, which means that people’s self-representation may be drastically different from how they are perceived offline. Both participants of grooming may feel more relaxed, as they do not face the interlocutor. This may lead victims to sharing more personal details with the thought that it would not affect their real life. In addition to that, while texting, a person has more time to think about their answers, which allows a groomer to think ahead and calculate how their words could influence the victim. Also, groomers on the Internet

can look for new victims on social media and choose the ones who would be more prone to manipulation. Thus, the Internet is a “perfect” environment for groomers.

It is possible to find a person’s profile on a social network and find out much about him or her. It is a common practice that people post their personal data: marital status, photos, place of residence, places they have visited, their interests and hobbies – these are standard details that can be found, for example, on a Facebook profile (although the owner may limit access to it). What is more, such platforms as Instagram give one an insight into a person’s life, favorite places or leisure activities. In addition, the function ‘Story’ allows others to see where the observed person currently is and what he/she is doing. It is important to take account of how the social media have evolved to include user-generated content and how much people are willing to share. It is possible to harvest not only the basic personal information, but also find out about people’s problems and feelings, and how they relate to the reality that surrounds them.

Petter Gottschalk wrote: “Relationships are built using social software” (Davidson, Gottschalk 2011, 34). This statement represents the online reality, as the need for face-to-face contact loses its value rapidly. Internet users share their thoughts with the whole online community and receive feedback. As expressed by Cook, “the role people now play is not only in consuming information and conveying it to others, but also in creating and sharing content with them, be it textual, aural or visual” (Cook 2008, 7). Notwithstanding the granted amount of freedom that people have online, they often forget about the need of being cautious within any environment. This leads to the question about posting too much personal information or sharing too much with absolute strangers. This lack of concern may make a person more prone to being groomed, as sex offenders can use it to their advantage. As Julia Davidson states, grooming is a socialization process, within which groomers possibly share hobbies and interests with their victims, in order to prepare them for sexual abuse (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011, 82).

Moreover, the development of social networking sites has led to groomers creating communities of their own, where they discuss their interests, the ways of approaching children, new techniques of building relationships and many other topics. They commonly use forums that can be found on Tor Browser, which enables a person to change their IP-address and become almost untraceable. In addition to that, it gives access to websites that are commonly hidden and cannot be found via Google search engine. People with the help of Tor

can access Deep and Dark Webs, where they express themselves without being afraid of any punishment; they may also find illegal shops and services.<sup>4</sup>

*Internet Child Abuse* mentions that young adults are more engaged into risk-taking behaviors, which include: sharing personal data online, engaging into conversation with an unknown person, going on chatrooms or video chats (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). The lack of education about Internet safety may lead to people being less cautious and more prone to manipulation. When groomers choose their victims, they use basic information to start an interaction where they forge an understanding whether they will proceed with the grooming. Perpetrators use specific manipulative techniques or a combination of them to gain full secretiveness and make sure that the victim would not tell anyone about their relationships. The research that was conducted by Helen Whittle and her colleagues studied grooming from the victim's perspective and, surprisingly, this interaction was considered "a relationship." The victims of grooming interviewed by researchers were both females and males: Whereas girls did consider their groomer to be their "boyfriend," boys did not treat him/her as an object of romantic relationships, but rather thought of the bond as either a sexual or a friendly relation. The interviewed victims also mentioned the techniques that were used by the groomers and they indicated that these were dominantly friendly or romantic ways of influence, but admitted that sometimes it was like a "roller-coaster," because the perpetrators could "get mad" at them for disobedience or not answering to messages (Whittle et al. 2014).

The information from extensive research presents several points that are crucial for this paper. Firstly, the female victims truly believed that they had a romantic relationship with a person on the other side of the screen. At the moment of their communication, the girls were 12-15 years old and their groomers did manage to establish romantic relationships, and at the same time they managed to keep it secret. Some of the parents knew about the relationship, although they did not know who was actually talking to their children. Secondly, there were also male victims (their number was lower than females), but it only highlights that belonging to one of the sexes does not guarantee safety, and boys should also be taught about on-line manipulation. Thirdly, adolescents tend to engage in risk-taking behaviors and this puts them at a higher

---

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie\\_bartlett\\_how\\_the\\_mysterious\\_dark\\_net\\_is\\_going\\_mainstream/discussion?nolanguage=es%3Futm\\_source%3Dtedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_bartlett_how_the_mysterious_dark_net_is_going_mainstream/discussion?nolanguage=es%3Futm_source%3Dtedcomshare).

risk of being groomed. In combination with the information about the Internet as the medium for grooming and the behaviors of children online, it is possible now to outline the stages of grooming and describe them, following Whittle et al. (2014).

Conversation	Including normal, mutual interests, victim focused and confiding
Deception	Including lies about interests, lies about identity and webcam Trickery
Regular/intense contact	Including increasing methods of contact, talking through the night
Secrecy	Including techniques to keep it secret, encouraging victim secrecy, allowing victim to decide secrecy
Sexualization	Including sexual chat, sexual photos and videos, sexual compliments, sexual contact and overemphasis on sexual side of Relationship
Kindness and Flattery	Including generosity, good listener, genuine, fun, helping with homework, supportive, traditional and sexual compliments, promises about the future, personality and physical compliments
Erratic Temperament & Nastiness	Including blackmail, threats, bribery, possessiveness, anger, encouraging jealousy, fights, being contradictory
Grooming others	Including friends and family

Table 1: Subthemes of offender manipulation techniques (Whittle et al. 2014, 409-410).

It is almost impossible to outline a single approach that groomers tend to use, as their techniques are constantly evolving. One case may be drastically different from another; nevertheless, O’Connell (2008) presents five phases that could be used in an analysis. He describes each of them and gives strong arguments why they are used exactly in this sequence: Friendship-forming, Relationship-forming, Risk-assessment, Exclusivity and Sexual Contact. This line

gives a better understanding on how this type of abusive relationship is built. The length of these phases is never stable and sex offenders try to monitor the situation and decide whether their victims are ready for moving to the next stage. In fact, at the beginning it does look like a normal relationship where the participants are trying to find common ground, then share some details and at this point the child starts perceiving his/her new friend as someone with whom they can share and they bond. However, starting with the stage of Risk-assessment, a groomer checks whether a child is secretive about their communication. The Exclusivity phase changes the context of the interaction into more private one and sets a strong connection when interlocutors are sharing ever more personal information and secrets. The sexual phase is fully controlled by the adult and gradually the relationship gains more intimate and romantic features. It can develop to the point when a child perceives his/her 'friend' as a boyfriend/girlfriend and possible future lover.

The phases that were listed above refer to online grooming and perpetrators may continue this process for years until they either lose interest or get noticed. The long-term grooming can be effective if the techniques described by Whittle and phases by O'Connell (2008) are combined. For example, the manipulation called 'Conversation' may go with 'Friendship-forming' stage to build a strong basis for the relationship and 'Secrecy' with 'Risk-assessment' to achieve exclusivity of the contact. Obviously, groomers use their own resources of information or generate ideas by themselves, but it is easier to understand how the abuse is conducted by reading advice. It is one of the top priorities for a groomer to dominate the conversation in a subtle manner, so that a child will be willing to communicate and in due course will be ready for sexual acts. These may include not only a physical contact, but also sharing photos or videos with this sexual content. Groomers may keep these materials to themselves or share them online with others (Whittle et al. 2014).

In order to get to the core of factors that put people at higher risk of being groomed, it is necessary to define how their lives reflect onto their online behaviors. There are two groups of vulnerable underage people. The first group includes people who are vulnerable both offline and online and the second group is the people who are vulnerable to manipulation online exclusively (UKCCIS 2012). It is believed that people do not have identical behavioral patterns both in real life and virtual and the research that was provided by Whittle et al. (2013) illustrates this. Moreover, scholars have identified what aspects put children at higher risk, such as females, those questioning their

sexuality (female or male), at the stage of adolescence, with disabilities or psychological disturbances. While this may seem generalized, it can be well explained. At the stage of adolescence people are more curious and develop their personalities and, unfortunately, disabilities or mental health problems may marginalize people in real life, which forces them to seek communication online. These factors, indeed, make manipulation easier, as it would be enough for the groomer to raise a person's self-esteem, make them feel comfortable with themselves and give them a sense of belonging and love to start a relationship.

Additionally, researchers (e.g. Whittle et al. 2013) combined risk factors from other studies and found that, for example, extroversion in combination with extreme confidence and friendliness may as well make a person vulnerable to grooming, as much as low self-esteem and emotional disturbances. What is necessary to highlight is that higher socioeconomic status makes underage individuals more prone to being groomed online, while lower status increases chances of falling victims to offline predators (Whittle et al. 2013). As in the case with combining phases and relatable techniques, it is possible to suggest that the risk factors alone do not guarantee that a minor will be groomed online. Knowing what risk factors and risk-taking behaviors put children and teenagers in danger and make them more prone to manipulation is fundamental, but interlacing it with the social exchange theory will present a newer picture of the whole process. Susan Sprecher notes that "social behavior is a series of exchanges; individuals attempt to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs; and when individuals receive rewards from others, they feel obligated to reciprocate" (1998). Consequently, it is important to entangle the child grooming process with a theoretical basis.

## **2. Social Exchange Theory and Investments in Grooming**

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) and its models are the key to the analysis and understanding the motives of both victims and groomers. They explain why children engage in this type of relationship and add more details to the manipulative side of grooming. The theoretical framework presented below considers the grooming process as an interaction between two human beings and how they benefit from the exchanged communications. SET has been primarily developed as psychological but was extremely well suited

to be applied to sociological studies within many contexts (interpersonal and institutional). George Homans introduced the theory following the basic economic principles of reward and cost (1961). He gained his inspiration from economic studies and adopted the formula of  $\text{Profit} = \text{Reward} - \text{Cost}$ . Thus, in his interpretation, behavior is considerably influenced by profits that one may get from the interaction. Reward is what a person gets for his actions and Cost is what has to be done to get the benefits (Rewards). Homans states that “when an action (or sentiment) emitted by one man is rewarded (or punished) by the action issued by another man, then, regardless of the type of emitted behavior, we say that these two people interact” (1961, 35). In his following research studies, Homans defined some more propositions that broaden the theory. These notions describe the psychological aspect of interactions and provide a better understanding of how Social Exchange works in cases that differ with one another (1974).

Homans’ theory influenced Peter Michael Blau’s model as he applied it to the sociological field and expanded it. Blau also stated that each interaction gave rewards to *both* participants, and then used this notion to describe how social structures were organized by explaining society’s structures and how they are sculpted by people’s interactions (1964). Thibaut and Kelly (1959) took the theory to a more interpersonal level, and their postulate was that people were constantly calculating (consciously or not) costs and rewards in their relationships. While such statement may seem mercantile, it is traceable in everyday lives. People in relationships do expect to receive some reward (i.e. a child did his/her homework and wants to play). This expectation is omnipresent, and Thibaut and Kelly described why it happens, using Social Exchange Theory as the basis. Nevertheless, the Investment Theory by Rusbult (1983) will be the best choice for the subject that is being investigated here, as this theory focuses on intimate relationships and their prevalence. Rusbult explained why people are dedicated to their intimate relationships and what factors ensure they last.

Rusbult’s Investment Theory does not focus on one part of a romantic relationship (i.e. sexual), instead she observed human bonding as a whole. Rusbult expanded SET in a way to explain why some relationships are long-lasting and some are not. As it was mentioned above, child grooming process is a long-lasting relationship and the Investment Theory outlines reasons for that. It is important to indicate that from the child’s perspective grooming is not treated as a wrongdoing, but rather a romantic involvement. Rusbult employs

Profit, Reward and Cost as a basis of the theory with variables of her own (See Figure 1). The Investment Theory outlines a general model of behavior for partners in romantic relationships. It describes partners' input, their exchange of tangible and intangible matters and how these factors make the relationship last. A formula summarizes the theory:  $\text{Commitment} = \text{Satisfaction} - \text{Alternatives} + \text{Investments}$ . Commitment in this context is seen as a decision whether a partner wants to stay or leave, Satisfaction stands for level of comfort and delight, Alternatives are the other candidates for the role of a possible partner and Investments are the things given to the partner.

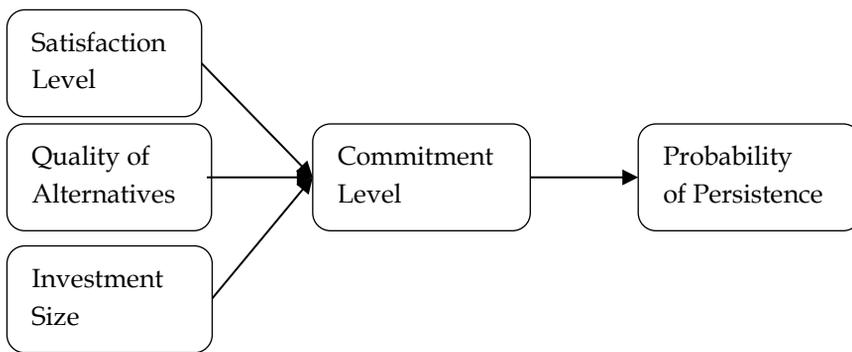


Figure 1: Diagram of Investment Model (Rusbult et al. 1998).

Since the investments represent the foundation of the theory, they deserve more scrupulous attention. As it was presented by Rusbult (1980), Investments are relatively similar to costs and rewards; however, these are rather non-materialistic resources and after the break-up these cannot be taken back. Intrinsic resources are put into the relationship directly; they are of an intangible nature, such as emotional work on the relationship, openness with the partner and time spent together. Extrinsic resources involve values, memories, hobbies, activities, friends and some materialistic possessions that are associated with the relationships but were happening outside of them. There is another similarity with the reward-cost model, because some Investments are rewarding (sharing memories) and some are costly (spending time or money on your partner). Consequently, Commitment is increased if the amount of Investment is on the decent level, as they make a person feeling attached to the partner, since ending these would mean losing all the Investments (Rusbult 1980).

The theory seemed abstract and even though people could relate to this, it lacked proof. Rusbult verified it based on test that was conducted in a form of a questionnaire administered to 17 males and 17 females, who were in heterosexual relationships. They had to evaluate their relationships in accordance with the theory's variables. Findings state that the higher the investments, the bigger the chance of holding onto the partners and not seeking alternatives (1983). However, the theory and the test received some criticism. It was stated that the findings could be biased by the participants, as they could evaluate some investments unconsciously. It was also suggested that the theory is dubious, because the high investment could be the result of high commitment. Despite the contradictory feelings about the results of the test, the theory took its niche in the psychological and sociological fields, because in 2006 Rhatigan and Axom used Investment Theory to explain the situation of women who were in abusive relationships and suffered from intimate violence. It was stated that women who have invested substantially in the relationships, despite the violence from partner's side, did not want to break up. This proved that Rusbult's Theory is applicable to the cases of abusive relationships (to which grooming belongs) among others.

Therefore, when it comes to child grooming, both participants still invest intrinsic and extrinsic means to make the relationship work. The manipulative techniques that were described in Table 1 represent how it occurs. The intrinsic resources, like time, emotional work and self-disclosure, remain the elements that make the victim feel attached and important to the groomer. Apart from that, children become very open and share everything that happens to them on daily basis: they may share secrets and matters that trouble them, while predators listen to them and may give a piece of advice. This example also shows the Cost-Reward model, as victim puts in time and personal details and receives understanding. It is possible to suggest that groomers have to be cautious and tell their victims exactly what they desire to hear.

The extrinsic means are related to the things that become associated with the partner, but happen outside of the relationship. The cases of online grooming do not typically include spending time together in real-life situations; however, the participants may still share a range of such investments. For a victim it may be a cellphone that they use as a tool for communication with a groomer. Moreover, groomers frequently fake their identities and adjust them to the needs of a victim, which means that they will share similar activities, hobbies, thoughts and preferences. All the investments, according to Rusbult's theory,

promote a deep commitment that leads to prolonging the relationships. At some points, the victim may doubt the groomer's motives, but after so many investments and deliberate manipulation his/her commitment is extremely high. Since the aim that is set by the predator – to make the victim open for sexual activities, Susan Sprecher's suggestion can elaborate on that: "it is likely that investment model variables (rewards, costs, comparison level, comparison level for alternatives, investments) should predict how sexually involved dating partners become" (1998). She proposes that the higher the variables of the theory, the higher the chances of a victim being sexually active, which means that the goal is achieved by the groomer if the manipulation and bonding are done properly.

Rusbult's theory provides a solid ground for the grooming perspective, but it does not explain sufficiently the aftermath of abusive relationships, apart from the fact that the victims find it difficult to move on, because of intense affection to their abusers. To extend the theoretical part of the research, it is useful to add the aspect of what happens after, and how the strong bond between a groomer and a child keeps the victim entangled and almost addicted to the connection. The term "trauma bonding" was invented by Patrick Carnes (1997) and it is rather an effect than a tool of the abusive relationships. He describes it as the misuse of fear, excitement, sexual feeling, sexual physiology to entangle another person. The term is applicable to long-term abusive relationships and despite the harm that is done to the victim, he/she firmly believes that that is what love and affection feel like. It is especially accurate when the cases that involve children are considered, since minors, because of the lack of experience and the influence from grooming tactics, start to believe this is a legitimate relationship. It does not matter if the abuser manipulates the child to perform sexual activities, the victims will not perceive it as a wrongdoing; by contrast, they will be committed to performing it again, because they may receive the rewards after. Trauma bonding also suggests that fear is the tool that forces victims to embrace the abuse without much resistance and the more the person passively responds to the abuse, the higher the chance of automatically following the pattern. Groomers do not constantly exploit fear to manipulate the victim. However, the victim may be fearful because of the consequences and what will happen if the relationship is revealed. Apart from fear, there are also the excitement and sexual feelings that could be considered as investments that also entangle the victim within the abusive relationship.

The repercussions of trauma bonding are difficult to overcome, as the child may not understand the relationship was wrong. Moreover, they were looking for comfort and sympathy from the groomer every time they demanded it and, after the bond was broken, they can no longer do so. Even if the abuse was systematic and made the victim feel miserable about it, they have learned to accept it and even like. According to Carnes (1997), no matter how the abuse was disclosed, it is crucial to be very tentative and careful with the feelings of the child, as what they have experienced for a lengthy period of time seems normal and desirable to them and it will take time and patience to explain the abuse. The PACE (Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation) states that it is important for the victim to be isolated from his/her abuser for a significant period of time, as it will help to rebuild the perception of what a healthy relationship should look like.

#### **4. Analysis of Grooming Techniques**

##### **4.1. Material and Procedure**

It is required to note here that the review of literature about grooming processes and theoretical frameworks that were presented above enable this research to be extended to textual analysis. The purpose of this section is to investigate and interpret the data from one victim's interview (see appendix) about a past experience of grooming. The findings present patterns of this grooming relationship and outline what manipulative techniques were used in the studied case. It will interpret them in the context of Investments Theory. The case study will not give the opportunity to generalize about all the relationships, as each case is unique, but it is important to identify what the consequences for this victim have been, and how the experience of being groomed affected her.

However, before proceeding there is a need to describe the background of the interview. The victim asked to not include personal data, such as name, dates and cities, but gave her permission to mentioning some factors. At the moment of the grooming process, she was 15-16 years old and lived in Ukraine. The situation is slightly more complicated with her groomer. She admitted that he initially presented a different personality, but then confessed

that he was around 40 years old, was married and lived in Spain. It is difficult to determine whether the information he gave her was truthful or not. At the moment when the interview was taken, the victim was 18 years old. The interview was conducted in early 2019 by the author of this article, via online voice call, and was originally in Russian before it was transcribed and translated (see Appendix).

A specific methodology helps to analyze data, interpret the information that was collected and these steps will help to verify a hypothesis, which later on can be used in theoretical or artistic fields. For this paper, a qualitative methodology has been chosen for a number of reasons. Foremost, the textual material requires a thorough interpretation and coding, as the dataset consists of an interview that was conducted with a victim of online grooming process. Secondly, the rather dynamic approach gives freedom to the researcher. It is necessary to look at the victim's answers and groomers' point of view from various perspectives, read between the lines and identify meaningful patterns from the transcript. Conclusively, there is a necessity to be objective and critical to explain why children fall for predators' manipulations and why adolescents treat that relationship as romantic. Moreover, the qualitative approach is widely employed by researchers who are investigating grooming, for example *Under His Spell* presents chunks of interviews with victims of grooming and interprets them accordingly (Whittle et al. 2014). This proves that this methodological choice is appropriate for this cause and can be exploited further on.

Taking into consideration the qualitative methodology and the fact that a thorough investigation of text will be performed, the most convenient way would be a thematic analysis. It allows one to identify significant sequences in the text, interpret and structure them. Braun and Clarke define it as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data" (2006, 79). The goal of a thematic analysis is to extract themes that are hidden in the text, while these themes are later on used to help answer research questions/hypothesis. The advantage is that it is very flexible and there is no specific pattern that must be followed to organize it; however, it may be treated as a negative feature as well. Yet, this possible confusion may be prevented if a researcher selects one of the well-recognized procedures. This paper will use Braun and Clarke's six-step model (2006) explained by Moira Maguire and Brid Delahunt, in their guide (2017). It will be implemented to assist in the research, as it is brief, describes the key points and provides exceptional examples that can be clearly followed:

- 1) become familiar with the data,
- 2) generate initial codes,
- 3) search for themes,
- 4) review themes,
- 5) define themes,
- 6) write-up.

When the text is being analyzed with a theory in mind, it is best to employ theoretical thematic analysis, which means that the researcher may start generating codes at the first step, since he/she approximately recognizes what he/she is looking for. The second step is "Generating initial codes." At this stage, it is essential to select the most significant parts of text, as there may not be a need to analyze every single line. There is a need to identify relevant chunks to the research question and briefly describe them, to help in the following step. Once the codes have been written, it is time for the subsequent move "Search for themes." After gathering the codes (that carry relevant question information), the analyst may start arranging them into themes aimed at helping to answer the research question. There is no strict rule how to divide them, so it merely depends on their relevance and importance. Later, comes the "Reviewing themes" step; here the investigator should look through themes and define which remain the main ones, and which are secondary. Such a division will help to concentrate on the critical findings from the analysis. The fifth step "Define themes" is the finishing touch. The researcher has to "identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 92). It consists in labelling themes, after the relation has been found between the themes and subthemes. In conclusion, the concluding part has to be concise and describe the findings, and it will help to answer the research question or prove the hypothesis.

## 4.2. Data Analysis

The interview was conducted and transcribed and the results allow us to reconstruct the whole process of grooming and define which themes emerge. The thematic analysis allowed us to identify significant patterns that were interpreted accordingly to the guide described above. Moreover, the themes make it possible to take a closer look at the manipulation and how a groomer maintained a long-lasting connection and was not caught. In addition, it is possible

to observe how the victim’s perception had been changing over time and what consequences it had on her life. Consequently, I identified four major themes and five subthemes that are listed below in the Table 2.

<p><b>Theme: Victim’s context</b>  <b>Subtheme: Victim’s pre-grooming context</b>                  Being an adolescent,                  Suffering from changing environments,                  Feeling pressure to perform well at school,                  Feeling melancholic,                  A tool to distract – computer.  <b>Subtheme: Context within grooming</b>                  Intense contact affected the V’s life,                  Mother was concerned,                  Mother did not mind communication,                  V sent intimate photos first,                  Sharing photos became a routine for V.</p>	<p><b>Theme: Manipulation</b>  <b>Subtheme: Grooming techniques</b>                  G faked his photo,                  G lied about his identity,                  G used flattery,                  G applied intense contact,                  G was interested in V’s personality,                  G confessed about lying (installed credibility),                  G never showed himself during calls,                  G was supportive, shared interests with V,                  G confessed being in love with V,                  G pushed V to send more erotic content,                  G became aggressive when received ‘no’.</p>	<p><b>Theme: Victim’s emotions</b>  <b>Subtheme: Emotional response to grooming</b>                  V enjoyed receiving compliments,                  V liked G’s identity,                  V was insecure about continuing communication,                  V was afraid of losing contact,                  V forgave G for lying, was flattered                  V felt attracted to G’s personality,                  V used video during calls,                  V became confident,                  V did not feel like she loved him,                  V felt like she owned him,                  V got afraid of how he changed,                  V ended the relationship.</p>	<p><b>Theme: Post-grooming</b>  <b>Subtheme: Recovery</b>                  V has never told anyone about it,                  V believed in this relationship,                  V regrets,                  V is hurt,                  V is ashamed,                  V is afraid.</p>
---	--	--	---

Table 2: Results of analysis: themes/subthemes (G = groomer; V = victim).

The first theme represents *Victim's context* and is divided into two subthemes: *Pre-grooming context* and *Context within grooming*. This depicts the circumstances and surroundings that the victims appeared to be in. As the interviewee said, she was mentally exhausted before the grooming occurred: "I felt (short pause) empty, like there was no point in all the hard work that I was doing at school" (2I).<sup>5</sup> That, according to the previous research, makes victims more prone to manipulation (Whittle et al. 2013). Later, during the grooming she confessed feeling better and encouraged, but was physically exhausted, which was caused by the lack of sleep, because of the intense contact that was established by the groomer. The second theme is actual *Manipulation* and the subtheme is *Grooming techniques*. The groomer had been practicing already known manipulative techniques: establishing intense contact, flattery, faking the identity, being overly engaged with the victim's life, creating an illusion of a romantic relationship, etc. These techniques allowed the groomer to maintain a lasting connection and get to what he had wanted: erotic photos of the adolescent. It is a presumption, but it was impossible to interview the groomer to find out his true intentions. Given that, the manipulative techniques are vividly illustrated in this case and the victim has confessed that she did enjoy the communication until the groomer had started being aggressive. That intrusive and demanding reaction was caused by being rejected being given more erotic content.

The third theme is *Victim's Emotions*, and the subtheme is *Emotional response to grooming*. Emotions are imperative when child grooming is taken into account, and groomers try to regulate emotions of their victims in a way that children would behave and obey their will: "He made me feel understood [...] I was wishing that we would live in the same city. He made me feel confident, because he was complimenting me, how smart I was, how beautiful I was, that I had a beautiful smile" (12I). The words "made me feel" are repeated frequently by the interviewee through the interview. This indicates that the groomer had been carefully controlling his victim's emotions while their relationship developed and was made to last. It is possible to assume that if the groomer had not started to be so pressing to receive more content, their relationships would be even longer. Despite the fact that the victim had doubts about their connection, she felt pleased about the communication and the amount

---

<sup>5</sup> 2I refers to the second reply of the interviewee in the interview in the appendix, the notation is used subsequently to refer to specific fragments of the interview.

of support that she had been receiving from the groomer. Moreover, he made her think she was in love with him: "I was still insecure about this whole thing, but a long story short, he made me feel at ease with this new form of relationship [...] I really felt like I was falling in love with him" (13I).

It is noteworthy that the range of emotions that the victim was feeling is certainly overwhelming for a teenager. She felt admired, which made her feel confident, but she was also insecure about the relationship but was not sure that she truly loved him. In brief, she was afraid of losing him; however, she also "felt addicted to him" (13I). This emotional rollercoaster ushered her to the point that she willingly sent him revealing photos of herself and he was very encouraging of that action. The victim then commented on how the communication looked later: "He was asking 'to share myself' with him and I felt like I had to. Not because he was forcing me, but because he had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him" (15I). The feeling of owning can be related to Rusbult's theory and will be described later.

The last theme that was identified is the *Post-grooming*, with the subtheme called *Recovery*. It has little to do with manipulation, but it is important to recognize what the consequences of such experience are and how they have affected the victim's life. The case that has been analyzed here belongs to one of many that was not reported to the police and that was unrevealed by the parents, and kept secret from the public for years. The victim cannot be judged for that, as she is traumatized by what happened to her. "It was nothing like the first love that teens are dreaming about. I regret giving so much of myself" (18I). The victim also admitted that she could not tell anyone, because she "just felt so ashamed and dirty" (18I). What is equally critical is she is still afraid that he may appear in her life again.

The following step of the analysis is the thematic map of the interview. It is important to bear in mind that attention should be paid to the text itself and the identified connections should be made to actual statements and not to presumed psychological states or intentions. The map's role is to display how the themes and subthemes are connected within the data. In the case that was studied, the core element is *Manipulation*. Hence, that theme is the center of the analysis, and it is necessary to grasp how the *Manipulation* is conducted and what elements define the *Grooming techniques* that are going to be used. Besides, it is curious what role manipulation plays in establishing the romantic relationships between groomers and victims. The thematic map (Figure 2)

is depicted below. It is possible to see that *Manipulation* is the core and other components surround it and recreate a pattern according to which the groomer had been dominating the relationship. There were three fundamental factors: *Grooming techniques*, *Victim's emotions* and *Victim's context*. They shape the *Manipulation* itself, as the groomer had to operate the victim's emotions and circumstances and use the technique that would help him achieve the goal. The personal context within grooming also influenced the techniques, which later led to *Emotional response*. Apparently, *Victim's emotions* heavily relied on the *Pre-grooming* context, which proves there is a connection between these elements. As was mentioned before, the *Post-grooming* phase does not retain a direct connection to the *Manipulation*, as by that moment the relationship was already over (obviously, she keeps a memory of the relationship, but the interview does not evidence her experiencing a severe trauma). However, *Emotional response* did affect the victim to that point that she is presently at the stage of *Recovery*.

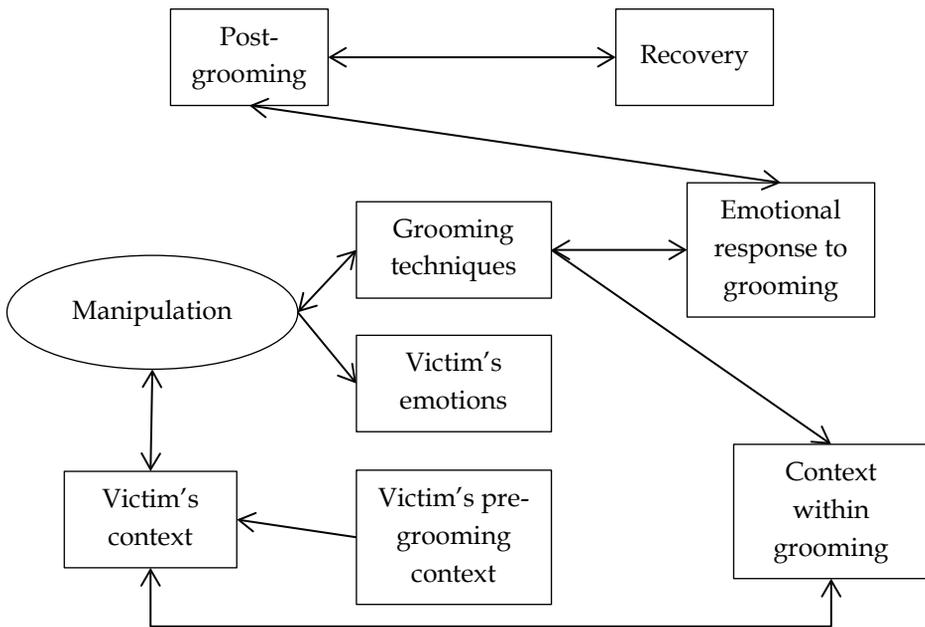


Figure 2: Thematic map of relations among identified themes/subthemes.

### 4.3. Explaining the Mechanisms of Investment

It is possible now to say that a thematic analysis of the interview had been conducted. The findings, including coded themes and the thematic map, allow us to look at grooming as a manipulation that is strategic and calculated. The interview transcript itself is unique and represents the real-life case of an adolescent being groomed. The question of how the manipulation is conducted was documented at length. However, there are still several elements that could complement the study and offer a different perspective of the grooming process. One of them is that the interview is an opportunity to trace Rusbult's Theory of Investments, in this case of grooming. The victim, during the interview said: "He had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him." That sentence clearly depicts how the theory works. The intrinsic methods that were used are all the communicational patterns. For example, following the Cost-Reward mode, the victim had put a significant amount of time, personal details and personal photos, and as the Reward she received comfort, understanding and confidence boost. Yet, another curious detail lies in between these lines: "I had to hide that part of me from everyone but him. He created that world of ours and it felt so great." It seems like there were not only the intrinsic Investments, but the whole intrinsic world of theirs. "I really felt like I was falling in love with him. It was exciting." The victim was genuinely committed to this relationship and despite some moments of hesitation, the groomer made her feel confident about herself and their communication. At the same time, the extrinsic aspect was her cellphone, as it was strongly associated with the feeling of their bond. Despite all the Investments and the dedication from the victim's side, the groomer overstepped and started forcing the victim when she was not mentally prepared, which led to a break-up. The result was that the victim did suffer from their connection, as she believed that the feelings were real and this could have been traumatic, as later on, she could adapt that model of abusive relationship in her future relationships. Another possible consequence is that now she may not be able to trust other people to the same degree. Also, the feeling of fear that their connection, even though it ended, may be revealed and greatly influence her present life.

## 5. Conclusion

All things considered, child grooming is a manipulative relationship. It affects the victim and may leave one in a state of post-trauma. This concluding statement is supported by a review of literature presented in the introductory sections. Rusbult's theory, which describes why people endure abusive relationships, was utilized here to obtain a more systematic reference system for the understanding of how groomers invest into their victims and how exactly this helps to maintain a long-lasting connection despite social stigma and suspicious secrecy. The thematic analysis in the practical section helped to effectively analyze an interview with a victim of online grooming. The findings from the data proved to be useful, as they gave an answer to the research question: "What traces of bonding/romantic relationship does child grooming have?".

Despite the fact that the results of the research matched initial expectations, there is still a lot to be studied. Further research studies could give more details from various victims, preferably from different backgrounds, as that might allow us to discover more risk factors. Additionally, there is very little research that would characterize groomers' motivations in detail in sociological and psychological terms. Naturally, it would be naïve to presume that groomers voice the same perception on this type of relationships. Having a better understanding of their social behaviors could also help to detect them online and in real life situations.

Taking everything into consideration, the data allow us to pose several recommendations for parents that could help them to protect their kids. Initially, grooming may occur because children are socially marginalized. This may occur when they move homes or cities, change schools or neighborhoods and lose long-time friends. It means that parents have to constantly remind their children that they can always have their support if they feel isolated or anxious. Adaptation should not be replaced by simply switching from physical contacts to the virtual world. Also, excessive secrecy about the online activities performed by the child should be brought to the parents' attention. It is a basic piece of advice, but it is frequently neglected, because if parents suspect anything, they merely limit the access to the Internet without going into the core of the problem of their child's seeking certain stimulations online. The child's sudden changes in moods and attitudes, evidence of stress and depressive states, even if natural in the period of growing up, should not be dismissed by parents or educators. These might be signs of conflicted

feelings that arise when a person is being manipulated to do something they subconsciously feel is against their best interest.

It is natural for young people to be curious and want to engage in new types of relationships and they should not be punished for trying to develop socially through social media, but they should be made aware by parents and educators of the possibilities of being manipulated. Training in assertiveness and in being able to refuse unwanted advances is crucial here. On the other hand, teenagers often feel peer pressure to be online, to be liked, to be engaged in the activities similar to their peers, so teaching them how to handle peer pressure would be useful, because it could prove equally handy when resisting a groomer's pressure.

Obviously, the problem of grooming is not restricted to the Internet, which may be a tool, but it is not the reason for groomers to gain access to victims. However, parents should implement certain software that prevent children from going on potentially dangerous web-sites. Child's safety heavily depends on parents and as difficult as it can be, parents should establish an atmosphere of trust and make sure that their kids are not afraid of speaking up and talking about their problems. Last but not least, parents should become educated about the scale and scope of grooming and about grooming techniques so that they can more easily detect them and prevent their children's falling victim to predators.

## Works Cited

- Bentley, Holly, Andy Burrows, Maria Hafizi, Pooja Kumari, Niamh Mussen, Orla O'Hagan, and Jessica Peppiate. 2018. *How Safe are our Children? The Most Comprehensive Overview of Child Protection in the UK 2018*. London: NSPCC.
- Blau, Peter M. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: Wiley.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77-101.
- Cano Amparo, Miriam Fernández, and Harith Alani. 2014. "Detecting Child Grooming Behavior Patterns on Social Media." *The 6th International Conference on Social Informatics*, 10-13 November 2014. <http://socinfo2014.org/>.

- Carnes, Patrick. 1997. *The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships*. Florida: Health Communications, Inc.
- Cook, Niall. 2008. *Enterprise 2.0: How Social Software will Change the Future of Work*. Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Ltd.
- Davidson, Julia, and Petter Gottschalk. 2011. *Internet Child Abuse: Current Research and Policy*. London: Routledge.
- Family and Community Development Committee. 2012. *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-government Organisations: Executive Summary and Recommendations*. <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/family-and-community-development-committee/Executive+summary+%26+recommendations.pdf>.
- Homans, George C. 1961. *Social Behaviour: Its Elementary Forms*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Homans, George C. 1974. *Elementary Forms of Social Behavior*. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Hymas, Charles. 2019. "Adverts from Tech Giants Help to Fund Apps for Paedophiles." *The Telegraph*, January 1, 2019. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/01/01/adverts-tech-giants-help-fund-apps-paedophiles/>.
- Maguire, Moira, and Brit Delahunt. 2017. "Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars." *AISHE-Journal* 9(3). <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/viewFile/335/553>.
- McAlinden, Anne-Marie. 2012. *'Grooming' and the Sexual Abuse of Children: Institutional, Internet, and Familial Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moloney, Anastasia. 2018. "Grooming is Gateway to Child Sex Trafficking as 'Seducing' Moves Online." *The Reuters*, June 17, 2018. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/global-trafficking-technology-youth/feature-grooming-is-gateway-to-child-sex-trafficking-as-seducing-moves-online-idUKL8N1RT53E>.
- NSPCC. 2013. *Child Sexual Exploitation*. [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/cse-introduction\\_wda97566.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/cse-introduction_wda97566.html).

- O'Connell, Rachel. 2003. *A Typology of Child Cyberexploitation and Online Grooming Practices*. Preston: University of Central Lancashire.  
<http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Society/documents/2003/07/24/Netpaedoreport.pdf>.
- Pace UK. n.d. "What is Trauma Bonding?" <https://paceuk.info/about-cse/what-is-trauma-bonding/>.
- Randhawa, Trisha, and Scott Jacobs. 2013. *Child Grooming "Offending All the Way Through from the Start."* Australia: Child Wise.  
<http://childwise.blob.core.windows.net/assets/uploads/files/Grooming%20-%20Exploring%20the%20call%20for%20law%20reform%20-%20Child%20Wise%20%28Web%29.pdf>.
- Rhatigan, Deborah L., and Sanny K. Axsom. 2006. "Using the Investment Model to Understand Battered Women's Commitment to Abusive Relationships." *Journal of Family Violence* 21(2): 153-162.
- Rusbult, Caryl E. 1980. "Commitment and Satisfaction in Romantic Associations: A Test of the Investment Model." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 16(2): 172-186.
- Rusbult, Caryl E. 1983. "A Longitudinal Test of the Investment Model: The Development (and Deterioration) of Satisfaction and Commitment in Heterosexual Involvements." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45(1): 101-117.
- Rusbult, Caryl E., John M. Martz, and Christopher R. Agnew. 1998. "The Investment Model Scale: Measuring Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Quality of Alternatives, and Investment Size." *Personal Relationships* 5(4): 357-387.
- Smallbone, Stephen, William L. Marshall, and Richard Wortley. 2008. *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy and Practice*. Devon, England: Willan Publishing.
- Sprecher, Susan. 1998. "Social Exchange Theories and Sexuality." *The Journal of Sex Research*, 35(1): 32-43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3813163>.
- Statista. 2013. *Internet Usage in Europe: Statistics & Facts*.  
<https://www.statista.com/topics/3853/internet-usage-in-europe/>.
- Thibaut, John W., and Harold H. Kelley. 1959. *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York: Wiley.

- UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS). 2012. "Identifying Vulnerable Children Online and What Strategies Can Help them. Report of a Seminar Arranged by the UKCCIS Evidence Group."  
[http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/content/childnet/safer-InternetCentre/downloads/Research\\_Highlights/Vulnerable\\_children\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/content/childnet/safer-InternetCentre/downloads/Research_Highlights/Vulnerable_children_report_final.pdf).
- Whittle, Helen C., Catherine Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony Beech, and George Collings. 2013. "A Review of Young People's Vulnerabilities to Online Grooming." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 18(1): 135-146.
- Whittle, Helen C., Catherine Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Anthony Beech. 2013. "Victims' Voices: The Impact of Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse." *Universal Journal of Psychology* 1(2): 59-71.
- Whittle, Helen C., Catherine Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Anthony Beech. 2014. "'Under his Spell': Victims' Perspectives of Being Groomed Online." *Social Science* 3(3): 409-410.

## Appendix

1R Researcher: What were you like when you met the groomer?

1I Interviewee: I had just turned 15 and was studying at school, obviously. It was a hard time for me as we just moved with my mum and new school did not start well for me.

2R: What do you mean by that?

2I: It was OK, in a sense that I made some friends, but I was stressed simply. I don't know. It is difficult to explain. We changed cities and I felt like something was lacking. My grades were OK too, but it was very difficult. I had to put twice as much effort to live up to my mums' expectations. I felt (short pause) empty, like there was no point in all the hard work that I was doing at school. Heh, that's what you call being a teenager, I guess.

3R: Did you try to fight the "emptiness"?

3I: Oh, I did! I was going out with a friend of mine. We did have a good time and were chatting. We still do, actually. The town was very small and I felt incredibly bored, there was a coffee shop, where we would usually hang out and a pizzeria. That is basically it, so you can imagine. It was boring, especially after living in a big city. We tried smoking ones. It was weird, so we stopped. But usually, we would spend time playing computer games, watching movies, the computer was our main source of entertainment.

4R: I suppose that is where you met your groomer?

4I: True, that's where we met.

5R: Could you tell me about it?

5I: Well, I will do my best. We were sitting at mine with that friend, who I mentioned. She proposed to go to some random chat room. You know these? Honestly, I did not expect anything good as I have heard that there

are perverts mainly, but it was something new! Not the perverts, but the chat with random person. So, we went there and after few chats we came across a man, who surprisingly did not ask for "sexting". So, the man started the conversation and he was good looking on the photo. I liked him, actually so did he. He said a few compliments and me with my friend thought it was so cute. We were 15, back then OK? Anyway, the man asked for my Skype, I was hesitating, but at the same time I enjoyed the communication so much, that I was willing to continue.

6R: What was the motivation to continue communication?

6I: It wasn't really a "motivation". He seemed very kind and educated, besides he was from Spain. I have always been attracted to different cultures and he just seemed like a window to a new world. I thought that since he is from abroad, he could be my pen friend, right? All these factors together convinced me to share my contacts and that's how it started. Trust me, from the bare beginning we have been talking non-stop!

7R: How intense the communication was, since you have mentioned 'non-stop'?

7I: I literally mean it. From the day one I have never put my phone further than one meter away. We were texting at first. Loads of messages every day. We were talking mainly about our culture differences, how our lives look like. Actually, he was mostly asking me about my life and that seemed very flattering. Like, he was interested in me and my boring routine, of course, I found it very pleasant. I have tried asking him about his life. He did share a bit about himself, he said that he was 23, was working part-time and studying. But! He went silent after. I started panicking. I thought I did something wrong or was pushing too hard to get any information from him. We have been talking for 2 or 3 days when that happened and as ridiculous as it sounds, I was afraid of losing him, as I already considered him a friend.

8R: I suppose the communication didn't end. How long have you been waiting for him to answer?

8I: He answered back one day later. He wrote extremely long text where he was explaining himself and honestly, he had quite a lot to say, since he lied to me. Everything that he told me about himself was a lie and he told me the truth. I don't know how honest he was, but he said that he was much older in reality, to be precise he was around 40, had a wife and was working in some office. I was shocked! Not really from the fact that he is an adult man, but from the fact that he lied, I saw no point in it. Though, he said that he was afraid that I wouldn't like to talk to him if I knew the truth and I found it reasonable and forgave him. Should have asked myself why an adult man pretended to be a 23-yo student, but I didn't! How genius of me! Anyway, from that point everything got back to normal and few weeks later I insisted on calling him. He asked if I was sure and actually, I was excited. We did not use video, but it was very comforting (?) to hear him talk. Soon he asked if I could turn on the video, coz he wanted see me "smiling" and ones again I fell for the flattery and my camera was always turned on and his "wasn't working", even though he promised to buy a new one, he never did.

9R: How did you feel about not seeing his face?

9I: It felt weird. On the one hand, it gave me freedom to imagine how does he look like and for some reason I really wanted him to look good. I felt attracted to his personality and I wanted to be just as attracted to his looks. I still feel bad about it, since he had a wife, but my 15-year old brain did not care about it. Still, I was sure that even if he hadn't looked attractive, he still was a nice person. Anyway, eventually he sent his photo and was ok

(laughs), but said that was an old photo and he had put on some weight since then. It was enough for me and my curiosity and I felt more comfortable, since I knew who I was talking to.

10R: What were the topics that you have talked about?

10I: It was something new for me. I could talk to him like I used to with my peers. Not in a bad sense. He was mature and I loved it. I liked his experience, the stories that he was telling me about his life and "youth". I shared everything with him. I shared my secrets, my fears, my troubles

and he has always been there for me 24/7. He has always been supportive and could make me laugh. Whenever I was telling about my hobbies and interests, he as if was sharing them too. "Oh, I like that band too!" "I loved that book!" "You have seen that movie, too?!" These were quite regular phrases from him that I was hearing/reading very often. I loved that we shared so many things in common and though that he really was my... Soulmate. I felt very confused, because somehow it felt wrong that I was talking to a grown man and shared every part of my life with him, but he always made me feel ok with it, and was saying that what we share is very special. But, here comes the big

"BUT". We were talking for at least 4 hours daily, constantly texting and of course it effected my life. I was sleepy quite often because we would talk a lot at night, I couldn't focus at school and soon one of teachers told about that to my mum. She was furious. She didn't mind me talking to a 40-yo man, but what she did mind is that he took over my life. It got to the point that she took my phone for a day. It was just one day, you understand, but for me it was a tragedy. I realized that I need him in my life, that without him it is not the same. The next day I felt so happy and relieved when I got the phone back.

11R: May I ask you how did you tell your mum about your new friend?

11I: Sure. My mother noticed that I was spending more time with my cellphone and of course she wanted to know what was going on. I asked him if I could tell my mum. He was very encouraging and said that I should have done it a long time ago. That was definitely a confidence boost and I told mum everything about him, well, at least what I knew about him. She just told me to be careful, but did not think that it was wrong, since I seemed happier.

12R: Even though you felt tired from the lack of sleep, you felt happy. Do you think he made you feel that or that was just the fact of communication?

12I: Looking back now... (Sighs) It's a complicated question! He made me feel understood. I hope, it makes sense. He was always there for me, always in my phone. I was wishing that we would live in the same city. He made

me feel confident, because he was complimenting me, how smart I was, how beautiful I was, that I had a beautiful smile. Every day I had been hearing that I am gorgeous. And it's difficult to say, but after half a year (pause) he had changed our relationship.

13R: How did he change it?

13I: For what it's worth, I wish he never did that. I was on a school trip and as usual I was texting him and he said, quote: "I have to confess you. It may change the way you see me." I was intrigued and scared, but agreed to call him when I would get a moment alone. He sounded nervous but right after saying "Hello", he said "I love you." I was speechless! What would be the right words? I hang the call. It took me a few hours and my ill brain decided that I loved him too. Maybe I was afraid of losing a friend like that, but I felt addicted to him. I was scared, because of the age difference and he had a wife, but I texted him back saying that I loved him too. I don't think that was love. I don't think that he ever loved me, but you know what is strange? He spent so much time talking to me. Would a sane person spend that much time on someone you don't love? That relationship wasn't normal. It was a mistake.

14R: I know it is difficult, but how did your romantic relationship look like?

14I: I can't say it was much difference at the beginning. We would still talk a lot, but we would also exchange "I love you"s quite often. It felt wrong and of course we had to keep it secret. It is not something you tell your mum. I was still insecure about this whole thing, but a long story short, he made me feel at ease with this new form of relationship. I don't know how he did that, but I really felt like I was falling in love with him. He never pushed me, well, not at least directly, but on my 16th birthday I decided that I am grown up enough and sent him a photo of myself, in underwear only. I hate myself for doing that. Back then it felt awesome, like "Hey, I am 16 and I have an adult boyfriend." That is so stupid, but yeah, it wasn't him who asked for it. It was me who sent it.

15R: What was his reaction? Did it have any consequence?

15I: His reaction was weird, to say the least. He called me immediately and started saying how beautiful I was, how much I grew up and that he wished that

he could be in the same room with me at that moment. Still, I loved it that he liked the photo. I loved hearing his compliments. Maybe it would be a normal situation, but I was 16! What was I thinking? Anyway, that's how it kept on going from that moment. He was asking "to share myself" with him and I felt like I had to. Not because he was forcing me, but because he had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him. Things were getting heated he was asking for more and I was ready to send him the photos... It got to the point that it felt like routine. I would get up, get ready, send nudes and go to school, same in the evening. Still, it was exciting. I had to hide that part of me from everyone but him. He created that world of ours and it felt so great.

16R: How long did it last? What was the reason that it stopped?

16I: After a few months he started asking for videos. You know, the ones that look like porn. I wasn't ready, but he wouldn't listen. He would get aggressive and lash out, then he would say that he was sorry and didn't mean to, but that was a vicious circle. I couldn't do that. He really changed a lot from caring to yelling. I couldn't recognize him anymore and started thinking about leaving him. That is what I did. I wrote him a long message, explained how I felt and that he had changed, that he started scarring me. (pause) We had been arguing for an hour. He wouldn't let me go, he was saying that he loved me, that I didn't understand, that what we had was love and all that. It hurt me a lot. I don't understand why it was so hard breaking up, even though I wanted to, there was a part of me who was saying that I had to be with him. He just got so deep in my head. Somehow, I got away; the last thing he said that I would have to keep on living in my "rotten" world all alone. Huh, whose world was rotten?

17R: I am very sorry that you had this experience in your life. Nevertheless, I am very grateful for this interview. Mind if I ask the last question?

17I: Thanks, but really, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. Shoot your question! We have already got this far.

18R: Thank you. My question is how do you feel now about it?

18I: It's been years since it ended. It hurts, you know. It felt so real, as if it was love, but I know that it wasn't. He was so genuine, but I swear, I have no idea if there was a single word of truths in his words! He was so kind for only one purpose. I wish, I could turn back in time. It was nothing like the first love that teens are dreaming about. I regret giving so much of myself. The worst is that I know now that there are so many girls and boys are suffering from this. I know and I can do nothing, but talk to you. It is better now, but back then I had to deal with it myself, I couldn't tell my friends and my mum. I just felt so ashamed and dirty. How could I tell them about it? I regret that because of him I lost so much time that I could spend with my friends and family. I lost that time and can't take it back. I just hope that they will never find out. Can you imagine how they will see me? I am afraid that one day he may be back in my life. Still, it is getting better.

R: Trust me, your name will not be revealed. You already did a lot. At least, you helped this research, which means that the more people are aware of it, the safer children will be.



# Representations of Polish Migrants in British Media from the Perspective of “Moral Panic” Theory

Alicja Portas

University of Opole

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to present the prevalent media representations of the Polish immigrants to the UK. Since the EU Accession on May 8, 2004, conservative British media adopted a relatively negative attitude towards the new European migrants, in particular the Poles. This study aims to verify and nuance this assumption. It reviews the theories applicable to anti-Polish moral panic, stereotyped portrayals of Eastern Europeans and the social impacts of media narratives. The first case study offers an analysis of the documentary *The Poles are Coming!* directed by Tim Samuels in order to explore stereotypes and devices of (mis)representation employed. The second case study traces the evolution of representations of Poles in Britain in selected texts from the British newspaper *The Guardian*. A content analysis is combined with a discourse analysis of the articles to investigate to what extent negative framing and labelling are employed in the British media coverage of the migrants.

**Key words:** Stereotypes, moral panic, Polish migrant, UK, British media, representation

## 1. Introduction

It was not until May 2004 that the United Kingdom experienced a large inflow of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, the majority of whom were Poles (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015). According to the British Office of National Statistics, since 2007 Poles have been the biggest migrant group from the EU, with estimated 788 thousand residents in 2016 (Office of National Statistics 2017).

During that time the most widely circulated conservative press narratives constructed a prejudiced representation of Poles and fomented negative attitudes towards Eastern European migrants often portraying them as a burden to society and unfit for functioning among the British (Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska 2017). Needless to say, at that time some anti-Polish stereotypes were formed, with single incidents involving Poles feeding powerful slogans and images. This functioned as a dialectical move which represented Polish labour migrants as a threat to the individual rights of British citizens in the context managing their employment insecurities (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015). The stereotype of a Pole with low education, poor English-language skills, difficulty in assimilating, and unsophisticated manners proving their low cultural capital was disseminated, even if it was only partly true,<sup>6</sup> and Poles stood out to the British among other Eastern Europeans. This contributed to Pole's social stigmatization and served the moral panic ideology that reproduced the harshest stereotypes of Polish migrants as job-stealers and benefit-tourists (Spiegelman 2013).

Although migration has been historically an ever-existing phenomenon in Britain, with migrants' motivations commonly alike, the BBC documentary *The Poles are Coming!* directed by Tim Samuels was aimed at elucidating the A8 wave of immigration and its consequences to various groups involved. It portrays the consequences of the large influx of Poles to such provincial towns as Peterborough and the fates of individual migrant families. However, this study demonstrates that the light it sheds on the issue is different from the accepted media narrations at the time, as the infotainment approach employed may seek out to nuance the image of migration.

Equally important is the role of the press, since it has the potential to guide people's judgments and opinions on many social issues (Wilk 2017) and this study will explore whether "othering" and negative stereotypes have been reproduced in progressive and liberal outlets. According to Fomina and Frelak (2008), the representations of Polish migrants have impacted the economic, cultural and political views offered in the British press, whose criticisms were not entirely directed against Poles but, as appears in most cases, against the British government. One could claim that these possibly influenced the results

---

<sup>6</sup> The complex relation between the economy and immigration is discussed in many studies, including this recent report from London School of Economics: <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/brexit05.pdf>.

of the Brexit referendum, which is treated as a critical moment that can be used to decide how to organize data for the analysis of press articles in the present study.

Some of the key analytic categories and conceptual frameworks adopted in this project are “stereotype,” “moral panic,” and “media narrative.” “Stereotyping” is understood as forging an overgeneralized and fixed idea regarding other ethnic groups, which does not correspond to factual data (Stangor 2000). The term “moral panic” was first introduced by Stanley Cohen in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972). The term expresses the idea that certain representations of current events by the media may lead to the development of biased opinions within the society, including fears regarding the matter of concern and societal prejudice. The term “media narrative” is understood as the media creating and propagating their own storyline through which subsequent events are filtered and interpreted (Richardson 2007). These concepts are used to account for the setup of (relatively stable) media representations of migrants, including Poles, against which new claims and statements are being made.

Given these points, this article analyses a sample of twelve newspaper articles published on the webpage of *The Guardian* ranging on a time scale of pre- and post-Brexit referendum (see Appendix 1). As Fomina and Frelak (2008) note, *The Guardian* has socio-democratic and liberal credentials and, although it has a limited circulation of 132,793 copies per day (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2019), it is considered a quality newspaper and an influential daily that is popular amongst the intellectual elite. A content analysis is carried out to trace the extent to which there have been changes in the content of articles regarding the Polish and Eastern European migrants in the time range. To investigate further and to compare the findings, a narrative analysis is undertaken to establish if there is a common, pre-arranged storyline in the articles that is aligned with the reoccurring stereotypes in which Polish migrants in the UK continue to be represented in the British media.

## 2. Moral Panic in the UK after A8

Known within the European Union as A8 (EU enlargement by the following new member states: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary), the accession of eight Central and Eastern European

countries was finalised on May 1, 2004. Given its flexible labour market rules, the United Kingdom experienced a large inflow of migrants from A8 countries of whom the majority were Poles (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015). With a steady growth of Polish migrants, the UK had implemented a “limited registration scheme” for the migrant labourers, which showed that the predominant number of A8 migrants were Poles (66 per cent) who registered as employed in low paid jobs (Office of National Statistics 2017). Yet the numbers of those who did not register in the scheme or were self-employed are unknown and it was only estimated that the figures were equivalently high. As is visible in Figure 1, the percentage of EU members being in employment is relatively higher than inborn British citizens.

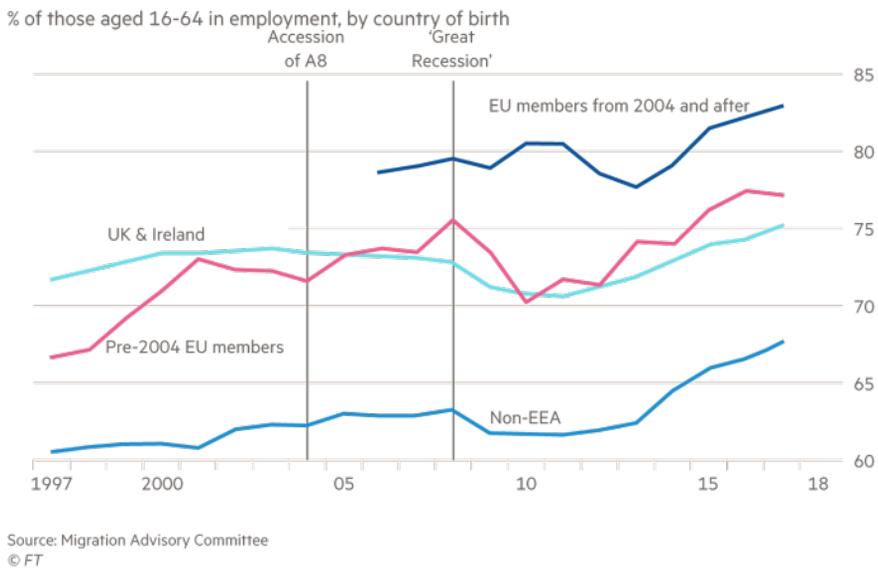


Figure 3: Employment in the UK by percentage of those aged 16-64, by country of birth. Migration Advisory Committee online.

The unexpectedly high numbers were thought of as abnormal and of influence to the labour market, which also exposed British organisations' lack of preparation and readiness to cope with economic migrants from Poland. Crisis management was the first action undertaken in response to the case. For example, trade unions faced many new demands while encountering Polish labourers, for example to help negotiate between groups of employees and potential employers. Trade

unions attempted to supply the Polish workers with information in Polish; however, this was not sufficient because the unions were constrained by the shortage of resources to fit “the needs of newly emerging communities” (Chan, Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2013, 154). These critical events had very quickly been addressed by the British National Party and UK Independence Party which repeatedly demanded that the British Government at the time ‘restore proper control’ over housing policy and immigration. The crisis enabled Eurosceptic parties to build political capital and to stir further controversy around migration, particularly from Eastern Europe. This was a breeding ground for anxieties and insecurities in the domestic labour force, which gave rise to moral panic.

With British media exploiting the controversy around this new huge wave of migration, certain anti-Polish moral panic was fomented. For example, pictures in British tabloids functioned as a dialectical move which represented the Polish labour migrant, or rather the stereotype thereof, as an economic and social threat, for example as job-stealers or as benefit tourists (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015). They were many and thus less integrated into the British society, which, as a result, contributed to their social marginalisation and served the moral panic ideology that added to the stereotypical images of Polish migrants. The moral panic arose from the assumption that the Polish labourers had such a significant impact on the job market that they impacted job opportunities for British citizens and exploited the job market to the point where British workers had little influence on their pre-existing employment instability (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015).

The British public, even if it does not have any contact with the issue of immigration, draws their information from the mass media, which are the primary source of news on societal problems and deviance (Cohen 2002). In his explanation of media panic, Cohen states:

The media appear in any or all of three roles in moral panic dramas: (i) Setting the agenda – selecting those deviant or socially problematic events deemed as newsworthy, then using finer filters to select which of these events are candidates for moral panic; (ii) Transmitting the images – transmitting the claims of claim-makers, by sharpening up or dumbing down the rhetoric of moral panics; or (iii) Breaking the silence, making the claim (29–30).

As Cohen (2002) states, media can take on a role that results in generating and fuelling moral panics. To begin with, an agenda has to be set, which means that an occurring problem, situation or social complications are considered to be newsworthy and selective filters are applied to single out cases that fit the moral panic scenario. Correspondingly, media outlets then produce an allegation towards the case of concern and transmit it to the public. With this understanding of media's application of filters through which they transmit the current events, the moral panic functions "to reassert the dominance of an established value system, provide ontological security at a time of social anxiety, and target those who are considered folk-devils as an external threat" (Chan et al. 2013, 151).

On the condition that media capitalise on this fear, the moral panic, and the negative stereotypes of the other, will be inevitably implemented in the prevalent, agenda-setting narratives. However, it is important to realise that over the years the British government has legitimised public antipathy towards Eastern Europeans and adopted a way of public expression that aligns with that of the press. Moreover, pre-established societal assumptions that relatively high "numbers of welfare claims were bogus or fraudulent" were given the official approval of the British government with their official confirmation of requirement of institutional practices, laws and administrative procedures that would regulate such cases (Cohen 2002, 21).

### 3. Stereotyping of Polish Migrants

Fitzgerald and Smoczynski (2015) even contend that it was mass media's contribution that had driven the circulation of subjective negative representations of a Polish migrant labourer fuelled by "moral panic ideology [...] in the form of tabloid rumours, urban legends, and political agitation" (Chan et al. 2013, 152). Moreover, Conboy (2006) observes that the press and media not only influence the rapid growth of significance of the issue of migration but also shape the public attitudes and opinions in the UK towards it by the manner of negative framing.

With the British press narratives and othering of A8 migrants (Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska 2017), a common stereotype regarding Polish workers had been formed, targeting them as a threat to employment opportunities and security of native citizens. However, a folk-devil classification of Poles as job-

stealers was contradictory to the fact that they are, as any EU citizens, eligible by law to enter the British job market. This narrative had called for what Fitzgerald and Smoczynski (2015, 348) call a “multi-mediated effort”, which, by applying the folk-devil concept, exaggerated their “otherness.” Thus, the negative targeting of “job-stealing” Poles was not concealed the lack of organisational structures within a late capitalist society that ought to deal with such events, but also a provided a “narrative justification of the failure of individual responsibility for managing employment insecurities” (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015, 348).

While the British newspapers were dedicating a considerable amount of negative coverage to the arrival of A8 migrants, Bulgaria’s and Romania’s entry into the European Union (A2) was guaranteed in 2007. Still, Poland remained the largest of the ten new EU members, and special attention was devoted to it (Fomina and Frelak 2008, 13). Henceforth, the moral panic, which was mainly driven by the concerns of “flood of migrants” within the media, also had an impact on the British government by affecting its decisions towards certain social policies. In late 2006 the government promised restrictions of the A2 countries labour migration and in 2013 David Cameron, the British Prime Minister at the time, campaigned with an initiative to cut certain types of social benefits, including child benefit, to job-seeking migrants arriving from Eastern Europe.

Anti-Polish migrant moral panic was to rise soon after the financial crisis in 2008. British authorities, with Prime Minister David Cameron at the forefront, used the depiction of Polish migrants as “abusers of the welfare state” (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015, 344). Rzepnikowska (2019, 5) pointed at Cameron’s BBC One interview for *Andrew Marr Show* from January 2014 in which she observed him singling out “Polish migrants in the discourse about welfare benefits abuse.” In November 2014 the Prime Minister delivered his speech in Staffordshire<sup>7</sup> in which he brought up figures related to migrants that could not be verified in the UK’s official statistics (Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser 2017).

The attractiveness of British welfare benefits and services being the main reason behind EU migration was another prevailing mould into which the UK political discourse was shaped (Rzepnikowska 2019; Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser

---

<sup>7</sup> Cameron, D. (2014) JCB Staffordshire: Prime Minister’s speech. Delivered at JCB Staffordshire, 28 November 2014. Transcript of the speech as delivered. Available at: <http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/jcb-staffordshire-prime-ministers-speech>. Accessed May 7, 2019.

2017). The moral panic resulted in the advancement of political tensions and the concurrent spreading of negative perceptions of uncontrolled European immigration. What also followed in 2014 was the UK Independence Party's (UKIP) controversial campaign narrative in which infamous posters with "26 million people in Europe are looking for work, and whose jobs are they after?" slogan were distributed (Rzepnikowska 2019, 5). The media took on a predominant negative treatment of particularly Polish migrants "to the extent of being alarmist, seeking to stir popular sentiment into something of a panic surrounding the economic impact [...] of these new arrivals" (Spigelman 2013, 98; see also Simionescu 2018).

However, statistics contradict a common misconception throughout the British political and news arena that the benefits and welfare services are the principal magnet for EU migrants who are only interested in acquiring them without making an effort in the labour market. The reason above all others for EU citizens to move is work. For example, locally, the trade unions recognised the worth in Polish labourers' potential skills and their ability to fill the manual workforce gap in British public services, construction occupations, transport sectors or hospitality as well as their willingness to work in low-paying jobs (Fitzgerald and Smoczynski 2015). Yet with the presence of Poles in the UK becoming more noticeable in numbers and constituting "a larger and potentially more problematized group, they have become more prominent in a racialized visual schema" (Rzepnikowska 2019, 4).

In 2016 Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser conducted a research project among a narrow group of EU migrants who resided in Manchester and Oxfordshire. The interviews had been taken prior to the referendum on Britain's exit from the EU. Participants pointed out that they "did not investigate rights to welfare benefits" (4) and "did not come to the UK expressly to access welfare rights" (8) as their only aim was to work and many had not had the idea whether they are determined for a long-term stay. Most of the interviewees firmly discarded the stereotype of benefit tourists that had been attached to incoming EU migrants and declared their contribution to the labour market and their "cultural conditioning of self-reliance" (4). On the other hand, some of the participants stated that they had lacked the time to further investigate possible entitlements, as they had as short time as three weeks of notice before a job offer to move to UK (Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser 2017).

In conclusion, over the years 2004-2016 the British discourse concerning migrant Poles arriving to UK became adverse and unfavourable of their position

as labourers particularly after the economic crisis of 2008 (Rzepnikowska 2019). As Rzepnikowska (2019, 6) notes, at the very beginning of Polish UK arrivals, the new migrants were “perceived as a ‘desirable’ migrant group and labelled as ‘invisible’ due to their whiteness.” However, subsequently after the 2008 economic crisis and leading up to the Brexit referendum, the viewpoint has tilted towards the negative perception of Eastern Europeans that take work opportunities and placements from the nationals and capitalise on British welfare and social services. Prior to the EU referendum, the media devoted three times more coverage to immigration, its effects on British economy and welfare state. The Eastern European migrant had thus acquired media’s depiction of “an economic threat responsible for society’s malaise: job shortages, unemployment and the strain on social services” (Rzepnikowska 2019, 6). Significantly, the most targeted minority by these negative media narratives were the Polish.

### 3.1. Case Study One: A Narrative Analysis of *The Poles are Coming!*

BBC’s documentary *The Poles are Coming!* directed in 2008 by an award winning English journalist Timothy Samuels (who comes from an immigrant family himself) portrays the very beginnings and the impact of the large migration influx of Poles into the UK. However, the light it sheds on the issue is relatively different from the existing, mostly negative, media narratives at the time. The infotainment convention, in which the whole documentary is kept, may not only be questioning the image of migration’s negative influence, but also exposing some of the stereotypes on which the British moral panic towards the Eastern Europeans was grounded.

The documentary’s pre-opening sequence delivers some scenes of a Polish shop, a poster of a Polish club event for Poles, Polish food items in a shop and a man sitting outdoors with “Polska” (Poland) on the back of his jumper. The scenes are accompanied by British trumpet music, while Tim Samuels narrates “You don’t have to go far these days to find a little slice of Poland or Eastern Europe in your town” (00.02). As the orchestral music takes on a dramatic note and Samuels narrates “but for some in Peterborough it’s all too much” (00.09), the scenes develop to a contrasting image of crowded General Practice doctor clinic and school, an upset British man who describes the area as “completely and utterly swamped” (00.14) and the town’s councillor who states that they have had enough of it [immigration] (00.22).

This sequence ends with a frame showing a firefighter training taken only by a single woman, while Samuels asks “Back in Poland, are there any man left?” (00.26). Through this introduction, it is possible to conclude that a large number of Eastern Europeans, particularly Polish migrants, are a burden on the local communities in the UK, while the overdramatised ending question implies that nearly all Polish males have migrated out of their country.



Figure 4: Title sequence, *BBC documentary The Poles are Coming!*

After the title sequence, an archive video from Ellis Island is shown with the narrator making the comparison between Ellis Island in the previous century and Victoria Coach Station in this one. On the screen a coach reaches the station, where Samuels engages a few Polish who are getting off. As he greets them, the Poles seem to misunderstand “Welcome to England,” and reply “No, from Poland.” Another man, when asked why he had come to England confidently replies, “to do work.” The scene captures the migrants as barely able to speak the language of the country, an impression that is based only on the case of two examples. The parallel to Ellis Island may indicate a massive wave of thousands of astute migrants. The reason behind exaggerating the scale of migration may be linked to the general notion of moral panic sweeping through the media and political discourse at the time.

To set up the context for the documentary, a map of Eastern and Western Europe divided by the Iron Curtain is shown and the narrator explains that twenty years after communism collapsed, the European Union had decided to expand and allowed post-Soviet countries to join. Flag banners of Sweden, Ireland and UK represent the only three countries that allowed immediate work permits to the newly accepted countries. Then, statistics appear to state that 800,000 people from Eastern Europe had entered the UK alone, and most of them, nearly 500,000 were migrants from Poland. This animation-based representation of historical facts categorises the new EU countries as part of the Soviet bloc, and certainly reinforces the *border* between the Eastern and Western Europe. Common associations assigned to the West revolve around its prosperity, progress, freedom and democracy. In contrast, Eastern Europe is assigned negative values “such as underdevelopment, poverty and the lack of democracy” (Wilk 2010, 339). What is more, the classification of Poland as a post-communist country fortifies the unfavourable concept of it being an “other,” a part of Europe that tends to be discredited by the media discourse with references to communism, low standards of living and crime.

The documentary revolves around two cities, Peterborough in the UK and Gdańsk in Poland, which may be a strategical narrative setting for contrast. The narrator describes Peterborough as the first city in the world that was fully designed in the 1960s by a computer including its housing and residential buildings. It is also suggested that the computer design had not taken into consideration the extra fifteen thousand new migrants from Eastern Europe moving into the city in 2004. Samuels is seen as he takes a walk down Peterborough’s Linking Road, which apparently is the area most transformed by incoming waves of immigrants. Sentimental black and white footage is shown presenting Peterborough as a calm, typically British market town. In contrast, the next scene is of Samuels passing by the road and its foreign food stores accenting that now the area is “a little slice of the world, with the strongly Polish flavour” (5.14). These comparisons of old and new could also suggest that the city lost its British flavour due to the migrants.

The next scenes present occupations which migrants take, showing people picking vegetables in a farm field as well as doing factory, carpentry and building work. The narrator states that all this work had contributed to the fastest growth of British local economies. A stonemasonry factory is shown, where most of the labourers are Lithuanians, some who had worked there for over three years. While proceeding to an interview with the owner of the Stamford

Stone, who stresses Lithuanians' great work ethic and impact, a Soviet-era choir music is played in the background to the accompanying images of men working in the factory. Indeed, if the Lithuanians packed up and left, the business would be in serious trouble and in danger of closing down. The scene ends with a sarcastic remark from Samuels: "extra work, more hours, no tea breaks? What was this way of working? Better call the union." This motif and the connotative ambiguity of the word "union" could be treated as a device with the music choice, which intentionally connects Lithuanians to the Soviet Union. Behind this image and sound manipulation lays a suggestion that the good work ethic and reliability of Eastern Europeans perhaps comes from a regime.

Another problem occurring in Peterborough is the overcrowding of local General Practice doctor surgery. It is explained that only within the span of six months the GP had to deal with a massive influx of over 10,000 Eastern European patients. The GP doctor Jitendra Modha identifies two main issues facing the clinic: the language barrier and the lack of funds to hire language interpreters, which necessitates the surgeons to rely on language service call lines, which is too time consuming and expensive.

The next part of the documentary captures a Polish family of four and shows their home, focusing on their daily actions such as brewing tea, gathering at a table, eating breakfast together. The camera also zooms in on a picture of Jesus hanging on a wall of their flat. The narrator mentions that the family share one room in the flat, whilst three other Polish, strangers to the family, live in other rooms. This brief introduction to a Polish migrant family brings to mind a representation of an average family, regardless of their national origin. Tea brewing being a part of British culture could be shown as a link between the migrants and culture they are becoming a part of. The scene showing the children learning English could also be thought of the migrants' willingness to adapt to the local society. The religious motif may seek to represent the family as rooted in Christian values, which brings an association with good will or even connection to the common Christian roots of the UK and Poland, hence showcasing another connection between the cultures. However, the education motif may suggest that British schools had turned into migrant schools, and give a sense of "an overtaking" of all school institutions by newcomers.

A few scenes later, Samuels goes to visit a local neighbourhood watch formed by a residents' group who meet up at the New England Club and Institute in Peterborough. The narrator comments that "here you can meet some pretty angry residents" (22.10). The members speak up about the issues of their concern.

One states that they "are not anti-immigration, but anti-the-amount-of-immigration" (22.29) and refers to the area as "utterly swamped by foreign migration" (22.30). They present a map of Peterborough with most of the city highlighted in white to indicate where it is most saturated with newly arrived migrants, and all group members agree that there are too many migrants. It may be assumed that the group of five residents are the only members of the anti-immigration movement in the city. The main issues they address are the number of migrants simply living and to a certain extent overcrowding the city, which interferes with the British community. In addition, the common benefit-tourist migrant stereotype can be derived from one of the resident's response to the idea of hard-working Poles. The phrase "utterly swamped" in regard to foreigners residing in the area could be identified as water and natural disaster language, which reinforces the negative perception of migrants.

The following part of the documentary is set in Poland, with the narrator beginning with a statement: "a thousand miles away, on the other side of Europe it is not such a bed of roses either, just different" (24.19). A Polish telephone book is opened on the plumber and services section and the audio of a man calling plumber companies can be heard. He receives information from all the companies that there are no plumbers available, as they all left. However, this is only a staged scene for the entertainment of the viewer. As the view changes to the streets of Gdańsk, showing the architecture and main town square, Samuels says that "here in Gdańsk city something is missing" (25.08). He then appears under the gates of Gdańsk's shipyard and brings up information about the free trade union *Solidarność*. Moving to the city again, with sentimental violin music in the background, the narrator explains that the main problem in the city is the number of men that had left the country, resulting in women having to fill in the shortages. The shots capture only women walking around the city and the next frame focuses on firefighter training, where also only women are being trained, all aged between 17 and 25. As Samuels interviews them, they explain that most of the young men in the area had left to work abroad in Western Europe. A window-making factory is shown, where women state the same reasons for taking up such work. The scene showing no men around the city may have been manipulated into achieving an exaggerated and untrue image of the depleted local Polish communities, which is a contrast brought to the overcrowded Peterborough.

The third key part of the documentary starts with a short description of a Polish man, Mariusz, who was content with his job as a security guard

in Poland; however, he decided to leave it to work in Peterborough, where his sister lives. Samuels is accompanying him from Poland on his 30-hour land journey to the UK. As they are welcomed in the sister's house, Samuels finds out that she had left her nursing job in Poland and took a cleaner's job in a restaurant to earn more money to provide for her daughters. This part of the documentary presents how easy it is for a newly arrived EU citizen from Poland to get a job and to move, which is motivated by higher wages, even if it means for the migrant to downgrade from a position they had back home.

The fourth part of the documentary opens up with the question "But what about the great British youth? Are they really unwilling to do this kind of work?" (44.34). The narrator explains that the rise of youth unemployment has been another major issue around Peterborough. Samuels then interviews young men near a Job Centre and asks them about the reasons behind their unemployment. The common answer is that cheap labour from Eastern Europe had taken over the job market, and when applying for a job with approximately two hundred people they do not stand a chance. One Englishman blames all the foreigners for taking the jobs, as he could not get a job for over twelve months. Another says "All the foreigners, they've taken all our jobs, don't they. They work for, like, 50p per hour don't they. So, us English people, we ain't gonna get a job, are they. We work, we want 7 pounds per hour, and they will work for 2 pounds per hour" (45.09). When Samuels asks the third English man how desperate he is to find a job, he replies "Pretty desperate" (45.25). As Samuels suggests going vegetable picking at a farm the next day, he shakes his head and rejects the idea. Samuels then tells them about the large number of jobs on farms that need workers and pay a minimum wage of 7 pounds per hour. The English are not willing to take it up, as they say "that's where all the Poles and Czechs are" (45.45). Thus, there is also a hint of racist prejudice as the young Englishmen show aversion to the idea of working alongside other Europeans. The theme of othering is present, as the English men put blame on the other (Allen 2008). The view of Eastern Europeans working for below a minimum wage is strongly reinforced in the British youths' view. This can be linked to the previous scenes where a job recruitment officer states that the British do not work as the benefits they receive are enough to live on. This image contradicts the commonly expressed idea throughout the media that the typical Eastern European migrant arrives to the UK with an only interest to use the welfare system and to acquire benefits instead of working.

The final part of the documentary revolves around a small campaign which Samuels encourages the Chairman of the City Council of Gdańsk Bogdan Oleszek to stage. With emotional Polish leaflets they go to Peterborough to encourage Poles to return. Before they depart, they also visit Lech Wałęsa, who is named by the narrator the “possible, one last trump card, the most famous Pole alive.” During the interview Wałęsa is sceptical of the idea of encouraging Poles to come back. Nevertheless, Oleszek delivers an emotional speech at the local Polish church in Peterborough after a service in which he presents Poland as a developing country, which is worth coming back to. The gathered congregation of Poles is, however, not convinced and lists reasons for not returning: low wages, no changes for the better, and the lack of opportunities back home. Out of the whole group, only one person raised their hand when Samuels asked who is willing to return home. This develops the idea that Poles are not willing to return to Poland because of its poor economy and workforce system and are going to reside in the UK permanently.

The final scene shows separate shots of the Poles who are content staying in Peterborough for good, the local residents who are still filing complaints to the local council regarding the migration influx, and a homeless Czech who is preparing to sleep in a local park, determined to stay in the UK regardless of his situation. The documentary thus leaves us with a sense of wonder and an unanswered question whether there are more Europeans who have come and never acquired their dream of British prosperity. As Allen (2008) comments the destitute Czech can be perceived as a signal or warning to those who are yet to arrive to the British Isles that not everyone succeeds.

Altogether, the documentary may leave the viewer with a realisation that the life of migrants is not as easy as is presented in the common media narratives on benefit tourism. Rather than living on benefits, migrants have to endure hard work and long hours to earn their living and have some savings. The newspaper’s response to *The Poles are Coming!* appeared in *The Guardian* after the movie premiere (Wollaston 2008). It was kept in the same infotainment-infused tone and approached the topic of Eastern European migration as a story that has been retold. However, Wollaston (2008) highlighted an important factor, which is that British migration opens a gap for new incomers to the UK. The documentary along with its reviews in the media began a discussion and granted insight into the possibility of an unnecessary moral panic that was widespread in Britain at the time. Yet, at the same time, it has shown that not only Poles, but also many other nationalities are lumped

together and occasionally vilified by the local communities that feel threatened, themselves being also multicultural and fragmented.

#### 4. Analytic Categories to Study Stereotyping through Content and Discourse Analysis

To further examine migrant representations, some content and discourse analytical studies were applied to examine processes of group labelling and targeting (cf. Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska 2017). These studies, such as the thematic report on *Migrants and Media Newsmaking Practices* (Bennett et al. 2011, 11), often concluded that “the portrayal of specific groups and group characteristics is stereotypical and/or negative focusing on roles of the victim or the threat prevails.” The dominating narrative in the news coverage of migrant-related *topics* is often paired with the theme of “terrorism and crime” and, as discourse analytical studies emphasize, the re-occurring *linguistic* tactics used by journalists to portray migrants negatively (Bennett et al. 2011). Hart (2010) has identified the *topoi*, that is “argumentation strategies,” that are employed to establish the migrant image as “an external danger’ and associate them with “disadvantage, burden, finance, displacement, exploitation, crime and disease” (144).

Correspondingly, more studies in the area have confirmed that the use of *metaphors*, in particular those related to water, strengthen the negative depiction of immigrants (RSCAS 2011). As described by Charteris-Black (2006, 13), the negative portrayal of migrants is attained through “natural disasters” theme by use of water related figurative descriptions such as “floods, torrents, tidal waves.” Wilk (2017) specifies that strategic language use is present in the media discourse in *labelling and predication*. Pre-scripted representations of people’s various experiences are intertwined with known cognitive patterns in the newspaper articles to be communicated to the masses.

Given these points, it is also important to take into consideration the example of the coined term “Eurocepticism” that first appeared in the UK in the 1980s (Spiering 2004). According to Spiering (2004), the *frame* of Eurocepticism was formed in the UK partially as a result of the British tradition of othering themselves from the rest of Europe. The naturalization of the idea of the country and its people are different to Europeans is therefore visible in the press and political arena with respect to EU migration. As Spielgman (2013) states,

the visible othering of the Europeans, in comparison to the British nation, gives priority to an accusatory approach employed by the press and media. This in result can “reinforce the invader concept and vilify immigrants” (Spielgman 2013, 99).

#### 4.1. Case Study Two: The Content and Discourse Analysis of *The Guardian*

*The Guardian*, a quality British compact newspaper, is a daily known for its popularity among the elites (Fomina and Frelak 2008). Although its circulation is limited to 132,793 copies per day, as reported by Audit Bureau of Circulations (2019), its online readership reaches over 2.5 million readers (Newsworks 2019). Owned by the Guardian News and Media, *The Guardian* stands for liberal and socio-democratic values and usually takes a pro-European stance (Wilk 2010). The coverage of Polish migrants alongside other Europeans in the online articles of *The Guardian* should have a potential to question stereotypes and obliterate the moral panic. The scope of selected articles includes those published between March 2008 and January 2019. In a purposeful sampling procedure, 10 articles (see appendix 1) were chosen from a selection of search results on immigration from the online section *Europe news* and *Opinion*, which in their headline had the following terms: “Poles,” “Polish immigration,” “Polish migrants,” “Polish,” “Eastern Europeans” and were representative of various periods and opinions. It is important to note that, although *The Guardian* regularly covers immigration issues and analyses them in the context of social and economic policy, it relatively rarely singles out one nationality as a headlined item.

The first article marks the beginning of a discussion that followed after the BBC documentary directed by Tim Samuels *The Poles are Coming!* was first aired. The article (1) in its title “The Poles have come” strongly alludes to the documentary title. It is uploaded to the section *Opinion* and appeared on the same day that Wollaston’s (2008) documentary review was published. The article points at the perfect timing of the documentary’s appearance in the media as well as its unintentional answer to the unnecessary political proposals from the British government. The author opines that the government is not necessarily doing anything to improve the British economy and that “overstretched local services and the frustrations they create are threatening Britain’s goodwill towards the cheap labour” (Taylor 2008). This reinforces

the idea that the Polish are cheap labourers and are becoming a burden to the British society due to the sheer number of unassimilated communities. In the article, a quote from the documentary has been intentionally changed, and instead of the term “Eastern Europeans,” the journalist put “the whites.” This is possibly an attempt to racially assimilate the migrants, yet at the same time the term “Eastern Europeans” appears three times in the article, which potentially seeks to stigmatize Poles by representing them as coming from “the other” Europe.

The next article (2) titled “Polish immigration to the UK: wild claims don’t add up” seems to have the purpose of clearing the moral panic. It was published in 2010 and, as its headline indicates, it questions the widely reproduced negative portrayal of the Polish migrants, which do not align with the statistics the article quotes. The article argues that, due to the large numbers of British citizens who work outside the UK, there is a space created for migrant workers from the EU. However, it stresses that Eastern Europeans are able to work harder in certain sectors than the British nationals. This representation is conjoined with the statement that the migrants arrive to Britain via “cheap air routes such as Ryanair” (Travis 2010). This may be an indication of the poorer, less privileged status of the arriving European migrants from “new ex-communist states.” This brief introduction can leave the reader with the false impression that only due to A8, the countries are freed of their communist associations.

Later in 2010, an article which triggered over 400 responses in the comments area came up with a more pessimistic approach. The article written by Ed Balls, a Labour MP, “We were wrong to allow so many Eastern Europeans into Britain” (3) debates whether there are sufficient restrictions that would prevent unskilled workers entering the UK. The typical pro-European perspective of *The Guardian* is not noticeable, as the author criticizes EU regulations and plans. Addressing the economic risks posed by certain EU actions, the statement “large countries in Europe [are] forcing smaller countries to implement spending cuts” (Balls 2010) uses figurative language and implies a difference between the status of certain EU member states. The article then proceeds to signal the problem of the “wave of unskilled” workers that are coming to the UK, which only to a certain extent benefits the British economy. However, it is also argued throughout most of the article that contrary to the EU assumptions of mobile labour market, Britain should implement restrictions on “unskilled” European workers. The article ends with a controversial statement

"The world needs Britain at the heart of Europe" (Balls 2010), which underscores a nationalistic undertone of the feature.

The fourth feature, published in 2011, "Going home: the Polish migrants who lost jobs and hope in UK" (4) represents the downside of migration to UK and presents the Polish migrants as victims. The article begins with a story of a successful Polish man whose parents were able to afford his stay and higher education in Britain, and his return to Poland to live in relatively abundant conditions. The rest of the piece is devoted to young Polish men who due to unfortunate circumstances were left "destitute" and jobless. The article presents the men as victims of the economic "downturn" which began in the UK after 2006. It is stated that due to their lack of English language skills they were unable to hold a job. When one of the men became homeless, he was forced to steal to survive and ended up in prison for almost a year. The article may frame the assumption that the Polish migrants cause more trouble than benefit, and again, are a burden to the economy.

The following article from 2012, "Poles are here to stay in Britain, but it'll take time to make a cultural splash" (5), begins with the statement that Poles are not only the largest group of migrants living in the UK but also outnumber Indians and Pakistanis. These figures could be regarded as outstanding; however, the article was later amended and the incorrect number of 2 million Poles residing in the UK was replaced by 800,000. The article then drily sums up the reasons behind immigrant Poles' choice to live in Britain. What is stressed is the unfortunate lack of cultural enrichment to the society by the migrants, as they belong the working class. This foregrounds the idea that Poles are nothing else but labour force, without any culture or tradition to keep and represent. The next part of the story is dedicated to great Polish expatriates who contributed to such areas as "literature, art or science" (Pyzik 2012). What strikes one is the author's remark that, as a result of their emigration, many did not know that they were Polish "as if emigration wiped away their Polishness" (Pyzik 2012). This could potentially signify that even if there happened to be any cultural potential amongst the working class Poles, people would not recognise them as Polish. This representation draws a contrast to other articles, where Poles are made to be a clearly noticeable group and visible through their "otherness." In the last paragraph, the author asserts that the Poles would most of all want to be recognised for the input they had into British history. This statement may aim to evoke sentiment and the feeling of connection to the Poles, which would assimilate rather than other the migrant in the society.

The sixth piece focuses on a Polish blood donation campaign that took place in the UK. The 2015 article, titled “Polish migrants to strike and give blood to demonstrate importance to UK” (6) recorded an incredibly high number of comments under the piece (1,635) and an even higher number of media shares (4,614). In view of the incoming Brexit referendum, the article marks the tensions and reports on the unconventional blood strike, initiated by British Poles Initiative members. It is noted that UK’s National Health Service is in need of 200,000 blood donors. Instead of a strike, which was described as “risky,” the Polish campaign had the aim of proving the importance of Polish migrants and workers in the British system. It is narrated that due to the rise of British right-wing parties, the Poles began to feel “scapegoated” and discriminated against. The article also puts in context the British-Polish history, reminding us that “thousands of Poles fought in the British army” and “shed blood and lives for the UK” (Davies and Carrier 2015). This strongly emotional remark may provoke the reader to remember the Polish involvement in the Battle of England and think more inclusively of Poles as Europeans with a common history.

The next article was written after the Brexit referendum, which had taken place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016. According to The Electoral Commission results, 51.9% of British voted to leave the EU and 48.1% of voters opted to remain in the EU. The headline reads “Britain’s Poles wanted to stay here for ever, until the EU referendum” (7). The article opens with a description of the 2004 events, when Poland had joined the EU. It is stated that Britain needed labourers at the time, and the arriving Poles in large numbers were not only filling the gap but also boosting the economy, as their services were cheap. It then describes the circumstances of most Polish migrants as they work in jobs way below their qualifications; however, “the exchange rate between sterling and Polish zloty was enough to compensate for swallowed pride” (Krupa 2016). The author brings up and denies the common assumption that Polish migrants’ main aim is to take advantage of the British benefit system. The language is vivid and possibly seeks to evoke the readers’ understanding and empathy. Again, a reference to the Battle of Britain is made and the Poles’ significant input. The author also describes the communist period and proceeds to recount Poland’s “democratic transition in 1989” (Krupa 2016). The Poles that made their living in the UK are described as a community that had “gained confidence in their value, built their social skills, and developed fluency in English” (Krupa 2016). The article represents the Polish as a valuable part of the British society and points to the harsh reality that the EU referendum imposed on them. This representation

of Polish migrants differs from those described in articles (1), (3), (4) and (5) and could be perceived as pro-European and anti-Brexit.

The eighth out of the ten articles, “Britain’s Poles: hard work, Yorkshire accents and life post-Brexit vote” (8), was written two months later. The article begins with a paragraph in which a small town of Wakefield in Yorkshire and its resident Poles are presented as everyday citizens who run small businesses and make a successful living by working alongside native-born British. The Polish are characterised as “hard-working,” very much adapted into the British way of life and whose English has a “broad Yorkshire” accent (Pidd 2016). This positive depiction could have an underling intention of persuading the reader of Polish migrants’ assimilation and, as a result, aid in identifying them as interwoven in the British society. In the next part of the article, the writer focuses on the initial fear that was dominant in the British public discourse and how the numbers of incoming migrants exceeded the expectations of UK’s government and society. This could be regarded as an attempt to assure the reader of *The Guardian* of support and positive intentions towards EU migrants, specifically the Poles. In the last part of the feature, the writer interviews Poles and addresses their perception of the referendum results. The last part of the article is devoted to the rise of British hate-crime and xenophobic attacks on the Polish migrant minority since the Brexit vote. Although some Poles may leave the UK due to the vote, “hundreds of thousands of Poles will never go home” (Pidd 2016). This final part may serve as an emphasis of Poles’ assimilation into the British society and their will to acquire permanent residential status against all odds.

The penultimate article in the selected series goes by the headline “Poles in the UK urge May to protect them from a no-deal Brexit” (9). Written in 2018, the article tackles the Polish community’s fears of a Brexit without any deal that would protect the residential and working status of EU citizens living on the British Isles. In an interview with the chairman of the Federation of Poles in Great Britain, it is stated that over 1 million Poles live in the UK. These numbers are not, however, backed by any sources. This therefore may only be a strategic exaggeration to empathize with the British Poles that would suffer the “no-deal Brexit.” The Poles are again represented as hard-working people who, because of the lack of English language skills, may be in a disadvantaged position. It is claimed that the migrants may not understand that they will “have to register for a new ‘settled status’ immigration category post Brexit” (O’Carroll 2018). This portrayal of Poles – as unable to adjust

and understand the language – can unintentionally present the Polish migrants to the reader as still a burden in the British society.

The last article out of the selected ten focuses on the hardships Polish migrants are facing in the UK after the Brexit vote. The article, published in January 2019, is titled “Everything changed in 2016: Poles in UK struggle with Brexit” (10). The article takes on a similar narration as articles (7) and (8). There are three interviews with successful Poles, all of whom have steady jobs. It is described that all of them took the Brexit vote personally and are uncertain of what the future may bring, as the political dealings between Britain and EU are tense and unstable. The author then gives approximate statistics and states that around 900,000 Poles live in the UK. Again, the number of Polish migrants is constantly fluctuating throughout the articles, without indication of references to official statistics. According to the interviews, most of the Poles and those in the Polish community around them are planning to return to Poland. This is supported by Polish prime minister’s speech in which he encourages [Britain] to return the Poles back to Poland. At the end of the article it is mentioned that the Poles, being under pressure and feeling of discrimination towards them from the British society, are “becoming quite anti-British themselves” (Davies 2019).

To summarise the findings from the selection of the articles, it is important to note a narrative change which took place. The post-A8 articles take on a neutral, descriptive tone; however, they use such language to subtly “other” the Eastern European migrants. Articles (3), (4), and (5) present the same qualities of objective attitude in describing the migration phenomena, but at the same time pointing towards the burden that Poles possibly impose on the British society. The Poles are also represented as a lower working class (e.g., 4), who are prone to become homeless and jobless. This portrayal victimises the Poles and presents them as unable to cope in the British system. The narrative then changes in the run-up to the Brexit referendum. Article (6) depicts Poles as historically bonded with the British and their unease as they are forced to organise a protest campaign to prove, so, while articles (7), (8), (9) and (10) mostly focus around Poles’ success and assimilation into the British society and the harm Brexit may impose on them. They are described as hard-working and an asset to Britain. It is clear that the approach shifted from somewhat negative after the A8 migrant arrivals to positive with the emerging Brexit debate and referendum taking an effect. Markedly, the numbers of Polish migrants arriving and residing

in the UK fluctuate from figurative hundreds of thousands to thousands or to millions.

Overall, it can be seen from this short analysis that the representation of Polish migrants in *The Guardian's* features throughout the years 2008–2019 began with a cautious, yet not fully negative, approach, then proceeded onto representing the migrant as a victim of British economic downturn and ended in positioning the Polish migrant in a favourable light in the stage leading towards and shortly after the referendum (perhaps to counterbalance the conservative outlets' coverage).

The final stage of analysis presents the most frequent terms gathered from the selection of 10 *Guardian* articles from the years 2008 to 2019. All of the analysed articles, listed in appendix 1, were published online and are available on the official webpage of the newspaper ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)). The total word size of the gathered material is 838 words. The common issue present in all the articles concerns Eastern Europeans, and in particular Poles, who migrated to the UK after A8. *The Guardian* features are spread across the timescale of post-A8, pre-Brexit referendum and post-Brexit referendum, which enabled us to observe whether the language used and narration of migrants varied depending on current events. The starting point in this analysis is an argument which Wilk (2010, 345) poses that “*The Guardian* portrays Poland in a positive light, while at the microlevel, i.e. the context of Polish emigration to Great Britain, the picture seems to be more negative.” With this calculation, it is possible to see the main semantic fields and connotative links the Poles are associated with.

The terms which have the highest percentage of occurrences are listed alphabetically in Table 1 below:<sup>8</sup>

<b>Term</b>	<b>Year(s) article was published</b>	<b>Number of occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Brexit	2016, 2018, 2019	20	2.38 %
Britain('s)	2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	58	6.92 %

---

<sup>8</sup> The whole dataset can be accessed through the link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=16iZVjiU9fDjVPkGhZxTFyJaY9h5U1oFU>.

British	2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2018, 2019	33	3.93 %
Eastern European(s)	2008, 2010, 2011	8	0.95 %
economic	2008, 2010, 2011, 2016	11	1.31 %
economy	2010, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	9	1.07 %
English	2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	25	2.98 %
EU	2010, 2016, 2018, 2019	32	3.81 %
Europe('s)	2010, 2012, 2016, 2019	18	2.14 %
European(s)	2010, 2016	9	1.07 %
immigration	2008, 2010, 2016, 2018	9	1.07 %
job(s)	2008, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2019	32	3.81 %
migrants	2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	25	2.98 %
migration	2010, 2011, 2019	16	1.90 %
Poland	2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2019	51	6.08 %
Pole(s)	2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	55	6.56 %
Polish	2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	118	14.08 %
UK	2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019	62	7.39 %
work(-ing,-ed)	2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2019	28	3.34 %
worker(s)	2010, 2011, 2013	20	2.38 %

Table 3: Most recurring terms in Guardian's news articles regarding Polish immigrants.

The term “Polish” was found 118 times and term “Pole” in singular or plural form “Poles” was found 55 times. These are of highest occurrence, while the term “Eastern European(s)” occurred only 8 times. This suggests that although *The Guardian* employs the macro-discriminating phrase “Eastern European” (Wilk 2010) to describe most A8 states citizens, in the case of selected articles it was not as observable. The term “Polish” can be seen to depict direct targeting of particular nationality group out of any other A8 migrants. Second to these, terms “UK” 62 times, “Britain” 58 times, and “British” 33 times, appear most frequently. These can be interpreted as a strong national belonging and an entry point for all the issues, as the “migrants” and topic of “migration” directly affects “the UK.” Words such as “work” (with the differentiation in tenses; -ing, -ed), “worker(s),” “job(s),” “economic” and “economy” appear on average from 9 to 32 times and make up the third of most repeated terms. As they can be directly related to employment and economy and the negative terms, which could be noted along such terms as “downturn” are not included here. This suggests the positive impact behind these, and in alignment with all the other terms, it could be perceived that the language *The Guardian* uses to depict the migrants goes along the positive terms of economic boost with the employment factor. On the whole, the terms which appear at frequency of above 1% out of all the gathered data of 838 words appear to carry a neutral meaning. However, it could be argued that the selective targeting of Polish migrants among other A8 incomers is strongly visible and may serve the purpose of othering them.

## 5. Conclusions

To conclude, both content and discourse analyses present the evolving ways in which *The Guardian* had portrayed the image of Polish migrants who arrived to the UK after the EU enlarged in 2004. Poles, being the largest and the most active migrant group, became the media’s target due to the British political and societal response to their substantial influx. Although *The Guardian* is known for their liberal and progressive values, its framing of Poles changed along with the political events that were, at the time of publications, occurring in the UK. By the use of specific language to describe the phenomena of Polish migration to the UK, *The Guardian* implemented stereotyping of the Poles through “othering” them as a strain to the British society and system due

to their lack of necessary language skills, inability to seamlessly assimilate and make a cultural contribution to the society.

Yet, *The Guardian's* coverage has to be treated in the context of the larger media discourses operating in the UK. Some stereotypes of migration were also addressed by the BBC's documentary *The Poles are Coming!* directed in 2008 by an award-winning English journalist Tim Samuels. He has aimed to portray the very beginnings and the impact of the large migration influx of Poles (but also other Eastern Europeans who were lumped together) into the UK. Rather than following the common negative media approach, Samuels chose to narrate the issue from a problematizing perspective to convey the issue in an infotainment mode. Indeed, reactions to his film may vary depending on whether the viewer's position is pro- or anti-immigration.

The analysis of *The Poles are Coming!* enables one to obtain a more complex image of the stereotypes of Polish migrants in the UK. Although the infotainment documentary tackled the common assumptions of Eastern European migrants, it did not portray them in terms of the straightforward moral panic approach, but in a nuanced way. Rather, it was possible to perceive the positive depiction of the A8 Europeans as the movie scenes revolved around migrants who work in occupations English people would not take. They are well deserving of their earnings and do not live on benefits, as media (and politicians) typically claim. Then again, a few common stereotypes could also be noticed in scenes which focused on the issue at its root, namely in Poland. The depiction of male-depleted Polish cities was unfavourable and manipulated to suit the entertaining tone of the whole documentary, as it included a ridiculing representation of Polish political figures and Polish society that enabled the "othering" of Poland in the larger context of its role in the European Union. Last but not least, the film exposed various fissures in the local and national communities across Britain and revealed how the changing patterns of migration intertwine with economic and political factors rather than only personal preferences and cultural codes.

This study has taken a look at the role of the media and their potential to guide people's judgments and opinions on many social issues (Wilk 2017), particularly those that relate to "othering" and negative stereotypes. As previous studies have shown, the media have flourished due to fomenting discontent and moral panic (Cohen 2002). The same mechanisms are now an indelible part of the British media coverage of migrant Poles. One could claim that these mechanisms have possibly influenced the margin of results of the Brexit

referendum. The main conclusion that arises from this study is that although the British media and press vary in their representations, editorial lines and political support, a degree of othering of Polish migrants is pre-existing in its discourse, probably as a result of a deep-seated stereotypical view of Eastern Europe.

### Works Cited

- Allen, Chris. 2008, March 12. “White: ‘The Poles are Coming!’ (BBC series).” *Walls Come Tumbling Blog*. Accessed September 13, 2018. <https://wallscometumblingdown.wordpress.com/2008/03/12/white-the-poles-are-coming-bbc2-series/>.
- Audit Bureau of Circulations. 2019, June 13. The Guardian Circulation Analysis. Accessed June 13, 2019. <https://www.abc.org.uk/product/2451>.
- Bennett, Samuel, Jessika der Val, Artur Lipinski, Malgorzata Fabiszak, and Michal Krzyzanowski. 2011. *Thematic Report: Migrants and Media Newsmaking Practices*. Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Cameron, David. 2014. Prime Minister’s Speech. Delivered at JCB Staffordshire. 28 November 2014. Transcript of the speech as delivered. Accessed December 10, 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/jcb-staffordshire-prime-ministers-speech>.
- Chan, Paul, Ian Fitzgerald, and Rafal Smoczynski. 2013. “Anti-Polish Migrant Moral Panics and Trade Unions in the UK.” In *Culture of Fear to Society of Trust*, edited by Janez Juhant and Bojan Zalec, 149–55. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2006. “Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign.” *Discourse and Society* 17(5): 563–581.
- Chovanec, Jan, and Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska. 2017. *Representing the Other in European Media Discourse*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Cohen, Stanley. 2002. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Conboy, Martin. 2006. *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community Through Language*. London: Routledge.

- Ehata, Rebecca, and Martin Seeleib-Kaiser. 2017. "Benefit Tourism and EU Migrant Citizens: Real-world Experiences." *Social Policy Review* 29.
- Electoral Commission, The. 2016, June 24. EU Referendum Results. <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/electorate-and-count-information?EU%20referendum%20full%20results%20page>.
- Fitzgerald, Ian, and Rafal Smoczynski. 2015. "Anti-Polish Migrant Moral Panic in the UK: Rethinking Employment Insecurities and Moral Regulation." *Czech Sociological Review* 51(3): 339–361.
- Fomina, Joanna, and Justyna Frelak. 2008. *Next Stopski London. Public Perceptions of Labour Migration within the EU. The Case of Polish Labour Migrants in the British Press*. Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs.
- Giles, Chris. 2018. "The Effects of EU Migration on Britain in 5 Charts". *Financial Times*. September 18. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/797f7b42-bb44-11e8-94b2-17176fbf93f5>.
- Hart, Christopher. 2010. *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Newsworks. 2019, March 20. The Guardian Overview. Accessed April 2, 2019. <https://www.newsworks.org.uk/the-guardian>.
- Office for National Statistics. 2015, January 15. "International Migration: A Recent History." Accessed September 13, 2018. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/internationalmigrationarcenthistory/2015-01-15>.
- Office for National Statistics. 2018, May 24. "Latest Population Estimates for the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality, Covering the Period from 2004 to the Year Ending 2017." Accessed September 13, 2018. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/ukpopulationbycountryofbirthandnationality/2017>.
- Office for National Statistics. 2018, January 15. "Long-term International Migration into the UK, 1980 to 2013." Accessed September 13, 2018. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/internationalmigrationarcenthistory/2015-01-15>.

- Richardson, John. 2007. *Analysing Newspapers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rzepnikowska, Alina. 2019. “Racism and Xenophobia Experienced by Polish Migrants in the UK before and after Brexit Vote.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(1): 61–77.
- Samuels, Timothy. 2013. “The Poles are Coming!” Tonic Productions for BBC TV. October 17. <https://vimeo.com/77151640>.
- Simionescu, Mihaela. 2018. “The Impact of European Economic Integration on Migration in the European Union.” *Holistica*, 9(1): 23–34.
- Spiering, Menno. 2004. “British Euroscepticism.” *European Studies. An Interdisciplinary Series in European Culture, History and Politics* 20: 127–150.
- Stangor, Charles. 2000. *Stereotypes and Prejudice: Essential Readings*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Spigelman, Ariel. 2013. “The Depiction of Polish Migrants in the United Kingdom by the British Press after Poland’s accession to the European Union.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 3(1, 2): 98–113.
- Wilk, Przemyslaw. 2010. “Images of Poles and Poland in The Guardian, 2003–2005.” In *Facing the East in the West. Images of Eastern Europe in British Literature, Film and Culture*, edited by Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Sissy Helff, 335–345. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Wilk, Przemyslaw. 2017. “Construing the Other: On some Ideology-laden Construals of Europeans in The Guardian.” In *Representing the Other in European Media Discourses*, edited by Jan Chovanec and Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska, 121–134. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Wollaston, Sam. 2008, March 12. “Last night’s TV: The Poles are Coming!” *The Guardian*. Accessed January 13, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/tvandradioblog/2008/mar/12/lastnightstvthepolesarec>.

## Appendix 1

1. Taylor, Ros. 2008. “The Poles Have Come.” *The Guardian*. March 12. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/mar/12/thepoleshavecome>.
2. Travis, Alan. 2010. “Polish Immigration to the UK: Wild Claims Don’t Add up.” *The Guardian*. April 29. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/apr/29/polish-immigration-to-uk-numbers>.

3. Balls, Ed. 2010. "We Were Wrong to Allow so Many Eastern Europeans into Britain." *The Guardian*. June 6.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/06/ed-balls-europe-immigration-labour>.
4. Gentleman, Amelia. 2011. "Going Home: The Polish Migrants who Lost Jobs and Hope in UK." *The Guardian*. April 6.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/06/uk-polish-migrants-lost-jobs-and-hope>.
5. Pyzik, Agata. 2012. "Poles are Here to Stay in Britain, but It'll Take Time to Make a Cultural Splash." *The Guardian*. December 12.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/12/poles-britain-cultural-splash>.
6. Davies, Caroline, and Dan Carrier. 2015. "Polish Migrants to Strike and Give Blood to Demonstrate Importance to the UK." *The Guardian*. August 20.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/20/polish-migrants-strike-blood-donation-protest>.
7. Krupa, Jakub. 2016. "Britain's Polish Wanted to Stay Here Forever, Until the EU Referendum." *The Guardian*. August 25.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/25/britains-polish-wanted-to-stay-here-for-ever-until-the-eu-referendum>.
8. Pidd, Helen. 2016. "Britain's Poles: Hard Work, Yorkshire Accents and Life Post-Brexit Vote." *The Guardian*. October 25.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/25/polish-in-wakefield-brexit-vote-britain>.
9. O'Carroll, Lisa. 2018. "Poles in the UK Urge May to Protect them from a No-deal Brexit." *The Guardian*. August 7.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/07/poles-in-the-uk-urge-may-to-protect-them-from-a-no-deal-brexit>.
10. Davies, Christian. 2019. "'Everything Changed in 2016': Poles in UK Struggle with Brexit." *The Guardian*. January 27.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jan/27/everythingchange-d-in-2016-poles-in-uk-struggle-with-brexit>.

## **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Polish Association for the Study of English Conference Report**

The 27<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Polish Association for the Study of English was hosted by the University of Łódź. The conference sessions were spread over three days (25-27 June 2018) and attracted almost a hundred participants from Poland and other countries such as Italy, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. The theme of the conference was the notion of identity, and the various papers, situated within literary studies, linguistics, as well as cultural and media studies, aimed to approach this concept through a range of different methodologies, case studies and theoretical assumptions.

The literary sessions of the 2018 PASE conference dealt with topics such as gender identity and the dynamics of national politics, investigating how notions such as these become intertwined with problems of personal identity formation. The latter issue found its reflection in Professor Jan Jędrzejewski's plenary lecture about Anglo-Irish identities in the nineteenth century, whereas Professor Christoph Bode devoted his lecture to the poetics of non-identity in the works of John Keats. The linguistic sessions were also grounded within the area of identity construction, with Professor Adam Głaz addressing in his lecture the idea of hybridity and the importance of hybrid identities for understanding the modern world. The two other plenary speakers, Professor Agnieszka Kielkiewicz-Janowiak and Professor Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszcyk, approached identity through different theoretical lenses, the former dealing with generational identities and the latter outlining how particular modes of constructing emotions relate to one's cultural identity.

The chronological span of the works, genres and media that the various papers addressed was not limited to any particular period, and the conference included sessions about medieval poetry as well as discussions of the latest, future-oriented television series. Participants had both an opportunity to attend a session subjecting the language of Geoffrey Chaucer to linguistic analysis and a chance to learn more about the role of identity in organizing education in a global, multicultural context. A number of special discussion panels were also held, the largest one dealing with hate speech and verbal aggression

and attracting as many as ten different speakers and a large audience. Although many papers were streamlined to deal with particular works of culture or offer analyses of case studies, it is worth noting that the q&a sessions following the papers provided a forum for a more general discussion about identity, not just in an academic context but also in terms of bringing to light the mechanisms of Othering and their role in shaping hierarchies and maintaining the *status quo*. The hate speech discussion panel in particular provided insights into how understanding such mechanisms may help diffuse and oppose the symbolic violence inherent in public discourses.

The conference concluded with a guided tour of Łódź, a city that itself provides ample opportunity for studying how identities are shaped, reshaped and reinvented. Having refashioned itself as a creative arts centre and multimodal industry hub, Łódź may seem to have turned its back on its textile past as an industrial monoculture, but the city has managed to modernize its run-down factory districts and bring in the new without shedding away the old. The conference, which was held in the new building of the Faculty of Philology, a short distance away from the new city centre and right next to the grounds of the 2024 Horticultural Expo, was a testimony to the importance of academic reflection on identity construction and its relevance to the places and spaces that govern our lives in the twenty-first century.

## **Authors' Biodata**

**Patrycja Biniek** graduated from the Institute of English, University of Opole in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree (with honors) in English in Public Communication.

**Brygida Hurek** graduated from the Institute of English, University of Opole in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree (with honors) in English in Public Communication.

**Maria Horskykh** graduated from the Institute of English, University of Opole in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree (with honors) in English in Public Communication.

**Przemysław Komsa** graduated from the Institute of English, University of Opole in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Philology.

**Alicja Portas** graduated from the Institute of English, University of Opole in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in Public Communication.

## Information for Contributors

We invite our colleagues from Poland and abroad to contribute articles which would reflect their field of research and expertise. The articles will be blindly reviewed by two independent scholars prior to their publication. We hope to publish general issues as well as specific, topic-oriented ones. This first, inaugural issue is open to all scholars working in English studies.

The journal encourages previously unpublished submissions in linguistics, applied linguistics, literature, cultural studies and related aspects of history. Papers should be written in English. Conference reports as well as book reviews which address similar issues are also encouraged. Proposals of edited thematic issues are also welcome.

### General Information

1. Submission of an article for *Polish Journal of English Studies* equals accepting the following:
  - the journal publishes scholarly articles which offer new, original materials and information;
  - the journal does not offer any royalties;
  - full versions of all articles are available in the online (primary) version on the website of the journal: [www.pjes.edu.pl](http://www.pjes.edu.pl);
  - the journal and its contents are included in appropriate databases of scholarly journals;
  - the authors are fully responsible for any information, illustration etc. included in their articles.
2. Each submitted article is first evaluated by the editorial board. Articles which do not fit the range of subject matter of the journal, do not keep academic standards, or include grave errors may be subject to desk rejection in case of which the authors will be immediately notified.
3. Articles which do not follow the editorial guidelines will not be considered for publication. Please, acquaint yourself with current Notes for Contributors on our website before submission.
4. After the initial acceptance by the board each article goes through double blind review process. Consequently, contributors are requested to submit their work in a form which allows the removal of all data of the author.

5. Each review must include unequivocal evaluation of the submitted text and clear recommendation concerning its acceptance or rejection.
6. The editorial board selects reviewers appropriate for each contribution also not included in the currently published list of reviewers.
7. The names of new reviewers are consequently added to the list which aims at including all the reviewers in the history of the journal.
8. The contributor receives reviews as soon as they are available as retains the right to respond to them in writing.
9. In case of inconclusive reviews the editorial boards retains the right to make the final decision or seek additional review.
10. The authors of accepted articles are requested to respond to the reviewers remarks in writing and correct their articles as soon as possible.
11. The online version is considered the primary (reference) version.
12. "Ghostwriting" and "guest authorship" are considered scholarly unreliability and as such they will be revealed including notifying appropriate authorities.

### **Notes for Contributors**

13. Articles should be no longer than 6,000 words (including all in-text citations, footnotes and the "Works Cited" section).
14. Abstract (150-200 words each) along with 5 keywords should be attached.
15. Biodata (note 100-200 words in length) listing the author's education, professional experience, academic affiliations and achievements, etc. should be attached.
16. Chicago style (author-date system) should be used throughout. Major failure to comply with this requirement will result in your essay being automatically rejected.
17. Reference follows this pattern (Kowalski 2013, 37) (Name Year, Page) – any more specific bibliographic data should be included in "Works Cited" section at the end of the paper.

### **Examples of entries in Works Cited section:**

Book with one author:

Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*.  
New York: Penguin.

Book with two authors:

Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. 2007. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf.

Article in a scholarly journal:

Weinstein, Joshua I. 2009. "The Market in Plato's *Republic*." *Classical Philology* 104:439–58.

Chapter in a book:

Kelly, John D. 2010. "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana." In *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, edited by John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, and Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

More detailed information is available at: [http://www.chicagomanualof-style.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualof-style.org/tools_citationguide.html)

### **Remember to choose Author-Date option!**

18. Short quotations (no more than thirty words or three lines of poetry) should be run on (i.e. included within the text, separated by quotation marks) and enclosed within double quotation marks. Longer quotations (more than thirty words) should appear as a separate block, double-spaced and additionally indented left and right. They are not to be enclosed within quotation marks.
19. The number of footnotes should be kept to a minimum. When simply citing the source, always use in-text citations. Footnotes may be used only to expand some thought or concepts that transcend the main text.
20. Italics (and not underlining) should be used for titles of larger works such as books, journals, films, etc. and double quotation marks for titles of shorter works such as articles, shorter poems (which are not published in a separate volume), etc..
21. The editors reserve the right to copyedit and proof-read all papers accepted for publication.
22. Book reviews should be preceded by publishing details of the book under review in the following format and order: Terry Eagleton, 2013. *How to Read Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press)
23. They should NOT contain: title, abstract, keywords, "Works Cited" section, in-text citations.

**NOTE! Only articles with the complete list of the required components** (specifically, titled article, abstracts with keywords, complete bibliography

and in-text citations consistent with Chicago stylesheet, author's biodata) **will be considered for publication and recommended for review**. Authors are not allowed to submit any of the components separately. Otherwise, the articles will be returned to the authors until consistent with the requirements.

Papers should be submitted electronically to the Editor, Dr Weronika Szemińska at [pjes@pjes.edu.pl](mailto:pjes@pjes.edu.pl), or via our contact form available at <http://pjes.edu.pl/start/>.

Further information is also available from the above address.

## Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

*Polish Journal of English Studies* (PJES) is a peer-reviewed journal committed to ensuring the highest standards of publication ethics. All parties involved in the act of publishing (editors, authors, reviewers and the publisher) have to agree upon standards of ethical behavior. The principles of Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement are based on the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors of the Committee on Publication Ethics – COPE.

### **Responsibilities of the Editor and the Editorial Board of PJES**

The editor and the editorial board of PJES are responsible for

- deciding which of the manuscripts submitted to the journal should be published. In making these decisions, they are guided by the policies of the journal and by legal requirements regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism;
- providing guidance to guest editors, authors and reviewers on everything that is expected of them and also a description of peer review processes;
- providing new editorial board members with guidelines on everything that is expected of them and keeping existing members updated on new policies and developments;
- evaluating manuscripts exclusively on the basis of their academic and intellectual merit, without regard to the author(s)' race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religious belief, citizenship, political orientation or social class;
- ensuring a fair and unbiased double-blind peer review of the manuscripts and that all information related to them is kept confidential. They also ensure that both authors' and peer reviewers' identities are protected;
- ensuring that appropriate reviewers are selected;
- developing and maintaining a database of suitable reviewers;
- ensuring that unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript are not used in an editor's own research without the express written consent of the author;

- taking reasonable responsive measures when ethical complaints are presented concerning a submitted or published manuscript.
- publishing corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies whenever needed.

### **Guest Editors' Responsibilities**

Guest editors are responsible for

- defining the subject matter and role of every article in a thematic issue;
- providing clear guidelines to authors regarding the topic and boundaries of their contributions and the overall design of the issue;
- ensuring, in collaboration with the editorial board, that appropriate reviewers are selected for all the articles (whether they have been commissioned or submitted as a result of a call for papers);
- establishing a timeline for draft paper submission, peer review, revision and final paper submission with the editorial board, and ensuring that all deadlines are met;
- writing the Introduction to the issue.

### **Authors' Responsibilities**

- Authors of reports of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should be represented accurately in the manuscript. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable;
- Authors should not submit the same manuscript simultaneously to more than one publication at a time. This constitutes unethical publishing behaviour and is unacceptable;
- Authors must ensure that they have written original works and that any work or words of others authors, contributors or sources have been appropriately credited and referenced;
- Authors submitting their works to PJES for publication as original articles confirm that the submitted works represent their own contributions and have not been copied or plagiarized in whole or in part from other works without clearly citing the source. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work;

- Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable;
- Authors must ensure that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere;
- Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project should be acknowledged or listed as contributors;
- The corresponding author with the journal should ensure that all appropriate co-authors are included in the author list of the manuscript, and that there is a full consensus of all co-authors in approving the final version of the paper and its submission for publication;
- Authors should disclose financial or other conflict of interest that might influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript. All sources of financial support should be disclosed;
- When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editors and cooperate with them to retract or correct the manuscript.

### **Reviewers' Responsibilities**

- Peer review assists the editor and editorial board of PJES in making editorial decisions and, through the editorial communication with the author, may also assist the author in improving the manuscript;
- Any invited referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its timely review will be impossible should immediately notify the editor so that alternative reviewers can be contacted;
- Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents;
- Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage;
- Reviewers must report to the editor of PJES if they are aware of copyright infringement and plagiarism on the author's part;
- Reviews should be conducted objectively, and observations should be formulated clearly with supporting arguments, so that authors can use them for improving the paper;

- Reviewers evaluate manuscripts based on content without regard to the authors' race, age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief, citizenship, political orientation or social class;
- Reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

### **Publisher's Responsibilities**

As publisher of PJES, Polish Association for the Study of English (PASE)

- provides practical support to the editor and editorial board of PJES so that they can follow the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal;
- ensures the autonomy of editorial decisions;
- protects intellectual property and copyright;
- ensures that good practice is maintained to the standards defined above.

Adapted from *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* (RCCS)

<https://journals.openedition.org/rccs/5601>