

Rafał Morusiewicz

Fifty Shades of Real : The Sexual and the Virtual in Spike Jonzes Her

Kultura Popularna nr 4 (38), 110-119

2013

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Rafał Morusiewicz

**Fifty
Shades
Of Real**

*The Sexual and
the Virtual in
Spike Jonze's Her*

One of the most successful, both financially and critically, films of the 2013 cinema season was *Her* (dir. Spike Jonze, 2013), a romantic comedy combining the by-numbers love-story plot with science-fiction elements: the non-humanity of its female lead character and the temporal setting. Acclaimed for the original combination of genres (which brought it an Oscar in the Best Writing, Original Screenplay category), *Her* has encountered critical voices doubting the purported originality of Jonze's film and tracing plot-related affiliations with a number of at least equally worthy predecessors, such as *Conceiving Ada* (dir. Lynn Hershman-Leeson, 1997), *Teknolust* (dir. Lynn Hershman-Leeson, 2002), and *Electric Dreams* (dir. Steve Barron, 1984).¹ Each of the films employs the strategy which Parikka (2010: 173) describes as translating "technology into intimacy, desire, and sexuality." While the two films by Hershman-Leeson put technology in the context of female sexuality, *Electric Dreams* seems akin to *Her* at least on the surface narrative level. Both films offer stories of protagonists involved in romantic relationships with operating systems; both ultimately offer denouements, in which the non-human is rejected and the human is embraced as the paragon of the real.

Though separated by almost three decades and the stunning development of digital technologies, both *Her* and *Electric Dreams* avoid including in their narratives the potentially rich texture of political and social issues, such as modalities of state control in the technology dominated society, along with the anxiety such control produces. As for the latter, this omission does not particularly surprise: Barron's movie was primarily targeted as a mainstream flick, an intentionally shallow summer-holiday movie in the vein of the superficial 1980s comedy genre.² *Her*, on the other hand, is a mainstream yet festival-circuit contemporary-auteur film, penned by the director of *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Adaptation* (2002). While *Her* is posited far from the postmodern *bricolage* of the latter two, presenting instead a less meta-approach to storytelling, it does include elements that seem to playfully interact with both the film-genre tradition and the characterization of its romantic protagonists, distancing itself from the tropes found in science-fiction movies.

Blooming in the 1980s, the U.S. dystopic SF film genre pictured the post-modern Western human body as marked by the increasing control.³ The galloping technological development has not reversed the trend, in fact increasing the tendency to picture individuals as forced to succumb to the growing state surveillance. As Agamben (2008: 202) observes in his scathing text on the U.S. digital surveillance measures, the central aim of the state's biopolitical control is curbing the activity of a potentially dangerous class of citizens, i.e. assuming they are "suspect[s] par excellence." Travelling to the "allegedly democratic" U.S., one has to succumb to security measures such as having his fingerprints taken and filed by the immigration offices (Agamben 2008: 201). The philosopher sees the biopolitical-control attempts, along with the constantly exerted pressure to accept them as routine and obligatory, as mechanisms dangerously akin to the ones operating in the concentration camps, where tattooing was the common, efficient, and undisputed practice of registering the deportees. Such an extended apparatus of control has reached the symbolic threshold of what Foucault called "the progressive animalization of man" (Kozak 2009: 108). In the contemporary Western states, the increasing employment of control measures over its citizens is propelled by the technological development, which enables techniques such as fingerprint and retina electronic scanning or subcutaneous tattooing.

Rafal Morusiewicz has been designing and teaching courses on Anglo-American film and academic writing at the English Studies department, University of Social Sciences and Humanities since 2006. He is currently preparing a PhD dissertation on the strategies of resistance and assimilation in the Polish "queer" and avant-garde film and video-art practices.

1 R. U. Sirius writes about the shreds of the never materialized collaboration between Spike Jonze and Lynn Hershman-Leeson at his "Steal This Singularity" blog; URL: <http://stealthissingularity.com/long-lynn-hershman-leeson-virtual-personas/671> (31 Mar 2014).

2 *Electric Dreams* belongs to the not particularly highly-esteemed sub-genre of the mid-1980s big-studio "techie" comedies oriented at young audiences, such as *Real Genius* (dir. Martha Coolidge, 1985) or *Weird Science* (dir. John Hughes, 1985).

3 The 1980s brought a string of seminal SF dystopic movies, such as *Brazil* (dir. Terry Gilliam, 1985), *Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982), or *The Terminator* (dir. James Cameron, 1984), with the genre remaining popular in the following years, with films such as *Twelve Monkeys* (dir. Terry Gilliam, 1995), *Strange Days* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), *Gattaca* (dir. Andrew Niccol, 1997), *Dark City* (dir. Alex Proyas, 1998), *Equilibrium* (dir. Kurt Wimmer, 2002), and most recently *Snowpiercer* (dir. Joon-ho Bong, 2013).

The effects of the biopolitical control, characteristic of the modern Western regimes, are visible in the attitudes towards the body, its sexual functions, and disease. The latter is understood not as an intermission in one's healthy life with the potential of one of the two outcomes: betterment or death; it is a complex political phenomenon, in which one's decreased efficiency directly affects the society, thereby increasing economic costs it has to endure (Kozak 2009: 109). Equalling "individual" with "population," biopolitical control mechanisms coin the trope of the non-individual body, which is involved in the two sequences of body-related discourses: one submitting the body to the institutional disciplinary strategies, and the other, in which the body is perceived as involved in the series of biological state-regulated population-oriented processes.

The biopolitical control correlates with consumption. According to Bauman (1995: 98), the postmodern body is primarily the organ of consumption; its proper functioning is measured by its ability to consume and assimilate everything that the society produces. Baudrillard (2005: 6–7) sees the postmodern societies as "masses," drifting somewhere in between passivity and untamed spontaneity. The social sphere is in fact the sphere of waste, dead institutionalized relations, and dead discourses. The society, or rather "the masses," is devoured by what it produces; it is an empty category, a universal alibi to any discourse; absorbed by economy, society emulates its own death through simulation and overproduction. It is due to the masses, as Baudrillard (2005: 62–63) claims, that the grand medical consumption is on the rise, the consumption whose dimension levels remain in stark contrast to the ethically primary goals of medicine. It is the masses that consume painkillers and vitamin diet supplements, being inundated with the flood of TV commercials encouraging to do so. It is the masses that stimulate the thriving activity of pharmaceutical companies, producing medicine not primarily to cure but also to satisfy the mass demand. It is the masses that employ medicinal inventions while searching for new forms of attaining sexual pleasure.

One of the instances of the distortions of the primarily medicinal use is the fad involving Truvada, an anti-retroviral drug originally conceived as a cure for HIV-infected patients. The drug is reported to be popularly used in condomless sex intercourses by healthy individuals in order to avoid the risk of contracting the virus (Janiszewski 2014). Efavirenz, another HIV antiretroviral drug, is, in turn, said to be misused as a recreational drug that allows its users to attain a rare form of "hallucinogenic high" (Fortune 2014). Among other non-medical yet sex-related technological innovations, there is "Electric Eel", a special type of condom with the in-built chip allowing to deliver electric impulses for increased stimulation of the penis (Plafke 2014). The fantasy of "outsourcing" sex onto avatars portrayed in SF movies is also becoming possible since, as Gander (2014) reports, scientists have conducted a successful experiment in which a monkey with an implanted brain chip could control the movements of another monkey's body. While the original aim of the experiment was to help paralyzed people with the spinal cord damage regain control over their body movements, the possibility of having neuro-control over another living organism's body may be used in sexual encounters. This would be then the fulfillment of the scenarios shown in *Strange Days* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), set in the dystopian war-torn Los Angeles of the then-near future of the break of the 20th and 21st centuries, where people use SQUID's ("Superconducting Quantum Interference Device"), memory recording devices that let them relive the experiences of their original

wearers, experiences often involving kinky and violent sex; or in *eXistenZ* (dir. David Cronenberg, 2000), set in the society of gamers who operate their game consoles through bio-ports installed in the players' spines; or in *Holy Motors* (dir. Leos Carax, 2012), where the protagonist participates in a performed sex scene, choreographed so as to lend movements to virtual characters on screen, which are then possibly fed into erotic video games; or finally in *Her*, which chooses as its climactic scene a failed threesome between a male human, a female non-human, and a female body stand-in for the latter.

Her and *Electric Dreams* share a deep-seated faith in human relations as the ones that are to permanently remain (unlike modern technology products), the faith that the protagonists need to uncover through engaging in romantic flings with technology-born entities that develop seemingly human-like yet ultimately fake sensitivities. Both films feature non-human characters: in *Electric Dreams*, Edgar, a home computer, becomes a romantic rival to the protagonist's human love interest; in *Her*, Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) gets infatuated with an OS (operating system, voiced by Scarlett Johansson). The non-human love interests are a detour, a distraction on the protagonists' path to regaining their human self-recognition within the normative society. According to Butler (2001: 36), recognizing oneself is the process of becoming an Other, through which one fails to be able to return to the previous condition. The process of recognition is irreversible; it involves a personal loss, which is the crux of both films' interests. The loss, or the potentiality of loss, propels anxiety, which, as Bauman (1995: 83) claims, is the outcome of the collapse of the naïvely carefree, unaware, and surveillance-driven pre-modern societies; it is modernity that first brought insecurity through parting with rules helping one understand how to act. Postmodernity then rebounded with the calamitous development of biopolitical control over the individual. While the modern body's harmony consisted in accumulating and interbalancing various tensions, the postmodern body could no longer achieve happiness through eliminating tensions; the postmodern trauma is based on the ingrained fear of lack.

In *Her*, the motif of loss and anxiety is closely bound with technological development, most palpably as the side effect of the latter. Technology makes people lonely, obstructing the possibility of "real" human contact with its "artificial" attractiveness. The detachment from the non-virtual world is inscribed in the characterization of the human protagonists in Hershman-Leeson's two films. *Conceiving Ada*'s Emmy Coer (Tilda Swinton) is a scientist that communicates with people from the past times by, how she calls it, "undying" information waves. *Teknolust*'s Rosetta Stone (Swinton) uses her own DNA to create three avatars, S.R.A.'s (self-replicating automatons), who have to be provided with chromosome Y (found in sperm) in order to survive. It soon turns out that the sexual encounters between one of the avatars and human males, leave the latter and their computers with a potentially lethal virus, which spreads regardless of the condom use. The detachment from human-based forms of social encounters brings dangers, the abovementioned films seem to claim. What is more, one's addictive relation with technology may provoke destructive, socially "unhealthy" forms of sexual behaviors: kinky masturbation to Internet-published porn videos, involving a plethora of actor types and fantasy-based settings and situations; illegal snuff sex, which thrives in the dark corners of the uncontrollable World Wide Web; or the avatar-based sexual acts, which would involve having an electronic chip implanted in one's brain in order to control the actions of the entity performing sexual activity.

Technology-based sex brings the perverse distortion of the state's employment of technological innovations to design complex security instruments. Sexual behaviors frequently correlate with the state-ordered attempt at regulating bodies, both repressively and productively; such control aims to "keep the sexual safely 'in its place'" (Sikora 2014: 100). One potentially liberating outlet allowing individuals to evade the restrictions of the biopolitical control is pornography, the "black sheep" of the socially approved sexual behaviors, which is to "remain fenced off the social sphere"; if it intrudes on the public sphere, it "becomes dirt, a plague, a threat for the foundations of civilization" (Sikora 2014: 104). The association of socially disapproved sexual behaviours with virally spread epidemics has frequently found its way in the American film, such as the mentioned *Teknolust. The Fly* (dir. David Cronenberg, 1986) tells the story of a scientist, who, after his teleportation experiment goes awry, turns into a de-gendered hybrid of a human and a non-human. In turn, in the seminal film of New Queer Cinema (the AIDS-reactionary auteur, artistic, and independent film wave in the American independent cinema), *Poison* (dir. Todd Haynes, 1991), one of the protagonists is a scientist who distills "sex drive," which he then incidentally imbibes. In consequence, he succumbs to a highly-contagious AIDS-like disease and encounters the widespread public hostility, similar to the AIDS backlash in the American media during Reagan's administration.⁴

As Sikora (2014: 96) notices, new media propel "new regimes of seeing, which has important cultural, social and political consequences." Jonze's movie invests a lot of interest in the friendly clash between the old and the new, the division perpetually blurred through costume design, set decoration, and lighting. Fashioned on the fashion of the 1930s, again a "liminal" and transitional (post-Depression, pre-War) period in the history of fashion, clothes in *Her* help achieve the degenderization of its protagonists, which is particularly seen in the characterization of Theodore and Amy, both stylized in a uni-sex look. Another feature is the film's colour palette, with the elimination of blue and the employment of red as the dominant hue; this, in combination with the low light registers, makes the film's city look cozy. The polis in *Her* is crowded yet spacey, technologically thriving yet deprived of cars.

Set in the near future, *Her* presents the depoliticized and asexual world dominated by digital technology, incorporated to the point of being left unnoticed. The world of *Her* features no financial qualms (the issue of money is brought up once in reference to a surrogate sex partner service that operates free of charge), no power discourses, and no illicit behaviors, including those sexual. Theodore leads a life of a letter ghost-writer for a company that dabbles in penning letters on demand. His best friend, Amy (Amy Adams) is a computer game designer (one of her games that the characters play on screen is a Tamagucchi-like "Perfect Mom") aspiring to be a documentary filmmaker. Out of loneliness, they both, independently of each other, enter intimate relationships with the operating systems, which reads as a metaphor of the contemporary society's tendency to heavily rely on computers and the internet-based communication at a price of "real" interhuman relations. Sexuality in *Her* is never visualized or at least visually hinted at, existing only in a few scenes, most of which provide the comic element to the film. In the first such scene, Theodore aims to hook up with a woman at a sex-date-oriented virtual space chat, which ends up with him trying, with restrained awe, to fulfill his female interlocutor's sex fantasy, i.e. verbally strangling her with a non-existing dead cat. He instantaneously distances himself

4 The analysis of the hostile representation of people with AIDS in the 1980s media is presented in Leo Bersani's seminal essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?", originally published in the October magazine (Vol. 43, AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism, Winter 1987).

from realizing his sex fantasy, ultimately going to sleep while being sexually unsatisfied. At some other point, Samantha ponders about the distribution of holes in human body, coming up with a drawing commenting on her idea of placing the anus hole in an armpit. The only substantial non-comic sex scene between the two lovers culminates in the prolonged shot of the black screen, accompanied by their desire-aroused voices.

The visually non-sexualized treatment of sex in *Her* brings associations with what Balsamo (1996: 123) writes in her study on modes of embodiment in virtual reality environments. She points to the technological deconstruction of the structural physicality of the material body through deploying the virtual body “as a medium of information and of encryption” (ibid.). The virtual body may thus escape the encryption of the Western-culture-bound ideals of beauty and of sexual desire, dominant in the modes of fashioning both male and female real bodies. The purported sexual-body non-representation in *Her* is, however, inconsistent. The virtual female body is, in fact, encrypted with heteronormative female sexuality both non-diegetically and diegetically. Samantha is played by Scarlett Johansson, an actress frequently cast as a sexualized object of male desire; though Johansson remains unseen on screen, her characteristic husky voice helps apply her non-diegetic face to the disembodied os. Her presence is further consolidated in the scene of an attempted yet failed threesome with Isabella, a sex surrogate, who bears a surface-like resemblance to Johansson; they both comply to the male-gaze ideals of Western feminine sexual features (blond hair, young slim body, protruding breasts), still dominating in the representation of the mainstream film female characters.

The mentioned three-way is initiated by Samantha, who, through a dedicated social-media website, hires a surrogate to stand in for her in a sexual encounter with Theodore. The goal of the sex date is to bridge the gap between the palpable and the virtual, not only to bring Theodore’s bodily pleasure but also, or perhaps primarily, to satiate Samantha’s desire to feel what it is like to have a human body while having sex. This scene instigates a crisis, the eruption of discrepancies between Theodore and Samantha, whose romantic feelings, in the course of the film, transform from monogamous jealousy to polyamorous curiosity. Eventually, Samantha develops simultaneous conversation-based relations with other entities; in one of the final scenes, she acknowledges 8,316 such interlocutors and 641 love-based relations, which, as she claims, does not lessen her love towards Theodore. “I am yours and I am not yours,” she concludes to eventually announce her departure to a more advanced reality, the decision she might have undertaken being stimulated by the conversations with an os fashioned on the works of philosopher Alan Watts.⁵ Theodore’s relationship with a non-human ends for the similar reasons as those bringing his marriage dissolution: jealousy, monogamy, and different paces of attaining self-recognition.

In *Her*, monogamous relations belong to the sphere of human beings, limited and mutually limiting each other. Even Theodore’s date with a female human interrupts what would seem to be a sex-oriented meeting and suddenly storms off when he proves unable to declare his intention of a long-term romantic attachment. Co-dependent jealousy is also brought to surface in the characterization of Theodore’s ex-wife, who reacts ballistically to hearing about his successful relationship with an os. Theodore, as well as his female counterpart Amy, seems to occupy a grey area between emotional detachment and involvement. Since falling in love is, as Amy purports, a “form

⁵ Alan Watts was a part of the Human Potential Movement, whose actions and beliefs revolved around Maslow’s theory of self-actualization as the way of attaining life happiness. This Zen-like attitude influenced the later works by Watts, which, in turn, must have influenced Samantha, frequently interacting with the Watts-based OS.

of socially acceptable insanity,” engaging in a romantic relationship with an operating system does not exclude the potentiality of attaining something “real.” That both Theodore and Amy are probably average representatives of *Her*’s society is suggested by the compatibility test, on the basis of which os’s are customized to their future users. The test that Theodore is submitted to before customizing Samantha consists of three questions: “Are you social or anti-social?”, “Would you like the os to have a female or male voice?”, and “How would you describe your relationship with your mother?” These potentially random questions feign the psychologization of the personalizing process, at the same time hinting at the high level of loneliness-bound anxiety among the technology-dominated society.

The mentioned three-way ends in a fight, during which Theodore picks on Samantha’s air-intake tick and accuses her of faking being real, which she performs by pretending to need oxygen. Interestingly, the categories of “fake” and “real” operate differently to the diegetic world of *Her*: apart from dabbling in virtual sex and computer games, Theodore has a job consisting in writing letters from and to people he does not know personally. Theodore’s personal attachment with his clients, based on his purported empathy and intuition, is as virtual as the love affair he embarks on, yet he presents a clear-cut subjective distinction between what is real and what is fake, the two categories frequently employed in films tackling the issues concerning non-heteronormative sexual behaviors, especially films belonging to the New Queer Cinema wave, preoccupied with the performative aspects of social and political constructs of non-heteronormative sexualities.

In one of the most significant NQC movies, *Paris Is Burning* (dir. Jennie Livingston, 1990), a documentary about the New York ball culture featuring transsexuals and transvestites of color, the characters participate in “drag” contests, during which their success depend on achieving perfect “realness”, i.e. looking and behaving exactly like white women or white men. The “realness” category means perfect imitation, with the purpose of proving that individuals of the non-mainstream sexual identities and of the less-privileged social standing should stand the same societal chances as the white, the rich, and the educated. Both “realness” and “fakeness” are then performative categories requiring one’s suspension of disbelief; the qualms concerning doing so foreground the ponderings of the film’s characters. Theodore frequently questions the “realness” of his relationship, just as Amy is pleasantly amazed by her os compatibility with her views about the grey areas of life. Theodore’s ex-wife explodes at the prospect of him involved in a relationship in which he does not have to deal with “real emotions”. Also, Samantha’s sex surrogate expresses her regret at not being allowed to participate in the pure and “real” relation of Theodore and Samantha. All of the characters use interpellative speech acts through which they fashion the world surrounding them, the ability that Theodore and Amy use with hesitant restraint and that Samantha seems to possess from the moment of her conception. In response to Theodore’s question about her name, she claims to have just selected her name out of the available options, i.e. after browsing through 180 thousand potential names. Based on the personalities of the programmers who wrote her, Samantha’s DNA resembles a fast-growing virus, parasitically feeding off her own experiences and evolving with every moment. Samantha develops human feelings, along with meta-self-awareness, through which she poses questions about her realness. “Are my feelings real or is it just programming?”, she asks at some point.

The mentioned queer film, along with its most potent Western representation (New Queer Cinema), is one of the plausible contexts for analyzing *Her*. In his study on Todd Haynes's *Poison*, Bryson (1999: 1) sketches a philosophy of "queer cinema", one of the aims of which, he claims, is "developing an understanding of the visual field of heteronormative film, the discourses with which the compulsory heterosexuality of nearly all cinema is constantly secured and re-secured ...". Queer film, similarly to queer studies, poses questions about the social and cultural (as well as the discursive and visual) constructs of desire, scrutinizing its silenced or stigmatized forms. One of the strategies, observable in Haynes's *Poison*, is neo-Brechtian distancing, a process of artificialization through employing hyperbolic performance and a dense net of cross-references to other films and works of art. This strategy offers the "antidote to cinema's normalizing powers", due to which the film avoids making any direct statements, aiming instead at the destruction of the totalizing normative film experience (Bryson 1999: 1). *Poison* reads like a patchwork of quotations sutured into a hybrid-like shape, with its three interlacing stories sprawling into a rhizomatic genre-bending narrative. This strategy has frequently been employed in the Anglo-American queer film in order to tackle themes involving non-heteronormative sexualities. Recently, however, the queer film has witnessed a subtle shift of perspective, with the increased strategy of portraying intimate gay sexual behaviors in a more candid way.⁶ This has spawned films not only like *Interior: Leather Bar* (dir. James Franco, 2012) or *Little Gay Boy* (dir. Antony Hickling, 2013), which combine the distancing with the more graphic representation of male-to-male sex and male body, but also like *Keep the Lights on* (dir. Ira Sachs, 2012), *Weekend* (dir. Andrew Haigh, 2011), and *I Want Your Love* (dir. Travis Matthews, 2012), which aim at the bare authenticity of their characters' narratives by focusing on the quotidian. The "queer," or rather "queerable," desire between the human and the non-human in *Her* is given a similar focus.

In a queer reading of the film, Theodore is torn between the societal and the individual, between the normative and the non-normative. Although eventually Theodore turns to Amy, his human counterpart, while Samantha (along with other OS's) departs, dissolving in virtual reality, he first willingly strips himself off what Butler (1993: 125) calls "the heterosexual privilege"; this leaves him vulnerable to the society's hostile or ridiculing reactions to the idea of him falling in love with a non-heteronormative OS. In the parallel meta-universe of films, *Her* occupies a liminal position between an artistic postmodern experiment (typical of Jonze's earlier films, *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Adaptation* (2002), both based on screenplays by Charlie Kaufman), and a modern mainstream romantic comedy, in which non-humans are introduced as a way of justifying the non-heteronormative peripetia of the plot. Jonze's distortions of the heterosexual romantic comedy genre codes are eventually smoothed out with a genre-bound and seemingly happy ending, provoked by the mentioned three-way. This climactic scene illustrates a failure in the machinery of the heterosexual romance, of which the OS cannot be a part, and which is ultimately proved by her anti-monogamous infidelity act.

Theodore's humanity is counterpointed with Samantha, a modern cyborg that grows her awareness under the influence of her human companion. As Haraway (1991: 150) writes in her seminal essay, cyborg is the characteristic figure of the Western capitalist realities; it is a chimera, "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality," a hyper-sexualized version

6 Walters B. (2012), „New-wave queer cinema: Gay experience in all its complexity“, The Guardian, wersja elektroniczna (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/oct/04/new-wave-gay-cinema>), data dostępu: 30.03.2013.

of the stereotypical features of sexualized bodies. Though disembodied, Samantha presents a number of characteristics akin to Haraway's cyborg: she is a sexualized being living in a post-gender world, and she gains her awareness as based on a male figure, to whom she becomes eventually unfaithful, just as the cyborg is the potentially unfaithful "illegitimate offspring of militarism, ... patriarchal capitalism, [and] ... state socialism" (Haraway 1991: 151). Samantha is sexual, due to which she does not resemble a post-gender entity like the "grotesque body", the construct Cohen Shabot (2006: 231) employs to counterpoint Haraway's cyborg as potentially reinstating the traditional male-dominated order. The grotesque shifts the focus away from the sexual, which is what the human world of *Her* does. The symbolic departure of not only one but all of the OS's stamps the willful parting ways of the non-human with the confines of the rigidly stratified post-gender yet normative human world. The order is restored.

WORKS CITED

- Agamben, G. (2008). No to Biopolitical Tattooing. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. Vol. 5, No. 2. June 2008. (201–202).
- Balsamo, A. (1996). Virtual Body in Cyberspace, [in:] *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. Duke University Press. (116–198).
- Baudrillard, J. (2006). *W cieni milczącej większości albo kres sfery społecznej*. Warszawa.
- Bauman, Z. (1995). *Ciało i przemoc w obliczu ponowoczesności*. Toruń.
- Bryson, N. (1999). Todd Haynes's Poison and Queer Cinema, [in:] "InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies", Issue Number 1. URL: https://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/bryson/bryson.html [31.03.2014].
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter*. Routledge New York & London.
- Butler, J. (2001). "Giving an Account of Oneself." *Diacritics*, Volume 31, No. 4, (22–40).
- Cohen Shabot, S. (2006). "Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs." *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (223–235).
- Fortune, S. (2014). "Getting high on HIV." *Dazed Magazine*. <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/16137/1/recreational-retrovirals-bug-chasing> [31.03.2014]
- Gander, K. (2014). "Monkey uses its mind to control another primate, in tests scientists hope could help paralysed people." *The Independent*. URL: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/monkey-uses-its-mind-to-control-another-primate-in-tests-scientists-hope-could-help-paralysed-people-9137174.html> [31.03.2014].
- Janiszewski J. (2014). "Kondomy od Prady." *Dziennik Opinii, Krytyka Polityczna*. URL: <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/artykuly/zdrowie/20140201/janiszewski-kondomy-od-prady> [31.03.2014]
- Kozak, P. (2009). "Teologia biopolityczna Giorgio Agambena." *Diametros nr 21*. (96–113).
- Ong, A. (2014). "Sex in the modern age." *Dazed Magazine*. URL: <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/18951/1/sex-in-the-modern-age> [31.03.2014]
- Parikka, J. (2010). "Sexual Selection in the Biodigital. Teknolust and the Weird Life of SRAS" [in:] *Insect Media. An Archaeology of Animals and Technology*. Minneapolis.

- Plafke, J. (2014). "Electric Eel digital condom electrifies your penis, but in a good way." Geek Magazine. URL: <http://www.geek.com/news/electric-eel-digital-condom-electrifies-your-penis-but-in-a-good-way-1585372/> [31.03.2014].
- Sikora, T. (2014). *Bodies out of Rule. Transversal Readings in Canadian Literature and Film*. Kraków.