

## SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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**Thesis title:** Between Reality and Phantasm. On the fictional prose of Jakub Żulczyk.

The thesis is an attempt to describe the fictional prose of the writer Jakub Żulczyk from the perspective of the realism and phantasmagoria that emerge from it. Divided into four chapters, the thesis analyses and describes the categories, motifs and literary tricks characteristic of the writer's novels. The description of the male protagonists created by the author in the context of the category of the anti-hero, the image of masculinity emerging from his work, and the novel genres he draws upon and how the contemporary writer modifies them were also important issues explored.

The dissertation, apart from the introduction and conclusion, consists of the following chapters: 1. 'Everything has already been but us'. In the circle of genre patterns and plot schemes; 2. 'Nobody knows what my real name is'. The figure of the anti-hero in Jakub Żulczyk's prose as an emblem of modernity; 3. Masculinity as reality and phantasm; 4. 'The world becomes even more blurred'. Realism and phantasmagoria as stylistic and narrative dominants.

The first chapter presents a consideration of the novel as a literary genre and it is variant, the postmodern novel. Nine novels by Jakub Żulczyk have been analysed from the point of view of their genology in order to indicate the novelistic schemes the writer reaches for and show how he modifies them. He creates various varieties of novels with a predominance of the crime novel. He enriches each of them with characteristic motifs and plots. What they all have in common is the motif of the clash between good and evil, which takes many forms. The world of the characters created by the writer is not black and white. Good permeates evil and vice versa, and the grey morality of the characters is a reflection of their complex psyches and today's ambiguous times.

The second chapter begins with a consideration of the figure of the anti-hero in literature. Anna Zagórska's conclusions and her classification of anti-heroes in Polish prose after 1989, which in this thesis served as a basis for comparing the creation of anti-heroes described by Jakub Żulczyk, are relevant here. The characteristic features of characters from the writer's novels with anti-hero traits were analysed and named. This allowed a thesis to be put forward that the male protagonists of the writer's prose are ambiguous characters with grey morality,

often passive and alienated, with complexes, unable to cope with their own emotions and the roles assigned to them.

The next section of the thesis characterises the category of masculinity that emerges from the writer's prose. The theoretical descriptions of masculinity presented in the first subchapter allowed us to place the image of man and masculinity that Jakub Żulczyk creates in his work against the background of these sociological and cultural considerations. The writer creates characters who, despite their adulthood, are emotionally immature and often struggle with various addictions and complexes. They represent masculinity in crisis, which is dominated, awkward and subordinate. In their view, they aspire to hegemony, but they only represent a stereotypical image of it. In reality, they are flawed, insecure and unable to cope with the social roles imposed on them, as they perceive their masculinity through the prism of their own imaginations and phantasmagorias. This affects their attitude as a father, partner or husband. The image of the former is also analysed in a subsection of the thesis. The presented chapter also includes an analysis of the male body and corporeality depicted in the writer's novels, as this issue is linked to the theme of masculinity. Żulczyk does not create one dominant pattern of male protagonists' corporeality, but the examples discussed show some analogies. The characters depicted in the dissertation from the author's prose can be analysed in terms of studies on masculinities. They are primarily hegemonic masculinities, but their ambiguous stories and inner worlds deviate from a completely hegemonic theory of masculinity. They are a reflection of the contemporary relational world, and see their self-image of masculine identity through the prism of perceptions of it, as evidenced in the paper.

The final chapter of the dissertation was devoted to the stylistic dominants used by the writer, namely realism and phantasmagoria. It has been shown that a writer working in the realist convention often enriches his works with categories such as oneirism, the grotesque, the brutalisation of the characters' language breaking all linguistic taboos, fantastic characters and events, and the depiction of a space of events in which the city becomes a symbolic monster consuming and destroying its inhabitants. These categories give the writer's works the impression of moving between the real world and phantasmagoria, and thus create a specific character and shape. When woven into the plots, they give them additional meanings and complement the real world shown in the light of antinomy and decay.

The prose of Jakub Żulczyk examined included nine of his novels, which were analysed problematically. This is a lively and still developing prose, as it concerns a writer who is still writing. The issues discussed in the dissertation confirm that the author's novel works are an example of literature on the borderline between reality and phantasm.

The entire work is complemented by a bibliography divided into subject, object and Internet sources.

**Key words:** Jakub Żulczyk, contemporary Polish novel, literature after 1989, anti-hero, image of masculinity, phantasm.