IN SEARCH OF TRACES OF MEMORY

Various Figures of Return in Circulation (Not Only) in Literature

edited by Marta Bolińska

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W POSZUKIWANIU ŚLADÓW PAMIĘCI
Różne figury powrotów w obiegu (nie tylko) literackim

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with the collaboration of Aleksandra Kobiałka

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CONTENTS

Foreword 7

Part 1. In the context of cultural anthropology
(Część 1. W kontekście antropologii kultury)

Michał Mazurkiewicz, "From Personal Passion to Literary Motif": Sport in Edmund Niziurski's Life and Literary Works 17

Agnieszka Majcher, Challenges facing young translators related to translating Niziurski's prose – as exemplified by the short story *Sprawa Klarneta* 27

Julia Manowska-Cebula, Edmund Niziurski in the GDR 43

Aleksandra Kobiałka, Double Jubilee. Edmund Niziurski's works in Jan Pacławski's academic research 57

Part 2. Around the Audience. Young Adult Literature?
(Część 2. Wokół odbiorcy. Literatura young adult?)

Jarosław Dobrzycki, The Mark of a Toasting. About a Story by Edmund Niziurski 69

Magdalena Żukowska-Bąk, School as a space of control and resistance – mechanisms of student functioning in the educational system and their representation in youth literature 85

Agnieszka Kondrak, Niziurski's remedy for youth problems. *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* [*Adelo, understand me!*] in bibliotherapeutic practice 97

Part 3. Niziurski in qualitative and quantitative research
(Część 3. Niziurski w badaniach jakościowych i ilościowych)

Agnieszka Rosińska-Mamej, Everfresh or outdated? Opinions of contemporary readers on selected novels for young people by Edmund Niziurski 109

Bogusz Boliński, Niziurski's mission in Gen Z (quantitative and qualitative exploratory research) 119

Marta Bolińska, *Rozalia Urbanik*, Niziurski among seniors. On the results of the survey at the Żeromski Free Zone in Kielce 135

Biographical note 145

Index 151

FOREWORD

Years ago, Jan Assmann[1] said that collective (social) memory becomes the determinant of individual memory. Two categories are used to recognise it, namely communicative memory and cultural memory. The communicative approach encompasses the active memory (reminiscence) and experiences of living generations, which are communicated – in a non-formalised way – through interactive actions. It is the kind of memory in which the events of two or three (in extreme cases four) generations are sustained through family handovers, neighbourly conversations, social gossip, social activity, etc. It is primarily connected to the biographies of individuals who recount the events they participated in. The recording of social memory[2] in various artefacts, including literary texts, regardless of the intention or purpose of their creation, may also involve the desire to commemorate events or individuals[3]. Collective memory influences individual memory.

During the conference held at ILiJ UJK in Kielce on 3-4 June 2025, "Gallery of characters. Map of places. To Edmund Niziurski on his 100th birthday"[4], thanks to the presence of the writer's family, we were able to experience

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1 R. Traba, *Czym jest pamięć kulturowa*, [in:] J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa: pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, trans. A. Kryczyńska-Pham, introduction and ed. by R. Traba, Warszawa 2008, p. 15.

2 R. Poczykowski, *Lokalny wymiar pamięci: pamięć zbiorowa i jej przemiany w północno-wschodniej Polsce*, Białystok 2010, pp. 27–89.

3 *Tropy biograficzne. Bieg życia w narracjach literackich i kulturowych*, scientific eds. J. Knapp, M. Roszczynialska, K. Wądolny-Tatar, Kraków 2007.

4 The project was co-financed with funds from the state budget awarded by the Minister of Science within the framework of the Excellent Science II programme. The project was implemented by the Department of Cultural Research at the Jan Kochanowski University and the "Pryzmat" Literature Studies Club.

this transfer of memory[5]. As researchers argue[6], such transmission is born out of a sense of connection with previous generations[7]. In the social sphere, it refers to the creation of structures (communities) that enable closer bonds to be developed. With the passing of people who took part in certain events or witnessed various situations, communicative memory can disappear or transform into cultural memory. The conference dedicated to the 100th birthday of the Kielce-based writer stopped such possible disappearance, but also contributed to activating the cultural memory initiated in the past. For it is cultural memory as a cognitive and interpretative category that makes it possible, above all, to reread cultural texts[8], including literary texts, such as the writings of Edmund Niziurski**.**

As a form of supra-individual memory, it is expressed through "the conscious relation of a group to the past embedded in a specific cultural space, transmitted through various forms of social communication: writings, images, celebrations, rituals, etc."[9]. Therefore, according to, among others, Nina Assorodobraj[10], it is worthwhile to study the past mainly for its contemporary social function (this also applies to all forms of representation of the past, including those that coexist with the functioning of collective memory)[11], as the June scientific session with its accompanying events proved.

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The phenomenon of Edmund Niziurski's (1925-2013) writings was already recognised by readers in the 1960s. Literary scholars (including

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5 E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka: przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*, Kraków 2014.

6 Z. Wojtkowiak, *Nauki pomocnicze historii najnowszej: źródłoznawstwo: źródła narracyjne. Cz. 1. Pamiętnik, tekst literacki*, Poznań 2003.

7 V. Julkowska, *Między pamięcią a historią. Przypadek historii rodzinnych*, "Sensus Historiae" 2012/1, vol.VI, p. 79.

8 *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa: współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, ed. M. Saryusz-Wolska, Kraków 2009, p. 18.

9 See also U. Tokarska, *Opowieść w relacji, relacja w opowieści. Kontekst narracyjnej strukturyzacji doświadczeń*, "Horyzonty Wychowania" 2025, 25(70), pp. 21–31, DOI: https://doi.org/10.35765/hw.2025.2570.04.

10 N. Assorodobraj-Kula, *Historia żywa. Świadomość historyczna: symptomy i propozycje badawcze*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 1963, no. 2 (9), pp. 5–45.

11 R. Lubas-Bartoszyńska, *Tożsamość i autobiografia*, "Przestrzenie Teorii" 2003, no. 2, pp. 139–157.

Krystyna Kuliczkowska, Gertruda Skotnicka, Marek Kątny, Stanisław Frycie, Jan Pacławski and others) soon began discussing the work of the prose writer. His first literary attempts (although he was a lawyer by training) attracted the attention of various cultural circles.

The writer was born in Kielce (July 10, 1925), grew up there and began his school education there, which was interrupted by the Second World War. After returning to his home town, he worked, among other things, in a steelworks and an agricultural site (in the vicinity of Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski) and attended underground classes (secondary school exams and university studies). He was associated with Kielce until the early 1950s. His wife, Zofia Barbara née Kowalska, came from Kielce. He died in Warsaw (October 9, 2013) and was buried there.

The emotional connection to his hometown left a lasting mark on the literary legacy of the author of *Wielka heca* (1962). He set the plot of many of his works in the Świętokrzyskie region, although the names of the places mentioned cannot to be found on any map. Examples can be found in *Księga urwisów* or *Awantura w Niekłaju.*

Early in his work as a writer, which he initially pursued in the weekly magazine "Wieś", he dealt with rural themes, among other things, making reportages (e.g. *Z zapadłej wsi*, 1953). He wrote critical literary texts, film scripts, was a publicist, playwright, author of radio plays and television shows. He collaborated with Polish Radio and the youth magazines "Płomyk" and "Świat Młodych". In 1965, at the Classical Theatre in Warsaw, he staged a play (written for a competition announced by the theatre) entitled *Wakacje z intruzami* [*Holiday with Intruders*].

He made his debut with works for adults. His first novel, *Gorące dni* (1951), still concerned the Polish countryside. The change in topics and conventions came with subsequent publications. *Śmierć Lawrence'a*, published in 1956, followed a few years later by *Przystań Eskulapa* (1958) and the work *Przystań Eskulapa* (1959) already heralded a different kind of work. Social and moral novels with "Kielce" themes include *Salon wytrzeźwień* (1964), *Eminencje i bałłabancje* (1975) and *A potem niech biją dzwony* (1976). Niziurski also had a publication dating back to the Second World War and the post-war era, i.e. the novel entitled *Wyraj* (1964).

His popularity, fame, acclaim and recognition came from his works for juvenile audiences, primarily works with sensationalist and detective plots and school stories. Many critics and researchers believe that Niziurski's success

among readers and their appreciation of him is due not only to his ingenuity in managing novel plots, his colourful creation of characters with unusual names, his omnipresent humour or fast-paced narration, but also because, in writing, he became known as an astute observer and expert in the psyche of young people.

The following works are now considered classics of children's and young adult literature: *Księga urwisów* (1954), *Lizus* (1956), *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* (1959), *Lalu Koncewicz, broda i miłość* (1959), *Awantura w Niekłaju* (1962), *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (1964), *Jutro klasówka* (1966), *Siódme wtajemniczenie* (1969), *Klub włóczykijów, czyli trzynaście przygód stryja Dionizego i jego ekipy* (1970), *Naprzód Wspaniali!* (1974), *Osobliwe przypadki Cymeona Maksymalnego* (1975), *Awantury kosmiczne* (1979), *Szkolny lud, Okulla i ja* (1982), *Pierwsza księga urwisów* (1991), *Żaba, pozbieraj się, czyli siedem obłędnych dni Tomka Ż.* (1992), *Przygody Bąbla i Syfona* (1993), *Syfon na tropie* (1995), *Pięć melonów na rękę* (1996), *Największa przygoda Bąbla i Syfona* (1999) i wiele innych.

Numerous of Niziurski's novels have been filmed, e.g. *Księga urwisów* (film called *Tajemnica dzikiego szybu*, 1956), *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* (a TV series with the same title was made in 1966), and *Awantura w Niekłaju* (as *Tajemnica starego ogrodu*, 1983). A film entitled *Spona*, inspired by the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa,* was released in 1998, while *Klub włóczykijów* (based on the novel of the same name) was released in 2015. His works have been translated into many languages, including Georgian, Lithuanian, Czech and others.

Edmund Niziurski belonged to the Association of Polish Writers, the Association of Polish Writers, and was also a member of ZAiKS. He received many awards and accolades for his work and attitude. His awards include the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Medal of the National Education Commission, the Gold Medal for 'Merit to Culture Gloria Artis' and the Prime Minister's Award for works for young people, as well as the World of Children Foundation and the Polish branch of IBBY. He was also honoured with the Order of the Smile and the Eagle Feather. In 2013, Kielce named the square at Kadzielnia after him. By a resolution of the City Council, the year 2025 was declared the Year of Edmund Niziurski in Kielce.

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The subject of the researchers' interest in the collective monograph entitled ***In Search of Traces of Memory. Different figures of return in (not only) literary circulation,*** ed. Marta Bolińska with the collaboration of Aleksandra Kobiałka, is Polish literature of the 20th century, as well as – following the interdisciplinary approach trend – anthropological and social phenomena correlating with it, which find inspiration or response in literature, and which concern all issues devoted to contemporary culture, especially in the context of Edmund Niziurski's literary legacy.

In the first part, entitled **In the context of cultural anthropology,** the researchers draw on the concept of memory (above all collective memory) and trace the approaches in various works and spaces of social life, as evidenced both by the subject matter of the articles and the way in which subject-object literature is used, the critical-scientific apparatus activated, the research perspectives adopted or the compositional solutions and titles of the texts. **Michał Mazurkiewicz** reminds us of the physical fitness, still rarely exposed but promoted by the writer, and of the various sports disciplines present in his prose (*"From Personal Passion to Literary Motif": Sport in Edmund Niziurski's Life and Literary Works*/ *„Od pasji osobistej do motywu literackiego": sport w życiu i twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*). **Julia Manowska-Cebula** presents the fate of *Edmund Niziurski*'s prose *in the GDR* (*Edmund Niziurski w NRD*), while **Agnieszka Majcher** raises awareness of *the challenges facing young translators in translating Niziurski's prose – based on the example of the short story Sprawa Klarneta* (*Wyzwania stojące przed młodymi tłumaczami, związane z przekładem prozy Niziurskiego – na przykładzie opowiadania "Sprawa Klarneta"*). **Aleksandra Kobiałka** accentuates the relationship between the Świętokrzyskie writer and the doyen of the Kielce school of niziurskology, celebrating the *Double Jubilee. Edmund Niziurski's works in Jan Pacławski's academic research* (*Podwójny Jubileusz. Twórczość Edmunda Niziurskiego w badaniach naukowych Jana Pacławskiego*).

Part two focuses on literary visions of literature constructed with the needs of the audience in mind. The title with question mark: **On the recipient. Young adult literature?** is an invitation to consider the position of E. Niziurski's writing in the context of "young adult" literature, which – if only with reference to the short story *Lalu Koncewicz, broda i miłość* or the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (but also other works) – seems justified. After all, Niziurski's books are not just literature for young people, but for readers of all ages. Suffice it to recall that the author debuted with prose for adults.

Jarosław Dobrzycki sees in the work of the classic elements of labelling and stigmatisation, which have been present in the school environment (and among people) for centuries (*The Mark of a Toasting. About a Story by Edmund Niziurski/ Piętno lizusa. O pewnym opowiadaniu Edmunda Niziurskiego*). In a rather unusual approach, the everyday life of students and teachers is also presented by **Magdalena Żukowska-Bąk**, based on selected works by Edmund Niziurski, indicating that education can have a non-standard, socially debatable dimension (*School as a space of control and resistance – mechanisms of student functioning in the educational system and their representation in youth literature/ Szkoła jako przestrzeń kontroli i oporu – mechanizmy funkcjonowania uczniów w systemie edukacyjnym oraz ich reprezentacja w literaturze młodzieżowej*). The need for an individualised approach to the problems of youth, as revealed in Niziurski's prose, is revealed in the text entitled: *Niziurski's remedy for youth problems. Adelo, zrozum mnie! [Adelo, understand me!] in bibliotherapeutic practice* (*Remedium Niziurskiego na problemy młodzieży. Adelo, zrozum mnie! w pracy biblioterapeutycznej* by **Agnieszka Kondrak**.

In the third part – **Niziurski in qualitative and quantitative research** – the work of the author of *Księga urwisów* is embedded in hybrid research relevant to the reception of his writing**.** There are reflections, opinions, conclusions on the existence of Niziurski as a person and his works in the reading sphere among different ages. **Agnieszka Rosińska-Mamej** reflects on the question of whether Niziurski's prose is current or perhaps outdated in the public consciousness (*Everfresh or outdated? Opinions of contemporary readers on selected novels for young people by Edmund Niziurski/ Everfresh czy nieaktualna ramota? Opinie współczesnych czytelników na temat wybranych powieści dla młodzieży autorstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego*). **Bogusz Boliński** mentions the knowledge of Niziurski's works among young people born in the 21st century (*Niziurski's mission in Gen Z (quantitative and qualitative exploratory research)/ Misja Niziurskiego w pokoleniu Z (ilościowe i jakościowe badania eksploracyjne)*), examining their reception based on the example of his own generation (using instrumentation appropriate for management and quality sciences), while **Marta Bolińska and Rozalia Urbanik**, together with club members from Kielce, takes a sentimental journey to the mid-20th century (*Niziurski among seniors. On the results of the survey at the Żeromski Free Zone in Kielce/ Niziurski wśród seniorów. O wynikach badania w Wolnej Strefie Żeromskiego w Kielcach*).

This monograph is a form of returning to books from childhood, to texts that may have been somewhat forgotten, to authors' sometimes hidden or

unconscious longings, to places of encounters with the great themes of literature, to the need to explicate the so-called fourth state of art[12] etc. Addressed to literary researchers, teachers, students, educational and library staff, parents, therapists and others interested in literature, culture, their study and social functions, it can also become a kind of guide to selected aspects of Edmund Niziurski's work and the anthropology of culture and memory.

The diversity of the subject matter, the breadth of the issues dealt with and the multidimensionality of the approaches presented mean that, even many years after the author's debut, Niziurski and his legacy are not without their appeal to readers and researchers. Certainly, not many authors, whether contemporary or well-known in literary history, would wish to make such a long and lasting mark on the public's memory as the writer from Kielce.

The work and influence of E. Niziurski's prose on several generations of readers were the subject of the project (2024-2026) "Gallery of Characters. Map of Places. To Edmund Niziurski on the 100th Anniversary of His Birth" (co-financed from the state budget by the Minister of Science under the Excellent Science II. Support for Scientific Conferences program), conceived and directed by Marta Bolińska, professor at the Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce. The National Scientific Conference in June 2025 was dedicated to the writer.

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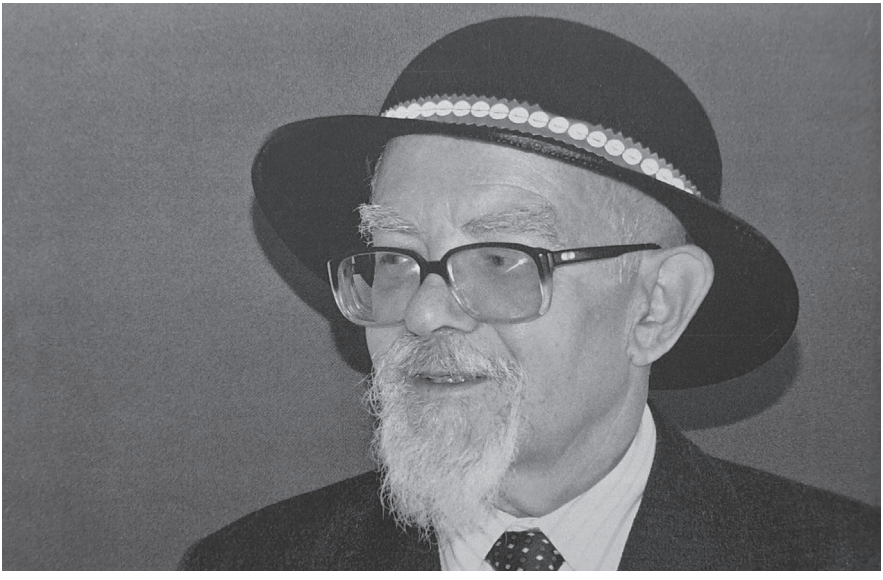
Edmund Niziurski (1925–2013) – Polish writer, born in Kielce on July 10, 1925 (died on October 9, 2013 in Warsaw), author of popular works for children and teenagers, including *The Book of Urchins* (1954), *The Incredible Adventures of Marek Piegus* (1959), *The Brawl in Niekłaj* (1962), *The Way to Alcibiades* (1964), *Tomorrow's Test* (1966), *The Curious Cases of Cymeon Maximalny* (1975), *Space Brawls* (1979), *School People, Okulla and Me* (1982), *Frog, Get Yourself Together, or the Seven Mad Days of Tomek Ż.* (1992), *The Adventures of*

[12] M. Dąbrowska, *Twórczość Zofii Żurakowskiej*, "Świat Książki" 1929, vol. 4–5; J. Cieślikowski, *Literatura czwarta. O naturze i sposobach istnienia literatury dla dzieci*, "Literatura Ludowa" 1976, vol. 1, pp. 3–16; A. Smuszkiewicz, *„Czwarta" czy „osobna"? (O literaturze dla dzieci i młodzieży*, [in:] *Konteksty polonistycznej edukacji*, eds. M. Kwiatkowska-Ratajczak, S. Wysłouch, Poznań 1998. See also Z. Adamczykowa, *Literatura dla dzieci. Funkcje – kategorie – gatunki*, Warszawa 2001; E. Domańska, *Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka?*, "Teksty Drugie" 2010, vol. 1–2, pp. 45–55; A. Szwagrzyk-Dalasińska, *Dyskursywność badań nad polską literaturą dla dzieci i młodzieży*, "Literatura Ludowa" 2018, no. 4–5, pp. 35–42.

Bąbla and Syphon (1993), *Five Melons on Hand* (1996), *The Greatest Adventure of Bąbla and Syphon* (1999), and for adults, e.g., *Lawrence's Death* (1956), *Aesculapius's Haven* (1958), *Five Mannequins* (1959), *Wyraj* (1964), *Sobering Up Salon* (1964), *Eminences and Ballabances* (1975), *And Then Let the Bells Toll* (1976), and many others. Numerous of Niziurski's novels have been adapted for film.

Marta Bolińska



Fot. z archiwum Waldemara Pacławskiego

In memory of Prof. Jan Pacławski (14.02.1935–1.08.2026) – full professor of humanities, historian of literature, doyen of Polish studies, educator of several generations of philologists, creator and animator of the Kielce scientific community, initiator of research on the work of Edmund Niziurski at the Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce (Poland)

PART 1

In the context of cultural anthropology

CZĘŚĆ 1

W kontekście antropologii kultury

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"FROM PERSONAL PASSION TO LITERARY MOTIF": SPORT IN EDMUND NIZIURSKI'S LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS

„OD OSOBISTEJ PASJI DO MOTYWU LITERACKIEGO": SPORT W ŻYCIU I TWÓRCZOŚCI EDMUNDA NIZIURSKIEGO

Keywords
sport – school – youth literature – sports literature

Słowa klucze
sport – szkoła – literatura młodzieżowa – literatura sportowa

Abstract
The chapter explores the theme of sport as a background in selected works by Niziurski. Although sport is usually not the primary issue, it plays a social, educational and cultural role here. It also acts as a catalyst for physical and mental changes in young people. This analysis fits into the broader context of research devoted to youth (or young adult) literature and sporting competition, which constitutes an element of culture and upbringing.

Streszczenie
W niniejszym rozdziale autor podejmuje temat sportu jako tła w wybranych utworach Niziurskiego. Sport – choć zwykle nie zagadnienie pierwszoplanowe – odgrywa tu rolę społeczną, wychowawczą i kulturową. Pełni też funkcję katalizatora zmian młodych ludzi – nie tylko fizycznych, ale i mentalnych. Analiza ta wpisuje się w szerszy kontekst badań nad literaturą młodzieżową oraz rywalizacją sportową stanowiącą element kultury i wychowania.

Sport and Literature – Introductory Remarks

Sport occupies a special, albeit niche, place in literature. Authors have been attracted to it due to the drama of rivalry, the struggle against adversity, the testing of character, the unexpected twists of contests, as well as the experience of both loss and victory. They have also been inspired by questions of courage, loyalty and honour. Their works tend to be characterized by emotionality and retrospective nostalgia, as these stories are often based on personal memories. Although the darker sides of sport are sometimes acknowledged, there is also a sense of hope for a better world. The biographies of many writers reveal how passionate they were about sport, a passion reflected in their works.

With regard to the men of letters themselves, the renowned Lord Byron was an enthusiast of swimming and boxing. The American master of horror stories and poet Edgar Allan Poe was a keen proponent of physical fitness (in particular, an excellent swimmer), which was evident both in his private life and in some of his works. In Poland, a notable example is Kazimierz Wierzyński, who played football during his youth, as a right midfielder and goalkeeper for Pogoń Stryj. Importantly, the famous poet was awarded a gold medal in literature for his poetry collection *Olympic Laurel* at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics.

A noteworthy example of a contemporary writer-athlete is Zbigniew Masternak, leader of the Polish National Football Team of Writers. Every year, the team plays a series of matches and takes part in friendly tournaments, exhibition games and charity events, both in Poland and abroad. In this way, they combine their passion for sport with the promotion of literature. The team has achieved international success, including winning European Championship medals[1].

When it comes to the origins of sports-themed literature for young people, Chris Crowe is right to point out:

> Sports literature and young adult literature have a common ancestry: both evolved from the boys' school story. In the late nineteenth century, Tomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) and *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861)

[1] M. Mazurkiewicz, *Sport, literatura, wspólnota – Reprezentacja Polskich Pisarzy w Piłce Nożnej*, [in:] *Kultura fizyczna a komunitaryzm i liberalizm*, eds. Z. Dziubiński, W. Firek, Warszawa 2022, pp. 248–255.

> were popular in England and the United States and helped to establish a market niche for books and stories for boys[2].

The niche was soon filled, with new authors emerging, new stories being created, and new books and periodicals being published and gaining popularity among young people.

Polish Sports Youth Literature

The majority of young people have some kind of relationship with sports, whether positive or negative. The concept of youth is closely associated with a tendency towards playfulness, movement and exploration. Participation in sporting activities provides young people with the opportunity to develop an understanding of the world around them and to establish social bonds. It is therefore unsurprising that sport has become a prominent feature in literature for young adults, also in Poland. This literature has proven successful in attracting young readers thanks to its ability to offer engaging narratives, facilitate identification with the characters, and provide valuable role models. Thus, in Poland, as in other countries, youth literature on sport has not always been solely a source of entertainment, but has also fulfilled an educational and motivational function. It places a strong emphasis on values such as fair play, cooperation, perseverance and overcoming personal challenges.

The first clear signs of sports youth literature in Poland emerged during the interwar period (1918-1939), but it did not reach its golden age until the post-war communist era. At that time, sport was promoted as a means of educating socialist citizens, a concept that was often reflected in literature. Adam Bahdaj is considered one of the most significant authors to combine sports and adventure themes in novels such as *Do przerwy 0:1* [*Until the Break 0:1*] (1957), creating stories that resonated with young readers' experiences. In this novel, set in post-war Warsaw, boys from disadvantaged backgrounds come together to form a football team and compete in a Warsaw youth tournament. In this context, sport is depicted as a means of empowerment, fostering a sense of community and providing an escape from poverty. Thus, the narrative portrays football not as mere recreation, but as a constructive response to social adversity.

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[2] Ch. Crowe, *More Than a Game: Sports Literature for Young Adults*, Lanham–Maryland–Oxford 2004, p. 11.

Following the political transformation, children's and young adult literature underwent significant changes, with new forms of expression and themes emerging. Most of all, sport ceased to be used for propaganda purposes. Contemporary authors such as Jacek Podsiadło or Rafał Witek now address the topic of sport in the context of personal development and identity formation. Furthermore, a greater variety of sports are now represented, including extreme and e-sports, and female protagonists are also more prevalent.

This chapter focuses on Edmund Niziurski's prose, which also contains sporting elements. For Niziurski, sport is a tool for integration and self-identification among young people, helping the characters to find their place in the group. Sport also constitutes a metaphor for the process of moral maturation: through competition, the boys learn the principles of fair play, responsibility, and friendship. To demonstrate this, several of his works will be examined. First, however, let us take a look at the writer's private life.

Sport in the Life of Edmund Niziurski

Krzysztof Varga's biography of Niziurski provides numerous examples of the author's appreciation of physical fitness and healthy pursuits. These include hiking in the mountains, long-distance walking in the city, as well as swimming. Let us now examine some selected descriptions whose authors are members of his family.

Niziurski's son Marcin noted that his father preferred mountaineous areas to big cities: "he loved the mountains and didn't like Warsaw"[3]. As for swimming, he remembered: "We spent all our holidays in Kielce. From Kielce, we took a 40–45-minute train ride to Skarżysko-Kamienna. There was a reservoir there where we swam"[4]. Niziurski's wife, Barbara, stated that she and her husband shared similar leisure-time predilections: "I loved the forest, and my husband loved the forest too. He loved the mountains, I loved the mountains, he loved the sea, I loved the sea"[5]. Niziurski was a keen hiker and would walk both in the city and in the mountains. Following his heart attack in 1989, however, he

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3 K. Varga, *Księga dla starych urwisów. Wszystko, czego jeszcze nie wiecie o Edmundzie Niziurskim*, Warszawa 2019, p. 34.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 41.

may have started to adopt a more moderate approach to walking, instead of participating in strenuous hikes[6].

Marcin, the son, pays attention not only to his father's passion for the mountains, but also to his extensive knowledge of the subject: "We went hiking in the Tatra Mountains at every opportunity"[7]; and next: "My father knew everything about the Tatra Mountains, as did I and my mother. We are all avid hikers and lovers of these mountains"[8]. Barbara admitted: "We had to be in the mountains twice a year, both Polish and Slovakian. […] in winter we went skiing"[9]. The writer's daughter, Anna, remembered: "He adored swimming in the sea, often swimming too far out. […] Dad taught us all to swim"[10]. The temperature of the water was irrelevant, as demonstrated by the practice of bathing in cold mountain ponds. Notwithstanding the illegality of such acts, Niziurski would decide to take a dip in the frigid mountain water infested with leeches[11].

My personal conversation with the writer's daughters Anna and Agnieszka on June 3, 2025, corroborates the above descriptions and provides several new insights: they emphasized that their father liked people who had interests and valued dedication to one's passions and hobbies. He was a patriot, watched Polish national football matches and cycling races. He appreciated sports heroes such as Królak and Szurkowski. He was also interested in boxing, athletics and swimming[12].

Sport in Niziurski's Novel – *The Way to Deal with Alcibiades* (Pol. *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*)

Sport, which usually serves merely as a backdrop to Niziurski's novels, is typically woven into a world of school intrigues, friendships, inter-school rivalries, and humorous exaggerations. Niziurski uses sporting motifs to build tension, but also to create parodies and comment on the realities of schools in

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6 Ibid., p. 58.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 59.
9 Ibid., p. 61.
10 Ibid., p. 70.
11 Ibid.
12 The personal conversation of the author [Michał Mazurkiewicz] with Anna and Agnieszka Niziurski, conducted at Jan Kochanowski University in June 2025.

communist Poland, where sport was treated as an important element of youth education.

One of the key features of Niziurski's novels is the emphasis on leisure time culture. As Krzysztof Varga has noted,

> What distinguishes these novels is, above all, the culture of the playground, a phenomenon that cannot be recreated at the present time due to the absence of playgrounds and slag heaps, which were spaces to be used by such an informal group. The culture of spending free time outdoors or often in an abandoned space, such as old buildings[13].

Sposób na Alcybiadesa (Eng. *The Way to Deal with Alcibiades*) (1964) is a young adult novel that focuses on school life, friendships and youthful adventures, incorporating elements of suspense. In this novel, sport is depicted as a significant component of the pupils' daily routine and a prominent element of school-based activities. Wątłusz Pierwszy, a boxer who stood out among his peers with his muscular build and extraordinary strength – after losing several fights, broke down and decided to become a poet; sports poetry thus appears here, presented in a very funny form. The poem quoted below, which rhymes in the original Polish version, is one of many amusing excerpts from this book:

> The sun sets blood red over the Smokehouse,
> The foul cry of Więckowska's poultry can be heard,
> The season is over, farewell fame!
> On the withered leaves a knocked-out boxer lies.
> A pitiful smile contorts his face,
> Just until spring!
> When you got sick of fist fights,
> Spread your wings of poetry![14].

The quality of the poem is not particularly impressive, but this is certainly intentional, to highlight the humour of the situation. Nevertheless, Niziurski draws the reader's attention to the intriguing, albeit niche, phenomenon of sports poetry. This kind of poetry is most commonly associated with the works of literary giants such as the aforementioned renowned Polish poet (and sportsman) Kazimierz Wierzyński. However, interestingly, the American

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[13] K. Varga, *Księga*…, op. cit., p. 119.
[14] Ibid., p. 131 (trans. mine – M. Mazurkiewicz).

boxing champion Muhammad Ali was also known for his rhyming improvisations in the 1960s, which often took the form of sports poetry – frequently short rhyming boasts. While it is unclear whether Niziurski was inspired by the famous boxer's work, it seems likely.

Niziurski's Sports Short Stories

It is important to note that Niziurski's two short stories are notable for the role that sport plays in the narratives. The first of these is *The Pitch*, which was published in 1956 as part of the collection of stories *The Toady*. The other one is *The Devilish Descent* from the collection is *Nikodem, or the Mystery of the Study* (1964). In both cases, Niziurski treats sport as a significant source of values, as something that has a positive effect on people and helps them to become better individuals.

The Pitch shows how a group of country boys mobilize to defend the place where they play, which was supposed to be taken away by the local authorities. Sport is presented here as a phenomenon which strengthens social ties and a sense of solidarity in acting for the common good. The key moment is the municipal council meeting, during which the fate of the pitch is decided. Emotional statements are made, including those of the opponents. One of them says: "Football is a waste of time. Why do we need sports? … We have farm work to do. That's what's important"[15]. However, the romantic vision of creating a place where future generations will be able to play wins out. The final victory is the moment of joy and triumph, which the following fragment demonstrates:

> That moment stuck in the boys' minds. They no longer cared about the vote [at the council meeting] or the rest of the discussion. They understood that their cause had been won. And in such a wonderful way! Could it have ended any better? There would be a pitch, a ball, equipment! And most importantly, their own real team![16].

The Devilish Descent, devoted to the annual school cycling competition, praises the ideal of fair play. In literature of this type, sport is not an end in itself, but a means of conveying moral values (the principles of healthy competition,

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[15] E. Niziurski, *Boisko*, [in:] E. Niziurski, *Lizus*, Warszawa 1956, p. 101.
[16] Ibid., p. 104.

honesty, and teamwork are promoted). The rules of fair play in sport often derive from the chivalric ethos. The following principles are usually recalled: selfless respect for the rules of the game; respect for the opponent; maintaining equal opportunities in the fight; not taking advantage of random advantages; giving up the practical benefits of victory; and minimizing the opponent's suffering. The aforementioned moving short story illustrates the pure and noble nature of sport, as one of the boys lends his bike to a colleague from the competing class (who then wins) after he fell down and crashed his own bike. At the end of the story, the winner states that he cannot accept the prize, as it would be unfair. The competing class also declines, and the teachers, surprised and moved by the honest attitude of their students, decide to divide the prize (sports equipment) among all the participants[17].

Ryszard Szurkowski, the famous cyclist, is a well-known example of fair play in sport. During the 1970 Polish Championships, the Polish Olympic Committee recognized his gentlemanly gesture when he gave his bicycle to Zygmunt Hanusik, enabling the latter to win. For this noble behaviour, he received the UNESCO Fair Play Award. It is not confirmed whether Niziurski's story had an influence on Szurkowski's upbringing.

Other (Selected) Examples

In the 1966 short story entitled *There's a Written Test Tomorrow*, the protagonists Jarek Strzębski and Zbigniew Cykucki express concerns regarding an upcoming maths test, having spent the previous winter playing hockey as goalkeepers with older students rather than studying for it. In this instance, the historical background is of particular relevance. The story is set against the backdrop of the 1964 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, where the Polish national hockey team finished in ninth place.

In *Adela, Understand Me!*, the author describes a football match between Orion Odrzywoły and Siarka Tarnobrzeg. In *Go Ahead, the Great Ones!*, a classic communist-era town undergoing transformation is shown, along with its stadiums and a sports museum. It is worth noting that some sports are practised illegally, for example ski jumping. In *The Peculiar Adventures of Cymeon Maksymalny*, Niziurski introduces Jacek Szykoń – a new type of teacher, intelligent,

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[17] E. Niziurski, *Diabli zjazd*, [in:] E. Niziurski, *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu*, Warszawa 1964, p. 224.

cunning, athletic, and committed to a healthy lifestyle. Szykoń is a member of the Sparta sports club and is particularly talented in the 400-metre race. In *The Seventh Initiation*, there is a chase through the local bathhouse. In *The Book of Rascals*, there is a boy named Gola, who is passionate about football and constantly persuades students to play. The arrival of his dream football by the post distracts the other students from their studies. The main protagonist of *The Case of the Clarinet*, Clarinet – shows off his acquaintance with such great athletes as cyclist Stanisław Królak and boxer Zygmunt Chychła – sports heroes of Poland at the time. In *The Adventures of Bąbel and Syfon*, the reader encounters the abduction and imprisonment of of Hubert Pucułka, a table tennis player, just prior to a significant competition. Bąbel and Syfon, the protagonists and junior detectives, take on the task of solving this case, which is one of the key moments in the book. These are just selected examples; it should be noted that there are, in fact, numerous additional episodes in which sport manifests itself in the form of various forms of rivalry and pursuit.

All this shows Niziurski's recognition of the importance of sport in young people's lives. He seemed to realize that given the way in which schoolboys function, something would be missing from their lives if there were no sporting rivalry. Furthermore, he clearly noticed the potential of sport as a contributing factor to the development of a narrative. Last but not least, sport has been shown to be a catalyst for different kinds of change – not only physical, but mental one as well.

Conclusions

Culture is a living organism. Constituting an integral part of the cultural reality, sport has been a source of literary inspiration and it is reasonable to assume that and will never cease to inspire authors. As the poet Krzysztof Zuchora notes, "sport can be a task for many writers, and they need not fear plagiarism. It is still a virgin land of words"[18].

Literature containing sports themes, due to its diversity, defies unambiguous assessment. It usually liberates experiences and preserves emotions which, although often less vivid, never truly fade. It plays an extremely important role – it clearly places sport in the sphere of culture. As demonstrated above, Polish literature is no exception to the universality of the sporting experience.

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[18] K. Zuchora, *Vademecum olimpijskie*, [in:] *Kultura fizyczna…*, op. cit., Warszawa 2022, p. 338.

The historical context of many literary works, including those by Niziurski, should undoubtedly be emphasized. Thus, literary works often have historical value in relation to sports competitions and practices. They offer a cultural interpretation of historical events.

Edmund Niziurski was not a sports writer in the strict sense of the word, but sport played a noticeable role in his literary output – especially as part of school and youth life, which he eagerly described. In his work, sport definitely serves integrative and educational functions. As demonstrated above, it is a metaphor for growing up, fair competition, and the development of young people's characters. It should be emphasized that the author presents sport as a space in which to fight for moral and social values, rather than just victory. While Niziurski may not have been a sports fanatic, he certainly valued a healthy lifestyle and was acutely aware of the social, educational and cultural role of sport. He incorporated this into his fiction and comedy with great skill.

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CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG TRANSLATORS RELATED TO TRANSLATING NIZIURSKI'S PROSE – AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE SHORT STORY *SPRAWA KLARNETA*

WYZWANIA STOJĄCE PRZED MŁODYMI TŁUMACZAMI, ZWIĄZANE Z PRZEKŁADEM PROZY NIZIURSKIEGO – NA PRZYKŁADZIE OPOWIADANIA *SPRAWA KLARNETA*

Keywords
Niziurski – translations – literary translation – translation equivalents

Słowa klucze
Niziurski – tłumaczenia – przekład literacki – ekwiwalenty tłumaczeniowe

Abstract
The world depicted in Niziurski's prose seems archaic to contemporary people in their twenties. Is it worth translating Niziurski into English today? What strategies should be applied in translation? The students analysed the short story *Sprawa Klarneta*, chosen for its topical theme of bullying among peers. In the text, passages posing a challenge for a young translator were identified. Translations for the selected elements, based on various translation procedures and techniques were suggested and then, in a survey, the students chose their preferred solutions. This paper presents the results of the survey, shedding light on how young translators perceive the translatability of Niziurski's work into English.

Streszczenie
Świat przedstawiony w prozie Niziurskiego wydaje się archaiczny dla współczesnych dwudziestolatków. Czy warto dziś tłumaczyć Niziurskiego na język angielski? Jakie strategie zastosować w przekładzie? Studenci przeanalizowali opowiadanie *Sprawa Klarneta*, wybrane

ze względu na aktualny motyw prześladowań w grupie rówieśniczej. W tekście zidentyfikowano fragmenty stanowiące wyzwanie dla młodego tłumacza. Do wybranych elementów zaproponowano tłumaczenia w oparciu o różne procedury i techniki. Następnie, w ankiecie, studenci wybierali konkretne rozwiązania. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki tej ankiety, rzucające światło na to, jak młodzi tłumacze postrzegają przekładalność twórczości Niziurskiego na język angielski.

Introduction

The world depicted in Niziurski's prose may seem archaic to today's twenty-year-olds. This paper presents observations on how contemporary students, specifically a group of second-year master's students in applied linguistics, whom I teach a literary translation course, perceive such prose in the context of its translation into English. The text *Sprawa Klarneta* from the short stories collection *Opowiadania*[1] was selected for analysis due to its up-to-date theme. The story of a boarding school in the 1950s, about a new boy who tries to gain the group's recognition by bullying younger children, and the description of the complex interactions within a group of teenagers, all of these turned out to be so universal that we decided to take a closer look at the text. The students read the story and were asked to identify locations in the text that they found problematic due to their own difficulties in understanding or potential obstacles in translation.

While reading Niziurski, the young researchers encountered words the meaning of which had been forgotten, bizarre colloquialisms of unclear functions, language that seemed unacceptable due to changes in register or cultural norms, and obscure cultural allusions.

If these texts are so linguistically distant for contemporary Polish twenty-year-olds, how exotic must they be for an English-speaking audience? Not only would a time gap separate them from the text, but also a lack of any connection with the world of the Polish People's Republic, as well as a linguistic and cultural barrier. The students therefore had to answer the question: is it worth translating Niziurski into English today? Why do we need to translate[2]? After the discussion, the conclusion was reached that if we found a time-transcending

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1 E. Niziurski, *Opowiadania*, Warszawa 1973.

2 According to Vermeer's Skopos theory, the starting point for translation is to determine the purpose of the translation. Cf. H.J. Vermeer, *Skopos and Commission in Translation Theory*, [in:] *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. L. Venuti, London–New York 2012, p. 191.

message in the texts themselves, an anecdote that was able to appeal to a contemporary twenty-year-old person, then it would be worth considering translating the works. The theme of peer violence and the search for leadership within the group was considered important enough to continue working on the text.

Since Niziurski's text is worth the translator's effort, the question of strategy selection arises. Intuitively speaking, the ideal move would be to gently domesticate and modernise the English text in terms of communication and the description of the interactions between the young characters, while preserving the local colour and distinctive foreign elements of the text – allusions to communist reality[3]. Such a text could serve as proof that the problem described existed even in a country that was distant in terms of time, geography and politics.

The next step was to identify passages in the text that required special attention due to problems with interpretation or uncertainty about their best equivalents in English. The students were asked to restrain themselves to identifying individual words or phrases no longer than a short single sentence. A questionnaire was created from the most representative examples: the students were asked to suggest alternative answers: the most appropriate, in their opinion, solutions for translating these passages into English. Newmark's typologies of translation procedures[4] and Hejwowski's translation techniques[5] served as the theoretical basis for creating English proposals. The number of responses was not predetermined: the survey included as many translation alternatives as the students came up with. The preparatory sheet included over 100 passages

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[3] This refers to domestication and foreignization, two extreme concepts of approaching a text according to Venuti. Cf. L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London–New York 1995, p. 20.

[4] Newmark proposes procedures such as: transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, synonym, through translation, shift and transposition, modulation, recognized translation, compensation, reduction and extension, paraphrase. Cf. P. Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, Hertfordshire 1988, pp. 81–90.

[5] Hejwowski proposes techniques for translating cultural elements (reproduction, syntagmatic translation, explanation, accepted, functional or descriptive equivalent, hyponym or hypernym and omission) and techniques for translating proper names (transfer, transfer with graphic or adaptive modification, transcription or transliteration, additional description, recognized, etymological or functional equivalent, use of a visually or phonetically similar name, or a completely different name, diminutive, translation using dictionary translations of the components of the name, substitution, replacement with an intentional name, common noun, omission). Cf. K. Hejwowski, *Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 76–83; K. Hejwowski, *Iluzja przekładu*, Katowice 2015, pp. 176–178.

indicated by the students during classes, of which 40 were ultimately selected. Due to the limited length of this text, the most interesting ones from the researcher's point of view were chosen for this article. Due to the purely exploratory nature of the survey – its purpose was to initially outline the trends in the attitudes of young translators towards the prose described above – the survey responses included ready-made proposals for equivalents in English, only the names of the proposed techniques or procedures, and sometimes even only hints in Polish concerning the direction in which the translation should go. This apparent inconsistency was necessary because, at the preparatory stage of translation, it is sometimes impossible to decide on the details of a passage which is interdependent with other elements of the text, and it is only at the final stage that specific linguistic means can be definitively selected. It was also important not to constrain the students' creativity with too many rules.

The final stage for the students was to vote in the survey for the best translation proposal in their opinion. In their choices, they were to refer to the theoretical knowledge and intuition they had acquired during their studies. The results of this survey[6] shed light on how young translators perceive the translatability of Niziurski's work into English.

1. Research material and survey results

For the purposes of analysing the survey results, the material, which was presented chronologically in the questionnaire, was divided into four groups: "local colour", "the language of the communist regime, including newspeak", "archaisms" and "youth language".

1.1. Local colour

I. *Klarnet* and other surnames and place names, here: *Maćków*
In these cases, all respondents opted for *transference* – transferring proper names into the English text, with optional modifications such as omitting Polish diacritical marks. Although in Niziurski's work surnames often carry additional information about the character (in the story in question, this is not the dominant function of proper names), this time the desire to emphasise the

[6] The illustrations presented in the article were generated directly from a Google Form as non-editable results of the students' voting.

extra-textual reality in which the universal problem described was observed prevailed, and the desire to foreignise the text won out. The syntagmatic translation of proper names, either using synonyms or functional equivalents (e.g. *Matthiastown*), as well as the use of arbitrary English names that are not related to the original in terms of sound or etymology, was considered inappropriate in the light of the intended purpose of this text.

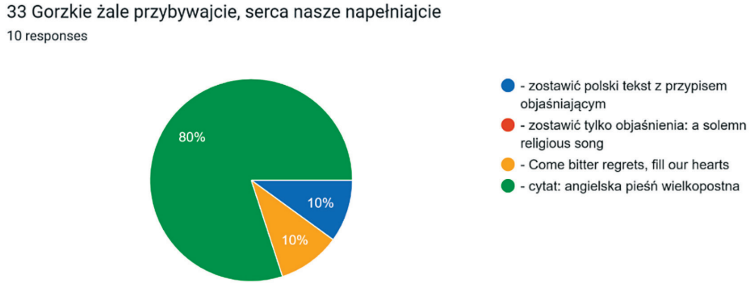
II. *Kolegiata*
The word was not clear to all the students, so it was identified as difficult. After learning its definition, most of the respondents opted for a literal translation. However, only 20% chose this solution in its pure form as the ultimate one, because as many as 60%, anticipating difficulties in understanding the term similar to those they would encounter themselves, decided that the syntagmatic translation *collegiate church* should be accompanied by an explanation of its age: *old*.

III. *Wojny szwedzkie*
The students decided that the literal translation (present in the questionnaire) of a phrase which, for a Polish reader, clearly defines the time and place, referring to an event that significantly changed the fate of the country, would not be obvious to an English-speaking audience. Therefore, in order to make the historical reference clear, the syntagmatic translation (*Swedish wars*) of this popular Polish phrase was abandoned in favour of extending the translation with an explanation in the text (50%) or a footnote (50%).

IV. *Święty Florian*
Although familiar hypernyms (*figure of a saint* or *statue*) were proposed in the survey, in the end, the vast majority opted to preserve the cultural flavour and use the recognised equivalent *Saint Florian*.

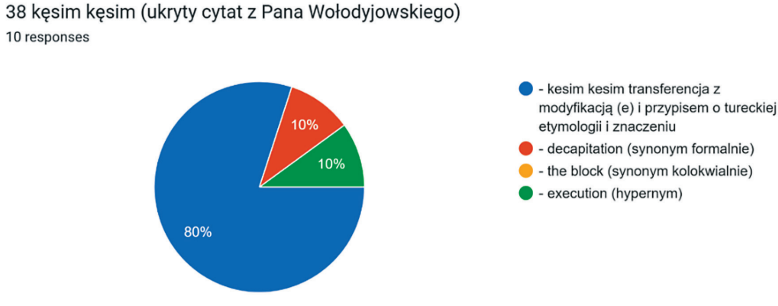
V. (Buda) *maćkowska* and *maćkowskie* (powietrze)
These two phrases show that local relations in the text can be more important than a consistent translation of a single lexeme. The adjective *maćkowski* has a locational function. In both cases, identical options were proposed: *in Maćków*, *in the town*, *local*. However, in the case of the school (buda), 80% opted for indicating the name of the town, and in the description of the air (powietrze), for adding the adjective *local*.

VI. *Gorzkie żale przybywajcie, serca nasze napełniajcie* (*Come bitter regrets, fill our hearts*)
In the case of the quote from a religious song, the options proposed came from the entire spectrum of techniques available to the translator, but the desire to make the text more accessible to the target reader prevailed, and the most popular vote (80%) was for the introduction of a cultural equivalent, i.e. a quote from any Lenten song in English:



VII. *GRN* – and other acronyms from the era
In this case, too, the voters opted (90%) for the exoticisation of the text: transferring Polish acronyms into the English text and adding explanatory footnotes for better understanding of the text. The options proposed included: literal translations of acronym expansions, the use of hypernyms – common nouns, and even translating acronym expansions and creating new ones based on English words.

VIII. *Kęsim kęsim* (hidden quote from the novel *Pan Wołodyjowski*)
In the last example in this group, the survey confirmed the tendency to exoticise the text. Despite the availability of equivalents that were clear to the target audience (e.g. *decapitation* or *execution*), the students chose transference with an explanatory footnote as the best technique for translating the phrase in question.



To sum up, when it comes to vocabulary such as names of places and people, references to Polish history and religion, or phrases revealing foreign cultural influences characteristic of Poland – all of which emphasise the local colour of the world depicted – the respondents often decided to transfer language from this group without changes or with minor modifications to the English text, less often to calques or cultural equivalents. Interestingly, being aware that explanations, and especially explanatory footnotes, are not considered a desirable tool in the translator's workshop today, the respondents often decided to use them, considering it a priority to introduce the English-speaking reader to the world depicted and, by emphasising the exotic nature of the place, to highlight the universality of the problem addressed.

1.2. The language of the communist regime, including newspeak

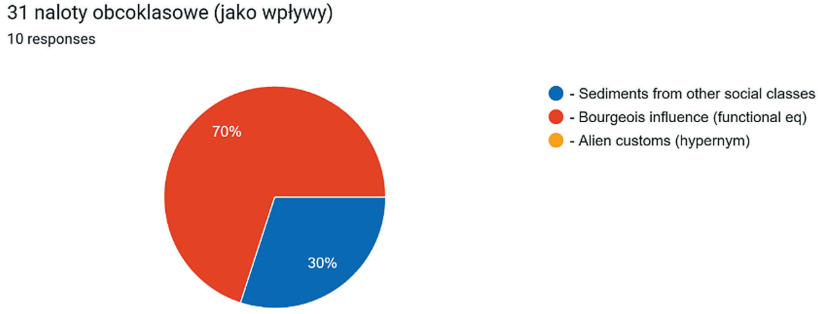
I. *Władza ludowa*
In this case, a total of 80% voted for a literal translation: *power of the people*, but 70% in this group chose this solution plus an explanatory footnote about the hidden totalitarian nature of this phrase, which, without the context, is associated with the benefits of democracy. The remaining respondents voted for the euphemism *local authorities*.

II. *Według rozdzielnika* (reference to the communist economy)
This phrase required introducing some students to the principles of the planned socialist economy, after which three solutions were proposed: descriptive, in relation to the specific situation of assigning students to rooms (*by the number of beds*), omitting the translation of this phrase and translating only the adjacent *jak padalo* (randomly), finding an equivalent functioning in a slightly different but analogous reality – *according to a rationing officedistribution office*. In the survey, 100% chose the latter option.

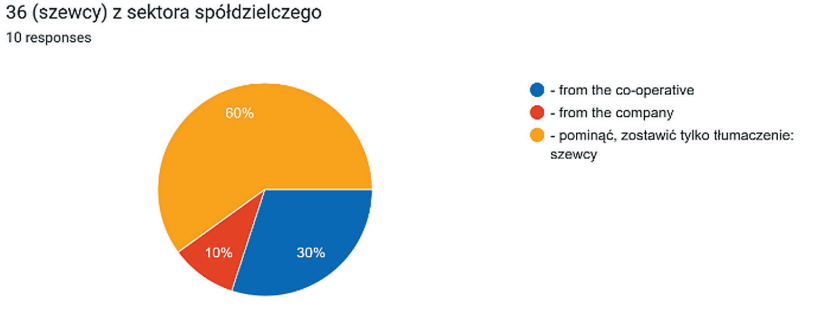
III. *Przyschnięty do strupa własności* – an example of newspeak
The expression sounds foreign and awkward to today's Polish reader. Perhaps it never sounded pleasant, as its function is to evoke negative feelings. Therefore, it seemed natural to create a linguistic "oddity" in the target language as well – through a syntagmatic, literal translation. For the proposed *stuck to the scab of property*, 80% wanted to add a footnote about the role of newspeak in Poland, and 20% wanted to leave the interpretation to the reading

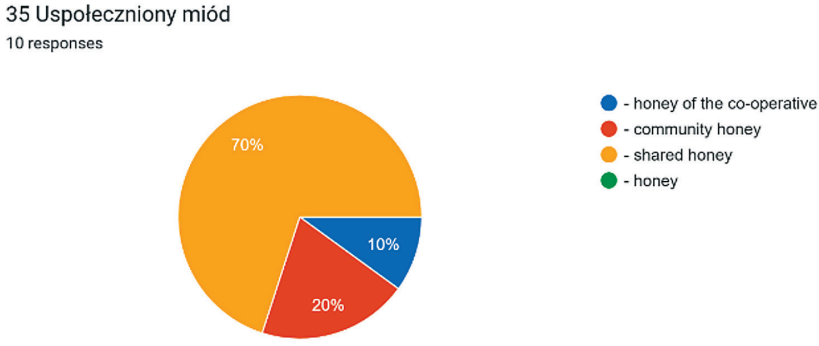
competence of the target audience. The neologism proposed in the survey, referring to the principles of Orwell's Newspeak (*propscabstuck*), was not chosen as the final solution.

IV. *Naloty obcoklasowe* (as influences)
Although this example could be interpreted in the same way as in III. as an example of newspeak – and this option appeared in the questionnaire – the functional equivalent from English texts on socialism (*bourgeois influence*) prevailed. The hypernym option did not gain recognition among the respondents, as can be seen in the chart:



V. *Uspołeczniony miód* and (szewcy) *z sektora spółdzielczego*
Although the role of co-operatives in the society of the time was noted during the discussion and their English equivalent (*from/of the co-operative*) was agreed upon in the proposed options, they did not gain a majority of votes in the survey. In the case of *honey* (*miód*), the functional equivalent won out over the more general synonym, and in the case of *shoemakers* (*szewcy*), an omission of the attribute did. Interestingly, in the first case, the option of omitting and leaving the translation of *honey* alone did not receive any votes.





VI. *Milicjant*
80% of respondents chose a translation emphasising the communist nature of the official (*militia officer*), while 10% opted for the functional equivalent (*police officer*) and 10% for the synonym with a different register (*cop*).

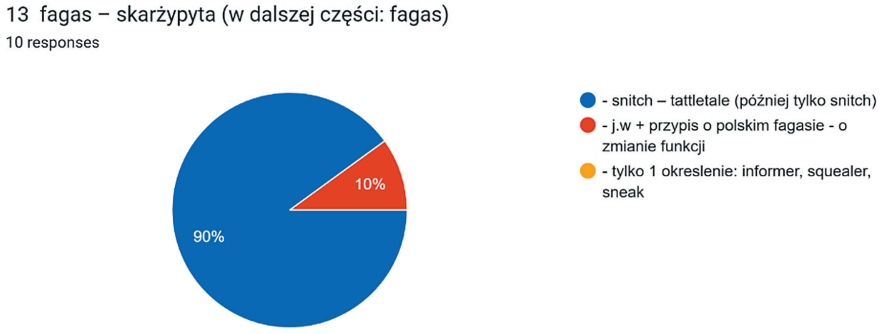
In summary, two trends were evident in the survey regarding the "language of communism". The first was the desire to find the best equivalents for phrases such as *władza ludowa* (literal translation) or *naloty obcoklasowe* (functional equivalent). Interestingly, on the other hand, some students did not notice the connection between the vocabulary and the communist reality and translated it as ordinary language without any subtext. However, if the language of the Polish People's Republic was recognised as specific, an effort was made to preserve it so that the target reader would be aware of where the story was set.

1.3. Archaisms

I. *Buda* (maćkowska)
It may come as a surprise that for some students, referring to a school as a *buda* (lit. doghouse) did not come naturally, and therefore the word was classified as an archaism. According to some, it referred to a building in poor condition, which was inconsistent with the content of the story – the school building was new in the town. As it is difficult to find a colloquial and slightly derogatory equivalent in English, the votes in the survey were distributed among various terms for the building: *our school* 50%, *school* 20%, *educational institution* 20%, *this doghouse* 10%.

II. *Mulat – "siadaj mule"*
The boarding school supervisor was called *Mulat* (a Mulato) because he was dark-skinned and had a habit of saying "sit down, mule" to the youngsters in his charge. This interesting word play can be transferred into English thanks to the similarity of the words *Mulato* and *mule*, which have functions analogous to those in Polish. Despite this facilitation, most of the respondents rejected this version, even with the possibility of adding a footnote explaining the reception of this word in the Polish reality of the time, and thus proposed replacing it with a completely different word play (a nickname referring to appearance combined with an allusion to calling someone stupid, e.g. *mug*, *bonehead*), at the cost of interfering with the text – just to avoid the racist, in the opinion of the respondents, use of the nickname *Mulato*. It turns out that even when aiming to reconstruct a specific reality in the target text, the translator often remains a "child" of their era, and we find echoes of this in the text they translate.

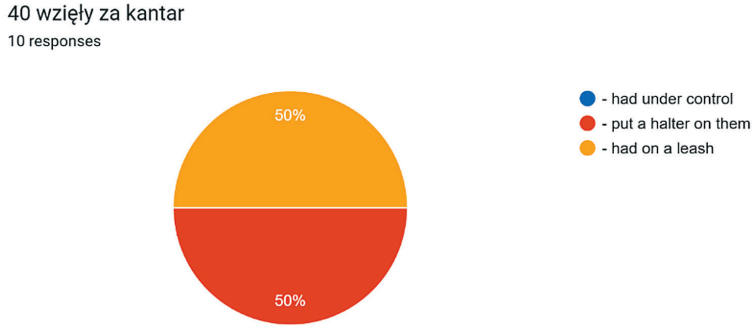
III. *Fagas-skarżypyta*, later in the text only *fagas*
This word was included in the group in question due to a change in register and meaning. Although in the text of the story *fagas* is a commonly used term for an informer, contemporary twenty-year-olds perceive it as extremely offensive. After the analysis and separating their own feelings from the rules of the world depicted, they easily found and voted for the best functional equivalent in English (*snitch-tattletale*, 90%):



IV. *Bubki*
After recognising the meaning and function of the word in the text, the students proposed the archaic *blokes* or *chaps* (10%), the pejorative *twitts* (80%), and the modernised *dillholes* (10%). The tendency to transfer the function of the word prevailed.

V. (Parskał) *pod tuszem* (a synonym for having a shower)
After finding the meaning of the phrase in question, the students proposed several options for the survey (including a highly literary register and a hypernym), but unanimously chose a contemporary neutral equivalent in English: *under the shower*. Interestingly, the students eagerly considered the etymology of the phrase, finding inspiration in German and Russian, but this did not influence their choices as translators.

VI. *Wzięły za kantar*
As in VII., the biggest challenge was to correctly interpret the phrase. However, this time the students did not opt for the contemporary and neutral simple message of control proposed in the survey, but divided their votes between two metaphorical solutions – control over a horse (*halter* – less popular, but consistent with the Polish metaphor) and over a dog (*leash*).



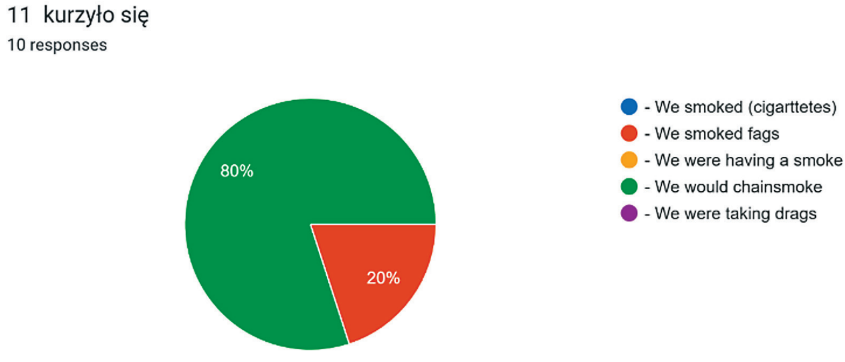
Based on the analysed material, we can observe that in the case of archaisms, a greater challenge for the group of young people surveyed was to understand them, rather than how to translate them. Once they had overcome the obstacle of interpretation, the students tended to opt for various techniques to facilitate the reception of the text which was itself difficult and archaic due to the world depicted. They chose lexemes with equivalent emotional connotations

and colloquiality levels without introducing any particular archaic measures in English.

1.4. Youth language from decades ago

Although the phrases in this section also seem archaic at times, they have been separated for analysis into a distinct group due to their function. The young characters use them to communicate with each other. Due to the specific nature of youth code, they have been placed in a separate group.

I. Kurzyło się
The fairly obvious term for smoking cigarettes resulted in the biggest number of options being proposed for the questionnaire in this point: from a simple translation of the message (*we smoked*) to highly colloquial and slang terms for the activity. However, none of them reflected (even through the passive voice) the non-subject form of the original. Interestingly, only two contemporary colloquial options were ultimately voted for, *we would chainsmoke* being the most popular among the respondents:

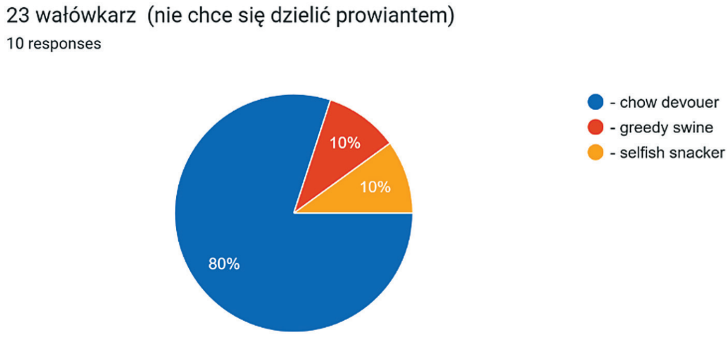


II. *Spławialiśmy faceta*
In the case of this still popular phrase, the students came up with three different solutions: the popular and therefore not perceived as distinctive (and distinctiveness was identified as a feature of youth language) *got rid of him/the guy*, the colloquial and eye-catching *dumped* or *saw the back of him*, and the formal *expelled*. 80% of respondents voted for the second option and 20% chose the first, proving that young translators perceive originality as a distinguishing feature of youth language.

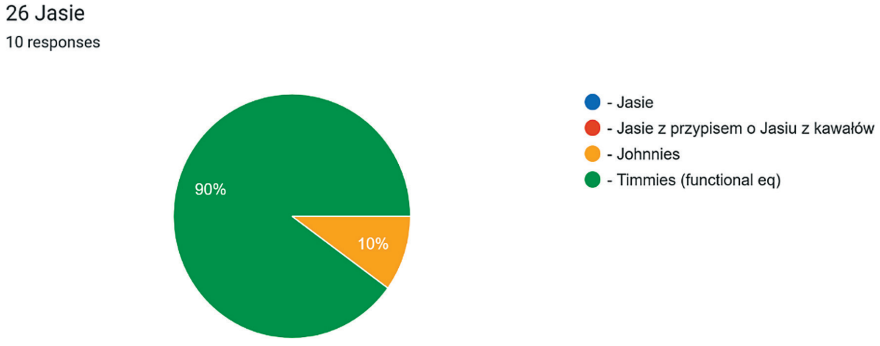
III. *Tubylec* (a native – a tribal metaphor, now seen as potentially sensitive language in terms of colonialism)
The solution proposed by the students can be classified as a compensation procedure as described by Newmark – because, according to those examining the text, it does not sufficiently emphasise the People's Republic of Poland as the setting, it was suggested that the young characters should not address each other as a native (*tubylec*), but as *commarade*, which, in their opinion, will seem sarcastic in the context of the whole story. 60% of respondents accepted this option, with 40% choosing the translation *tribe member*. Difficulties in finding out why the word *tubylec* had been chosen to describe a member of an elite community in the boarding school led to a search for substitutes that could function accurately in English.

IV. Names of "tortures": *zakładać "rower"*, *zakładać "cygaro"*, *zrobić koca*
The students noticed the functional similarity of these phrases. Therefore, it was proposed to use a noun as a verb in all three examples (*to bike*, *to cigar*, *to blanket*), which makes the expression sound neat and "youthful" in English. This solution won significantly in each of the discussed points of the survey (80 or 90%). Other proposals (adding verbs: *do* (robić) or *put* (zakładać) before each noun or a descriptive translation) proved to be niche and irrelevant for the young translator.

V. *Wałówki* i *wałówkarz* – provisions and one who does not want to share their provisions
The students recognised the need for internal consistency in the text and proposed translations based on the same word for both points: the slang terms *chow* and *chow devouer*, which beat (90% and 80%) other, e.g. neutral, offensive or descriptive, proposals in the survey.



VI. About younger mates: *Jasie*
Finding allusions to the foolish Jaś from jokes in this nickname, the students proposed an equivalent from the target culture, *Timmies*, and it won over the other options:



The language used by the young characters in their communication within the group was modified in the young translators' rendering proposals in order to facilitate understanding and enable readers to potentially identify with the characters. Patterns of concise and clear communication existing in contemporary English were used.

2. Conclusions from the analysis

To sum up, the above analysis, being the main part of the exploratory study on the tendencies prevailing among students and regarding the translation of a text set in Polish, now archaic, realities, did not reveal a single translation strategy consistent for the rendering of all the passages under study. Nevertheless, after dividing the material into four functional groups, the dominant trends in the approach to translating the text in question among twenty-year-old translation researchers became apparent. When translating phrases emphasising the local colour of the world depicted, the respondents often chose to transfer the language from this group, occasionally with minor modifications, into the English text. The respondents opted for footnotes, considering it a priority to introduce the English-speaking reader to the local specifics. When approaching the "language of the communist regime", two tendencies prevailed: the desire to find the best equivalents for phrases and to literally translate them as ordinary language without any hints, when the students did not recognise

the connections between the vocabulary and the communist reality. In the case of archaisms, the students decided to make the already difficult text easier to comprehend, without the use of any special procedures to make it sound archaic in English. The language of communication used by the young characters was tailored in the proposals to facilitate understanding and enable the reader to potentially identify with the characters. It should be remembered that the study was exploratory in nature and was conducted on a relatively small group of students who had been studying translation issues together for several semesters. Therefore, the results of this study may have been influenced by the teacher conducting the course, and the students may have influenced each other in the discussion preceding their individual responses to the survey. In order to obtain more reliable conclusions, this survey should be presented to a larger group of students who would make sure to provide reliable and honest answers after reading the source text.

Although formulated with some reservation, the conclusions of this study are consistent with the theoretical thoughts on translation. Krzysztof Hejwowski perceives the essence of translation as follows:

> Translation is a special form of communication because it mediates between people from different cultures, who speak different languages. In the case of literary translations (and not only), very often the recipients of the translation were not the 'intended' recipients of the text – it was written with native speakers of the same language as the author in mind. And yet, if a translation is being produced, it means that the translator and/or the person commissioning the translation believe that it will find an audience in a new environment, that it will be 'understood' and appreciated by someone[7].

The above words accurately summarise the essence of the students' work on Niziurski's text – the translator's task is to write a text which, with regard to its anecdote, message or other function, will be read and understood in the target

[7] „Tłumaczenie jest szczególną formą komunikacji, bo pośredniczy między ludźmi z różnych kultur mówiącymi różnymi językami. W przypadku tłumaczeń literackich (i nie tylko) bardzo często odbiorcy przekładu nie byli «planowanymi» odbiorcami tekstu – powstawał on z myślą o odbiorcach rodzimych mówiących tym samym językiem co autor. A przecież, skoro powstaje przekład, to znaczy, iż tłumacz i/lub osoba zamawiająca przekład uważają, że znajdzie on odbiorców w nowym otoczeniu, że zostanie przez kogoś «zrozumiany» i doceniony". Trans. A. Majcher. K. Hejwowski, *Iluzja…*, op. cit., pp. 9–10.

culture. Various procedures and techniques are used for this purpose, and their use depends on a whole range of contextual factors[8]. As we have observed, when selecting these, the internal coherence of the text must be taken into account, but also local factors (such as the function of the translated phrase) and interpretations. As the survey results suggest, it is possible to create an English text of the story that has the potential to appeal to the target reader.

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[8] P. Newmark, *A Textbook…*, op. cit., p. 8.

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EDMUND NIZIURSKI IN THE GDR
EDMUND NIZIURSKI W NRD

Keywords
Edmund Niziurski – the GDR – Polish children's and young adult literature

Słowa klucze
Edmund Niziurski – NRD – polska literatura dziecięca i młodzieżowa

Abstract
This research analyses a selection of Edmund Niziurski's literary works that were translated into German and published in the GDR. The paper investigates the reasons behind the choice of these particular writings, which is a notable departure from the author's most commercially successful titles in the Polish People's Republic. To explain this publishing paradox, the article compares the publishing profiles of Polish and German institutions and draws on German publishers' reports to shed light on their decision-making process.

Streszczenie
Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie utworów autorstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego, które ukazały się w Niemieckiej Republice Demokratycznej w przekładzie na język niemiecki. Stanowi on także zaproszenie do pogłębionej refleksji nad tym, dlaczego wybrano właśnie te, a nie inne utwory. W większości przypadków są to bowiem pozycje, które w Polskiej Republice Ludowej okazały się największymi bestsellerami. Artykuł jest również próbą wyjaśnienia tego fenomenu, m. in. w oparciu o oceny wydawnicze niemieckich wydawnictw, a także poprzez porównanie profilu wydawniczego instytucji polskich i niemieckich.

For over half a century, Edmund Niziurski's work has shaped successive generations. As observed by Krzysztof Varga, the author of his literary biography, "We all grew up on him, Niziurski"[1]. Although Niziurski also wrote for adults (creating short stories, crime novels and an occupation-themed novel), he is remembered by Poles above all as a master of children's and youth literature, and it was in this field that he created most of his works. The fact that Niziurski kept writing for more than 50 years means that the period of his work dedicated to children's and youth literature spans both the communist era and the post-communist era, but it was during the communist period that the vast majority of his works – several dozen of then – were written, including those that are unquestionably the readers' favourites. After 1990, until the author's death, only a few of his works were published[2].

In terms of Edmund Niziurski's place in the children's and youth literature from the era of the Polish People's Republic, based on his rich literary output he can certainly be regarded as one of the most popular authors of prose for a young audience of the period[3]. Analysis of the reception of his work speaks strongly in Niziurski's favour, presenting him as a prolific and popular author, but also an original, innovative creator with a sincere love for the youth[4].

Some of Niziurski's works have been translated into foreign languages. Translations were produced for the publishing market of the former Eastern Bloc countries as well as for Western countries and, in a few cases, non-European countries[5].

This article focuses on the presence of Edmund Niziurski's works on the GDR publishing market. The aim is to present the works published there. At the same time, it reveals a certain paradox in the lack of correlation between the popularity of Niziurski's works on the Polish market and the selection of works translated into German. In the face of this inconsistency, there is a need to examine the political, ideological and editorial factors that may have influenced the decisions of East German publishers. The publishing policy towards

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1 K. Varga, *Księga dla starych urwisów. Wszystko, czego jeszcze nie wiecie o Edmundzie Niziurskim*, Toruń 2019, blurb.

2 J. Czachowska, A. Szałagan, *Niziurski Edmund*, [in:] *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik biobibliograficzny*, vol. 6, Warszawa 1999, pp. 56–58.

3 G. Knap, *Dzieje wydawnicze twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, "Studia o książce i informacji" 2014, no. 33, p. 27.

4 See J. Dobrzycki, *Szkolne wyobcowanie. Inny Niziurski*, Sosnowiec 2024, pp. 9–47.

5 G. Knap, op. cit., p. 34.

Niziurski's works in the GDR was reconstructed on the basis of archives as well as German-language reviews, while the publishing profile of German institutions was compared with those responsible for publishing the originals in the People's Republic of Poland. It should be added that the topic addressed in this article has not been the subject of any studies to date. The present work is therefore intended as a contribution towards filling the research gap on the place of Polish children's and youth literature in the GDR.

Among Niziurski's best-known and recognisable works in Poland are his youth novels: *Księga urwisów* (1954), *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* (1959), and *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (1964). The popularity of these books is confirmed by the numerous reissues during the communist period: *Księga Urwisów* was published 13 times, *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* 8 times, and *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* 16 times[6]. These figures clearly distinguish these works from the writer's other work.

The influence of these three novels on popular culture is also evident in the media. Articles dedicated to the writer have often focused on these publications. For example, after Niziurski's death in 2013, Cezary Polak published in "Tygodnik Powszechny" an article entitled *Księgi Urwisów*[7]. Krzysztof Varga in "Gazeta Wyborcza" farewelled him with the headline *The Man who Invented Marek Piegus is Dead*[8]. In turn, Marcin Meller in "Newsweek" began his tributewith a poem by Wątłusz Pierwszy, the protagonist of the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*[9]. Moreover, even the aforementioned biography by Varga bears a title that refers to one of the author's most famous novels: *Księga dla starych urwisów. Wszystko, czego jeszcze nie wiecie o Edmundzie Niziurskim*.

The popularity of these Niziurski novels during the communist period is also underlined by the number of languages into which they were translated, a significant contrast to his other work. *Księga Urwisów* achieved a record result, being translated into 7 languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Lithuanian, Latvian and even Chinese. *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* and *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* were translated into 6 languages each[10]. *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* was published in Estonian (with a reissue after

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6 J. Czachowska; A. Szałagan, op. cit., pp. 56–58.

7 C. Polak, *Księgi urwisów*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2013, no. 42, pp. 14–15.

8 K. Varga, *Nie żyje człowiek, który wymyślił Marka Piegusa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2013, no. 238, pp. 24–25.

9 M. Meller, *Niziurski*, "Newsweek" 2013, no. 42, p. 54.

10 J. Czachowska, A. Szałagan, op. cit., pp. 56–58.

three years), Russian, Czech (with a reissue after four years), Georgian, Slovak and Latvian. *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* was translated into Russian, Latvian, Georgian (which was an indirect translation, as it was made from Russian), Czech, Bulgarian and German[11]. It is interesting to note that although many Eastern Bloc countries published these three works in their native languages, only *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* from this list was published in the GDR. This was not the only work by Niziurski available in East Germany, although given the popularity rates in communist Poland, the other choices may seem a little out of the ordinary at first.

Niziurski's first novel published in the GDR was *Wyraj*. The book, which was published in Poland in 1964, belongs to a category of literature for adults that is less common in Niziurski's work[12]. In the GDR, it was published in 1972 in 85,000 copies under the title *Der Fall Dr. Stajny* or literally *The Case of Dr Stajny* translated by Kurt Kelm (1925-2009)[13]. The choice of this particular novel for publication in the GDR is surprising for several reasons. It had not been reprinted in Poland since its first publication and, in terms of translations, it stands apart from the rest of the author's output, as it has only been translated into Czech and German[14]. *Wyraj* was, however, perfectly in line with the publishing policy of the Militärverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, i.e. the East German Military Publishing House. This was the East German equivalent of the Polish Ministry of Defence (MON) Publishing House, which published the original. As the 1967 MON publishing catalogue proclaimed, it was "from the beginning a military, party and political publishing house, also playing a part in all the changes that took place in People's Polish Republic"[15]. Militärverlag der DDR performed a similar function. In addition to specialist literature and the military press, the publishing house also published propaganda books, military fiction and literature aimed at strengthening socialist defence awareness. The publishing house was subordinate to the Ministry of Defence[16]. The *Wyraj* novel fits perfectly into these criteria, as it is set in the reality of the German occupation. The main character is Eugeniusz Stajny, a doctor without a degree who looks after the local community in place of his

[11] Ibid.
[12] See E. Niziurski, *Wyraj*, Warszawa 1964.
[13] See E. Niziurski, *Der Fall Dr. Stajny*, Berlin 1972.
[14] J. Czachowska, A. Szałagan, op. cit., pp. 56–58.
[15] M. Zaremba, *Katalog XX lat Wydawnictwa MON*, Warszawa 1967, p. 5.
[16] https://invenio.bundesarchiv.de/invenio/main.xhtml (accessed: 11/05/2025).

mentor, Dr Fudala, who is no longer able to perform this function after suffering a stroke. Stajny avoids direct involvement in guerrilla warfare, wanting to survive at all costs. In time, it becomes apparent that his passivity is a form of a breakdown after the tragic death of his brothers, with whom he had fought side by side earlier in occupied Warsaw. His father was sent to an oflag and his mother died in the Pawiak prison[17].

Elements of the storyline that are very in keeping with the propaganda nature of the publications printed by both publishing houses include the portrayal of Nazi crimes, such as the expulsion of people from their homes, the burning of mass villages and executions, as well as the image of the People's Army (AL), presented as the most important and effective partisan group. Other factions, such as the National Armed Forces (NZS) or the so-called "Jędrusie", are portrayed negatively as lazy and unproductive[18]. Another, albeit more subtle example of propaganda is the scene featuring an old history professor, whom the main character, Stajny, considers a harmless eccentric. The professor, fascinated by physics, shares his thoughts with Stajny: if the war does not end soon at the front, it will be settled in a horrific way – with nuclear weapons[19]. As history shows, this scenario was very real. In the novel, however, the professor claims that it would be Hitler who would use the atomic bomb, not the USSR's allies. The professor urges Stajny to take an active part in the fighting to prevent this. Although Stajny ridicules the professor in his mind, considering him mad, the reader may get the impression that it is the naive Stajny who is wrong, and that the professor rightly foresees the coming danger[20].

Although the aim of this article is not to provide an in-depth translation analysis of Niziurski's works, in the case of the *Wyraj* novel it is worth noting the significant interferences in its German translation. These measures were intended to soften the message, presumably because of the target country in which the work was released. The following examples illustrate the deliberate manipulation to "de-nationalise" the Nazis in the German translation. In the original, Niziurski refers to them explicitly as Germans, but it is clear from the context that he is referring to German occupiers, not ordinary citizens. In the first passage, describing the view from Dr Stajny's window, Niziurski writes:

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17 E. Niziurski, *Wyraj*, op. cit., pp. 72–73.
18 Ibid., e.g. pp. 10, 40 and 78.
19 Ibid., p. 26.
20 Ibid.

> People with bundles in his yard did not offend the local Germans. Admittedly, there were often loud cries coming from the bundles, but oberfeldbel Ratscheck turned a blind eye to this. Oberfeldfebel Ratscheck was a "good" German. A good German is one that is accessible. Oberfeldfebel Ratscheck was accessible. Oberfeldfebel Ratscheck was sensible and knew that the war would not last forever[21].

In the German translation, the term "Germans" was replaced by "Okkupationsbehörden", meaning "occupation authorities". Furthermore, the German version completely omits the ironic term "good German" with the adjective in inverted commas, which constitutes a kind of oxymoron in the historical context. The explanation that a "good" German is one who can be bribed was also removed. What is more, in the original, Niziurski deliberately, even mockingly, repeats the title "Oberfeldfebel Ratscheck" anaphorically. The repetition, which is semantically unnecessary, is a form of apparent respect and serves to mock the character. In the German translation, this was completely omitted. The name "Oberfeldwebel Ratscheck" appears only once, and is replaced in subsequent sentences by the pronoun "er" (he), which is natural to the German language, but deprives the text of the ironic overtone present in the original. Here is the German version of this passage:

> Um die Händler auf seinem Hof kümmerten sich die hiesigen Okkupationsbehörden nicht. Zwar ertönte manchmal ein lautes Quieken aus einem der Bündel, aber Oberfeldwebel Ratscheck drückte da ein Auge zu. […] Er wußte, daß der Krieg nicht ewig dauern wurde[22].

> The second excerpt describes Dr Stajny's encounter with a mysterious man who wants him to treat an injured "grandpa". The man says that "grandpa" was shot during a manhunt:
>
> The man grunted.
>
> – I will be honest. Grandpa was shot by the Germans in a manhunt. They killed a lot of people. Grandpa was herding cows near the forest when the shooting started. …[23].

In the German version, the word "Germans" was changed to "die Okkupanten" (the occupiers), again without indicating the nationality of these people:

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[21] Ibid., p. 5.
[22] E. Niziurski, *Der Fall…*, op. cit., p. 3.
[23] E. Niziurski, *Wyraj*, op. cit., p. 10.

> Der Mann räusperte sich. „Ich will die Wahrheit sagen. Den Großvater haben die Okkupanten angeschossen. Bei einer Razzia. Es gab viele Tote. Der Großvater hütete die Kühe am Wald, als die Schießerei begann …[24].

Although Niziurski's novel *Wyraj* thematically differs significantly from most of his books, talking about tragic times for Poland, it is not devoid of the writer's typical humour. It is discernible, for example, in the conversation between Dr Stajny and a merchant:

> It turned out that I was by no means to be the only passenger. There were already sheep and a pig sitting on the cart. In the back, a stubby cow of the Polish Red breed was tied up. Seeing that I was looking rather puzzled at these possessions, he explained quickly:
>
> – They are police animals.
>
> – Police animals?
>
> – The Blue Police farmed them by the post. I thought, it's a shame to give the animals to the Blue Police. Plus, they were hungry. The bastard policemen had run away. I felt sorry …
>
> – I see that you are a friend of animals.
>
> – I take after my father. Daddy was a butcher in Ostrowiec[25].

In the German translation, the passage was faithfully rendered in terms of humour. Only a supplementary sentence was added to clarify to the German reader who the Blue Police were, while the information that the animals were bred at the post was cut out – perhaps for volume reasons[26].

However, in this novel, humour is an added value and was not a factor in the decision to publish the novel in the GDR.

The second work by Edmund Niziurski published in East Germany was *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*. In Poland, it was published by the Nasza Księgarnia publishing house, similarly to *Wyraj*, for the first time in 1964, while the German translation, entitled *Verschwörung gegen Alkibiades*, or literally *Conspiracy against Alcybiades*, did not appear until 1968[27]. In the GDR, it was published in 10,000 copies by the Berlin publishing house Der Kinderbuchverlag, which specialises in literature for children and young people. Translated by Caesar Rymarowicz (1930-1993)[28]. In contrast to the propaganda theme of the *Wyraj*

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[24] E. Niziurski, *Der Fall…*, op. cit., p. 5.
[25] E. Niziurski, *Wyraj*, op. cit., p. 95.
[26] See E. Niziurski, *Der Fall…*, op. cit., p. 52.
[27] Publising Review no. 270/54/68, 1967, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.
[28] Ibid.

novel, the publication of *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* was determined by its educational value. According to the publishing opinion of Der Kinderbuchverlag:

> *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* depicts school disputes between pupils and teachers in a highly amusing manner. The author transforms the popular theme of pupils' pranks that confuse teachers into something positive. Based on these, he develops a theory of modern teaching methods which, without overwhelming the reader with boring details, are based on modern theoretical assumptions[29].

After an extensive description of the content, we read:

> All in all, this is an above-average book that offers valuable insights to both teachers and pupils without pitting them against each other. The author has succeeded perfectly in guiding the narrative in a style that, between the lines, smuggles in a topic for reflection for educators, and which for pupils aged twelve to fourteen will certainly go unnoticed. The book raises a very important issue with didactic implications: the problem of programmed lessons[30].

And the editor's final sentence reads: "*Sposób na Alcybiadesa* is one of the best books I've read recently – not least because it requires the reader to know what middle school students should know"[31].

The German version was additionally annotated – at the suggestion of the publisher's consultants – with a note that the content is recommended for readers aged 12 and over, and an extensive appendix was added at the end of the book, explaining historical figures and events that might cause problems for German readers. As for the title, this original one emphasises the desire, even desperation, born in the hearts and minds of the boys of Year VIII not to let themselves be driven into learning by overzealous teaching staff. The German translation, "Conspiracy against Alcybiades", has a slightly more conspiratorial overtone, although it also aptly addresses the content. After all, the boys, looking for a way to get at the teachers, and ultimately learning only how to get at Alcybiades, were in fact plotting against him.

It is worth mentioning here that this novel, as Niziurski's only work, was also published in West Germany by Signal-Verlag in Baden-Baden under licence

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.

from the GDR in a version with an identical cover and identical illustrations[32]. The decision to publish this novel in West Germany was certainly not dictated by political considerations, but rather by pragmatic ones – *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* is a novel with great commercial potential, which, in addition to its educational value appreciated in German publishing reviews, was also characterised by an unusual plot and was a work full of humour, which ensured its real reading success in Poland[33]. This is not the only case of the GDR granting a publishing licence to the Federal Republic of Germany. Indeed, trade contacts between the two German states were alive, despite the Iron Curtain.

Another work by Edmund Niziurski that was published in the GDR was the collection of short stories *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu*, published in Poland in 1964 by Nasza Księgarnia publishing house[34]. *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu* is, in addition to the title of the collection, also the title of one of the eight short stories included in the volume, the others being *Biała noga i chłopak z Targówka*, *Trzynasty występek*, *Spisek słabych*, *Alarm na poddaszu*, *Siódme żebro*, *Diabli zjazd* oraz *Równy chłopak i Rezus*[35]. In the GDR, the collection was published in translation by Caesar Rymarowicz, already mentioned in connection with the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*, and was also published by the children's and youth publishing house Der Kinderbuchverlag in 15,000 copies[36]. Interestingly, the collection was significantly truncated, as only three of the eight stories were translated: *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu*, *Spisek słabych*, and *Alarm na poddaszu*[37]. Although the title story for the Polish version also contributed to the German collection, the whole was published under a different title, namely *Alarm auf dem Dachboden*, or literally *Alarm in the Attic*[38]. Unlike Niziurski's previous works, which were published in the GDR four and six years after the publication of the Polish original, *Alarm auf dem Dachboden* was not published until twelve years later, in 1976[39]. The reasons are explained in an excerpt from a publishing review by Der Kinderbuchverlag:

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32 See E. Niziurski, *Verschwörung gegen Alkibiades*, Baden-Baden 1971.
33 See J. Dobrzycki, op. cit., pp. 22–23.
34 See E. Niziurski, *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu*, Warszawa 1964.
35 Ibid.
36 Publishing review no. 270/72/76, 1975, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.
37 Ibid.
38 E. Niziurski, *Alarm auf dem Dachboden*, Berlin 1976.
39 Ibid.

> To date, our publishing house has published Edmund Niziurski's humorous novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*. This author is one of Poland's best-known writers of children's and young people's literature, which is why we have long been keen to bring his work to our readers. Unfortunately, the evaluation of his most recent works came out negatively. We have therefore decided to turn to short stories which, although written more than a decade ago, are among the best works in Niziurski's oeuvre[40].

What gives them the qualities that predestine them to be the best part of Niziurski's work is, as in the case of the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*, educational value. As we read further in the editorial review:

> In the stories, children self-correct inappropriate behaviour, such as carelessness or coarseness. At the same time, positive attitudes are promoted, for example camaraderie, prudence, a sense of responsibility or care for animals. In doing so, it should be emphasised that the author avoids shallow didacticism – the educational elements are discreetly woven into the exciting plot. Niziurski knows how to build suspense, and by giving characters and situations features that are often absurd, the reader feels that everything is primarily intended to provide pleasant entertainment. This way of narration leaves room for fantasy and allows for the individualisation of individual characters, who, through their minor peculiarities, become more accessible as role models[41].

The collection in the German version is annotated that the stories are intended for readers aged 10 and over[42]. In addition, a film adaptation of one of the stories, *Alarm auf dem Dachboden*, directed by Fred Noczyński, was published in 1978. The film, based on a screenplay by Wolfgang Keller, is entitled like the short story *Alarm in the Attic*, but, according to the description on the Heiners Filmseiten website, it actually tells the short story *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu*[43].

Niziurski's last novel published in German in the GDR was 1975's *Osobliwe przypadki Cymeona Maksymalnego*. The translation, as with the novel *Wyraj*, was done by Kurt Kelm. Unlike other German-language editions of Niziurski's works published by East German publishing houses, the translation of this

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40 Publishing review no. 270/72/76, op. cit.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 https://www.heiners-filme.de/en/Film/23742/Alarm%20auf%20dem%20Dachboden%201978/ (accessed: 11/05/2025).

novel (published nine years later, in 1984) was published by the National Publishing Agency (Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, KAW) under the title *Cymeons seltsame Abenteuer*, with a cover and illustrations by Jerzy Flisak almost identical to the original[44]. The fact that a Polish institution was responsible for the publication may indicate that the decision to publish was made by the Polish side, although this hypothesis requires further research. The only available document confirming the backstory of the novel's publication in the GDR is a payroll file containing information about the commissioning of the first foreign-language edition of the novel by KAW[45].

In summary, Edmund Niziurski's works that were published in the GDR represent an interesting case of literary selection that largely deviated from the Polish canon of this author's works, with the exception of the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*. An analysis of the available archival material indicates that this choice was not accidental, but resulted from the propaganda publishing policy and the peculiarities of the cooperation between the publishing houses of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The publication of the occupation-themed novel *Wyraj* (1964) by the East German publishing house Militärverlag der DDR was perfectly in line with the anti-fascist propaganda narrative, consistent with the line of the Polish MON Publishing House. This choice is indicative of the priority given to ideological content that was intended to build a common historical discourse between the two socialist states. In turn, the novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (1964) and the collection of short stories *Nikodem, czyli tajemnica gabinetu* (1964), published by Kinderbuchverlag, gained recognition for their above-average educational qualities. Editorial reviews confirm that East German publishers saw the potential for shaping desirable attitudes in the younger generation, which was in line with the educational goals of the state. In this case, the publishing collaboration was based on pedagogical values, not just political ones. The least information can be found on why the novel *Osobliwe przypadki Cymeona Maksymalnego* (1975) was published in the German version. The fact that the novel was published almost unchanged by the Polish National Publishing Agency suggests that the decision to translate and distribute it may have been taken by the Polish side. The amount of research material currently available is

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[44] See E. Niziurski, *Osobliwe przypadki Cymeona Maksymalnego*, Warszawa 1975; E. Niziurski, *Cymeons seltsame Abenteuer*, Warszawa 1984.

[45] See Kartoteka KAW no. 744, 1985, Archiwa Opolskie.

negligible, so the hypothesis requires further archive searches, but it nevertheless points to the possibility of different mechanisms of works selection later on.

It can therefore be concluded that the German-language editions of Niziurski's works in the GDR were the result of a complex combination of factors linked to propaganda policy, educational objectives and specific publishing circumstances. The selection of works is indicative of the pragmatic approach of both parties, who prioritised the ideological and didactic value of the literature, often at the expense of the popularity of a particular work in its country of origin.

As the subject of Polish children's literature in the GDR remains an area that has not yet been researched academically, this article may inspire more extensive research into the appearance on the GDR publishing market of other Polish authors, such as Hanna Ożogowska, Małgorzata Musierowicz, Krystyna Siesicka, Zofia Chądzyńska, Elżbieta Jackiewiczowa, Adam Bahdaj or Zbigniew Nienacki, whose works have also been translated into German, along with their reception.

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DOUBLE JUBILEE. EDMUND NIZIURSKI'S WORKS IN JAN PACŁAWSKI'S ACADEMIC RESEARCH

PODWÓJNY JUBILEUSZ. TWÓRCZOŚĆ EDMUNDA NIZIURSKIEGO W BADANIACH NAUKOWYCH JANA PACŁAWSKIEGO

Keywords
Edmund Niziurski – Jan Pacławski – Kielce – Świętokrzyskie Region

Słowa klucze
Edmund Niziurski – Jan Pacławski – Kielce – Ziemia Świętokrzyska

Abstract
The double jubilee – the 100th anniversary of Edmund Niziurski's birth and the 90th anniversary of Prof. Jan Pacławski's birth – is an opportunity to recall the role of reflection on the achievements of the author of *Księga urwisów* in the research activity of literary scholar. The aim of the paper is to provide an overview of research into the work of the Kielce-based prose writer. The analysis will make it possible to characterise areas of greatest interest for researcher of Edmund Niziurski's works.

Streszczenie
Podwójny jubileusz – 100. rocznica urodzin Edmunda Niziurskiego oraz 90. rocznica urodzin prof. Jana Pacławskiego – jest okazją do przypomnienia miejsca, jakie w działalności naukowej literaturoznawcy zajmuje refleksja nad dokonaniami autora *Księgi urwisów*. Celem artykułu jest przegląd badań dotyczących twórczości kieleckiego prozaika. Przeprowadzona analiza pozwoli scharakteryzować obszary, które najbardziej interesowały badacza utworów Edmunda Niziurskiego.

The birthday anniversaries of both Edmund Niziurski and Jan Pacławski celebrated in 2025 became an opportunity to recall the literary scholar's contributions to the research into the prose writer's work. The broad-ranging academic activities of the researcher of regional and children's literature include not only producing original articles, but also organising research sessions commemorating the writer's successive birthday anniversaries, as well as editorial work on monographs produced following conferences.

In the *Introduction* to the first monograph, Jan Pacławski introduced the prose writer's profile and indicated the reasons for his interest in his work. Niziurski deserved special attention as one of few recognisable writers connected with the Świętokrzyskie Region and coming from "its capital city"[1].

The writer was born in 1925 in Kielce[2]. He began his education there, which was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. Together with his family, he sought refuge in Hungary. In 1940, he returned to the region of Kielce. After graduating from law studies, he became a trainee at the Prosecutor's Office in the Świętokrzyskie Region. Then, in 1949 he became Secretary to the editorial board of the "Wieś" magazine and settled permanently in Warsaw[3]. The Świętokrzyskie Region remained an important place for the author, to which he often returned – also on the pages of his novels.

The literary historian's connection with Kielce should also be mentioned. Jan Pacławski was born in 1935 in Leszczawa Dolna. In 1969, he became involved with the Świętokrzyskie University. Here, he helped run the Polish Studies Faculty in Kielce, witnessed the successive transformations of the University and passed through all levels of his academic career. He educated successive generations of philologists[4] and literary scholars and animated the scientific

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1 [M. Kątny, J. Pacławski], *Wstęp*, [in:] *Edmund Niziurski. Materiały z sesji w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 1996, p. 7.

2 See details of the writer's biography: M. Kątny, *Edmund Niziurski*, [in:] *Pisarze regionu świętokrzyskiego*, ed. J. Pacławski, vol. 3, Kielce 1990, pp. 105–145.

3 In a monograph presenting the recollections of many people about the writer and his output, Krzysztof Varga quoted the writer's widow, Barbara Niziurska, who stressed that the decision to leave the hometown was dictated primarily by financial reasons: "Later the editor said: «Our editorial team is supposed to get a tiny flat in the capital; how about you move from Kielce to Warsaw, why do you need Kielce?». […] And so we stayed in Warsaw. On impulse, because everything happened by chance with us, nothing was thought through". See K. Varga, *Księga dla starych urwisów. Wszystko, czego jeszcze nie wiecie o Edmundzie Niziurskim*, Warszawa 2019, p. 88.

4 According to the data of the "Archival catalogue of diploma theses of Jan Kochanowski University", thirteen theses on the works of Edmund Niziurski were written under the academic

life of the city over the years. For this reason, the researcher is sometimes called a "Kielce resident by choice"[5]. In his articles on Niziurski, the literary scholar analysed the role of the categories of space and time in the writer's works, the reasons for the popularity of his books and the socialist-realist beginnings of his creative work. Given the value of the author's metaliterary contributions, post-conference publications co-edited by Jan Pacławski and Marek Kątny were expanded to include reflections by Edmund Niziurski.

Świętokrzyskie Region inspirations in the works of Edmund Niziurski

In characterising the sources of his inspiration, Edmund Niziurski emphasised the value of the Kielce experience. The author modelled some of the characters on his schoolmates[6], teachers and "great Kielce types from sixty years ago"[7]. The writer also outlined a panorama of places close to his heart, where, as he said, "my knowledge and […] my soul was greatly cared for"[8]. These words show a particular relationship to his native space. For the writer, Kielce always remained a city full of memories of his youth – a time of intellectual development and character formation.

Although space and time are the elements of the presented world least susceptible to creative procedures, mainly serving to organise the plot of the work, Pacławski drew attention to the particular importance of these categories in the works by Niziurski. In his works, the writer combined: "a reporter-like treatment of space and time and an adventurous staging of the plot structure"[9]. Despite the introduction of fictional topographical names into *Księga*

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supervision of Jan Pacławski. The students were mainly interested in the comedic aspects, the image of the school, the creation of the characters and the relationships between them.

5 P. Obrączka, *Jan Pacławski – historyk literatury*, "Orbis Linguarum" 2020, vol. 54, p. 276.

6 School adventures were the subject of many of Niziurski's works. As Pacławski emphasised, the school created by the writer is above all a place of socialisation for young people, who developed their original interests together and gained life experience, among other things, through finding solutions to conflicts with teachers. See M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Kielce 2004, pp. 237–238.

7 [E. Niziurski], *Pisarz o sobie*, [in:] *Edmund Niziurski. Materiały z sesji w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 1996, p. 13.

8 E. Niziurski, *Wywiad autora „z samym sobą"*, [in:] *O twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 2005, p. 10.

9 J. Pacławski, *Kreacje przestrzeni i czasu w prozie Edmunda Niziurskiego na wybranych przykładach*, [in:] *Edmund Niziurski. Materiały z sesji w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 1996, p. 71.

urwisów, the meticulous descriptions made it possible to recognise the actual places the author was inspired by[10]: Zajączków called "Wilczków" and Miedzianka Mountain depicted as "Wilcza Góra"[11]. In constructing the world of *Klub włóczykijów*, the writer adopted a different strategy and used actual geographical names. The literary scholar emphasised that Niziurski, also using folk legends, precisely characterised the open spaces of the Świętokrzyskie Region, while Pułtusk and Warsaw were depicted as somewhat mysterious labyrinths. By contrast, *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* features authentic names and accurate descriptions of urban topography, however, it is difficult to pinpoint in which specific locality the adventures are set[12]. The timing of many of Niziurski's works is signalled by references to real events, such as, for example, the Winter Olympics in Innsbruck awaited by the characters in the *Jutro klasówka* short story. The reference to post-war social changes and facts from the history of the mine in *Księga urwisów* enabled the researcher to point out that the events in the novel took place between 1950 and 1954[13]. Both time and space were subordinated to the dynamic plot. Time was marked by the passing hours and days. This showed the fast-paced changes brought by subsequent events. The detailed descriptions of places – whose role is sometimes depreciated, especially by the youngest audiences – also did not slow down the fast pace of the plot.

Reasons for the popularity of Edmund Niziurski's works

There was no commemorative academic session organised in 2000, but Pacławski decided to dedicate the following year's issue of "Studia Kieleckie" to Niziurski[14]. Although the annual publication contains only two articles devoted to the writer, in the *Introduction* the researcher motivated his decision by the author's contribution to the development of Polish literature and the numerous references to the land of his childhood in his work.

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[10] The Świętokrzyskie origins of the first novel addressed to a young audience were confirmed by the writer's widow. Barbara Niziurska emphasised that when looking for a place where the writer could set the plot, he went to the Kielce Region: "There he came across an old mine, or actually an old shaft. […] He came back wearing shabby, muddy trousers and said «I've got my material!»". See K. Varga, op. cit., p. 88.

[11] J. Pacławski, *Kreacje*…, op. cit., p. 71.

[12] Ibid., pp. 74–75.

[13] Ibid., p. 78.

[14] J. Pacławski, *Wstęp*, "Studia Kieleckie. Seria Filologiczna" 2001, no. 3, p. 3.

Pacławski presented his perspective on the reasons for the popularity of Niziurski's prose, pointing out that it is impossible to pinpoint them clearly in the world of rapid changes[15]. Without diminishing the importance of the composition of the work, the researcher emphasised that the content was the key to the novel's publishing success. According to the literary scholar, the work of the Kielce-based prose writer provided a dose of geographical knowledge attractive to young readers. This premise, however, did not so much justify the reading choices of young audiences as prove the didactic value of Niziurski's books. Based on the examples of *Klub włóczykijów* and *Żaba, pozbieraj się!,* Pacławski pointed out that the audience's interest resulted from the writer's diligent preparation to presenting thrilling mysteries in a plausible manner, successfully solved by the characters through the skill of deduction, i.e. gathering information and discovering the logical connection between facts.

The characters created by Niziurski tended to form informal groups distinguished by their friendly relations and working together towards a common goal. The characters may impress readers[16], because: "the depicted students are mostly more mature than their peers"[17]. In creating the members of the youth groups, characteristics often connected to the physical or intellectual capabilities of the individuals were exposed. The world in the novels of the Kielce-based writer was not black and white; the characters made mistakes and were sometimes negatively influenced by others[18]. Similarly, the teachers portrayed in the

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[15] With a genuine interest in the experiences of young people, Niziurski also recognised that the development of modern technologies, new ways of spending leisure time and emerging youth subcultures were contributing to the gradual loss of popularity of literature. In referring to ways to address the reading crisis among young people, the writer expressed the hope that students would remember at least some of the themes of compulsory reading. The author stressed that children still read books and it was the duty of the writer to create for the "better part of the youth". See [E. Niziurski], *Wywiad*…, op. cit., p. 11.

[16] Thus, in line with the determinants of youth literature adopted by Jan Pacławski and Marek Kątny, Niziurski's prose can be considered valuable – "ambitious reading should always in some way anticipate the current experiences of a young person, show a higher degree of organisation of social and spiritual life than that resulting from the child's current intellectual position, social experiences and emotional and aesthetic maturity". See M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, op. cit., p. 10.

[17] J. Pacławski, *Źródła powodzenia prozy Edmunda Niziurskiego*, "Studia Kieleckie. Seria Filologiczna" 2001, no. 3, p. 7.

[18] Pacławski noted that the Kielce-based prose writer did not idealise the world of young people, but also showed the difficulties they faced in their family and peer environment. For example, the *Lizus* volume of short stories depicts the adventures of young people caught up in groups that even take on a criminal character.

books were not all shown in the same way. Pupils could sometimes find out the reasons for certain attitudes adopted by the teachers. In this way, Niziurski's work sensitised readers to making careful judgements about other people, whose undesirable behaviour may result from difficult experiences. Thanks to the gradation of tension, dynamic changes of style and spectacular endings, the adventures experienced by the characters surprised the audience. However, readers believed the adventures would have a happy ending.

An attractive feature of Niziurski's work was his situational and verbal comedy, shown above all in the original nicknames of the individual characters. The novel's humour was not only intended to bring a smile to the reader's face, but also to encourage the reader to reflect on the deeper, social meaning of the mocked phenomena.

Pacławski believed that Niziurski should be recognised among authors distinguished by their extraordinary insight and knowledge of the child's psyche. Thanks to his ability to carefully observe the behaviour of young and adult people, the writer was able to identify intergenerational behaviour patterns. The writer would emphasise that: "in a small society, children are viewed […] in a chemically pure, uncontaminated, true and unadulterated form, because children are much more open, honest and spontaneous in their actions, speech and behaviour"[19].

Socialist-realist novels by Edmund Niziurski

Edmund Niziurski once ironically remarked that in his creative work he was primarily interested in the possibility of creating new worlds and influencing his readers – "I wanted to be […] a little bit of a tyrant too, to capture their imagination and force them to adopt my point of view"[20]. The times in which the writer lived were not conducive to pursuing his ideas. The restrictions formulated by the censors also applied to literature for the youngest readers. However, the author recognised that they were not as strictly enforced as in the case of works aimed at adults. Therefore, he decided to try his hand at writing texts for children and young people. Niziurski initially believed that writing for a young audience was an easier task. But working on children's novels proved only apparently simpler. For young people, the most important

[19] [E. Niziurski], *Wywiad…*, op. cit., p. 10.
[20] E. Niziurski, *Pisarz…*, op. cit., p. 11.

determinants of works are comedy, language – adapted to their perceptual abilities, but without simplification or falsity – and an interesting theme of the work[21]. Although the writer jokingly regarded his decision to create such works as an "unforgivable recklessness"[22] due to the constant need to try to meet the expectations of a demanding reader, in creating the characters of young people he noticed that: "the teenage world presented […] is simply a miniature of the adult world, or more precisely a parody of it. It is an imitated world, but as if in a distorting mirror"[23].

As emphasised by Pacławski and Kątny in the *Introduction* to the subsequent post-conference volume, Edmund Niziurski held a prominent place among Polish prose writers. The enduring popularity of the Kielce-based writer's work is evidenced by the successive reprinting of his works. According to researchers, *Księga urwisów* was a breakthrough in the development of Polish literature[24].

Continuing his reflection on the popularity of Niziurski's works, Pacławski noted the importance of the reception of the writer's first novels. As he pointed out, *Gorące dni* and *Księga urwisów* aroused the interest of the audience because the author managed to "tame the hybrid"[25] of social realism. Using artistic means characteristic of popular literature – especially of thriller and crime novels – the writer created texts that are free from clichés. Although the novels by the Kielce-based writer were saturated with elements typical of the poetics prevailing in the first half of the 1950s[26], his works were distinguished by thrilling storylines, deep psychological profiles of the characters and humour. Even "classroom enemies" were endowed with positive qualities[27]. In *Księga urwisów*, the spy turned out to be an inconspicuous post office manager, and not the caretaker Kropa, suspected by the children, whose behaviour

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[21] Niziurski accurately recognised most of the determinants of literature for children and young people. See more on this topic: M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, op. cit., pp. 95–98.

[22] [E. Niziurski], *Pisarz…*, op. cit., p. 11.

[23] Ibid., p. 12.

[24] [M. Kątny, J. Pacławski], *Wstęp*, [in:] *O twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 2005, p. 7.

[25] J. Pacławski, *Początki pisarstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego a realizm socjalistyczny*, [in:] *O twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, scientific eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 2005, p. 13.

[26] For example, in accordance with the poetics of socialist realism established in 1949 at the 4th Congress of Polish Writers in Szczecin, the party organisation played a fundamental role in the world depicted in *Gorące dni*. The saboteur responsible for the crisis showed self-criticism before the other members of the cooperative. The characters also used communist newspeak.

[27] J. Pacławski, *Początki…*, op. cit., p. 17.

resulted from difficult family experiences[28]. Despite the fact that the characters were created as a warning against "political enemies" lurking everywhere, in line with socialist realities, the novel provided readers with positive experiences.

Summary

What emerges from Jan Pacławski's research is an image of Edmund Niziurski as a Kielce resident nostalgically returning to the mythologised land of his childhood years. The artist gained popularity through his use of original artistic solutions, intelligent humour, allowing readers to identify with the characters' experiences and the didactic qualities of his works. The research areas identified by the literary scholar[29] continue to be the subject of analyses that enrich our knowledge of the prose writer.

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[28] Ibid., pp. 20–21.

[29] A modern perspective on the multifunctional role of location in Niziurski's works was proposed by Mirosław Ryszkiewicz in an article published in the second volume of a post-conference monograph. There has also been research into the reading choices of contemporary readers based on statements made by recognisable characters and posts published on discussion forums. See I. Gralewicz-Wolny, *Stawiamy na Niziurskiego. Głosy i glosy prozaików polskich*, "Guliwer" 2019, no. 3, pp. 5–12; M. Gnieciak, *Zrozumieć Adelę w dobie Internetu. Refleksja z zakresu socjologii literatury*, "Guliwer", no. 3, pp. 12–31. Whereas an innovative reflection on the work of the Kielce-based prose writer from the perspective of the anthropological category of 'otherness' has been presented by Jarosław Dobrzycki. See J. Dobrzycki, *Szkolne wyobcowanie. Inny Niziurski*, Sosnowiec 2024.

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PART 2

Around the Audience. Young Adult Literature?

CZĘŚĆ 2

Wokół odbiorcy. Literatura young adult?

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THE MARK OF A TOASTING. ABOUT A STORY BY EDMUND NIZIURSKI

PIĘTNO LIZUSA. O PEWNYM OPOWIADANIU EDMUNDA NIZIURSKIEGO

Keywords
distinctiveness – Niziurski – ostracism – social group – stigma

Słowa klucze
grupa społeczna – inność – Niziurski – ostracyzm – piętno

Abstract
Text raises the issue of stigmatizing the main character in *Sycophant*, a short story written by Edmund Niziurski. The first part of the text focuses on illustrating the protagonist's distinctiveness, as his behaviour differs from the rest of the class. The second part presents the gradual ostracisation of the character by his colleagues, and finally brands him as the titular sycophant. Analysis of the actions of young people presents the entire process of excluding an individual who, in the perception of a specific social group, undermines the established norms existing within that community.

Streszczenie
Tekst porusza kwestię piętnowania głównego bohatera opowiadania *Lizus*, autorstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego. Pierwsza część skupia się na pokazaniu inności protagonisty, który swoim zachowaniem odstaje od reszty klasy. W drugiej części zostanie przedstawione stopniowe poddawanie bohatera ostracyzmowi przez kolegów, a finalnie napiętnowanie go mianem tytułowego lizusa. Analiza poczynań młodych ludzi pozwoli zaprezentować cały proces wykluczania osoby, która to, w przeświadczeniu konkretnej grupy społecznej, podważa panujące w tej zbiorowości prawa.

Lizus, a collection of short stories for young people written by Edmund Niziurski, was published in 1956[1]. It only received two reviews. Importantly, however, they were positive. Critics praised the uniqueness and originality of the stories. They attached significance to the way the writer depicted the school community and the tensions within it, the reactions to the arrival of new pupils (*Lizus*) and the treatment of those who stand out from the rest in some way (*Grubas*, in which the author shows the problem of a pupil being bullied because of being overweight). Wanda Grodzieńska stated at the time that:

> *Lizus* by Edmund Niziurski is an extraordinary book. This is evidenced by its excellent art form, the weightiness of the psychological issues and, above all, its debate-provoking nature. Any book that forces a young reader to think about multiple issues and to discuss the book with their peers is a good book[2].

Lizus was therefore intended to be seen as a response to the reading needs of young people. Teenagers did not want to read heavy-handed, socialist-realist stories, but something that would reflect their own lives and dilemmas. Niziurski managed to show school life as it was, without any misrepresentation. In these stories, pupils interacted with each other, made mistakes and tried to learn from them. Every reader could find something for themselves in the stories created by the Kielce-based prose writer:

> Young readers will be amused by the descriptions of the 'troubles', the failure of the 'big shot', the confusion among teachers and the ingenious jokes, while older readers will recognise the conflict between the individual and their environment, the problem of seizing power, wasting chances in life […] It is truly gratifying to know that young people and teachers have these stories written by Niziurski, whose narrative talent draws the reader in and makes them engage emotionally in the fate of the young contemporary characters[3].

Whereas a researcher of youth literature, Krystyna Kuliczkowska, described the collection of these short stories as "skilfully combining serious psychological

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1 This was the second such collection of short stories by this author for young readers, following *Dzwonnik od świętego Floriana* from 1955.

2 W. Grodzieńska, *Świeży powiew w literaturze dla dzieci*, "Nowe Książki" 1957, no. 2, p. 30.

3 A. K., *Lizus*, "Przegląd Kulturalny" 1957, no. 12, p. 5.

and moral issues with lively, dramatic plot enriched with elements of suspenseful action and humour"[4]. *Lizus* was thus a volume of universal stories. The stories were capable of evoking a range of reactions, such as laughter, sadness or reflection, while the characters "are not just rascals but children curious about the world, looking not only for adventure but also for virtuous deeds"[5].

The above brief description of the reception of the entire volume is proof that youth prose created by the Kielce-based writer from the very beginning enjoyed the interest of readers and favourable reviews of critics. However, what critics failed to notice at the time was that the collection features young protagonists who do not fit in with a particular group of students because of their appearance (the aforementioned *Grubas* [*Fatty*]) or their behaviour *(Lizus* [*Teacher's Pet*]), causing them to be alienated by their classmates, or even stigmatised[6]. The focus was mainly on the didactic layer, which, although important, limited the opportunity for an in-depth interpretation of some of the stories.

With this in mind, in this article I discuss one of the short stories mentioned above, namely *Lizus*. The main character, Rudolf Cejna, is branded with the stigma of being the titular Teacher's Pet. Through the category of stigma, I attempt to show the whole process of the protagonist's gradual exclusion from the peer group. This analysis follows the trend of reinterpreting older texts aimed at young readers.

To be new – to be unfamiliar

The main character evokes ambivalent feelings from the outset. The very fact that he joins the class in the middle of the school year becomes a cause for all sorts of gossip, and his future classmates want to get to know him as soon as possible so that they can assign him to a particular group: one of their own or people who do not inspire their confidence. This is exactly what happens to Rudolf, although here the whole class is in for a surprise, as the protagonist breaks out of the usual pattern of being the "new kid":

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4 K. Kuliczkowska, *W kolektywie młodzieży*, [in:] K. Kuliczkowska, *W szklanej kuli. Szkice o literaturze dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa 1970, p. 177.

5 Ibid., p. 178.

6 Kuliczkowska provides some insight into these issues, but it is not adopted in any way in later studies of Niziurski's work.

> The intruder placed his notebook on the desk and stood casually strutting, without a trace of any stage fright, staring with apparent superiority at the class and smiling somewhat derisively. He did not resemble someone completely new. If he was to resemble someone, he was more like a resilient athlete looking down on an unfamiliar audience […] It was all irritating and even offensive, because how can you look down on a class so brazenly when you are the new kid […][7].

The lack of fear, the signs of disrespect, the feeling of being superior, even though you are new – Cejna was breaking all the 'rules' that would apply to 'freshers' in a way previously unheard of for the pupils. The protagonist annoyed and intrigued his peers with his attitude:

> He could not be flustered. He did not provide reasons for ridicule. Any conversation with him would immediately turn serious and become dull and ordinary. We tried in vain to chat to him in any way. We couldn't get anything out of him […] We all agreed that the new kid was strange[8].

The inability to label Rudolf in any way left the boys confused. Paradoxically, the protagonist, through his mystery and maturity, manifests to those around him his "selfhood" (to refer to the category coined by Paul Ricoeur[9]), which he considers to be the proper one. Katarzyna Rozmarynowska writes about manifesting oneself:

> It is a form of expression in which our self-interpretation is revealed. Through certain behaviours, attitudes, we manifest who we are. It is important that this kind of self-storytelling is done towards other people. We tell stories about ourselves in the hope of finding some common experiences, values, goals with others[10].

Rudolf wants to show his peers himself, but at the same time does not want to go into any detail. It is precisely the absence of such detail that becomes the

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7 E. Niziurski, *Lizus*, [in:] E. Niziurski, *Lizus*, Warszawa 1956, p. 6.

8 Ibid., p. 9.

9 The philosopher applied this term "to the best part of oneself, often referred to as thought or intellect, or even soul – that is, to that within oneself which is the most enduring, the most constant, the least susceptible to changes of mood and desire, as well as to the whims of fate". P. Ricoeur, *O sobie samym jako innym*, trans. B. Chełstowski, Warszawa 2003, pp. 305–306.

10 K. Rozmarynowska, *Inność jako źródło etyczności. Inspiracje ricoeurowskie*, Warszawa 2015, p. 220.

reason for a certain distrust among the pupils, because they cannot understand him in any way, and the interaction between Cejna and the rest of the class is significantly hampered. In a way, the protagonist pulls the boys out of their comfort zone, which was their ability to 'label' any newcomer. The boy brings confusion to the orderly world of the class, which, of course, no one likes, although no pupil yet starts to directly contest Rudolf's attitude. It was not until the events during the maths class, when the protagonist not only failed to help another pupil called to the blackboard, but also gave the perfect answer to the teacher's question himself, that his troubles began:

> The only feeling that came over us was a fierce dislike of Cejna. How dare he know the answer. He did, after all, commit the unforgivable crime from the point of view of our classroom code: he knew the answer but did not help another out. He was a coward, or worse – a sly bastard who wanted to get an even better mark over his classmate's dead body[11].

Here the question needs to be asked: did the boy know about the classroom code? It should be presumed from the narrative that not quite, he may have only had suspected that the pleading glances directed at him by Chrustowicz (the pupil who was called on to answer the question) were a silent request for help. Despite this, he decided not to help him in any way, thereby inciting the wrath of his peers. This incident caused the rest of the class to position themselves against Rudolf, no longer seeing him as one of their own. Ewa Nowicka explains this as follows:

> The issue of familiarity and otherness occupies an important place in various currents of sociological thought, each arising from different theoretical premises. This is because the tension between familiarity and otherness is an essential component of processes taking place in both the emotional and intellectual sphere, leading to creating order in the social world. Recognising social reality, creating mental order, and therefore understanding or making sense of it, forms the basis of the social life of all societies of all times[12].

Not only did Cejna not help, but with this behaviour he shattered the order established by the other young men in their little classroom world. Leaving this

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[11] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 13.

[12] E. Nowicka, *Swojskość i obcość jako kategorie socjologicznej analizy*, [in:] *Swoi i obcy*, ed. E. Nowicka, Warszawa 1990, p. 5.

incident unaddressed could have led to deepening the chaos, because according to Zygmunt Baumann, this is exactly what a stranger does: he destabilises the existing reality[13]. The peculiar, silent threat directed towards the protagonist by the narrator here is therefore not surprising: "poor Oldman – if only he knew what a disastrous disservice he had done to his pet by praising him publicly in front of the whole class!"[14]. The word used here, 'pet', has a threatening connotation in this case, as it automatically places him in the position of an outsider, as referred to above. Stanisław Grabias writes:

> "otherness" will always be seen negatively. It can also show the "outsider" as an enemy. This hostility can be manifested in a variety of areas of human social activity. It can be noticed in opposing value systems, an opposition that pervades human action, orienting and fuelling it[15].

Oppositional systems exist and it all boils down to the following: I help out = I am one of them; I don't help out = I am an outsider. The reality for this group of boys is very simple, as it comes down to helping each other in any circumstances. Giving the other pupil the answer is not perceived here as something bad; on the contrary, it is the natural order of things, something absolutely basic, almost an axiom. And it is this fundamental law that Cejna dares to break, which provokes great anger from his peers, who from this point on set themselves the goal of "eliminating" the young man.

Stigma and destroying the individual

Stigma is a social construct, developed by humanity centuries ago. According to Erving Goffmann, one of the most important researchers on the issue of stigma, a stigmatised person is considered "crippled" or even not fully human:

> In contact with a stranger, it may come to light that he or she has some attribute that differentiates him or her from other members of his or her assigned category, which makes him or her a less socially desirable person. In extreme cases, because of this trait, this stranger may be considered a fundamentally evil, dangerous or weak person. In this way, an average,

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[13] See more extensively: Z. Bauman, *Wieloznaczność nowoczesna, nowoczesność wieloznaczna*, trans. J. Bauman, Warszawa 1995.

[14] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 13.

[15] S. Grabias, *Analityczne kategorie obcości*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2013, no. 1, p. 238.

> healthy person becomes in a way reduced in our mind and becomes someone marked and incomplete[16].

A stigma would not only be a certain marking of an individual, but also, and perhaps above all, a 'test' of strength of character, since "a stigmatised person is a person whose social identity, or affiliation with a certain social category, questions their entire humanity – such a person is in the eyes of others incomplete, crippled, handicapped"[17]. The stigmatised individual is then cast outside the community[18]. Exactly this fate, although not immediately, befalls Rudolf. First, following the (unwritten) rules of the classroom, he is stigmatised as a teacher's pet:

> After the class, Kurta approached me.
> – Did you see that? What a bastard!
> I remained silent, my teeth clenched.
> – Don't worry – muttered Kurta – we'll bring down the teacher's pet.
> It was then that the nickname, which later stuck so strongly to Cejna, was first uttered[19].

Note that the stigma was bestowed single-handedly by Kurta, who apparently enjoyed a certain kind of esteem and respect among his classmates. Evidence of this could be seen in the fact that no one resisted calling Cejna a teacher's pet, which, obviously, is one of the worst insults in the school community and immediately puts such a person in a difficult position. More often than not, any defence is interpreted as an admission of guilt, hence this term is only used against those pupils whose behaviour causes immense resentment among the other classmates[20].

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[16] E. Goffman, *Piętno. Rozważania o zranionej tożsamości*, trans. A Dzierżyńska, J. Tokarska-Bakir, Gdańsk 2005, p. 32.

[17] J. Crocker, B. Major, C. Steele, *Social stigma*, [in:] *Handbook of social psychology*, ed. S.T. Fiske, D.T. Gilbert, G. Lindzey, Boston 1998, p. 504.

[18] It should be noted here that "the process of stigma is relational… A trait treated by one person as negative or indicative of deviancy may be regarded by another person as a harmless and endearing quirk". A. Farina et al., *Social Stigma. The Psychology of Marked Relationship*, New York 1984, p. 5.

[19] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 13.

[20] At this point, it should be noted that the stigma here becomes largely linked to a breach of reciprocity. As far as this group is concerned, it relies on mutual assistance when it comes to answering the teacher's questions during the lesson. Whoever sits at the desk closest to the person being questioned is obliged to help them as much as they can. Here, this help was lacking, as evidenced by the words "he knew the answer but did not help out". Rudolf thus

Cejna was also not helped by the fact that his continued conduct only reinforced the validity of such judgements among his peers:

> Everything pointed to the fact that Cejna was in fact a teacher's pet. He would arrive for the classes fully prepared, and he would even sit down with a book at recess. He studied with a kind of a disgusting passion that was incomprehensible to us […] Whenever one of us would get lost while answering a question, the teacher would turn to Cejna, as if to embarrass us:
>
> – Well, how about you, Cejna?
>
> And Cejna would reply. He was always prepared[21].

This "perfectionism" of this character was a source of anger for all his classmates, as they felt as if Rudolf, together with the teachers, wanted to expose their poor level of knowledge. This caused his peers' resentment towards him to increase with each passing day:

> He didn't laugh, he didn't talk in class, he didn't get into fights, he didn't call anyone names. Any trouble filled him with great fear. He would get all red instantly and speak in a terrified voice:
>
> – Come on… You'll see, this could get serious.
>
> – Be quiet, teacher's pet – we would reply – or else![22].

A critical point in the classmates' relations with the main character is when they find out that the boy is living with one of the teachers, Professor Żwaczek. This news causes them to panic, making them decide to change their behaviour (fearing that Rudolf could report their bad deeds to the teacher), but in doing so, they risk being ridiculed by the older pupils:

> Morowcy from year eight were laughing at us. Kicki once approached us at break time and smiled mockingly, pointing at Cejna.
>
> – I hear you're shaking in your boots because of the teacher's pet. He rules over you! Congratulations on your success! Żwaczek praised you to us today and said you're setting an example. You losers!
>
> We remained silent, humiliated and angry.

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broke another unwritten rule in an attempt to gain extra 'credits' from the teacher (according to the boys' thinking), making them feel very embarrassed. For more on this topic, see A.W. Gouldner, *Norma wzajemności. Preliminaria*, [in:] *Współczesne teorie wymiany społecznej. Zbiór tekstów*, eds. M. Kempny, J. Szmatka, Warszawa 1992.

[21] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 14.

[22] Ibid.

> – Suckers – muttered Kicki – don't you know how it's done? We had one like that too, but we wore him out[23].

Good behaviour is perceived by the other students as a sign of weakness and subservience in Cejna, which means that Rudolf's classmates are forced to endure various taunts. It is then that a decision is made among them to torment the main character, in order to show him that the stigma of being a teacher's pet carries significant consequences.

The very function of stigmatising specific individuals is worth delving into here. According to some researchers, "the universality of social stigma suggests that it has some functional significance for the stigmatising person, for the group from which that person comes, for society, or for all of them at once"[24]. Stigma is thus something like an (in)visible warning to other people not to approach such a person, to avoid or even to treat them with contempt. By doing so,

> stigmatisation of others may […] increase the perceived and actual control exercised by the stigmatising person to the extent that it leads to differential treatment, systematic avoidance, segregation and marginalisation of individuals who pose a threat to the stigmatising person's wellbeing […] or to their values[25].

Peers recognise that Cejna must be excluded from their group and that the best way to do this is to persecute him. This should restore balance to the class as the fear of the teacher's pet disappears, because, pushed to the limit, he will withdraw from the life of the group. It is important to note that such an action by the boys fits into the whole construct of stigma, as "individuals will benefit if they begin to avoid, reject or eliminate those whose behaviour disrupts the group"[26]. Additionally,

> […] by definition, we do not believe that the stigmatised person is fully human. Based on this assumption, we discriminate against them in various

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[23] Ibid., p. 15.

[24] J. Crocker, B. Major, C. Steele, op. cit., p. 508.

[25] J. Crocker, J.F. Dovidio, B. Major, *Piętno: wprowadzenie i zarys ogólny*, [in:] *Społeczna psychologia piętna*, eds. T.F. Heatherton et al., trans. M. Szuster, Warszawa 2008, pp. 28–29.

[26] M. B. Brewer, *On the Social Origins of Human Nature*, [in:] *The Message of Social Psychology. Perspectives on Mind Society*, eds. S.A. Haslam, C. McGarty, Cambridge 1997, p. 57.

> ways, thereby effectively – even if often unconsciously – reducing their chances in life. We imperceptibly construct our own theory of stigma – an ideology explaining the inferiority of the stigmatised and testifying to the danger they represent[27].

The boys decide to follow this line of thinking about Cejna to regularly, step by step, throw him out of their group:

> We started carefully. First, Cejna's shoe bag got lost. He looked for it in vain all over the cloakroom […] The next lesson was a Polish language class. Żwaczek dictated the topic. We all watched surreptitiously as Cejna dipped his pen in the inkwell and made a hideous blot across the entire page. After the lesson, the teacher's pet, as usual, helped Żwaczek take the notebooks to the staff room. Barely did he take a step towards the door, for some unknown reason he slipped and fell, spilling the notebooks all over […] After classes, Cejna went to the LPŻ [Friends of Soldiers League] model workshop located in the school's basement. For a month, under the guidance of an instructor, he had been working on a beautiful model aircraft there. But that day he was in for an unpleasant surprise. His already half-finished model had been horribly damaged[28].

Gradually, the boys' actions become more and more psychologically destructive for Rudolf, who nevertheless endures them and does not allow himself to lose his temper. This is very difficult, as his peers do not even refrain from destroying the model aeroplane that he spent a great deal of time building, most likely often staying after school.

The persecution of the protagonist intensifies with each passing day. During class trips, no one wants to be paired with him, violence is used (the scene in the theatre where, in a fake crowd, the main character is pressed against the wall and almost suffocates[29]), and there are even attempts to implicate the boy in the theft of Ms Więckowska's pet duck. This, in turn, causes Rudolf to start losing respect among some teachers:

> When we were left alone, Oldman slumped exhausted in a chair.
>
> – Rudolf Cejna – he said – I regret to say that our alliance is beginning to fracture like the Greek-Turkish friendship. How could you […] come to my lesson with the duck in your briefcase?

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[27] E. Goffman, op. cit., p. 35.
[28] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 16.
[29] Ibid., p. 17.

> – It wasn't me… I don't know where this duck came from… I swear, I don't know – said Cejna.
>
> But Oldman only shook his head[30].

Also, attempts to improve the relations with his peers have no effect; on the contrary, the protagonist encounters first a wall of indifference and then outright hostility. The classmates, in their viciousness, do not want to listen to his explanations or pleas to stop the harassment. The protagonist tries to enter into a discussion with his persecutors in an attempt to defend himself, since "no one can remain indifferent to insults and expectations from others, we must anticipate that ego defence will often occur among group members being ridiculed, scorned and discriminated"[31]. There is a telling scene where everyone thinks there is going to be a fight between Cejna and one of the boys, yet this does not happen:

> For a moment, we thought a bloody brawl would ensue this time, as Cejna's eyes narrowed dangerously, but he only bit his lips, gave a disdainful look and walked away with a heavy step. We smiled victoriously. We were pleased with ourselves. It was the first time Cejna chickened out […] From that moment on, we could not only hate him, but also despise him[32].

The boys at that point lose all inhibitions and Rudolf's persecution takes on unprecedented proportions. At every turn he is insulted or openly excluded from the group. Satisfied with their 'victory', the boys do not care about his feelings; they even take pleasure in the successive manifestations of alienating him. In addition, the stigma of being a teacher's pet is also beginning to resonate in Cejna's interactions with older students:

> He tried to play with the eight-graders. At first they even accepted him into the team because he had good technique, but when they found out who he was, they chased him away:
>
> – You, my friend, are a teacher's pet. Do not come over to us again.
>
> This is what they told him bluntly[33].

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[30] Ibid., p. 20.
[31] G. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, New York 1979, p. 143.
[32] E. Niziurski, op. cit., p. 21.
[33] Ibid., p. 22.

Rudolf is left alone, without support, constantly exposed to further harassment. The classmates perceive him as an individual not adapted to their community and therefore insignificant in the context of the school life. Zygmunt Bauman highlights the issue of removing individuals who do not fit into a particular group:

> To be "superfluous" means to be surplus, unnecessary, or useless – regardless of the type of needs or benefits that define the standard of usefulness and indispensability. Others don't need you; they will do just as well, or even better, without you. There is no obvious reason for your presence and there is no basis for you to claim a right to remain[34].

Rudolf Cejna is not needed and can therefore be thrown out of the community, as no one will lose anything when that happens.

The boy's gradual removal from the group is not without its effects on his wellbeing and appearance:

> We decided to eliminate him completely. He lost weight and his skin turned yellow. He somehow lost vitality. He was nothing like the cheeky boy back on that day when he looked defiantly and insolently around the classroom […] At break time I went down to the cloakroom to get something […] Cejna was sitting in the corner on a bench and crying […] there was no longer any doubt. Cejna had been 'eliminated'[35].

As a result of the classmates' actions, Rudolf loses any residual confidence. Everyone rejects him, including students from years above, which results in the character's mental breakdown.

Cejna's "elimination" is not the only cruel deed of the pupils. The boys, not wanting to do a maths test, prepare a telegram stating that their teacher's mother is seriously ill. The test is, of course, cancelled as the terrified mathematician makes his way to his parents' house in a hurry. When the truth comes out, a real storm breaks out in the school. The teaching staff immediately turned their suspicions to the four teenagers who had the most to lose if the test had gone ahead. They unanimously decided that Cejna must have told on them earlier, hence the teachers knew who was responsible for this heinous act. They started to abuse him and the hatred towards the character reached

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[34] Z. Bauman, *Życie na przemiał*, trans. T. Kunz, Kraków 2004, p. 25.
[35] E. Niziurski, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

unprecedented proportions, including a physical conflict, from which Rudolf emerged victorious. Then, to the group's surprise, the boy took the blame for sending the telegram. The scene of the character being led out of the classroom is extremely telling:

> Simply put, the teachers took Cejna out. In the doorway, he turned around one more time.
> – Can I say something to the class?
> – Go on.
> Cejna looked at us for a moment.
> – I am not a teacher's pet or a coward! – he said in a strong voice.
> The classroom was still as if spellbound[36].

It is not only Rudolf's words but also the value of his sacrifice that are beginning to reach the classmates. They are slowly starting to understand that they may have been wrong in their assessment of the boy, who, despite the hell they had put him through, decided to take the blame for something they did. Then, thanks to Żwaczek, they learn about their peer's tragic story. It turns out that he was sent to a correctional facility for two years for assault. He was released on parole for good behaviour and the probation officer in charge of him asked Żwaczek to reintroduce Cejna into society: "I took Cejna to my home and put him in this class as a trial. The Headmaster had serious doubts, but I eventually managed to persuade him. Unfortunately, it turned out that he was right, not me. I am disappointed with Cejna"[37]. This shows the tragic fate of the protagonist: whatever he did, those around him looked at him with dislike, suspicion, even waited for the moment that would confirm his moral corruption. The character had to face the double stigma of being a criminal and a teacher's pet. Thus, the boy's adaptation to the new reality was significantly hampered. However, he did not give up, and he wanted to show that he had changed. This was evidenced by the situation with the mathematician, although at that very moment, if he had told the truth, he could have had his revenge on his peers for weeks of harassment. However, he chose a different path, proving that no stigma would rule his life.

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[36] Ibid., p. 30.
[37] Ibid., p. 33.

Summary

Rudolf Cejna was different, and this caused surprise and a kind of discomfort among his new classmates. He didn't fit in with the group; on the contrary, he seemed to be someone who, in the minds of his peers, was feeling superior and looking down on everyone. Branding him with the stigma of being the teacher's pet, one of the worst things that a young person can be called in the school environment, gave the boys an excuse to mentally (at times also physically) abuse the protagonist. Step by step, he was excluded from the class community that refused to accept the existence of a person like Rudolf: calm, balanced, reasonable. These qualities, positive in the eyes of the teachers, to his classmates were a sign of abnormality, while the willingness to learn and honesty (shown in the scene when Cejna failed to give the answer to another pupil) were the traits of a teacher's pet.

Edmund Niziurski showed, through the *Lizus* short story, the whole process of stigmatisation and exclusion of an individual who, in the opinion of the community, does not fit in. Although the storyline is set in the school environment, the story's message should be seen as universal, because an educational institution is nothing more than a micro-world governed by laws that are not much different from those applicable to the world of adults. In both worlds people like Rudolf Cejna face a lack of understanding and, in extreme cases, hostility. However, the author lets us know that we should be true to our values in life, even if they stand in opposition to the whole (school) world, because only in this way can we keep our 'self' intact.

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SCHOOL AS A SPACE OF CONTROL AND RESISTANCE – MECHANISMS OF STUDENT FUNCTIONING IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN YOUTH LITERATURE

SZKOŁA JAKO PRZESTRZEŃ KONTROLI I OPORU – MECHANIZMY FUNKCJONOWANIA UCZNIÓW W SYSTEMIE EDUKACYJNYM ORAZ ICH REPREZENTACJA W LITERATURZE MŁODZIEŻOWEJ

Keywords
school – control – resistance – teacher–student relationship – youth literature – education – education system – student agency – survey research

Słowa klucze
szkoła – kontrola – opór – relacja nauczyciel–uczeń – literatura młodzieżowa – edukacja – system edukacyjny – podmiotowość – badania ankietowe

Abstract
The article examines the school as a space of control and resistance, analysing the mechanisms of students' functioning within the educational system and their literary representations. From a socio-pedagogical perspective, it highlights the marginalization of students, labelling, and the limitations of autonomy resulting from an authoritarian teaching model. The literary analysis focuses on the image of school in the works of René Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempé, Kornel Makuszyński, and Edmund Niziurski. Particular attention is

given to Niziurski's *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (*The Way to Deal With Alcibiades*), which presents the teacher–student relationship as a space for overcoming hierarchy through dialogue, authenticity, and mutual respect. The empirical section discusses the results of a survey conducted among high school students regarding their perceptions of teachers and the school environment. The findings indicate a lack of emotional engagement from teachers, monotonous lessons, distance in interpersonal relations, and students' sense of alienation. The article emphasizes the need for educational reform aimed at strengthening students' agency, developing relationships based on empathy and cooperation, and moving away from a model of education rooted in control and coercion.

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje szkołę jako przestrzeń kontroli i oporu z perspektywy społeczno-pedagogicznej oraz literackiej. Autorka omawia mechanizmy funkcjonowania uczniów w systemie edukacyjnym, zwracając uwagę na proces marginalizacji podmiotowości, etykietowanie uczniów oraz ograniczanie ich autonomii. Przedstawione zostają literackie reprezentacje szkoły w utworach Goscinny'ego, Makuszyńskiego, Niziurskiego i Gombrowicza – jako miejsca napięcia między światem dorosłych, a światem młodzieży. Szczególny nacisk położono na powieść „Sposób na Alcybiadesa", która ukazuje szkołę jako instytucję represyjną, ale też umożliwia przemianę relacji nauczyciel–uczeń dzięki postaci profesora Misiaka. Tekst zawiera wyniki badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych wśród uczniów szkół średnich, które wskazują na niski poziom zaangażowania nauczycieli, brak relacji emocjonalnych oraz doświadczenie alienacji w szkole. Wnioski artykułu wskazują na potrzebę reformy edukacji w kierunku zwiększenia podmiotowości ucznia, odejścia od autorytarnego modelu kształcenia i wzmacniania funkcji wychowawczej szkoły.

The school is a special social space, characterised by specific mechanisms and norms that regulate daily functioning. Understanding these rules and adjusting accordingly can be crucial for students' proper functioning in the school environment. The formation of diverse social groups, including some informal structures of a subcultural nature, poses additional challenges for young people, shaping their position and relationships in educational institutions. Young people in schools often struggle not only with peer conflicts, but also with tensions arising from their relationships with teachers, who often view students through the prism of established stereotypes. Labelling a student as problematic can lead to a variety of difficulties, both in the psychosocial sphere and in day-to-day functioning at school: "In crisis situations, such as disciplinary incidents, students labelled as 'unruly' are often the first to be suspected [to be guilty]"[1].

[1] J. Dobrzycki, *Szkolne wyobcowanie. Inny Niziurski*, doctoral dissertation, Katowice 2021.

As Ewa Wysocka and Katarzyna Tomiczek emphasise, educational institutions play a key role in shaping interpersonal relationships and in the process of socialisation of young people:

> In the developmental aspect […] they determine passive adaptation to imposed control, exclude or explicitly limit the formation of personal autonomy, possibly leading to learned helplessness blocking or diminishing the possibilities of coping with life and rational, active action towards shaping one's own life and social life[2].

The student in the educational system is obliged to submit to pedagogical control, which is often associated with the marginalisation of their subjectivity. Any attempts at emancipation or actions that deviate from accepted norms are sanctioned, and students who take such actions face repressive consequences. Nevertheless, despite awareness of these limitations, there is a group of students who do not accept the imposed rules. In opposing the system, they oppose the school hierarchy, wanting to undermine the rules that they believe hinder development and lead to stagnation in the formation of their personality. The vertical power model operating in the school significantly hinders dialogue and prevents young people from voicing problems. Consequently, many students adopt a passive attitude, accepting the imposed governance system. This probably stems from the belief that this is the only way they can preserve even a small degree of their autonomy.

In youth literature, school often serves as a backdrop for building interpersonal relationships. According to Zofia Mitosek's observations, "in children's literature school becomes a micro-world in which young people learn the rules of society"[3]. An example is *The Nicholas* series by René Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempé. Here, the school is presented in a way that's humorous yet critical towards certain aspects of the educational institution. It is a space where children not only acquire knowledge, but above all experience a variety of social interactions – competition, friendship, conflict and fun. Teachers in the series are portrayed as having difficulty keeping order in the classroom, which leads to many hilarious situations, while also highlighting the difference in perspective

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[2] K. Tomiczek, E. Wysocka, *Szkoła jako środowisko życia i codzienność ucznia – analiza teoretyczna i empiryczne egzemplifikacje percepcji i sposobu wartościowania szkoły przez uczniów*, "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 2014, no. 1, p. 171.

[3] Z. Mitosek, *Szkoła jako mikroświat w literaturze dziecięcej*, Kraków 2015, p. 28.

between adults and children. The school in *Nicholas* is a chaotic space, where young characters pursue their own needs and ideas, often ignoring formal rules. As Zofia Mitosek notes: "*The Nicholas* series portrays school as a field of constant play between the world of children and the world of adults, allowing young readers to find a reflection of their own experiences"[4]. The image of school in this series thus becomes not only a critique of educational rigour, but also a celebration of children's imagination and spontaneity.

The school plays a similar role in Polish youth literature, including in the works of Kornel Makuszyński, where the characters, despite numerous conflicts with their teachers, learn how to build friendships and cope with the challenges of everyday life. School in these works is not only a place for acquiring knowledge, but also a space where young people acquire social skills. In the novel entitled *Szatan z siódmej klasy*, school is depicted as a place of intellectual challenges, where the relationship between students and teachers is really diverse. School portrayed in the novel functions as a place where young people develop their talents, while the teachers, although eccentric at times, are presented as guides in the educational process. As Krystyna Heska-Kwaśniewicz emphasises, "Makuszyński, in his novels for young people, portrays school as a space not only for teaching, but also for raising young people, in which relationships based on trust can foster their development"[5]. The image of school in *Szatan z siódmej klasy* combines realism with a certain idealisation, which brings it closer to the experiences of young readers, while also presenting a model of education in which the teacher becomes an ally of the student.

School as a repressive institution

Another important motif is the portrayal of school as a repressive institution, limiting individual freedom. As Barbara Tylicka points out, "youth literature often portrays school in a critical way, as a space where the power of teachers collides with the need for student autonomy"[6]. This is exemplified in Edmund Niziurski's novel *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (*The Way to deal With Alcibiades*), where **school** is shown as a space of competition and strategy, with students trying to

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[4] Ibid., p. 42.

[5] K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *Obraz szkoły w literaturze młodzieżowej okresu międzywojennego*, Katowice 1994, p. 123.

[6] K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *Korczak i jego wizja wychowania*, Katowice 2003, p. 112.

avoid their responsibilities by using the titular "tricks" on teachers. In *Sposób na Alcybiadesa*, school is presented as a space with a clear hierarchical structure, where the dominant role of teachers imposes the need for students to conform to rigid rules. This organisation of the educational institution fosters tensions between students and teaching staff, leading to a situation where young people start to perceive school as an oppressive system that controls their lives. Teachers, although portrayed with a certain irony, symbolise power based on authority, which often does not result from their personal competence but from their formal position in the school structure. As Katarzyna Heska-Kwaśniewicz points out: "school in Edmund Niziurski's youth literature is sometimes portrayed as a space of conflict between the individual needs of the pupil and the norms imposed by the system, which leads young people to oppose authority"[7].

An example of this opposition is the actions of the characters who, using the "tricks" mentioned in the title, attempt to circumvent the school rules while distancing themselves from a system that does not allow them to make autonomous decisions. Focused on developing strategies to avoid responsibility, Year VIIIa treats school as a space where survival is paramount and education falls into the background. However, this critical view of the educational establishment is not limited to criticism of teachers. As Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel notes, "the ironic portrayal of school as a repressive institution reflects not only the actual social tensions between young people and adults, but also the wider problem of a lack of dialogue and mutual understanding"[8].

The repressive nature of school in Niziurski's novel also manifests itself in the stereotypical treatment of pupils by teachers who assume their irresponsibility or lack of commitment. This model of building relationships fosters a negative image of teachers as gatekeepers to the system rather than guides to support the development of young people. Using humour and the grotesque, Niziurski's novel highlights how the institutional nature of school, based on rules and penalties, can lead to the alienation of students who, instead of engaging in learning, look for ways to cheat the system.

Contemporary pedagogy assumes that **the individual teacher-student relationship** is a key element of the educational and social process. Its analysis in

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7 K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *Korczakowskie tradycje w literaturze młodzieżowej XX wieku*, Katowice 2003, p. 145.

8 A. Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Humor i groteska w literaturze młodzieżowej Edmunda Niziurskiego*, Kraków 2001, p. 92.

youth literature shows how these interactions affect the development of young people. Surprisingly, this is also what we can find in Niziurski's novel. Despite the oppressive nature of school as an institution, the author brilliantly portrays the character of Professor Misiak, who becomes the focal point of the analysis, showing the possibilities of building mutual understanding and respect with students.

Professor Misiak, although initially perceived by students as harmless and easy to manipulate, gradually reveals his authenticity and commitment as an educator. In his relationship with students, he does not base his authority on firmness or rigour, but on passion and knowledge, which becomes the basis for building respect among young people. As Krystyna Heska-Kwaśniewicz observes, "Niziurski, in creating the character of Alcibiades, departs from the schematic image of the teacher as a guardian of discipline, proposing a model of an educator whose authority is based on personal values rather than on institutional position"[9].

Alcibiades' relationship with the students of Year VIIIa initially fits into a pattern of distance and mutual distrust. The students, perceiving the teacher as an "easy target", use various "tricks" on him in an attempt to avoid work and responsibilities. However, over time their perception changes as they begin to see Alcibiades not only as a teacher, but also as a passionate and committed human being who can inspire them to take action.

The attitude of the students towards the teacher is also an important element of the novel. The titular "trick for Alcibiades" becomes a strategy for avoiding responsibilities and taking initiative in their relationship with the teacher. As Barbara Tylicka points out, "the strategic approach of students to teachers in Niziurski's work is a metaphor for the youthful need for emancipation from imposed authorities"[10].

But over time, Alcibiades breaks the established pattern, gaining the recognition among students through his authenticity and passion for teaching. It is a breakthrough moment to discover that a teacher is not only a representative of the educational system, but also a human being who can inspire young people and support their development. This process of transforming the relationship from a distant one to full cooperation shows that building mutual understanding requires openness and commitment on both sides.

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[9] K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *Korczakowskie tradycje…*, op. cit., p. 147.

[10] B. Tylicka, *Obraz nauczyciela w literaturze młodzieżowej*, Warszawa 2008, p. 64.

Sposób na Alcybiadesa emphasises that the key to building effective teacher-student relationships is dialogue based on mutual respect. Professor Misiak, although initially appearing inconspicuous and unassertive, turns out to be a person able to gain students' appreciation through his approach to teaching and openness to talk. As Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel notes, "Niziurski proposes the model of a humanist teacher who, rather than imposing his authority, seeks to understand the needs and aspirations of young people"[11].

The dialogue between Alcibiades and the students becomes a tool for developing a relationship based on trust. Discovering knowledge together, and supporting young people in their activities, leads to a change in the students' perception of the teacher. However, the relationship is not one-sided – Alcibiades also sees the potential and energy of his students, which allows him to act as a guide rather than a guardian of discipline.

The teacher-student relationship in Edmund Niziurski's *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* is an example of a dynamic process in which initial distance and lack of understanding transform into a relationship based on dialogue and cooperation. The novel emphasises that successful relationship building between two parties requires authenticity, openness and mutual respect. Alcibiades, although initially treated as a target for manipulation, becomes an authority figure for the students, and his strength lies not in formal authority but in his values and passion for teaching. The analysis of this relationship allows us to see that youth literature can be an important voice in reflecting on the role of the teacher in the contemporary educational system.

Teacher-student relationships from the students' perspective: survey results

Relationships between teachers and students play a key role in the educational process, affecting both learning outcomes and young people's wellbeing. Contemporary research indicates that the quality of these relationships leaves much to be desired, particularly in terms of a lack of emotional engagement and individual attention on the part of teachers. In my article, I present the results of a survey conducted among secondary school students to investigate their perceptions of their relationships with teachers, the school atmosphere and the quality of lessons.

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[11] A. Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Humor…*, op. cit., p. 88.

Research methodology

The survey was conducted in the form of an anonymous questionnaire among 300 secondary school students from different regions of Poland (Mielec, Rzeszów, Kraków, Starachowice). The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions that asked about students' opinions on teachers, lessons and the general atmosphere at school. Analysis of the results makes it possible to identify the key problems that young people perceive in their relationships with teaching staff.

Findings

An analysis of the responses shows that as many as 72% of respondents say they do not like going to school. The main reasons cited include monotony of lessons (65%), lack of teacher involvement (58%) and feeling pressurised by an overload of responsibilities (45%). In the open-ended questions, students described school as "a hopeless place", "stressful" and "detached from reality". As one student notes: "Teachers treat us like memorisation machines rather than people with their own problems".

The vast majority of students (79%) found the lessons predictable, schematic and unengaging. Respondents pointed out that the dominant form of conducting classes was a lecture, with a lack of interactive teaching methods. Only 14% of respondents said that the lessons gave them inspiration or allowed them to develop their interests.

Another major problem according to the students is a lack of interest from teachers in their lives and problems. As many as 68% of respondents indicated that teachers do not try to understand them as people and that conversation with them is limited to educational topics only. As indicated in the responses, 'teachers are not interested in how we feel or what we struggle with, all that matters is the score on the test". It is worth noting that these results are in line with the observations of Jadwiga Izdebska, who notes that "the contemporary school increasingly limits the teacher-student relationship to the purely formal sphere, neglecting the emotional and educational aspects"[12].

[12] J. Izdebska, *Relacje nauczyciel – uczeń we współczesnej szkole*, Warszawa 2015, p. 45.

Respondents largely emphasised their distant relationships with teachers. As many as 62% of students said they felt uncomfortable talking to teachers and 54% felt that teachers did not encourage them to be open.

Discussion of results

The results of the questionnaire indicate significant problems in the teacher-student relationship that can negatively affect the school atmosphere and the effectiveness of the educational process. The schematic nature of lessons, the lack of teacher involvement and the distant relationships are factors that make students reluctant to participate in school life. As Marta Bogdanowicz points out, "a good relationship with the teacher based on mutual respect and interest can significantly contribute to the student's motivation and their perception of school as a place for development"[13]. Unfortunately, according to the research conducted, most students do not experience such support.

Research Conclusions – Scientific, Pedagogical, and Literary Context

Analysis of the presented research and literary representations of school indicate that the student experience in an educational institution remains largely unchanged, both sociologically and literary. The phenomena of alienation, lack of subjectivity, and an authoritarian model of teacher-student relationships, which emerge in contemporary research, are aptly captured in the work of Edmund Niziurski. As previously mentioned, the novel *The Way to Deal with Alcybiades* provides a literary diagnosis of a school system based on control, hierarchy, and coercion, in which young people, deprived of real influence over the educational process, engage in resistance. Student rebellion and the strategy of "ways" are not merely a manifestation of laziness or a lack of ambition, but a form of defence of their own autonomy and identity. Niziurski, using humour and the grotesque, shows that by resisting school rules, young people are fighting for the right to self-determination – for a space of freedom within a system that restricts this freedom. In this sense, Niziurski's prose proves surprisingly relevant: his vision of school as a bureaucratic institution, full of rituals and ostensible authorities, resonates with contemporary research, in which students point to monotony, a lack of dialogue, and the emotional distance of

[13] M. Bogdanowicz, *Psychologiczne aspekty relacji nauczyciel – uczeń*, Kraków 2019, p. 87.

teachers. Both in the fictional eighth-grade classroom and in real-life 21st-century schools, young people experience a similar sense of lack of influence and a reluctance to participate in a process that does not engage them.

At the same time, Niziurski, far from being a mere critic of the school, creates a model of a humanist teacher who breaks the mould of power and authority based on coercion. His strength lies not in his formal position but in his passion, knowledge, and genuine interest in his students. Alcibiades's relationship with the youth demonstrates that even within a repressive system, dialogue and mutual understanding are possible. It is this relationship that becomes literary proof that education can be a collaborative process, not a hierarchical one. The juxtaposition of empirical research with the message of *The Way to Deal with Alcibiades* reveals a continuity of problems and confirms the need for a profound reflection on the contemporary education system. Niziurski, although writing in a completely different context, universally captures the tension between control and freedom, between obedience and subjectivity. His work can therefore be read as a call for the humanization of schools, with an education based on relationships, empathy, and collaboration, rather than coercion and judgment.

In the context of the research findings and literary analyses, it can be concluded that a reform of the educational system is needed, aimed at restoring the student's role as a subject and the teacher's role as a guide and partner. School, as in Niziurski's vision, should become a space of encounter and dialogue, where knowledge is not a tool of control but a path to understanding oneself and the world.

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NIZIURSKI'S REMEDY FOR YOUTH PROBLEMS. *ADELO, ZROZUM MNIE!* [*ADELO, UNDERSTAND ME!*] IN BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

REMEDIUM NIZIURSKIEGO NA PROBLEMY MŁODZIEŻY. *ADELO, ZROZUM MNIE!* W PRACY BIBLIOTERAPEUTYCZNEJ

Keywords
Edmund Niziurski – bibliotherapy – *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* [*Adelo, understand me!*]

Słowa klucze
Edmund Niziurski – biblioterapia – *Adelo, zrozum mnie!*

Abstract
The aim of this article is to show the potential of Edmund Niziurski's works in bibliotherapy. The first part of the article is an attempt to present the difficult situation of children and adolescents in the face of the experience of loneliness and mental crisis, with particular emphasis on the importance of bibliotherapy as a tool supporting the process of emotional and social maturation. The second part of the article focuses on identifying the main protagonists of the novel *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* [*Adelo, understand me!*] by E. Niziurski and pointing out the possibilities of therapeutic and didactic use of their experiences in working with young people in bibliotherapy classes.

Streszczenie
Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie potencjału twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego w biblioterapii. Pierwsza część artykułu stanowi próbę przedstawienia trudnej sytuacji dzieci i młodzieży wobec doświadczenia samotności i kryzysu psychicznego, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem znaczenia biblioterapii jako narzędzia wspierającego proces dojrzewania

emocjonalnego i społecznego. Druga część artykułu koncentruje się na wyodrębnieniu głównych protagonistów powieści *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* E. Niziurskiego i wskazaniu możliwości terapeutycznego i dydaktycznego wykorzystania ich doświadczeń w pracy z młodzieżą w ramach zajęć biblioterapeutycznych.

Man in the modern world is lost. Many factors contribute to this feeling of emptiness and loneliness, including the spread of digitalisation in every area of life, consumerism and changing values[1]. Finding oneself in such a rapidly developing society, establishing and sticking to one's own decisions, and living in a general community has become a considerable challenge for both adults and children. Young people today are particularly lonely. Renata Matusiak and Agnieszka Dębicka write about the difficult mental state of children and young people, listing the causes of the crisis and pointing to the possible consequences of adults' lack of involvement in helping young people. The authors argue that the mental state of young people has particularly deteriorated as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic[2]. Wanda Matras-Mastalerz draws attention to the terminology used to describe the generation of contemporary students: 'Members of Generation Z, i.e. people born at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, are often referred to as the 'snowflake generation'. This name refers to the individualism characteristic of this group and their relatively low mental resilience'[3]. Loneliness affects people of all ages, and today's youth, partly due to the influence of social media, may have problems finding their place in society.

The importance of bibliotherapy in working with young people

Bibliotherapy comes to aid of young people. There are many definitions of this field of science, but the most accurate one is presented in the *Encyklopedia współczesnego bibliotekarstwa polskiego* [Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Polish Librarianship]: 'W zakres biblioterapii wchodzi działalność praktyczna w dziedzinie oddziaływania książki w różnych środowiskach społecznych poprzez

[1] See J. Mółka, *Samotność i osamotnienie w procesie autorealizacji*, "Horyzonty Wychowania" 2022, vol. 11, p. 17.

[2] See R. Matusiak, A. Dębicka, *Kryzys zdrowia psychicznego dzieci i młodzieży – profilaktyka, pomoc*, "Kultura – Przemiany – Edukacja" 2023, vol. XII–XIII, p. 238.

[3] See W. Matras-Mastalerz, *Literatura jako narzędzie wspierające rezyliencję młodzieży w sytuacjach kryzysowych*, "Studia de Cultura" 2023, vol. 15 no. 2, p. 95.

odpowiedni dobór lektur oraz metod i form pracy z czytelnikami wymagającymi szczególnej opieki'[4] [5]. The basis of bibliotherapy is considered to be the reader's support in everyday dilemmas. A book is supposed to become a guide and a comforter in the hardships of life. Librarians, teachers face a real challenge, as they are responsible for selecting appropriate content for the individual problems of readers[6]. Matras-Mastalerz highlights the interdisciplinary nature of bibliotherapy. This field of study combines literary studies, bibliology, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, philosophy, ethics, history, anthropology and medical sciences[7]. This correlation of knowledge from many disciplines is necessary in order to prepare appropriate material that will help readers in crisis. In the process of bibliotherapy, a book ceases to be a mere cultural text. Its impact is intended to positively influence the way one perceives a problematic situation, oneself, or even change one's behaviour. Magdalena Prokopowicz states:

> W ujęciu psychologicznym biblioterapia jest szczególną metodą psychoterapeutyczną, która ma wzmocnić i wzbogacić zasoby pacjenta, by lepiej potrafił radzić sobie z trudnościami. Książka ma dać wsparcie, uspokoić, zredukować lęk, pomóc w kształtowaniu adekwatnego postrzegania świata, swego w nim miejsca. Pacjent sam odbudowuje swoje zasoby lub wykształca nowe i szuka sposobu realizacji siebie[8] [9].

Bibliotherapy is a complex science, as Prokopowicz describes. The audience, together with the characters, must find the right path or solve a problem. Sometimes bibliotherapy is most effective in showing readers that they are not alone with their dilemmas. It is not important whether young people are

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4 *Encyklopedia współczesnego bibliotekarstwa polskiego*, eds. K. Głombiowski, B. Świderski, H. Więckowska, Wrocław 1976, p. 81.

5 "Bibliotherapy encompasses practical activities in the field of the impact of books in various social environments through the appropriate selection of reading material and methods and forms of working with readers requiring special care." [Trans. A. Kondrak].

6 See W. Matras-Mastalerz, *Biblioterapia w procesie umacniania zdrowia psychicznego i fizycznego czytelników*, "Studia Pedagogiczne. Problemy społeczne, edukacyjne i artystyczne" 2016, no. 27, p. 91.

7 Ibid., p. 92.

8 M. Prokopowicz, *Biblioterapia–istota, cele i rodzaje*, "Biuletyn EBIB" 2014, no. 150, p. 2.

9 From a psychological perspective, bibliotherapy is a special psychotherapeutic method designed to strengthen and enrich the patient's resources so that they can better cope with difficulties. The book is intended to provide support, calm the patient, reduce anxiety, and help them develop an adequate perception of the world and their place in it. The patient rebuilds their resources or develops new ones and seeks ways to fulfil themselves. [Trans. A. Kondrak].

going through a crisis that is the result of a bad social situation or is related to illness or puberty, generally considered a difficult period – what is crucial is that young people, especially during adolescence, need support, guidance or simply participation in their life choices.

The concept of identity is particularly associated with adolescence. This is the time when young people ask themselves the most fundamental question: who am I? It is not without reason that adolescence is a stage when it is so easy to fall into various extremes. It is a manifestation of curiosity about the world and its mysteries. Identity is linked to issues such as self-esteem, awareness of one's own distinctiveness and individuality, and personal value systems. These are important components that influence the formation of identity. When discussing this concept, it is important to mention interpersonal relationships. They also reflect self-esteem and contribute to the determination of self-worth[10].

Relations between peers are a troublesome issue nowadays. As Matusiak and Dębicka note: "Children and young people can be very cruel to each other: they gossip, ridicule, mock, bully, turn others against them, and exclude them from their circle of friends"[11]. Hate is one of the causes of suicide among young people[12]. That is the reason why young people should be sensitised, taught tolerance and helped to build self-esteem. It is therefore worth turning to bibliotherapy, which is fully prepared for the problems faced by young people and can sometimes be the only source of support for them.

Adelo, zrozum mnie! [Adelo, understand me!] and its use in bibliotherapy

Adelo, zrozum mnie! [Adelo, understand me!] by Edmund Niziurski is the last part of the Trylogia Odrzywolska[13] [Odrzywoly Trilogy]. The book was published in 1977 and is a continuation of the adventures of Tomek Okist, Zygmunt Gnacki, Matylda Opat, Cypek and the beautiful Adela. Niziurski presents the vicissitudes of young people. The story is full of twists and turns and humour, based on a crime plot, with a love story also appearing. The novel is

[10] See D. Musiał, *Kształtowanie się tożsamości w adolescencji*, "Studia z psychologii w KUL" 2007, p. 75.

[11] R. Matusiak, A. Dębicka, op. cit., p. 239.

[12] A. Bąbik, D. Olejniczak, *Uwarunkowania i profilaktyka samobójstw wśród dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce*, "Dziecko krzywdzone. Teoria, badania, praktyka" 2014, pp. 99–105.

[13] The title is taken from the fictional village of Odrzywoły, where the novel is set.

certainly considered an interesting proposition for young sters, in which, in addition to popular literary motifs, the reader can find issues relevant to their age.

In *Adelo, zrozum mnie!*, the main character, Tomasz (Tomek) Okist, is used as an example to illustrate the interpersonal relationships that arise at every stage of life, but which are particularly vulnerable during adolescence.

The first one is friendship. From the first pages, it is clear that the main character is friends with Gnat (Zygmunt Gnacki). Their relation is based on support, conversations and shared adventures. When discussing companionship with young people, it is worth referring to the example from the novel *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* The characteristics of Tomek and Gnat's brotherhood can be examined and the following questions discussed with the pupils: what is fellowship? What makes a good friend and in what situations does a person become a trusted friend? What do we expect from another person? Young people, surrounded by information chaos, may have trouble distinguishing between such basic concepts as friendship. Niziurski comes to the rescue by showing situations that deserve to be called brotherhood, e.g. when Tomasz offers to talk to Gnat's mother and explain his friend's lateness. This scene shows that one boy cares about another, even in such prosaic situations. Companion here is not limited to personal gain, but turns into concern for the other person. It teaches young readers empathy and understanding. Another example is the characters' conversations. They show consideration and commitment.

The second relationship is the main character's acquaintance with 'beautiful Adela'. This bond has the hallmarks of love story; the girl asks Okist out on a date, and the young people meet up. Discussing the nature of this relations with students would not be limited to a discussion about young people's companions, but would also draw attention to the dangers that can arise in such cases. Adela manipulates the protagonist, exploiting his feelings for her own purposes. This manifests itself in her forbidding Okist from maintaining contact with his friends. Adela believes that she is encouraging 'mature behaviour' in boys, and she requires this of Tomek, but her demands boil down to manipulation and a distorted vision of adulthood. Students should be made aware of such behaviour so that they do not get hurt in the future.

Both relations, friendship and love, are put to the test and fail. The brotherhood with Gnat ends, and Niziurski comments on this as follows:

> Z Zygmuntem Gnackim także koniec… Nie sprawdził się. Ale nawet nie to jest najważniejsze. Po prostu zbyt się różnimy. Dawniej, gdy byliśmy

> malcami, to nie rzucało się tak w oczy, ale teraz widać aż nadto wyraźnie. Nie mamy wspólnego języka. Więc żegnaj, Gnacie, po siedmiu latach przyjaźni, byłeś dobry do szczeniackich zabaw, a teraz – cześć! Niech każdy z nas pójdzie swoją drogą![14] [15].

The breakdown of friendship depicted by Niziurski can happen in real life and is sometimes impossible to avoid. As we mature, our priorities and outlook on the world change, and *Adelo, zrozum mnie!* is a perfect example of how to familiarise young audiences with such an event. A child's feelings should never be underestimated; every close friendship plays a crucial emotional role in life. Whether it is through an argument or incompatible values that causes the loss of contact with someone important, it is an unpleasant situation, especially for a child or teenager. Sometimes friends are confidants and provide more support and understanding than family members, which is why it is so significant to talk to young readers about all their relationships in life. Importantly, Niziurski also offers suggestions on how to deal with such a problem. First of all, he examines the feelings accompanying the protagonist, accepts them and embraces them. One should not fight against changes that are an integral part of life. The author guides readers to understand that as we mature, our values are formed and what once suited us may no longer meet our expectations.

The romantic relationship ends in a similar way:

> Rzecz w tym, że moja droga rysuje się nader niejasno od czasu, gdy padłem ofiarą niegodziwej Adeli. Nie otrząsnąłem się dotąd z tej klęski. Na próżno sobie tłumaczę: Po prostu mi nie wyszło… Sprawa z Adelą to zwykłe nieporozumienie i pomyłka. Rzecz normalna padłem ofiarą iluzji. […] Teraz opadłem na dół. Nie ma sprawy. Po prostu będę chodził po ziemi. Że mi nie wyszło, to fakt! No cóż, życie byłoby zbyt proste, gdyby każdemu zawsze wychodziło, a tak jest znacznie ciekawiej, pisarze mają temat i mogą powstawać dramaty. Dramat to piękna rzecz…[16] [17].

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[14] E. Niziurski, *Adelo, zrozum mnie!*, Olsztyn 1991, p. 232.

[15] "It's over with Zygmunt Gnacki too… He didn't work out. But that's not even the most important thing. We're just too different. Back when we were kids, it wasn't so obvious, but now it's all too clear. We don't speak the same language. So goodbye, Gnat, after seven years of friendship, you were good for childish games, but now – bye! Let's each go our own way!" [Trans. A. Kondrak].

[16] Ibid.

[17] "The thing is, my path has been very unclear since I fell victim to the wicked Adela. I still haven't recovered from that defeat. I try to explain it to myself in vain: It just didn't work out for me… The whole thing with Adela was just a misunderstanding and a mistake. It's

The breakup with Adela hurt the protagonist. It seems that Tomek 'got over it' faster after his friendship with Gnat ended. This may be due to greater emotional involvement in a romantic relationship than in a brotherhood. It is worth noting that in the first comment, the protagonist understands the reason for the breakdown of his companion with his friend, explaining it as a change in life values and growing up. In the case of the end of his relationship with Adela, the protagonist realises that he has fallen victim to the girl's illusions and deceit. In both cases, Okist attempts to understand the reasons for the 'breakups', but the wickedness of the other person becomes a more difficult challenge to overcome. The boy needs more time to heal his broken heart, while he takes the farewell to his friend, caused by adulthood, extremely well.

During bibliotherapy workshops, just like Niziurski, it is possible to look for the reasons behind life's failures, breakups or disappointments. This is necessary because young people perceive life events through the prism of emotions, and explaining and getting to the root of the problem will certainly make it easier for teenagers to solve their problems or ailments[18].

The same applies to the search for one's own identity. Using the characters of Tomek and Adela as examples, one can look for the values that guide them and compare them with the worth of the pupils.

The analysis of these two protagonists will combine literary studies and bibliotherapy. Interdisciplinarity will allow for an in-depth exploration of the characters' behaviour and give the audience – students, pupils – space for emotional engagement. The characters of Adela and Tomek represent extreme opposites, which makes them all the more valuable for discussion during classes.

The protagonist wants to be an adult, but when analysing this character, we should ask ourselves: what does adulthood mean to her? During the lesson, you can explore the process of emotional maturation and discuss with your students: what it means to be an adult and whether Adela's idea of adulthood matches their answers. It is also worth considering the following questions: how does the protagonist's behaviour differ from that of the other characters?

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normal, I fell victim to an illusion. […] Now I've fallen down. No problem. I'll just walk on the ground. It didn't work out for me, that's a fact! Well, life would be too simple if everything always worked out for everyone, and this way it's much more interesting, writers have a topic and dramas can be created. Drama is a beautiful thing…" [Trans. A. Kondrak].

[18] See H. Kubiak, *Edukacja emocjonalna adolescentów–program profilaktyczny ukierunkowany na wspomaganie zdrowia psychicznego*, "Kultura – Społeczeństwo – Edukacja" 2016, vol. 2, p. 111.

Who displays a more responsible attitude and why does Adela treat Okist badly? Addressing these issues during the discussion will allow for a detailed analysis of the protagonist, not only in terms of literary studies, but also psychology. The latter field of science, which is an integral part of bibliotherapy, will reveal the protagonist's hidden aspirations, answer the question of why she hurts other people, and provide explanations for her behaviour. The teacher may refer, for example, to the methods of Carl Gustav Jung, particularly to the *Shadow Aspect*[19], according to which a person (in this case, the protagonist) sees in others what they do not want to see in themselves (just as Adela sees immaturity in others, but displays this very attitude herself). Such an analysis can become a starting point for further reflection.

Although the main character is a positive figure, he does not limit the possibilities for interpretation. When treatment this protagonist, it is also important to characterise his actions by asking students whether they would have done the same in his place. Tomek is a protagonist who displays many important aspects: he is a model friend, a boy in love, a person who reflects on his own life, and is critical of himself and others. The teacher can start with a general question, e.g. what do the students think about Tomek? This opens up the discussion and encourages young people to argue their own views. The next questions should be more specific, e.g.: What admirable qualities can be seen in the protagonist? Would you do the same as him? Above all, when analysing Okist, the character's critical nature should be discussed. The protagonist's final monologue is an analysis of events, both unpleasant and good. Niziurski conveys the message that every situation in life must be faced, not denied or falsified. This key piece of advice, which comes from the message of the novel, should be highlighted when creating the characteristics of the protagonists. It should also be remembered that both Adela and Tomek show the influence of the environment on the individual. This can be an interesting starting point for a discussion about relationships with peers and how to maintain one's own values in a given social group.

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[19] See A. Warmiński, *Koncepcja „cienia" w psychologii analitycznej CG Junga*, "Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP w Krakowie", 1997, issue 190, p. 36.

Summary

The chaos of information, the need for recognition in their environment, the desire for love and understanding – all these factors contribute to young people feeling lost. In response to these everyday problems, Niziurski offers his advice, emphasising the importance of finding the source of the problem and understanding it. In *Adelo, zrozum mnie!*, the author shows two common causes of relationship breakdown: adulthood and bad behaviour. In the first case, he directs young people towards a change in value systems, priorities and ourselves caused by puberty. Young people need to be made aware that change is necessary and inevitable, but that it allows us to develop. The second case shows the behaviour of bad people who are guided only by their own good and do not care about others. We cannot avoid this either. The protagonist's experience is certainly unpleasant; as we learn from the last fragments of the work, it is difficult for him to come to terms with such an ending. This situation can happen to anyone – betrayed trust and exploitation by another person can have very unpleasant consequences, which is why it is worth reading Niziurski's prose, which speaks openly about broken hearts and wounds. During bibliotherapy classes, it is worth introducing young readers to this author's work. The novel *Adelo, zrozum mnie!*, rich in guidance, will help young people find a remedy for confusion and loneliness in the modern world.

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PART 3

Niziurski in qualitative and quantitative research

CZĘŚĆ 3

Niziurski w badaniach jakościowych i ilościowych

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EVERFRESH OR OUTDATED? OPINIONS OF CONTEMPORARY READERS ON SELECTED NOVELS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BY EDMUND NIZIURSKI

EVERFRESH CZY *NIEAKTUALNA RAMOTA*? OPINIE WSPÓŁCZESNYCH CZYTELNIKÓW NA TEMAT WYBRANYCH POWIEŚCI DLA MŁODZIEŻY AUTORSTWA EDMUNDA NIZIURSKIEGO

Keywords
Edmund Niziurski – reception of literature – reader's review

Słowa klucze
Edmund Niziurski – odbiór literatury – recenzja czytelnicza

Abstract
The aim of this article is to examine contemporary readers' opinions on the relevance of selected young adult works by Edmund Niziurski. A linguistic analysis of the research material, consisting of so-called reader reviews published on the portal *Lubimyczytac.pl* (an online platform dedicated to books), demonstrates that the evaluated novels continue to be regarded as interesting and appealing by the majority of readers, who do not consider them to have lost their relevance over time.

Streszczenie
Celem artykułu jest zbadanie opinii współczesnych czytelników na temat aktualności wybranych utworów dla młodzieży autorstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego. Analiza językowa materiału badawczego złożonego z tzw. recenzji czytelniczych zamieszczanych w wortalu Lubimyczytac.pl (serwis internetowy poświęcony książkom) dowodzi, że oceniane powieści wciąż są interesujące i atrakcyjne dla większości czytelników, nie starzeją się według nich.

The year 2025 marks the centenary of the birth of Edmund Niziurski (1925-2013) – prose writer, publicist, scriptwriter and playwright, one of the most outstanding creators of Polish youth literature[1]. Niziurski's books have attracted the interest of the public and been widely read, with large print runs, numerous editions and translations into more than a dozen languages[2]. In 2014, Grażyna Knap – on the basis of collected publishing statistics – stated that: "Edmund Niziurski's popularity in Poland is well established. His books are constantly being reprinted and finding new readers […]"[3].

Entries posted on the online book sites of Lubimyczytac.pl, Nakanapie.pl, Granice.pl prove that Niziurski's works are still being read by Poles[4]. More than 80 years after the writer's artistic debut[5], which depicted the school reality of the 1950s-70s from the perspective of pupils, used elements of the youth sociolect of the time in the way his characters spoke and in some of his works used a socialist-realist convention[6], one can ask whether his books still appeal to readers, whether they are understood by them, whether they affect them in some way (e.g. evoke emotions, make them think, enrich them cognitively).

The aim of this article is to examine the opinions of contemporary readers on selected novels for young people by Niziurski, and more specifically to determine how they evaluate these works in terms of a criterion that can

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1 See e.g. M. Kątny, *Sposób na Alcybiadesa Edmunda Niziurskiego*, Kielce 1995, pp. 3–7; J.R. Kowalczyk, *Edmund Niziurski*, [in:] https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/edmund-niziurski (accessed: 12/08/2025).

2 M. Kątny, op. cit., p. 7; G. Knap, *Dzieje wydawnicze twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, "Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Studia o Książce i Informacji" 2014, no. 33, pp. 29, 34; *Niziurski Edmund*, Polscy pisarze i badacze literatury XX i XXI wieku, [in:] https://pisarzeibadacze.ibl.edu.pl/haslo/3291/niziurski-edmund (accessed: 30/08/2025).

3 G. Knap, op. cit., p. 34.

4 See https://lubimyczytac.pl/szukaj/ksiazki?phrase=edmund+niziurski; https://nakanapie.pl/szukaj/ksiazki?q=edmund+niziurski; https://www.granice.pl/search.php?search=edmund+niziurski&current_page=1 (accessed: 25/05/2025). See data on the number of readers of selected Niziurski novels provided in the table later in this article.

5 The writer made his debut in 1944 with the poem *Pielgrzymi*, featured in "Biuletyn Informacyjny" published by the Home Army. His debut novel was *Gorące dni* from 1951. See G. Knap, op. cit., p. 26; M. Kątny, op. cit., p. 3; *Edmund Niziurski*, Stowarzyszenie Pisarzy Polskich Oddział Warszawa, [in:] http://sppwarszawa.pl/czlonkowie/edmund-niziurski/ (accessed: 11/08/2025).

6 See e.g. J. Pacławski, *Początki pisarstwa Edmunda Niziurskiego a realizm socjalistyczny*, [in:] *O twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, eds. M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, Kielce 2005, pp. 13–22; G. Knap, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

be described as "relevance": whether they consider the writer's works to be relevant, i.e. still interesting and true despite having been written a long time ago[7], still attractive[8], worth reading, understood, still affecting the reader, or outdated, i.e. works that are no longer interesting, true, attractive, comprehensible, worth reading, etc. The criterion indicated makes it possible to determine whether a given work has become "outdated"[9] or whether it remains "vital"[10].

The research objective is therefore linked to the phenomenon of the reception of literature[11]. In order to achieve it, it is necessary to find appropriate linguistic material to explore the reception of literary works. As Michał Głowiński wrote, "The fact of reception […] is […] in most cases not directly given, as is […] the literary work. It is yet to be reconstructed […] on the basis of texts of a certain kind. Namely, those which allow themselves to be interpreted as its testimonies"[12].

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[7] Term: *aktualny* 1, [in:] *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, vol. 1, ed. M. Bańko, Warszawa 2000, p. 15; cf. term: *aktualny* 1 – „istotny i ważny lub interesujący w chwili, w której lub o której mówimy", [in:] https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/22806/aktualny/3010070/problem (accessed: 30/08/2025).

[8] Cf. W. Wielopolski, *Atrakcyjność pożądana – od powieści socrealistycznej do młodej prozy epoki przełomu*, "Teksty" 1979, no. 5 (47), pp. 136–139.

[9] „Kiedy jakieś utwory, idee, pomysły itp. starzeją się, to stają się nieaktualne", term: *starzeć się* 3, [in:] *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, vol. 2, ed. M. Bańko, Warszawa 2000, p. 683; *Starzeć się* 5 – „z biegiem czasu tracić aktualność lub atrakcyjność", [in:] https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/11877/starzec-sie/1141633/dzielo (accessed: 30/08/2025). Cf. J. Paszek, *O starzeniu się tekstów literaturoznawczych*, "Teksty Drugie" 1990, no. 5–6, pp. 49–61; J. Smulski, *O starzeniu się tekstów literaturoznawczych. Uwagi polemiczne*, "Teksty Drugie" 1991, no. 6, pp. 74–78. Although the cited articles do not deal with literary texts but rather with literary studies, they nevertheless make it possible to notice certain similarities in the reception of both types of messages, e.g. the relative nature of the ageing process (who considers a given text to become outdated), and to use these features as a research problem.

[10] Term: *żywotny* 3, [in:] https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/80495/zywotny/5200489/problem (accessed: 30/08/2025).

[11] Due to limited space, we do not discuss the differences between the terms *receipt, reception* or *interpretation* (see e.g. A. Skrendo, *Recepcja literatury: przedmiot, zakresy, cele, badań. Komentarz do tytułu i „postscriptum"*, "Teksty Drugie" 2001, no. 5, pp. 87–93; A. Jarmuszkiewicz, *Recepcja literacka – jak może być rozumiana we współczesnym literaturoznawstwie?*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 2019, no. 1, pp. 140–148). Let us assume that the reception of Niziurski's works is, to simplify and generalise, the way they are received and evaluated by contemporary readers. Cf. term: *odbiór*, [in:] *Inny słownik…*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 1093; see also H. Markiewicz, *Wymiary dzieła literackiego*, Kraków 1996, pp. 250–268.

[12] M. Głowiński, *Style odbioru. Szkice o komunikacji literackiej*, Kraków 1977, p. 117.

In the present research, the "testimony" of the reception of Niziurski's works are reader reviews[13] posted from 1.01.2019 to 11.08.2025 on the Lubimyczytac.pl portal[14], "Poland's largest opinion-forming book portal"[15]. The linguistic material consists of 280 reader reviews of 11 of Niziurski's novels[16], whose titles are listed in the table below. The works were selected on the basis of the number of readers (at least 710 portal users declaring that they had read the work), the number of ratings they received (at least 350), and the number of reader reviews posted on the site (at least 19). Statistics for individual novels are provided in the table below[17]:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Novel title	**Average ratings on Lubimyczytac.pl**	**Average ratings with standardised parameters (conditional probability)***	**Number of readers**	**Number of ratings**	**Number of reviews**
Sposób na Alcybiadesa	6.8	6.83	10.252	5.927	**367**
Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa	7.2	7.14	2.583	1.445	**88**
Siódme wtajemniczenie	7.3	7.15	1.428	752	**69**

[13] See e.g. J. Jagodzińska, *Recenzje w Internecie (na przykładzie księgarni Merlin.pl)*, [in:] *Komunikowanie (się) w mediach elektronicznych – język, edukacja, semiotyka*, eds. M. Fliciak, G. Ptaszek, Warszawa 2009, pp. 113–125 or M. Krauz, *Potoczność w recenzjach czytelniczych*, [in:] *Potoczność a zachowania językowe Polaków*, eds. B. Boniecka, S. Grabias, Lublin 2007, pp. 111–124. It seems academically valuable to carry out research on the genological status of the texts analysed. There is not enough space in this article to discuss these issues. Therefore, let us simply state that reader reviews are texts containing an evaluation of a book, written by non-professionals, 'non-experts' (cf. J. Sławiński, *O dzisiejszych normach czytania (znawców)*, "Teksty" 1974, no. 3(15), pp. 9–32) – readers.

[14] See https://lubimyczytac.pl/szukaj/ksiazki?phrase=edmund+niziurski (accessed: 12/08/2025). In the aforementioned portal, this type of texts is called *reviews*. Users of the site can also express their opinions on books through *ratings* in a graphic form, and as *official reviews*. The latter two forms of evaluating works are not the focus of this research.

[15] See https://lubimyczytac.pl/o-nas (accessed: 25/05/2025).

[16] At Lubimyczytac.pl there are also ratings and reviews of other works by Edmund Niziurski.

[17] Columns 2, 4, 5, 6 contain data from Lubimyczytac.pl (as of 11/08/2025). The order of the novels is determined by the number of reviews they received. The data in the table require more commentary, but this text does not offer enough space. This information provides an interesting context for the considerations here, which is why it has been included in the article; some of it has been used in the argument.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Księga urwisów	7.0	7.02	1.751	847	**47**
Klub włóczykijów	7.3	7.14	1.240	668	**46**
Adelo, zrozum mnie!	6.7	6.94	817	429	**42**
Niesamowite przypadki Cymeona Maksymalnego	7.0	7.03	784	403	**32**
Awantura w Niekłaju	6.9	7.0	944	505	**27**
Naprzód, Wspaniali!	7.1	7.06	711	363	**25**
Szkolny lud, Okulla i ja	7.2	7.09	795	432	**20**
Awantury kosmiczne	6.9	7.01	775	356	**19**

* As the different novels received a different number of ratings, it is not possible to compare the averages obtained by simply collating these values. In order for the comparison to lead to correct conclusions, the conditional probability of obtaining a certain mean rating with standardised parameters was calculated by using Bayes' theorem. The following formula was used: $WR = \frac{v}{v+m} \times R + \frac{m}{v+m} \times C$, in which R is the average rating, v – is the number of ratings, m – is the accepted/required minimum number of ratings (for the purposes of this study, 1000 was adopted), C – is the average rating of all the books analysed (the arithmetic mean of the ratings of the novels studied is 7.04). See e.g. W. Kurt, *Statystyka bayesowska na wesoło. Poznawanie statystyki i prawdopodobieństwa przez* Gwiezdne wojny*, klocki Lego i gumowe kaczuszki*, trans. M. Bartoszuk, Warszawa 2020.

Source: Own development.

The research used mainly qualitative methods (such as linguistic text analysis, mainly semantic-pragmatic analysis), as well as quantitative methods (such as statistical analysis).

The above figures show that *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* has the largest readership, and it is also the most often rated by audiences. However, this does not mean that it is the novel rated the highest by readers. When we calculate the conditional probability of the average rating of each novel (vid. see the note marked with an asterisk below the table), we find that *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* is rated the worst, while the best reader rating has been achieved by *Siódme wtajemniczenie*.

The rating of the first novel is probably due to the fact that it is a compulsory school reading and therefore some of its readers read it out of compulsion, not by choice (for pleasure, sentiment, etc.). On the other hand, people who are interested in Niziurski's work and who like and appreciate his works may choose to read his other novels. The ratings by those forced to read it (who, for example, prefer other genres or like other authors) may be more critical than those of fans of Niziurski or of the type of literature represented by his novels.

The age of the readers is also important – younger readers, for whom *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* is a school compulsive reading, may find it anachronistic and less appealing than older readers, who are more familiar with the world described in the novel.

The reviews contain several characteristic elements (repeated in the various texts, but not an obligatory part of them), such as a more or less accurate description of the plot, an assessment of the language of the novel or comments on the humour present in the work. The collected material also includes reviews (34% of the texts), which assess whether a particular Niziurski novel is relevant[18] or outdated.

In more than half of the reader reviews analysed (56%), Niziurski's novels are viewed unequivocally positively in terms of the criterion analysed. Some readers write explicitly that the book *does not age*; *it will never age*; *it has not aged* (or an element of it has not aged, e.g. the language)[19], it is *still relevant*; *timeless* (or an element of it is timeless, e.g. the humour) *everfresh*[20].

Synonyms for not getting old, being relevant are expressions used in the text, such as: *holds strong* (the book's first edition was released a long time ago, but it is still being read and appreciated by the audience, relevant)[21]; *is not outdated* (it is not outdated, old-fashioned) or *is like wine* – this comparison is a fragment of a well-known maxim referring to women: "A woman is like wine – the older she gets, the better she gets". Although the entire aphorism is not used here, most audiences will probably be able to complete its further part and attribute the characteristic originally associated with women to the novel: both gain with the passage of time, become more attractive, their additional qualities are revealed (cf. *its retro atmosphere only adds to the charm. Instead of giving the impression of being dated, the novel gains in authenticity and nostalgia*).

The positive ratings still given to Niziurski's books mean that these texts are still within the readers' scope of interest – they are known, bought, read,

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[18] See footnote 7.

[19] „Kiedy jakieś utwory, idee, pomysły itp. starzeją się, to stają się nieaktualne", term: *starzeć się* 3, [in:] *Inny słownik…*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 683; https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/11877/starzec-sie/1141633/dzielo (accessed: 30/08/2025).

[20] The term *everfresh* literally means "always fresh", "eternally fresh". In the context studied, it can be understood as "timeless". All reader reviews quoted are from Lubimyczytac.pl, [in:] https://lubimyczytac.pl/szukaj/ksiazki?phrase=edmund+niziurski (accessed: 12/08/2025).

[21] „Jeśli ktoś trzyma się dobrze, zdrowo itp., to wygląda i czuje się dobrze jak na swój wiek", term: *trzymać się* 24, [in:] *Inny słownik…*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 862.

kept in home libraries; the recipients return to them many times, recommend them to their relatives, e.g. their children, cousins. The discussed aspect of the novel's relevance is also commented on by the authors of the reviews, e.g. *it does not lose its reading appeal; a timeless bestseller* or *still the top of our youth and/or adventure literature*.

In half of the positive reviews, readers do not write *expressis verbis* about the *relevance*, *the timelessness of* the book, the fact that it has *not aged*, but they point out the qualities that determine its "vitality", its relevance, its appeal to readers. The mentioned 'elements' of timelessness include attractive, reader-pleasing qualities, enduring impact on the reader (e.g. making them laugh, evoking memories, making them curious), cf. *it has been entertaining and teaching successive generations of readers for years*; *I still love this book, and going back to it has been wonderful*; *You read it with bated breath despite the passage of years*; [Przygody Marka Piegusa] *never gets boring*; *It's extremely interesting, touching on the problems known by every child, across generations* […]; *I enjoyed reading it again*.

An overwhelming minority of readers (9% of reviews) view Niziurski's novels unequivocally negatively in terms of their relevance. Some audiences explicitly state: the novel *has grown old*; *its time has passed*; it is *outdated*; *outlandish* (in the sense of "distant in various respects from the present; incomprehensible to contemporary audiences, incompatible with the current system of values, with the expectations, needs of today's audiences"[22]); some element (e.g. language, the presented world) is *archaic*, *incomprehensible* to the young readers[23]. Some readers, on the other hand, suggest its obsolescence, saying that the work no longer affects audiences as it once did (there is no *magic*) and therefore [the book] *will not have a multitude of readers*; *it will have few fans*.

Among the reviews with negative views of the novels based on their relevance, there are also some that can be described as mild in character. They

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[22] The other terms used in the review have a similar meaning: *complete abstraction*, *weird*, *S-F (science fiction*). Cf. term: *kosmita*, [in:] https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/2048/kosmita/5163094/dziwak (accessed: 02/09/2025).

[23] An important characteristic of the reviewers is their age (that they represent different generations of readers). It would be academically valuable to investigate whether the evaluation of Niziurski's novels is dependent on the age of the reader, e.g. whether negative reviews are written mainly by young audiences. A preliminary view of the material does not confirm the latter hypothesis – young people are the authors of a small proportion of explicitly negative reviews (around 10%). However, this issue needs to be explored further. This action is hampered by limited access to the reviewers' metadata. Their age can be inferred mainly from the wording they use, cf. *me, a fifty-year-old man*.

contain expressions, mainly adverbs, that soften the review, e.g. *it has aged a little bit*.

The authors of the remaining reviews (35% of the texts analysed) do not give Niziurski's novels an unambiguous rating – their reviews contain both statements that the book has aged, that it is no longer attractive to the reader, as well as statements indicating the timeless qualities of the text, for example:

> The book is unlikely to be understood by today's generation, there is nothing attractive here from their point of view: phones are analogue and rather rare in homes, the city is not covered in posters about promotions, and friends meet outside the house rather than on social media. But it also tells the truth about the old days, which they no longer know: the doctor and the teacher were people of position and authority and children listened to their parents; you went to school and if you didn't go, you hid it carefully from your parents. Across generations, we have a few things in common: a retouched world will always sell better, an attractive girl like Adela will always experience life as better, easier and more forgiving, and the saying "don't leave an old friend for a new one" will still be relevant.

As the statistics cited above show, Niziurski's novels continue to be read, with audiences commenting on them, reviewing them. One of the criteria for these reviews is the relevance of the books. A linguistic analysis of the research material consisting of reader reviews posted on the Lubimyczytac.pl website proves that Niziurski's works are still interesting and attractive to the majority of readers, the readers think that they do not age, and even gain with the passage of time – 56% of the analysed reader reviews contain unambiguously positive views. Negative views are also not absent from the reviews surveyed, but firstly they are not numerous (reviews containing explicitly negative views account for 9% of the research material), and secondly in half of the cases they are combined in the same review with positive statements (e.g. *A brilliant book from my youth, now the time of this book has passed and it will no longer have a multitude of readers, but 40 years ago it was great* or *Even though the book* […] *is not written in the most recent language, it is still interesting*) or they use expressions that soften this evaluation (e.g. *It's a bit outdated* or *the language has become a bit aged*). The authors of the reviews furthermore write about revisiting Niziurski's novels. If we accept the following "definition" of literature proposed by Jerzy Pilch: "My criterion for literature is that literature is a book that you return to. The rest are single-use objects. You don't go back to most of them; you've gone back to Niziurski many times. Various generations have

been brought up on his novels"[24], we can conclude that Edmund Niziurski's works are true, valuable literature.

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NIZIURSKI'S MISSION IN GEN Z (QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY RESEARCH)

MISJA NIZIURSKIEGO W POKOLENIU Z (ILOŚCIOWE I JAKOŚCIOWE BADANIA EKSPLORACYJNE)

Keywords
reading – survey – youth – Generation Z – Edmund Niziurski's prose

Słowa klucze
czytelnictwo – ankieta – młodzież – generacja Z – proza Edmunda Niziurskiego

Abstract
The aim of this study was to prepare a specially designed questionnaire on the state of familiarity with Niziurski's works, which was conducted in the spring of 2025 among young people (Generation Z). The idea for the study arose in connection with the declaration of 2025 as the Year of Edmund Niziurski in Kielce. The study sought answers to questions such as whether contemporary youth know the author's name, whether they read his books, whether they receive suggestions, or from whom, about what to read, and others. The survey results indicate that familiarity with Niziurski's works and name is significant. The survey also revealed that reading is a significant part of the respondents' lives. The information obtained largely aligns with the data presented in a report prepared by the National Library in Warsaw on the state of readership in Poland in 2024.

Streszczenie
Zadaniem pracy było przygotowanie kwestionariusza specjalnie skonstruowanej ankiety na temat stanu znajomości twórczości Niziurskiego, którą przeprowadzono wiosną 2025 roku

wśród młodzieży wieku (generacja Z). Pomysł na badania zrodził się w związku z ogłoszeniem 2025 roku Rokiem Edmunda Niziurskiego w Kielcach. Poszukiwano odpowiedzi m.in. na pytania: czy współczesna młodzież zna nazwisko autora, czy czyta jego książki, czy otrzymuje sugestie, względnie od kogo, na temat tego, co czytać i inne. Wyniki pomiarów wskazują, że znajomość twórczości i nazwiska Niziurskiego jest znaczna. Ankieta ujawniła ponadto, że czytanie książek stanowi dość istotną część życia respondentów. Uzyskane informacje w dużej mierze pokrywają się z danymi przedstawionymi w raporcie wykonanym przez Bibliotekę Narodową w Warszawie na temat stanu czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2024 roku.

The idea for a study aimed at determining the level of familiarity with the works of the author of *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* among today's youth arose in connection with the announcement of 2025 as the Year of Edmund Niziurski in Kielce. The analytical reflection was based on, among others, the following questions: do young people today know the author's name, do they read his books, do they receive recommendations on what to read, and if so, from whom?[1].

The aim of this paper was to prepare an exploratory (for the time being fragmentary, pilot)[2] study and to test survey questions on the state of knowledge of Niziurski's works among young people in the 21st century. Preliminary research also proved to be a way of providing material that enabled the selection of a representative group for conducting a professional survey in the future[3].

A specially constructed research questionnaire was used to verify knowledge of Niziurski's works and name. Respondents were asked the following questions: How often do you read books?, Are illustrations in a book important to you?, Is the name E. Niziurski familiar to you?, Have you read Niziurski's books?, How many of Niziurski's books have you read?, At what age did you read Niziurski's books?, Who recommended Niziurski's books to you?, What do you think about reading books?, What books do you read?, When did you last read a book?, What book did you last read?[4].

As can be seen from the overview above, the questions were both specific and general in nature and took the form of alternative and problem questions. In general, the questionnaire contained three types of questions: open-ended,

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1 M. Krajewski, *Dzieje wychowania i doktryn pedagogicznych*. *Zarys wykładu*, Płock 2005.

2 M. Łobocki, *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych,* Kraków 2006; T. Pilch, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych*, Warszawa 1998.

3 Cf. H. Gardner, *Pięć umysłów przyszłości*, Warszawa 2009.

4 M. Szczepska-Pustkowska, *Esej o kulturze dziecięcej*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2014, no. 32, pp. 189–210.

closed-ended and single-choice. The survey was conducted online from mid-March to mid-May 2025 in three age categories, i.e. 9-25 years, 26-40 years and 41-55 years. It was taken by 38 people. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

In analysing the survey results, the content and form of the respondents' statements were checked, the data analysed and the results described (constructive replication) in the form of bar charts and pie charts (own compilation). The reflection undertaken was based on a quantitative and qualitative approach[5]. The methods used primarily included content analysis, text analysis, and literature study.

Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z (Gen Z), often referred to as '*digital natives*'[6], are people born between 1995 and 2010. For the purposes of the study, they were assumed to be people born after 2000. Gen Z are the first generation to have had access to the internet, smartphones and social media from an early age. Their world is an online reality – fast, interactive, personalised[7]. Gen Zs are characterised as a technologically savvy generation (they intuitively navigate the digital environment, using multiple sources of information at once)[8]. The young people have a short attention span[9] (having grown up in a world of shortcuts, notifications and so-called *scrolling*, they are used to dynamic and attractive forms of communication). They are seen as open-minded and creative, and keen to create their own content, engage with online communities and interested in a variety of cultures and topics. They are also characterised by social sensitivity, in that they respond strongly to issues of equality, ecology, mental health and identity[10].

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5 K. Konecki, *Przedmowa do wydania polskiego*, [in:] K. Charmaz, *Teoria ugruntowana. Praktyczny przewodnik po analizie jakościowej*, translated by B. Komorowska, Warszawa 2009, pp. IX–XXVII; K. Konecki, *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana*, Warszawa 2000.

6 M. Żylińska, *Neurodydaktyka. Nauczanie i uczenie się przyjazne mózgowi*, Toruń 2013.

7 Cf. M. Spitzer, *Jak uczy się mózg*, Warszawa 2011; J. Kalat, *Biologiczne podstawy psychologii,* Warszawa 2007; M. Kielar-Turska, *Rozwój człowieka w pełnym cyklu życia*, [in:] *Psychologia*, ed. J. Strelau, vol. 1, Gdańsk 2000.

8 A. Hansen, *Wyloguj swój mózg. Jak zadbać o swój mózg w dobie nowych technologii*, Kraków 2020.

9 R. Kotarski, *Włam się do mózgu*, Warszawa 2019.

10 Wikipedia https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pokolenie_Z (accessed: 08/09/2025).

Although it is often said that Gen Zs rarely reach for traditional books, this does not mean a lack of interest in literature. The form of interaction with text is changing, as e-books, audiobooks, the fragmented reading technique (e.g. quotes or screenshots) or even reading novels on platforms such as Wattpad are gaining popularity, but reading itself still takes place[11].

In the context of this cultural transformation, it is worth reflecting on several issues[12], including:

- Is classic literature such as Edmund Niziurski' books, present in the world of Gen Z?
- What forms of narratives and character depictions reach (can reach) today's young audiences?
- Can a book compete with TikTok today?

These are questions worth asking when analysing the relationship of Gen Z with literature[13].

Course of the study

As already indicated, in order to seek answers to the questions given above, a tool in the form of an online survey was constructed. The aim of the survey was to find out the opinions of readers, especially young readers, on Niziurski's works. The survey was designed in two parts, i.e. a particulars section and a battery of questions. The particulars section adopted the following order of data collection: gender, age, place of residence, status, educational background, survey source (delivery method). The particulars section therefore collected information about the respondents such as gender, age, place of residence, status (e.g. student, employee), education. They were also asked to answer the question: how did you hear about the survey?

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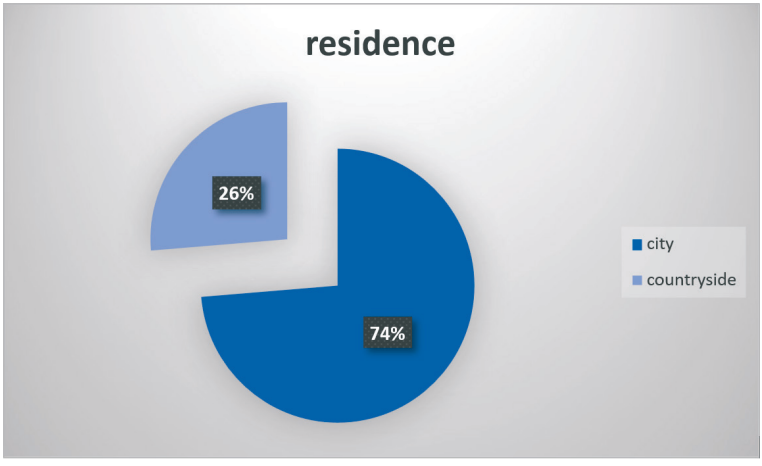
[11] Cf. M. Kaczmarzyk, *Szkoła neuronów: o nastolatkach, kompromisach i wychowaniu*, Słupsk 2018.

[12] See A. Baluch, *Propozycje metodologiczne w badaniach literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży*, [in:] *Po potopie. Dziecko, książka i biblioteka w XXI wieku. Diagnozy i postulaty*, eds. D. Świerczyńska-Jelonek, G. Leszczyński, M. Zając, Warszawa 2008.

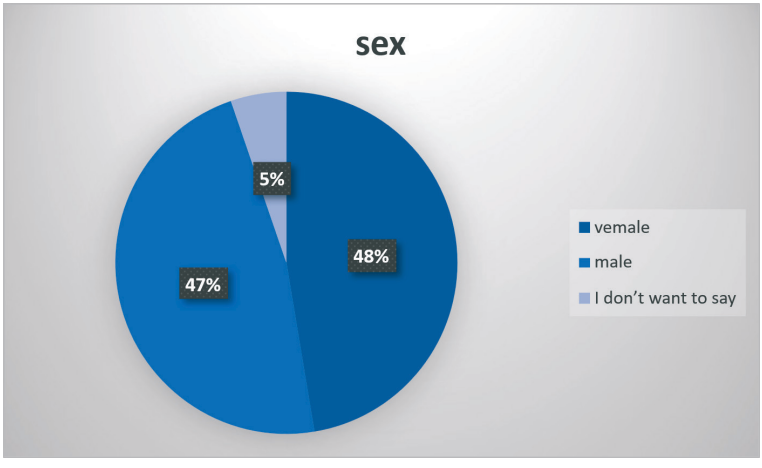
[13] See S.J. Blakemore, U. Frith, *Jak uczy się mózg*, Kraków 2008. C.f. A.I. Brzezińska, *Jak myślimy o rozwoju człowieka?*, [in:] *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka. Praktyczna psychologia rozwojowa*, ed. A.I. Brzezińska, Gdańsk 2005, p. 9; M. Budzik, *Jak uczyć się na miarę XXI wieku*, Warszawa 2018.

Respondents completed surveys between mid-March and mid-May. The particulars section revealed that 74% of respondents indicated a city as their place of origin, and 26% indicated a rural area.



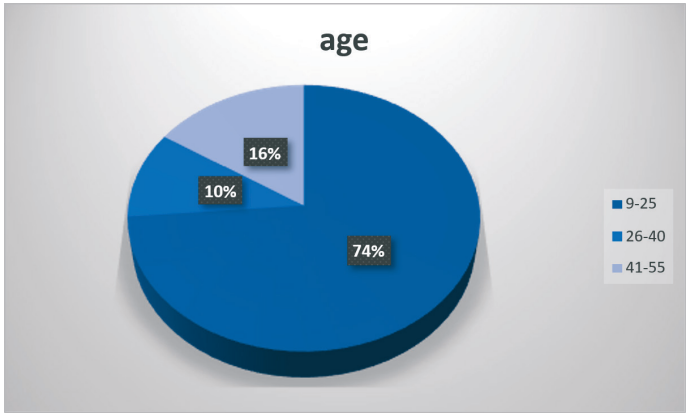
(Graph 1 – own elaboration)

Overall, survey participants included 48% men and 48% women. 4% of respondents did not answer the gender question.



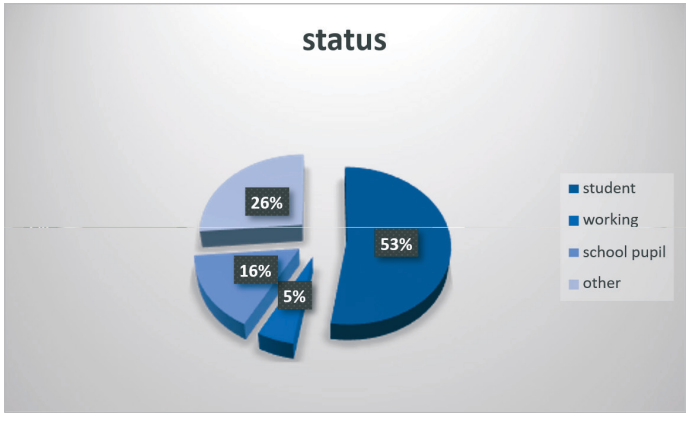
(Graph 2 – own elaboration)

The 9-25 age bracket accounted for 74% of respondents. The next age category (26-40) included 10% of respondents, and 16% of respondents were in the (41-55) age group.



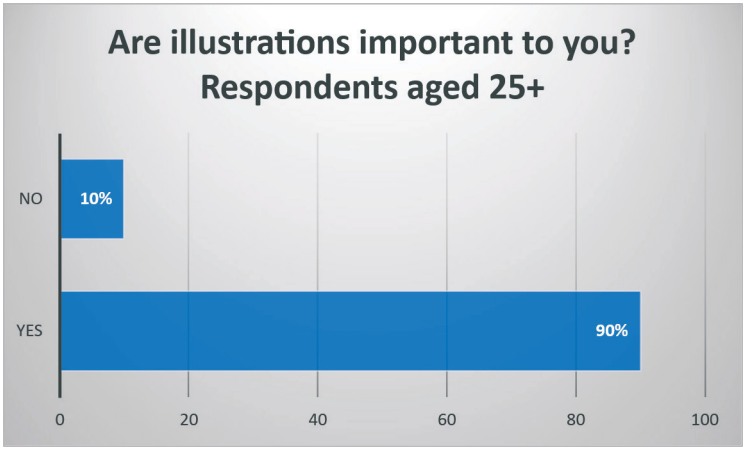
(Graph 3 – own elaboration)

The question about occupation revealed that 13% of respondents described themselves as actively working. It is also apparent from the responses given that among the respondents there was a white-collar worker, teacher and engineer. 53% of respondents said they were university students and 16% school pupils. There was also a general high school graduate (before university), as well as a person declaring themselves as 'human' and a person identifying as an assault helicopter; 6% of respondents chose 'other', without specifying further.

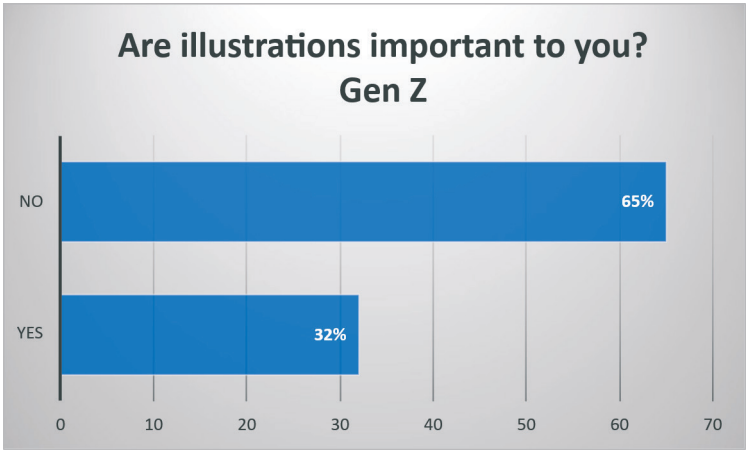


(Graph 4 – own elaboration)

In terms of education, 32% reported higher education, 58% secondary education and 11% primary education. The result does not add up to 100% due to rounding. All participants indicated that they had heard of the survey from friends.



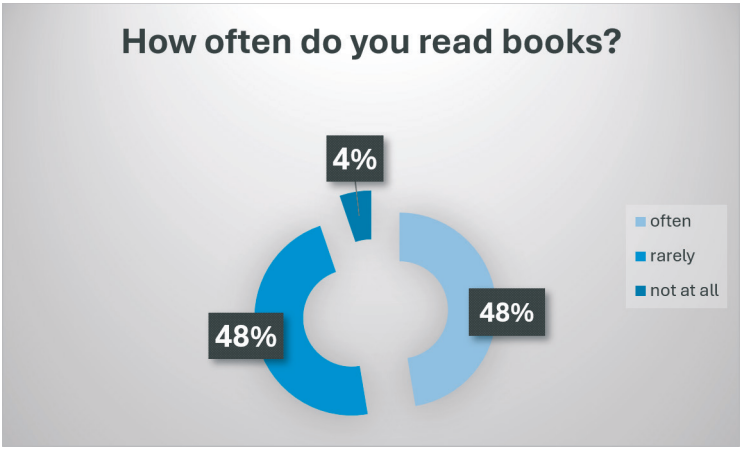
(Graph 5 – own elaboration)



(Graph 6 – own elaboration)

Main study – reading, Niziurski and interest in books

When asked how often they read books, 48% of the survey participants answered that they read often, the same number reported that they read rarely (48%); 4% wrote that they do not reach for books at all and do not read books. When it came to the presence of graphics in books, respondents in the 25+ age range reported that illustrations were of little importance to them (90%). In the 9-25 age group, 32% of people found art forms important[14]. In contrast, for the remaining 68%, graphics do not matter or they do not pay attention to them. An interesting correlation can be seen here: for Gen Z, illustrations are no longer as important as they were for previous generations.

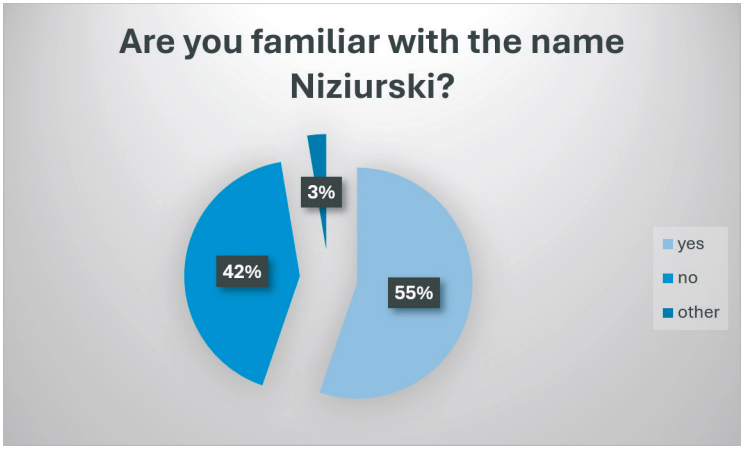


(Graph 7 – own elaboration)

The conclusion that emerges is that Gen Z's life is dominated by ubiquitous digitalisation and therefore illustrations do not impress them. Gen Z seem to reach for books mainly for the content rather than the visual aspects (the latter being available thanks to the internet and *social media*).

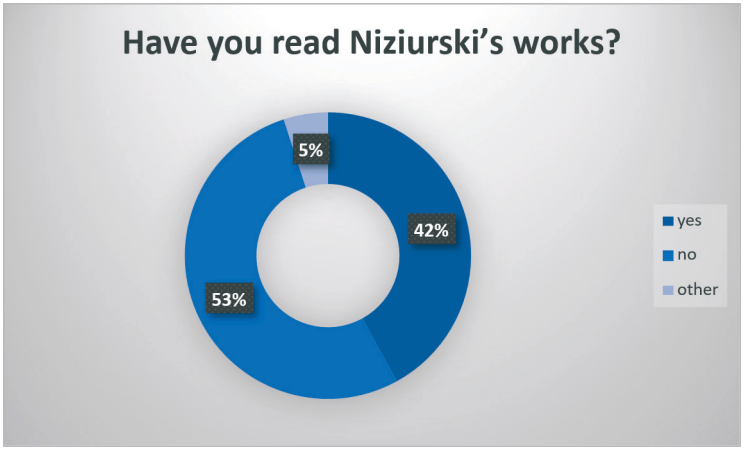
When asked about their knowledge of Niziurski's name, 55% of people were familiar with it, 42% had not heard of the author and 3%, had not so far paid attention to the writer's name.

[14] See *O twórczości Edmunda Niziurskiego*, Kielce 2005; M. Kątny, J. Pacławski, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Kielce 2004.



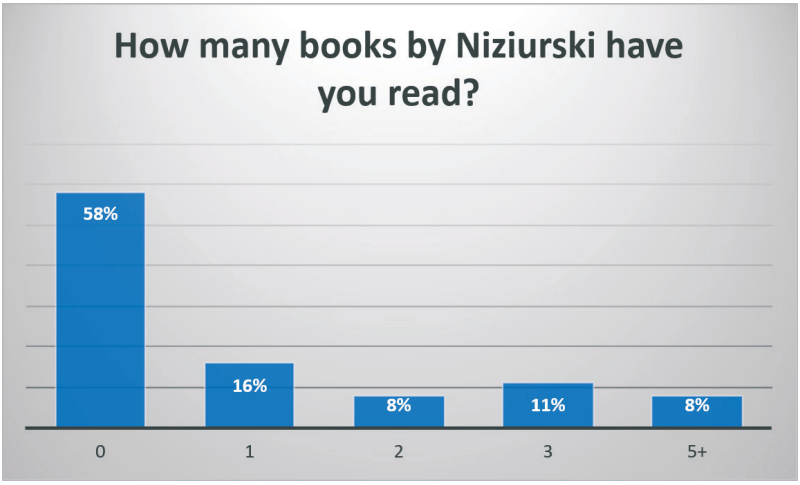
(Graph 8 – own elaboration)

To the question "Have you read Niziurski's books?" 42% answered yes, 53% answered no, 2% said that they could not remember, while 3% of respondents did not answer.



(Graph 9 – own elaboration)

In terms of reading the author's books, 8% of people said they had read more than 5 of his works, 11 people had read at least 3 books, 8% were people who had read 2 books, 16% said they knew 1 book.



(Graph 10 – own elaboration)

When it came to the titles of Niziurski's works, *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* was named most frequently (29%), 5% of people had read *Awantura w Niekłaju*; *Księga urwisów* and novels: *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa*, *Pięć melonów na rękę*, *Adelo zrozum mnie* were also known. The "not applicable" box was ticked by 58% of people, which can be interpreted as lack of knowledge of the titles of Niziurski's works and a lack of reading activity in this area.

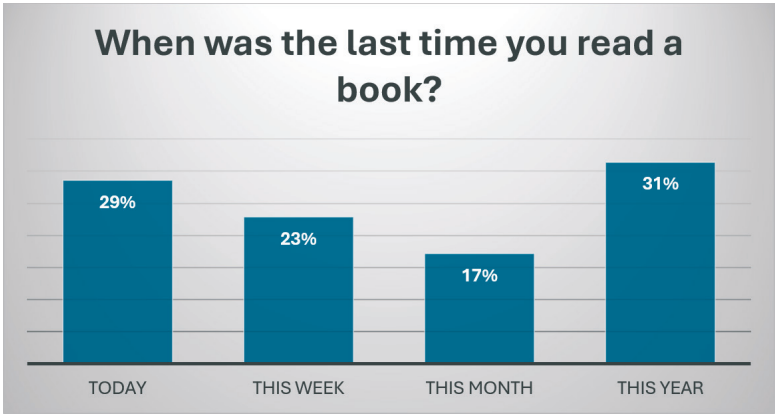
The question of when they came across Niziurski's work showed that the age of the readers was of considerable importance. The answers to this question were quite varied. Some respondents answered descriptively, some gave an age range or a specific age (e.g. 7-11 years, 10-13 years, 11 years, about 12 years, 13 years, 19 years). "Not applicable" was chosen by 58% of people.

Among the extended answers about the importance of reading books (more specifically: what do you think about reading books), the most frequent ones were: it develops the mind, it is needed, it is useful, it is crucial for development, it expands the vocabulary, books are food for the brain, and others. Some people responded, for example: "I find it useful, but I don't have much time for it", "I don't think it's necessary", "I love reading books", "I love fantasy books" etc.

The respondents' answers therefore show that they read a variety of books, from classic masterpieces of fiction literature to guidebooks. They often reach

for crime stories, romance, science books, adventure stories, fantasy, biographical, philosophical, psychological, historical, popular science books[15].

The survey also revealed that readership still exists. 29% of respondents answered that they had last read a book on the day they completed the survey; the same number (29%) said in the year of the survey (2025); the answer "this week" was given by 21% of respondents, "this month" by 16% of respondents.

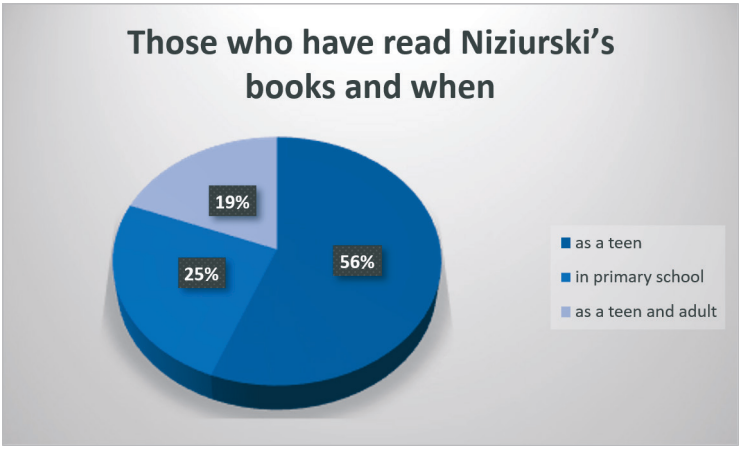


(Graph 11 – own elaboration)

The question about the titles of recently read books yielded varied answers, from the Bible to *The Master and Margarita*. Most of the titles were not repeated. Nevertheless, *1984* by G. Orwell was mentioned several times.

Most of the people surveyed, due to their lack of knowledge of Niziurski's works, did not answer the question "At what age did you read Niziurski's books?" (58%). More than 40 per cent of respondents (42% to be precise) declared that they had come across the author's works in their youth. This was mainly in the teenage years (24%). A large proportion of those familiar with the prose of the author of *Księga urwisów* (25%) read Niziurski's books as a child in primary school. 19% of respondents read them both as teenagers and later (as adults).

[15] See, inter alia, *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. Janusz Sławiński, Wrocław 1976; J. Cieślikowski, *Literatura osobna*, Warsaw 1985; H. Markiewicz, *Wymiary dzieła literackiego*, Kraków–Wrocław 1984.



(Graph 12 – own elaboration)

It seems, therefore, that most people familiar with Niziuski's work were interested in it as children. How does this relate to Gen Z? Well, as the survey showed, in Generation Z Niziurski is no longer as popular as he once was (e.g. in the second half of the 20th century). However, readers still recognise the writer's name despite his prose being outside the list of compulsory school reading[16].

Reading Niziurski's prose and the state of readership

The report on the state of book readership in Poland in 2024[17] shows that women are more likely to read books than men. The statement indicated that, among other things: 72% of women read books frequently, 28% rarely. All of them, however, read. For men, only 22% read books, 11% do not read at all. The trend is similar to the figures from the 2024 readership report.

According to a study on the readership of Niziurski's works, Gen Zs are reaching for books, including the prose of the author of *Awantura w Niekłaju*, but to a slightly lesser extent than those surveyed in 2024. In percentage

[16] G. Leszczyński, *Dzieciństwo dzisiaj*, http://www.fidesetratio.org.pl/ files/plikipdf/leszczynski2.pdf (accessed: 08/09/2025).

[17] R. Chymkowski, Z. Zasacka, *Raport o stanie czytelnictwa w 2024 roku*, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.bn.org.pl/download/document/1744372368.pdf (accessed: 08/09/2025).

terms, this can be put as follows: 68% of women and 32% of men are readers of Niziurski's works.

Summary

The research was treated as a pilot study to conduct reconnaissance prior to the main study in order to test the developed procedures and selected tools. The researcher was keen not only to detect but also to rectify any problems that might arise as part of a larger project[18]. It was assumed that the value of the study – as a contribution to E. Niziurski's centenary birthday celebrations – would be symbolic, documentary and – at this empirical stage – general.

The small scale of the survey (i.e. conducting it on a small group of participants) was, firstly, due to the need to reduce the cost of the experiment, secondly, it was considered to be only a preliminary stage to the proper study, and thirdly, it was taken into account that the data collected would not be included in the final results. The experiment also did not serve to confirm or reject a specific hypothesis, as its purpose for the time being was to validate the tools and possibly improve the procedures before the actual project started.

In the end, the feasibility assessment and analysis of the plan confirmed the right direction taken, but at the same time concluded that the study group should be larger, more diverse and the study itself should be more condensed (run in a much shorter time). In addition, the main survey should specify where it is to be carried out and how respondents are to be recruited, and the size of the survey sample should be more precisely defined (random sample selection; with more pronounced representativeness).

It was found that the survey questionnaire proved to be a useful tool and does not require major adjustments (none of the respondents complained, for example, that the questions were hard to understand or too difficult).

Conclusions

Reading books is a fairly important part of respondents' lives. If, thanks to Niziurski's books, the level of readership among young people does not decline,

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[18] *Metody hybrydowe*, [in:] *Badania ilościowe i jakościowe w studiach nad komunikowaniem*, eds. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, W. Sobera, Wrocław 2017, pp. 27–31.

the presence of his prose on the publishing market may become a continuation of the mission of "education through reading"[19] as a form of human development and the fulfilment of an important, responsible social and educational task[20]. The survey shows that familiarity with Niziuski's work and name is considerable. A small group of respondents had not come across the titles of the author's books. Nor do they know the name of the writer.

If we consider the readership report prepared by the National Library in Warsaw for 2024, the results regarding interactions with books among the young population seem to be similar to the results obtained in the survey. The conclusion can therefore be drawn that young people of Generation Z, despite the increased digitalisation of culture, still read books, are susceptible to reading recommendations from family and teachers, and also reach for literature themselves and make their own reading choices.

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[19] I. Koźmińska, E. Olszewska, *Wychowanie przez czytanie*, Warszawa 2010.

[20] *Misja*, [in:] *Słownik języka polskiego* PWN, https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/misja.html (accessed 09/09/2025).

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NIZIURSKI AMONG SENIORS. ON THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AT THE ŻEROMSKI FREE ZONE IN KIELCE

NIZIURSKI WŚRÓD SENIORÓW. O WYNIKACH BADANIA W WOLNEJ STREFIE ŻEROMSKIEGO W KIELCACH

Keywords
Edmund Niziurski – reading – seniors – generativity – survey research

Słowa klucze
Edmund Niziurski – czytelnictwo – seniorzy – generatywność – badania ankietowe

Abstract
The text is a contribution to research on the reception of Edmund Niziurski's prose among people in middle and late adulthood, with particular emphasis on the phenomenon of generativity.

A survey, based on a purpose-built questionnaire, was conducted in 2025 among seniors at the Żeromski Free Zone Seniors' Club in Kielce. The article presents the assumptions and results of a pilot (extractive) study on readership and familiarity with the Polish writer's prose.

Streszczenie
Tekst stanowi przyczynek do badań nad recepcją prozy Edmunda Niziurskiego wśród osób w fazie średniej i późnej dorosłości, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem zjawiska generatywności. Sondaż, na podstawie celowo przygotowanego kwestionariusza ankiety, przeprowadzono w 2025 roku wśród seniorów w klubie pod nazwą Wolna Strefa Żeromskiego w Kielcach. W artykule przedstawione zostały założenia i wyniki badania pilotażowego (wycinkowego) na temat czytelnictwa i znajomości prozy polskiego pisarza.

Psychological classifications of human development distinguish between: infancy (up to the end of the 1st year of life), post-infancy (toddlerhood) (2nd–3rd year of life), preschool age (3rd/4th–6th/7th year of life), school age (6th/7th–10th/12th year of life), adolescence (10th/12th-18th/20th year of life), early adulthood (18th/20th-30th/35th year of life), middle adulthood (30th/35th-60th/65th year of life) and late adulthood (from 60th/65th year of life)[1].

For a long time, the attention of researchers was focused on school age and adolescence. Since the late 20th century, there has been a growing scholarly interest in middle[2] and late adulthood[3].

Although there is no uniform position in literature on the criteria for the onset of old age and its period , it is possible to identify three basic senior phases, i.e. the period between 60 and 70 years of age, further between 70 and 80 years of age, and between 80 and 90 years of age. The following terms are also used in relation to these age ranges: younger seniors (people aged 60-75) and older seniors (people over 75)[4]. Development is considered to be a quality connected to changes in different areas of human existence (physical, intellectual, social, moral, emotional etc.).

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1 See, for example, A.I. Brzezińska, *Jak myślimy o rozwoju człowieka?*, [in:] *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka. Praktyczna psychologia rozwojowa*, ed. A.I. Brzezińska, Gdańsk 2005, p. 9.

2 P. Oleś, *Psychologia człowieka dorosłego*, Warszawa 2011.

3 Subject literature states that the first eighteen months of a person's life, from birth to developing early speech, are a period known as infancy. The boundaries between the early and later stages of childhood are rather fluid. It should be noted that research on infants was initiated in the 19th century (one of the pioneers was Charles Darwin). Researchers' attention was initially focused on childhood and adolescence. Adult development was taken into consideration in the second half of the 20th century, while the end of the 20th century brought an increased interest in late adulthood. See *Psychologia rozwojowa*, eds. P.E. Bryant, A.M. Colman, trans. A. Bezwińska-Walerjan Poznań 1997, p. 15.

4 S. Steuden, *Psychologia starzenia się i starości*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 19–21.

About methodology and research group

Given that Edmund Niziurski's prose enjoyed its greatest popularity from the 1960s to the 1990s, it can be assumed that the current generation of people over 50 years of age came across his work in their youth. Based on that premise, a study was carried out to verify the above thesis. An analysis of subject literature, including content selection, was used as the basic research procedure, with a questionnaire used as the primary tool for learning about the opinions of the respondents, while also employing an analytical approach (compilation of the statements of the respondents) and a synthetic approach (study results, conclusions).

The study was conducted in May 2025. The questions ranged from the author's name recognition, knowledge of his works, the presence of Edmund Niziurski's works in memories connected to school reading, to general reading habits and the importance of reading among the 50+ population. The aim was to verify if and how the work of the Kielce-based prose writer functions today in the memories and experiences of readers, especially those who grew up in the 2nd half of the 20th century.

The research was carried out at the Żeromski Free Zone Seniors' Club in Kielce. It is a meeting place for the elderly that enriches their free-time offering and counteracts the social exclusion of senior citizens. Its main aim is to integrate, develop passions and activities through occupational therapy, themed activities and participation in cultural events and excursions.

About the study

Conducted on site, the survey made it possible to link qualitative and quantitative research (it is a sample survey; it therefore does not pretend to be a professional sociological study). The form of the questionnaire was intended to serve the recognition of the presence of Niziurski's prose in the memories of people in late adulthood, in addition to supporting the observations made thanks to the bibliographic search of subject literature, as well as to satisfy the young researcher's curiosity. The survey was treated as a complement to the findings of the description and analysis of the collected data[5].

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[5] Mainly, the following works were used: M. Łobocki, *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych*, issue 5, Kraków 2006; T. Pilch, *Zasady badań pedagogicznych,* issue 2 revised and expanded, Warszawa 1998; W. Zaczyński, *Praca badawcza nauczyciela*, Warszawa 1995.

Senior citizens from the Żeromski Free Zone Seniors' Club were selected as respondents. The survey consisted of a particulars section and closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire contained 12 questions relating to, among other things, knowledge of Niziurski's works, form and time of being in contact with his prose, as well as readership and reading preferences.

The tool used to measure the data was a specially-designed anonymous questionnaire[6], which consisted of two parts, i.e. a particulars section and a battery of questions. It was constructed from twelve closed-ended questions and four open-ended questions. The study involved 18 participants, including 14 women and 4 men. It was conducted between 5 and 11 May 2025. Five age categories were recorded among the participants: 26-40 years (two people), 56-65 years (four people), 66-75 years (seven people), 76-85 years (three people), 86+ years (two people).

The aim of the survey was, on the one hand, to determine where the respondents came from and how old they were, and on the other hand, to conduct research and analyse the reception of the author's work. The survey was anonymous.

Questionnaire

Among all respondents, two people indicated "countryside" as their place of residence, while the rest declared "urban areas". In the educational background category, eight people declared a higher education degree (of which one person specified it as "technical"), seven people indicated a secondary education, and single responses referred to vocational education, primary education and "other" (without further elaboration).

Niziurski in numbers

Edmund Niziurski's name was known to ten people, three people were unsure whether they were familiar with Niziurski's work and the writer himself, while five respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the author. The results are reflected in the subsequent answers, as ten respondents indicated that they had read E. Niziurski's books, six said they had not, and two did not remember if they had ever read his works. In terms of the number of the

[6] The survey was prepared specifically for this study. The idea was conceived by Professor Marta Bolińska.

author's books read, three people had read one book, five people declared that they had read two, two people indicated "five or more", one person had read three books, one person gave no answer and six people stated that they had not read any book by Edmund Niziurski.

The books most recognised by the respondents were: *Sposób na Alcybiadesa* (nine respondents identified the title), *Księga urwisów* recognised by eight respondents, and *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa* recognised by five respondents. Six respondents did not answer the question, one respondent gave no answer at all and there was one answer marked as "other" with a remark: "I can't remember".

Another question asked about the age at which the respondents read Edmund Niziurski's books. From the answers given, it appears that seven people reached for his works during their childhood, in school/adolescent years. The question did not apply to seven people. There were also individual responses indicating specific age ranges: 20, 30 and 36. One person did not give any answer. In response to the question: "Who recommended Edmund Niziurski's books to you?", the biggest number of respondents (four) indicated a friend. It is worth noting that all these responses referred to a female friend. One person answered "friends", two people declared that they had recommended the author's books to themselves ("myself", "I recommended it to myself"). Other responses included: "manager at work", "teacher", "I can't remember". One person did not answer this question, and there were seven respondents to whom this question did not apply.

According to the responses received, most of the seniors reached for Edmund Niziurski's prose as children, but they still remember the author's profile and his books. Renata Aleksandrowicz, based on a study on the reading choices of students at the University of the Third Age, reports: "It seems (…) that the power [of the works aimed at young readers] lies in the atmosphere created by the – essential in this period – intermediary and in the emotional power of the message that stays in the memory of the respondents"[7].

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[7] R. Aleksandrowicz, *Dziecięce i młodzieńcze lektury współczesnych seniorów. Wybory czytelnicze na podstawie wywiadów ze słuchaczami Uniwersytetu Trzeciego Wieku*, "Bibliotheca Nostra" 2016, no. 1, p. 149.

On mature people's reading

Questions were also asked about contact with books in adulthood. Eleven respondents declared that they read books frequently, four respondents admitted that they did not read at all, while three people reported that they rarely read. The research also took into account to the graphic side of the novel. For eight respondents, the illustrations in the books are not very important, six people considered them important and four people wrote that they did not pay attention to them. When asked: "What do you think about reading books? Is it needed/useful?", the respondents gave varied but unequivocally positive answers. All those who answered unanimously found reading valuable and needed. The most frequently cited benefits were: expanding vocabulary (four people), developing imagination (three people), increasing intelligence (two people) and deepening knowledge (one person). Additionally, two people noted that reading supports memory and helps avoid errors in speech and writing. There were also reflections on the impact of books on the development of personal culture, language, the mind, as well as their relaxing and calming effect. The opinions included the following entries:

- "Reading books enriches one's vocabulary, through them one can relax and is transported into the world of the book, and through some books we learn about the fate of our ancestors".
- "It enriches vocabulary, imagination, calms you down, gives you a moment for yourself".
- "I love reading books, it is like having lived more than one life".

Two people did not answer this question. One person reported difficulties with reading at a later age, indicating that memory problems had influenced her decision to give up this activity. The survey answers also included comments indicating that reading: "is very nice and necessary, but I stopped at the age of 50 when I could remember as I was reading a book, and a few days later, apart from the title of the book, I would forget the plot and that's why I stopped reading". Based on the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that books belonging to the following genres are the most popular: historical (8 people), adventure (7 people), romance (7 people), thriller (6 people) and novels (2 people). Individual answers also included medical literature, dramas, psychology books, linguistics, science books, religious books, Harlequin books and literary classics. One person did not answer the question on preferred genres.

Survey participants were also asked to indicate when they last read any book. Most people (5) declared that they had read at least one book in the current month. Four people indicated that they had read a book in the current week and another four said this year. One person had read a book on the same day they completed the survey, while three people chose the answer "none of the above". One person did not respond. When asked about the last book they had read, two people did not answer, another two indicated that they could not remember the title, although they had read some text. Other respondents indicated a variety of titles, which included both academic and fiction books. Here are examples: *Podstawy fizjologii noworodka*; *Język jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych. Psycholingwistyka ogólna i neurolingwistyka* – Ida Kurcz, Hanna Okuniewska; *Córka generała*; *Dygot* – Jakub Małecki; *Zielarnia pod starym dębem*; *Harda*; book on religious topics (no title given); *Wuthering Heights*; *The Night House* – Jo Nesbø; *Quo vadis*; two thriller stories (no titles given); *Nad Niemnem*; *The Adventures of Werner Holt; Arabska żona*.

As Renata Aleksandrowicz suggests, respondents are eager to return to their school reading, while their own reading satisfaction and specific interests are also of considerable importance[8]:

> When recalling childhood books, respondents very rarely referred to universal criteria for evaluating remembered texts, such as timelessness, mythicality, etc. They also did not pay attention to other components of such criteria, such as readership, although in some cases they pointed to certain environmental trends in relation to so-called iconic titles. In the post-war political situation, the level of "reading satisfaction" of audiences often depended on the profile of their reading choices[9].

It also turns out that preferences for certain books or literary conventions are often far more important than contemporary bestseller lists[10].

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8 U. Tokarska, *Opowieść w relacji, relacja w opowieści. Kontekst narracyjnej strukturyzacji doświadczeń*, "Horyzonty Wychowania" 2025, no. 25(70), pp. 21–31, DOI: https://doi.org/10.35765/hw.2025.2570.04.

9 R. Aleksandrowicz, op. cit., p. 159.

10 M. Głowiński, *Ekspresja i empatia*, Warszawa 1997; G. Leszczyński, *Elementarz literacki. Terminy, pojęcia, charakterystyki*, Warszawa 2001.

More on generativity

In 1950, Erik Erikson, in reference to the so-called seventh developmental phase, introduced the term generativity in his psychosocial concept of human development[11]. It has since come to be seen as a trait that is important in the course of life and is realised in different ways and to different extents; it grows with age[12]. Generativity has been defined as the concern for establishing priorities in life while being able to create reality[13]. According to Erikson:

> generativity is primarily about conceiving and raising the next generation, although there are people who, due to misfortune or due to special and natural talents in other fields, do not have offspring, but satisfy this drive in other forms of altruistic care and creativity which can absorb their parental responsibility[14].

Generativity involves several important areas, with the most significant being cultural dimension, inner desires, beliefs and commitments, generative concentrations, actions and narratives[15]. According to researchers, old age means sharing joy with others whenever possible, receiving gratitude from others when there is a need for it, and being able to develop oneself in contact with other people.

The importance of generativity began to be linked both to its forms (e.g. caring for grandchildren, pro publico bono activities, supporting neighbours, friends, people in need) and to its characteristics, including the attitudes of older people testifying to their importance in socio-cultural life[16]. Based on research, it has been recognised that people in the later adulthood and early senior stage are able to challenge and eliminate negative stereotypes and beliefs about seniors (e.g. uselessness, backwardness), generativity influences spiritual, mental, physical and social wellbeing, and finally, generativity in older people fosters the maintenance of self-worth (awareness of being important, needed, significant)[17].

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[11] E. Erikson, *Childhood and society*, New York 1950.

[12] E. Berne, *Dzień dobry…i co dalej*?, trans. M. Karpiński, Poznań 2021, pp. 51–153.

[13] E. Erikson, *Childhood…*, op. cit., p. 267; S. Steuden, op. cit., pp. 82–86.

[14] Idem, *Tożsamość a cykl życia*, trans. M. Żywicki, Poznań 2004, p. 93.

[15] P.D. McAdams, E. de St. Aubin, L.R. Logan, *Generativity among Young, midlife, and older adults*, „Psychology and Aging" 1993, no. 8, pp. 221–230.

[16] S. Steuden, op. cit., pp. 83–84.

[17] U. Tokarska, op. cit., pp. 21–31; J. Trzebiński, *Autonarracje nadają kształt życiu człowieka*, [in:] *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*, ed. J. Trzebiński, Gdańsk 2002, pp. 43–80.

This is why the willingness of seniors from the Żeromski Free Zone Seniors' Club to participate in the study on their knowledge of Edmund Niziurski and his works should be regarded as a sign of generativity, an important contribution to building bonds between people of different ages and the realisation of the idea of passing on cultural heritage to the next generation[18]. For generativity modelled and appreciated by others becomes a source of joy and a kind of inner strength that not only strengthens self-esteem, but also often binds the community together[19].

Conclusion

Based on this exploratory fragmentary study, it can be concluded that Niziurski's work is still present in the memory of some older readers. Moreover, reading books remains an important form of activity and enjoyment, regardless of age. Respondents not only remember books, but are also able to talk about what the books gave them. This preliminary study raises awareness of the importance of the reading experiences of childhood and youth, how strongly they can become fixed and how literature can accompany a person throughout life. Thus, the assumption that books from childhood and youth stay with readers for a very long time was confirmed[20]. Such books include the works of Edmund Niziurski.

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[18] J. Turowski, *Socjologia. Małe struktury społeczne*, Lublin 2001.

[19] R. Traba, *Czym jest pamięć kulturowa*, [in:] J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa: pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, trans. A. Kryczyńska-Pham, introduction and academic ed. by R. Traba, Warszawa 2008, p. 13; B. Wojciszke, *Psychologia społeczna*, Warszawa 2011.

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Kita-Huber (professor at JU), she is preparing her dissertation on *Polish popular music in the GDR (cultural policy, translations of song lyrics and their reception, social response) [Polska muzyka rozrywkowa w NRD (polityka kulturalna, tłumaczenia tekstów piosenek i ich recepcja, echo społeczne)].* Since October 2020 employed at the Department of History and Culture of the German Language Countries at the UKEN in Kraków as a research and teaching assistant. English and German teacher. Publications to date**:** *Polska rockowa grupa muzyczna Skaldowie i jej rola w procesie kulturotwórczym NRD*, [in:] *Przekład jako forma interakcji społecznej*, ed. M. Korycińska-Wegner, K. Kęsicka, Fig.: Poznań 2020; *Das Bild des Teschener Schlesiens in „Die sieben Kinder des Pastors Kattenschlag" von Edith Schmettan-Demel und in „Czarna Julka" von Gustaw Morcinek*, [in:] *Transkulturelle Durchdringungen in der Gegenwartsliteratur Mitteleuropas*, ed. A. Majkiewicz, A. Mirecka, J. Ławnikowska-Koper, Harrasowitz: Wiesbaden 2021; *Hertha Karasek-Strzygowski – ein Leben im Spannungsfeld der Nationalismen,* [in:] „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Historicolitteraria XXII": Kraków 2022; *Małgorzata Musierowicz i tajemnica Opium w rosole* / Julia Manowska-Cebula, [in:] „Powroty do przeszłości": literatura i kultura lat 80. i ich współczesna recepcja (ed.) Wiktor Gardocki, Dariusz Piechota, Białystok: Temida 2. Research interests: children's and youth literature and popular music and cultural policy in the People's Republic of Poland and the GDR.

Michał Mazurkiewicz is a professor at Jan Kochanowski University (UJK) of Kielce, where he works at the Department of Cultural Studies. His main research interests include American, British, and Polish culture, with particular emphasis on the role of sport and recreation in history and culture broadly understood, including their representation in literature. These topics are reflected in his numerous publications, including monographs and articles in academic journals and edited volumes (e.g. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, in which he recently published an article on Janusz Kusociński), as well as in papers presented at national and international academic conferences. Mazurkiewicz is a member of several academic societies, including the British Society of Sports History.

Agnieszka Rosińska-Mamej – PhD, linguist, assistant professor in the Department of Discourse Studies at the Institute of Literary and Linguistic Studies of Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce. Her research interests

include linguistic pragmatics, socio- and psycholinguistics, linguistic geneology, gerontolinguistics. She is the author of two monographs devoted to the macroact of requesting in Polish (*Przepraszam, ma pan może długopis? Prośba we współczesnej polszczyźnie*, cz. 1: *Prośba jako makroakt mowy*, Kielce 2019, ISBN 978-83-7133-791-8; *Przepraszam, ma pan może długopis? Prośba we współczesnej polszczyźnie*, cz. 2: *Jak proszą osoby star(sz)e i młod(sz)e*, Kielce 2021, p-ISBN: 978-83-7133-953-0 – the second of them describes the similarities and differences in the way requests are formulated by representatives of different generations, including seniors), the author of several dozen scientific articles (e.g. *Jak reklamuje się perfumy*, „Poradnik Językowy" 2004, nr 1 (610), s. 65–73; *Ile aktów jest w makroakcie mowy, czyli o najczęstszych sposobach realizacji próśb we współczesnym języku polskim*, „Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego" 2013, z. LXIX, s. 113–126; *(Nie)grzeczność w kontaktach z ludźmi starszymi*, „Res Rhetorica" 2020, nr 7 (3), s. 32–46, DOI: https://doi.org/10.29107/rr2020.3.3), and co-editor of several multi-author monographs.

Rozalia Urbanik – graduate of Polish Philology at Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce. Her research interests include contemporary literature and its reception in contemporary cultural practices. She is professionally affiliated with the Stefan Żeromski Theatre in Kielce, where she is involved in educational and outreach activities. This publication forms part of her first research experience.

Magdalena Żukowska-Bąk – Polish language teacher, pedagogue, story-teller, examiner at the Regional Examinations Board. Graduate in Polish Philology from Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce. Professionally, she is affiliated with Upper-Secondary School No. 2. named after Mikołaj Kopernik in Mielec, where she has been teaching Polish language and emotional education as well as original bibliotherapeutic workshops for over a decade. She has written numerous therapeutic fairy tales and educational publications, including books: *Różnimy się skrzydłami* (Wydawnictwo Wrażlive, 2021) and *Koraliki. Opowieści o emocjach* (Wydawnictwo Spinacz, 2025). Her texts deal with themes of emotional development, vulnerability, acceptance and the courage to be oneself. Author of scientific article: *Bajkoterapia jako efektywna metoda terapeutyczna i rozwojowa dla dzieci* published in the journal "Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze" (2025, no. 4, 40 pts MEiN). Founder and editor of Wydawnictwo Spinacz, which produces books to support children in

emotional crisis and educational materials. Author of the blog "Ucho w ruch", which popularises the ideas of bibliotherapy and psychoeducation. Conducts numerous workshops and training sessions for teachers, educators and parents throughout Poland. Her activities bridge the worlds of literature, psychology and education. Her interests include literature for children and young people, empathic communication, pedagogy, psychology and alternative methods of supporting pupils' emotional development. Privately – mum, lover of theatre, cats and silence.

INDEX

A
Assman Jan 7
Assorodobraj Nina 8
Ali Muhammed 23
Aleksandrowicz Renata 139, 141

B
Bolińska Marta 11-13, 145
Boliński Bogusz 12, 145
Byron Lord 18
Bahdaj Adam 19, 54
Bauman Zygmunt 74, 80
Bogdanowicz Marta 93

C
Crowe Chris 18
Cykucki Zbigniew 24
Chychła Zygmunt 25
Chądzyńska Zofia 54
Czabanowska-Wróbel Anna 89, 91

D
Dobrzycki Jarosław 12, 145
Dębicka Agnieszka 98, 100

E
Erikson Erik 142

F
Flisak Jerzy 53

G
Grodzieńska Wanda 70
Grabias Stanisław 74
Goffman Erving 74
Goscinny René 85, 87
Głowiński Michał 111

H
Tomas Hughes 18
Hanusik Zygmunt 24
Hejwowski Krzysztof 29, 41
Heska-Kwaśniewicz Krystyna 88-90

I
Izdebska Jadwiga 92

J
Jung Carl Gustav 104
Jackiewiczowa Elżbieta 54

K
Kuliczkowska Krystyna 9, 70
Kątny Marek 9, 59, 63
Kobiałka Aleksandra 11, 146
Kondrak Agnieszka 12, 146
Królak Stanisław 21, 25
Kelm Kurt 46, 52
Keller Wolfgang 52
Knap Grażyna 110
Kurcz Ida 141

M
Mazurkiewicz Michał 11, 147
Manowska-Cebula Julia 11, 146, 147
Majcher Agnieszka 11, 146
Masternak Zbigniew 18
Meller Marcin 45
Musierowicz Małgorzata 54
Mitosek Zofia 87, 88
Makuszyński Kornel 85, 86, 88
Matusiak Renata 98, 100
Matras-Mastalerz Wanda 98, 99
Małecki Jakub 141

N
Niziurski Edmund
Newmark Peter 29, 39
Noczyński Fred 52
Nienacki Zbigniew 54
Nowicka Ewa 73
Nesbø Jo 141

O
Ożogowska Hanna 54
Orwell George 34, 129
Okuniewska Hanna 141

P
Pacławski Jan 9, 14, 57-64
Poe Edgar Allan 18
Podsiadło Jacek 20
Prokopowicz Magdalena 99
Pilch Jerzy 116

R
Rosińska-Mamej Agnieszka 12, 147
Rymarowicz Caesar 49, 51
Ricoeur Paul 72
Rozmarynowska Katarzyna 72

S
Skotnicka Gertruda 9
Szurkowski Ryszard 21, 24
Siesicka Krystyna 54
Sempé Jean-Jacques 85, 87
T
Tomiczek Katarzyna 87
Tylicka Barbara 88, 90

U
Urbanik Rozalia 12, 148

V
Varga Krzysztof 20, 22, 44, 45

W
Wierzyński Kazimierz 18, 22
Witek Rafał 20
Wysocka Ewa 87

Z
Zuchora Krzysztof 25

Ż
Żukowska-Bąk Magdalena 12, 148

The recording of social memory in various artefacts, including literary texts, regardless of the intention or purpose of their creation, may also involve the desire to commemorate events or individuals. Collective memory influences individual memory. During the conference held at ILiJ UJK in Kielce on 3-4 June 2025, "Gallery of characters. Map of places. To Edmund Niziurski on his 100th birthday", thanks to the presence of the writer's family, we were able to experience this transfer of memory. As researchers argue, such transmission is born out of a sense of connection with previous generations. In the social sphere, it refers to the creation of structures (communities) that enable closer bonds to be developed. With the passing of people who took part in certain events or witnessed various situations, communicative memory can disappear or transform into cultural memory. The conference dedicated to the 100th birthday of the Kielce-based writer stopped such possible disappearance, but also contributed to activating the cultural memory initiated in the past. For it is cultural memory as a cognitive and interpretative category that makes it possible, above all, to reread cultural texts, including literary texts, such as the writings of Edmund Niziurski (...).

This monograph is a form of returning to books from childhood, to texts that may have been somewhat forgotten, to authors' sometimes hidden or unconscious longings, to places of encounters with the great themes of literature, to the need to explicate the so-called fourth state of art. etc. Addressed to literary researchers, teachers, students, educational and library staff, parents, therapists and others interested in literature, culture, their study and social functions, it can also become a kind of guide to selected aspects of Edmund Niziurski's work and the anthropology of culture and memory. The diversity of the subject matter, the breadth of the issues dealt with and the multidimensionality of the approaches presented mean that, even many years after the author's debut, Niziurski and his legacy are not without their appeal to readers and researchers. Certainly, not many authors, whether contemporary or well-known in literary history, would wish to make such a long and lasting mark on the public's memory as the writer from Kielce.

From the foreword

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