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## “Six Short Stories” by the Founder of the Orange Alternative Protest Movement Waldemar “Major” Fydrych as an Ideological Interpretation of Homo Esteticus

### Abstract

This analysis is a contribution to the study of the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative protest-art movement. It interprets the literary work “Six Short Stories” as a supplement to the programmatic texts of the latter. In the research, the significance of the movement against the background of European avant-garde currents and the ideas of the “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” are briefly presented. Moreover, the study outlines the profile of its creator, Waldemar “Major” Fydrych. The article also shows the most important themes that appear in the texts: “Manifesto of Flowers,” “Mars Amandi,” “Dawn,” and “Opera for 44 Pieces of Silver.” In particular, their several surrealist aspects are highlighted.

**Keywords:** Orange Alternative, surrealism, Waldemar “Major” Fydrych, “Manifesto of Flowers”

### Introduction

This text is an important contribution to the study of the multifaceted history of the Orange Alternative movement, born in the student milieu of the city of Wrocław. The author of the present article herself took part in it during her studies in Romance Studies at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. This movement had an artistic and protesting nature. Involving student youth in various Polish cities in the 1980s and 1990s, it was a kind of *unicum* on the map of European avant-garde currents directed against communist realities. Indeed, it organized street demonstrations, marches, and happening actions. Furthermore, it promoted the publication of polemical texts and manifestos, such as “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981) and “Manifesto of Flowers” (Fydrych

1983); records of street events in surrealist conventions like “Hokus – Pokus” (Fydrych 1989), and literary texts, among which there is “Six Short Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985). Each of these activities complemented the other. The most important part of the movement’s legacy is exhibited in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative. This exposition is an important contribution to the European history of youth avant-garde movements of hippie-anarchist provenance. The founder and author of the programmatic and literary works of the Orange Alternative, which literally complemented the street actions, is Waldemar “Major” Fydrych. The texts of this visionary, artist, happenner, poet, and historian are the focus of the present research.

Regarding Fydrych’s literary legacy, despite the fact that his short stories are available in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative, founded in 2011. I am surprised by the silence of researchers on this issue, especially since the most important programmatic text has already been mentioned many times (Tyszka 1998; Gourgaud 1993; Gorska, Koschalka 2011; Misztal 1998) and attempts have been made to (unfortunately, still mostly superficial) analyse it. I am grateful to my masters – Professor Charles P. Marie, Professor Jerzy Świąch, and Professor Jerzy Falicki for encouraging me to study these surrealist literary texts from an interdisciplinary perspective. This approach seems particularly relevant in examining key aspects of the activity of the Orange Alternative.

### **Why the Orange Alternative movement?**

The Orange Alternative movement was the most important anti-communist mass happening movement in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1980s and 1990s for its colour, its ideology, and its values (freedom of speech, freedom of action, and artistic freedom). Bronisław Misztal notes that the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative has not yet been “the subject of rigorous analysis” (Misztal 1998: 57). According to him, the movement deserves to be recognized socially and intellectually, as it can be included in the list of “ontological problems enlightened with the most recent era of transition in Eastern Europe”<sup>2</sup> (Misztal 1998: 57). Nicole Gourgaud describes the Orange Alternative as a unique “aesthetic-political phenomenon” (Gourgaud 1993:193) that could only exist in the former bloc of communist countries, and only in Poland (Gourgaud 1993: 193). Lisiunia A. Romanienko presents the Orange Alternative as the antithesis of the stance of Lech Wałęsa<sup>3</sup> (Romanienko 2007: 135 – 136). She emphasizes that

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the collection of the museum has not been supplemented for the last fourteen years with the more recent publications on the history of the movement. The short stories have been distributed for many years as ephemeral prints during the happenings. Moreover, they are presented in the autobiographical book “Major” they have not yet been analysed in literary studies or in the light of cultural studies.

<sup>2</sup> Quotes are taken directly from the English publications unless it is explicitly stated that they were translated by me.

<sup>3</sup> Lech Wałęsa became the first democratically elected president of Poland since 1926 and the first-ever Polish president elected by popular vote.

the movement's creators based their activities on a "record of dramatic, nonviolent, humanist, pacifist, feminist support, anarchist, ecological, sexual and human rights" (Romanienko 2007: 135 – 136). Therefore, this article pays attention to the multidimensionality and interdisciplinarity of the movement.

Its name, including the orange colour that appears in it, is a reference to the Dutch Provos – a countercultural Dutch group. The latter was active in Amsterdam between 1965 – 1967 and could be defined as a protoplast of hippies in Europe. Its inspirers were Robert Jasper Grootveld<sup>4</sup> and Roel van Duijn<sup>5</sup>, who were fascinated at the time by the ideas of Hebert Marcuse<sup>6</sup> (Marcuse 1991). The phenomenon of the Orange Alternative can also be placed in the trend of independent art<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, the movement was not closely associated with the official opposition or the patriotic art manifestations, which were promoted by church circles of the time. With the successive protests throughout Poland of the "Solidarity"<sup>8</sup> trade union, founded in 1980 to defend workers' rights and one of the most important anti-communist formations until 1989 in our country, the ancestor of the Orange Alternative made its appearance. Its name was the New Culture Movement. "Solidarity" opened a chance for obtaining freedom. Juliusz Tyszka notes that the Orange Alternative appeared in the multicultural Wrocław, the formerly German Breslau. In this city, just after World War II, citizens were displaced from ex-Polish territories of Western Ukraine, Belorussia, and Lithuania to territories of Lower Silesia (Tyszka 1998: 58). Beata Maciejewska, Elżbieta Lukierska and Mieczysław Michalak emphasize the importance of Wrocław as a leading city in hosting ventures manifesting a commitment to freedom, as the Orange Alternative did during happenings and artistic activities in Polish university environments (Maciejewska, Lukierska, Michalak 2005: 15 – 45). The essence of the happenings, organized by Waldemar Fydrych and his friends-associates, was based on various forms of activities. The initiatives took place during specific timeframes in general urban scenarios with the use of props (toilet paper, writings on cardboard boxes, orange caps) and with the possibility of improvisation (Moldovan-Cywińska 2024: 431 – 432). Barbara Gorska, Benjamin Koschalka under-

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Jasper Grotveld was a painter and creator of happenings. He performed in public primarily against tobacco companies. He drew inspiration from French and Belgian surrealist painting.

<sup>5</sup> Roel van Duijn has been a Dutch politician, political activist and writer. He was among the founders of Provo and the *Kabouterbeweging*.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Marcuse was a German-American philosopher and sociologist with Jewish roots, and a representative of the Frankfurt School. In 1957, he criticized the form of Marxism widespread in the Soviet Union. His scientific works were commented on and quoted by participants in the 1968 student revolt.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that, in the Spanish context, the colour orange has been presented as a key aspect of the setting of retrospective exhibitions devoted to the Orange Alternative, including "La Alternativa Naranja – la Revolucion de los Gnomos" (Fydrych 2008: 10 – 12).

<sup>8</sup> *Solidarność* in Polish.

line the efficacy of these happenings as a contestation art form of the movement under discussion here. The reader should primarily pay attention to the political meaning of the Orange Alternative slogans and to their huge impact on the then Polish reality (Gorska, Koschalka 2011).

“Down with intellectual art. Long live socialism of the highest quality, as a work of comic art. Vivat Sorbovit”<sup>9</sup> – these are the key slogans of the Orange Alternative, cited by Padraic Kenney (Kenney 2002: 157 – 161). The latter emphasizes the importance of the Dadaist humour in the movement. However, we do not agree with belittling the influence of surrealism on the Orange Alternative by hyperbolising the Dadaist ones. The creator of the current himself believes that such an interpretation of the Orange Alternative is too superficial. Of course, the French surrealists took their black humour and love of the grotesque from the Dadaists<sup>10</sup>. Nonetheless, the constant reference to Dadaism should be overcome. Jan Przyłuski also highlights the Orange Alternative’s unequivocal ties with surrealism and Dadaism (Przyłuski 2012). Again, however, we cannot completely agree with this position. Przyłuski’s thesis seems to us to be a form of unargued mental hyperbole not only from the perspective of a researcher, but also from that of a participant in the happenings organized by the PA in the second half of the 1980s, as well as of a writer and poet creating in the spirit of surrealism a la polonaise. Przyłuski makes only artistic-cultural observations, while our considerations are grounded on a cultural-literary perspective.

The New Culture Movement, whose members published the first issue of the Orange Alternative periodical, saw in proclaiming the inner liberation of the individual a further development of the joint programmatic initiative. This was far away from the then atmosphere of Polish political struggle between Solidarity and the Communists. A magazine “Pismo” enriched the ideas of the “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981), of which Fydrych was one of the authors. The Orange Alternative was joined by young people – especially students of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Warsaw University, Wrocław University, and Łódź University, for whom the “Solidarity” formula was unrealistic or inaccessible.

The first known action of the Orange Alternative was the painting of dwarves on the walls of the houses of the main Polish cities (on the night between August 30 – 31, 1982). The most intense period of its activity was between 1987 – 1988. The Movement was the antithesis of official state and communist political slogans. The ideological legacy of the Orange Alternative results in programmatic texts such as “Manifesto of Flowers” (Fydrych 1983), biographical works as “Orange Men” (Fydrych 2002), journalism referring to “oneiric-surrealist imagination” (Moldovan-Cywińska 2023: 14 – 45, 56, 67), and “Six Short Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985). The latter are analysed in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>9</sup> A vitamin drink, popular in Poland in the 1980s and compulsorily administered to primary school children.

<sup>10</sup> Waldemar Fydrych – Marta Moldovan Cywińska conversations in Warsaw (August 2024).

## “Six Short Stories” – the Work of a Happener and a Leader

This contributory research on the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative is based on our long-time studies and on their results published in scientific journals, in monographs, or in comprehensive book. The used method has an interdisciplinary nature because such a research perspective is required by the complex phenomenon of the Orange Alternative itself. At least, a literary and cultural interpretation are needed. As already stated, I was inspired to do so by Professor Jerzy Falicki and Professor Charles P. Marie. This article aims to show the symbolic meaning of *Homo Esteticus*<sup>11</sup> on the example of the literary texts of the Orange Alternative.

The author of “Six Short Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985) is Waldemar “Major” Fydrych (born April 8, 1953, in Toruń, Poland). He was a student of art history at the Wrocław University, a happenner and the co-founder of the New Culture Movement. In 1981, he ideated the “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981), based on the “Surrealist Manifesto” of the French philosopher and poet André Breton (Breton 1967). Fydrych argued that the communist government was surreal and that every representative of the oppressive militia could be considered a work of art. “Six Short Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985), published in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative, is a continuation of the ideas presented in the “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981).

In the early 1980s, Fydrych began creating graffiti with the motif of dwarfs, covering up the stains on city and house walls (Janicka 1969: 34 – 67). Happenings, organized by the Orange Alternative, featured student representatives dressed in orange hats. Moreover, Fydrych became a forerunner of the “carnival revolution”<sup>12</sup>. He opened a dialogue between ordinary citizens and the representatives of the communist regime (Moldovan-Cywińska 2023: 20 – 24).

Each happening looked like a festive celebration, giving the participants the awareness of taking part in a historic turning point moment. At the same time, it preserved the ludic character of the manifestation. The happenings aimed to awaken Poles from the social apathy that had gripped our country during martial law. A disillusioned society, and especially young people, needed a new charismatic leader with a broader outlook (Moldovan-Cywińska 2023).

In 1988, Fydrych received the Solidarity Award from the Puls publishing house in London and the Polkul Award from the Polish community in Australia. The same year, he received the Ashes and Diamonds Award. During this period, the Interior Ministry arrested Fydrych and jailed him for three months. He was released after a wave of protests swept through Polish largest cities (Moldovan-Cywińska 2023: 12 – 15).

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<sup>11</sup> “Homo Esteticus” – actually it should be “Homo aestheticus”, but I give the transcript according to the original. A fictional character who appears in Fydrych’s stories as a symbol of the socio-political changes taking place through participation in the Orange Alternative actions. It is also a reference to the movement’s founder himself.

<sup>12</sup> An allusion to the title of Kenney’s book, Kenney 2002.

## From the Manifesto of “Socialist Surrealism” to the “Six Stories”

A convincingly written manifesto consists of a collection of views, opinions, thoughts, suggestions with a plan of action concerning literature, arts, a value system, or politics. The term has its roots in the Latin word “manifesto,” which means “to reveal,” “to make known,” “to proclaim,” or “to announce.” Researchers of the history of manifestos often refer to John L. Austin’s speech act theory (Austin 1962: 18 – 57). They define each manifesto as a performative act. A manifesto is also a document which states a particular position<sup>13</sup>. Our attention is primarily turned to performative utterances, which accomplish something by the very fact of being uttered, and illocutionary utterances, because these are the functions we attribute primarily to Fydrych’s programmatic texts (Moldovan-Cywińska 2023: 14 – 19).

In the 20th century, manifestos were peculiar from a stylistic point of view. They attracted attention with their originality in graphics. Manifestos were used by avant-gardes. For example, Dadaism (Dada), which around 1915 began to widespread, employed them. The main Dadaistic slogans were: complete freedom of artistic expression, a break with all traditions, and rejection of the then canons of beauty. Its representatives, who witnessed the drama of the First World War, negated commonly accepted aesthetic ideals and values. They did not produce a unified programme that tied their works – rather, they were unified by their common pacifistic views, as Gianni Eugenio Viola emphasises (Viola 2013). The Dadaists used absurdity, playfulness, wit. They rarely employed traditional artistic means such as painting, sculpture and printmaking in their pure form. For them, creativity was more important. Combining different techniques and elaborating new ones was characteristic of Dadaism (Viola 2013: 34 – 37).

The “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981) is an *à rebours* manifesto. It refers to the “Manifesto” of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and the “Notes on the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law” (Marks 1848). It is clearly linked to the idea of the mission of the artist, delineated by André Breton:

For the time being, I want to stigmatize this dis-hatred for the miraculous that some people have and the ridicule in which they try to plunge it. Let’s state: prodigality is always beautiful, all prodigality is beautiful, nay! Only prodigality is beautiful. (...) A whiff of wonderfulness permeates it thoroughly. We feel the readiness of its main characters for acts of unbelievable sublimity from the first moment, before the author has even managed to free them from the loops of time<sup>14</sup> (Breton 1967: 17 – 18).

The “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981), animated by anti-communist and anti-socialist spirit, was the ideological foundation of the Orange Alternative movement’s activities:

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<sup>13</sup> According to John L. Austin there are also other kinds of speech acts. He distinguishes locutionary acts which have meaning and pay attention to the phonetic aspect of the message and illocutionary acts which have a certain conventionalized power (Austin 1962: 26 – 68).

<sup>14</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

Let's not be afraid to be honest to the end. The only solution for the future and today is surrealism. Then, the world will not talk about the crisis. Let's not back down if we have come this far. After all, the whole world is a work of art.

Even a single militiaman on the street is a work of art. Let's have fun, fate is not a cross. What's the point of suffering when you can rejoice. The fate of life is a lottery fantasy. And religion, love, and Dostoevsky?<sup>15</sup> (Fydrych 1981: 1).

Instead of reading Russian literature, Fydrych invites to turn to the works of Breton (Breton 1967) or Aragon. He proposed a social-letter surrealism, based on reviving the word by giving it a new contestation-artistic function: "the end of every socio-economic formation is its comedy" (Fydrych 1981), "all proletarians are beautiful" (Fydrych 1981). His surrealism was aimed at redefining artistic slogans and applying them in a clearly political context, as well as introducing surrealist practices in Poland. Gourgaud writes that the "Manifesto" testifies to a reversal of hierarchy and the introduction of new governing reality rules (Gourgaud 1993: 38). In other words, the politician took over the philosopher. Fydrych criticized "logos" and "intellectual devotion" (Gourgaud 1993: 39).

Fydrych's "Manifesto" (Fydrych 1981) was intended to parody propaganda by developing the theme of the unlimited role of the imagination. The latter idea was very close to the viewpoint of French surrealists: "You know well that the Imagination is an unlimited world. Its image can be anything, but it will not relate servilely to the world called practical. It is a career for the realist to kill the winged imagination. Such a bird can be cooked for dinner. The movement also adds a weapon against realism" (Breton 1967).

"The Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism" (Fydrych 1981) refers to the animalistic world. It attributes animal characteristics to human vices. Its sources should be sought not only in French surrealism, but further back in time. In particular, it can be linked to the fables of La Fontaine (La Fontaine 1920) and Ezop (Ezop 2011). "A few generous remarks, Reader. Is the abolition of illiteracy unequivocal. And what will happen to fairy tales, especially painted ones. Fox, tiger, badger, bear. Revolutionary activist, toadstools, goldfish" (Fydrych 1981).

Fydrych highlighted spontaneity, "living for adventure," irrationality, and imagination as characteristics of the "unlimited world." He based his view on the classic principles of surrealism, exposed in the "Manifeste du surréalisme" (Breton 1967). These features are the priority of oneiric imagination, the perception of reality documented by its constant metaphorization, the recognition of poetry and the works of art as the most perfect form of metaphorical communication. He brilliantly exploited the multiplication of poetic images and the possibility of creating oneiric associations as a form of contestation. They were artistic messages addressed primarily to the youth of the time. Analysing the leadership aspirations of the theorists of the movements, it is evident the influence of passivistic litera-

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<sup>15</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska's translation.

ture and French depth psychology. Fydrych accomplished the seemingly impossible: he combined surrealism with socialist realism, taking inspiration from the works of Marx and the “antithetical” reality of the Solidarity revolution.

In this case, we agree with Przyłuski, who brilliantly comments on the multi-dimensionality of the theory and activities of the Orange Alternative:

If we only learn to dream consciously. Down with symmetry! Long live free imagination! We participate in this Spectacle, whatever its valuation is, and we can participate in its creation, creating new situations, otherwise, it is the Spectacle that will “do” us. The popular slogan “the street belongs to us” assumed a more tangible form in the discourse of British activists: “What the Parliament did, the Street can undo”<sup>16</sup> (Przyłuski 2012: 2 – 7).

### “Six Stories” or... Four

In his work and contestation-artistic activities, Fydrych turned the world into a parallel surrealist „reality” and described it in both literary and journalistic terms. The stories in the collection of the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative include “Six Short Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985), which *de facto* are only four: “Manifesto of Flowers” (Fydrych 1983), “Mars Amandi” (Fydrych 1984), “Dawn,” and “Opera for 44 silver coins”<sup>17</sup>. Each of them is a separate entity. On the other hand, they can be considered (with the exception of “Manifesto of Flowers,” Fydrych 1983) as a series of surrealist paintings, linked together by a political-surrealist thread: the contestation of an imaginary power that takes over the government of the citizens’ souls by limiting their civil rights, depreciating the concept of freedom and the right to proclaim one’s views. The stories were written between 1983 – 1985.

#### 1. “Manifesto of Flowers”

The title of the first text is “Manifesto of Flowers.” It is not a short story but a supplement to the ideas contained in the aforementioned “Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1981). It begins with the following words:

Non-violent action producing positive effects is the only action worthy of the interest of the real man, who is no longer the gloomy Homo Sapiens of socialist realism but evolves into the Homo Esteticus and develops his own form of Socialist Surrealism<sup>18</sup> (Fydrych 1983).

“The Manifesto of Flowers” (Fydrych 1983) was thought by its creator as a set of norms governing the hyper-reality created by the Orange Alternative. At the same time, it questioned the norms of the society built by the Homo Sovieticus. Fydrych defines a new ideal of man and introduces the concept of Homo Esteticus<sup>19</sup>. He shows that his intellectually enslaved predecessor contributed to an ideology,

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<sup>16</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

<sup>17</sup> “Dawn” („Świt” in Polish); “Opera for 44 silver coins” („Opera za 44 srebrniki” in Polish).

<sup>18</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

<sup>19</sup> Capital letters in the original.

according to which a work of art had to combine surrealist form and socialist content (films, sculptures, propaganda posters). This is an obvious deformation of the notion of *Homo sovieticus*<sup>20</sup>, which, according to Mikhail Heller, was the successor to *Homo sapiens* in the USSR. *Homo sovieticus* was shaped by the success of the Marxist social experiment (Heller 1989: 13 – 29). However, contrary to socialist realism, in the *Homo Esteticus* the attitude of artists takes over the needs and everyday life of ordinary citizens, which still should be reflected in art.

In Poland, socialist doctrine was in force from 1949, preaching ideological and political commitment in art. Fydrych proposed ideological and political commitment “on the other side of the barricade.” The *Homo Sapiens* of surrealism is identical with the *Homo sovieticus*. He is defined by Fydrych as an opponent of the Orange Alternative. The *Homo Esteticus*, created by the new movement, is a symbol of the twilight of a passing era. He is an opponent of the ordinary citizens with whom the author of “*Manifesto*” (Fydrych 1983) identifies.

Fydrych took the flower motif from surrealist poetry, creating a unique marriage between poetry and poetic prose (Éluard 1926). If in Éluard’s poem the flowers symbolize the awareness of lost love, of irreparable loss, in Fydrych’s poem they describe rebirth and transformation. The meaning of flowers is enriched by a reference to hippies, who proclaimed their rebellion against the ossified norms of the adult world, the institution of the Church, the family, the educational system, and private property (Taborska 2007: 23 – 59). Flowers also had a special symbolic meaning during the communist era<sup>21</sup>. The question is: should we attribute a multi-level meaning to the pictorial elements included in the “*Manifesto*” (Fydrych 1983), or should they be treated merely as a satirical, comic element, like from the perspective of carnations handed out on every occasion in workplaces during the communist regime? For Breton’s “*Union Libre*” (Breton 1931) they were a symbol of the element of the earth. In surrealism, they were also treated as a decorative element, a kind of “prop room” for artistic activities (Dali 1984).

## 2. From “*Ars Amandi*” to “*Mars Amandi*”

The title of the second text presented in the virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative is “*Mars Amandi*” and refers to the so-called March Events in Poland, during which students protesting for freedom of speech were attacked by van-bound troops of the Volunteer Reserve of the ORMOMO<sup>22</sup>, an offshoot of the paramilitary social organization supporting the Citizens’ Militia. The title alludes to Ovidius’ famous “*Ars Amandi*” (Owidiusz 1922).

„*Mars Amandi*” (Fydrych 1984) presents timeless events depicted in a dream-like manner. In the text, time is a non-linear concept. We become participants in a dancing event in pre-war Poland, where waiters resemble “appetizing mummies” and are witnesses of the contemporary political struggle. Fydrych uses oxymo-

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<sup>20</sup> *Homo sovieticus* (notation consistent with Heller 1989)

<sup>21</sup> 1945 – 1989 in Poland.

<sup>22</sup> In Polish: *Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej*.

rons, usually “reserved” for poetry. Among the dancing couples, two women sit at a table as if frozen in a photographer’s lens, while everything around them swirls.

Dancing is compared to a battle panorama: “frail twitching at a table with trumpets” is enriched with references to the natural world: “ant work” (Fydrych 1984). In a dynamic dance amid cauldrons (ambiguity in Polish: military cauldrons and cauldrons with food) characters with different military ranks appear and disappear (Fydrych 1984). “Officers disappear in the fumes of the kitchen”<sup>23</sup> (Fydrych 1984) refers to the mysterious deaths of Polish political figures. “Umbrella strikes to the neck and a flash of green percussion” (Fydrych 1984) is an example of another interpenetration of worlds: a blow in the tactical sense reduced by Fydrych to an umbrella hit and the sound of drums compared by him to a lightning strike.

The whole scene is a restaging of the famous piece “The Mannequin Ball” by Bruno Jasiński – a co-author of Polish “Futurist manifestos,” who wrote about his literary work as follows:

I wrote a play – a grotesque called “The Mannequin Ball,” mocking modern Western social democracy. I was stimulated to do this by the absence in our revolutionary repertoire of merry plays, which would give the proletarian spectator the opportunity to laugh for two hours at his enemies with healthy, carefree laughter, giving revolutionary training. I decided to attempt to create a revolutionary farce. The venture, to my taste, came out successfully<sup>24</sup> (Jasiński 1931).

The plot of “The Mannequin Ball” (Jasiński 1931) begins in a tailor’s workshop during a said ball. Only one night of the year mannequins can realize their dreams of freedom. Unfortunately, an uninvited guest appears. In fear of revealing their closely guarded secret, the mannequins sentence him to decapitation. After the sentence is carried out, dummy No. 41 spices up his victim’s forehead. He has a chance for social advancement, since in the wallet of the murdered man he finds an invitation to a ball organized by a tycoon of the automobile industry. Fydrych’s reinterpretation of “The Mannequin Ball” (Jasiński 1931) is an oneiric vision of future and past events, an allusion to the political unrest in Poland, which he fears by foretelling chaos and riots. “Mars Amandi” is both a brilliantly written political satire and an example of several surrealist metaphors used to show Polish society in a distorting mirror.

### 3. “Dawn” as a Harbinger of the Riots

The third story in the “Six Stories” (Fydrych 1983 – 1985) series is “Dawn” (Fydrych 1985). Its protagonist is an unnamed janitor who works as a doctor. “Dark-

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<sup>23</sup> In “Ars Amandi” the military with “June knives” (Fydrych 1984) is not only a reference to the cutlery in the surreal restaurant, but an allusion to the so-called “Night of the Long Knives,” an action related to the capture and subsequent murder of Adolf Hitler’s opponents on the night of June 30 – July 1, 1934, who were primarily members of the National Socialist movement, including Ernst Röhm (von Fallois 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

ness shines at the sight of yellow cheese,” “the behaviour of mice enriches man” – these are just a few excerpts from the surreal reality described in a daydream way in the oeuvre. The author focuses on the issue of the person’s inability to obtain a passport to travel abroad in Poland. The government described by Fydrych introduces an “innovation”: any Pole can buy a notebook, then choose the name of the destination country and leave without a problem, which is obviously at odds with the Polish reality of the 1980s. “We will all emigrate, those there without our work are zero” (Fydrych 1985). This is Fydrych’s “prophecy,” referring to the prospect of mass emigration from Poland to Western European countries and the United States. The “hole hitting the roof” (Fydrych 1985a) symbolizes the miserable housing conditions in Poland at the time and is an allusion to the Polish saying that someone is “suffering from a lack of a roof over their head.” The Poland he depicts is a tragic country torn by social divisions. The use of dreamlike description was a means to overcome censorship. For example, *pars pro toto*, the female hand itself as a substitute for a woman shows the crisis of femininity in a country where women stand in queues for hours to get elementary food.

“Thaw dripping from the balcony” (Fydrych 1985a) is a metaphorical reference to the longing for freedom, for political thaw<sup>25</sup>. It comes to mean the reduction of repressive policies by the PZPR<sup>26</sup> Party in Poland and in the other countries of the former communist bloc, which were ruled by so-called monopolies.

#### **4. “Opera for 44 Pieces of Silver coins,” or the Orange Alternative in the Fight Against “Socialist Realism”**

The story, with the telling title “Opera for 44 Pieces of Silver coins” (Fydrych 1985), was written in the form of a libretto. The prelude, entitled “Socialist Realism,” is a metaphorical interpretation of the influence of communism in Poland in the 1980s. Fydrych states that “People’s power was created by field scopes influenced by theatre scopes<sup>27</sup>. The first example of this was the October Revolution in Russia. The bourgeoisie wore monocles, while the Red Army wore telescopes” (Fydrych 1985). He reveals the theatricalization of power and the actions it undertook. The writer unmasking its historical sources, without hesitating to use oneiric principles: telescopes signifying tools of constant surveillance of citizens.

Even bottles have begun to serve as telescopes. The wine bottle is a Neanderthal telescope. The intoxication of the imagination. Red wines, of course. It is said that the people’s power has been overridden by cloisters armed with private telescopes taunting the state telescope<sup>28</sup> (Fydrych 1985).

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<sup>25</sup> The term *thaw* is derived from Russian and refers to the title of Ilya Erenburg’s novel “Thaw”, published in Poland for the first time precisely in the wave of political thaw, the so-called “Gomułka thaw” (Erenburg 1956).

<sup>26</sup> Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza.

<sup>27</sup> That’s how it is in the original. A typical example of Fydrych’s surreal metaphors, symbolizing the enormity of the misfortunes and losses caused by (every) war.

<sup>28</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

He mentions wine bottles causing intoxication of the imagination. The homeless are the revolutionaries of the Orange Alternative, who, through artistic and protest activities, brought about the overthrow of the system introduced with the help of “Red Army scopes” (Fydrych 1985). The leader of the “clochards” is the Homo Esteticus, who is the creator of the concept of a new system ruled by dwarves. He wears a long beard. This is a reference not only to the archetype of the wise man, but also to the dwarves, who became the symbol of the Orange Alternative movement: “rebels with long beards and hair” (Fydrych 1985).

The Homo Esteticus abhors the official mass media. He is an activist-oppositionist who *volens volens* takes on the role of interrogator while watching TV programs. His greatest adversary is an employee of the Security Office: “the model of culture was an elevation of the state’s exposure” (Fydrych 1985).

The Homo Esteticus can also take on other robes and become a “safety pin man,” i.e., he turns from a cloistered man into a punk. In this way, he becomes a representative of the “beaten individuals of the young samurai” forcibly snatched from the street by Homo sovieticus, dressed in “skins and tins, despising natural furs.” He is also an undisciplined contortionist, a victim of the artistic outbreeding of the ZOMO, that is of the socialist state carrying the message of freedom (Fydrych 1985).

A kaleidoscope was cheaper than a telescope. To have an approximate effect with a telescope you have to use artillery, flamethrowers and clouds of confetti. All you had to do was shake it. The kaleidoscope, unlike the telescope, make fun of gravity. Poland saw a renaissance of the telescope. The bottles filled the people power to the bottom. Over time, new artistic currents began to develop<sup>29</sup> (Fydrych 1985).

This is an allusion to the weapon with which the Homo sovieticus tried to defeat the Homo Esteticus at all costs.

“A r i a: Socialist Surrealism” (Fydrych 1985), which follows the prelude, contains a metaphorical story of an unspecified “first secretariat” preceding the appearance of a representative of a new era and a hopeful artistic current. Fydrych’s oneiric vision reveals the mechanisms of the escalating rebellion of the younger generation growing long beards and hair to resemble the dwarves painted on the walls. From this point on, the first secretary and the prime minister of an unspecified party, who appear on television, become a not “huge perceptual body” (Fydrych 1985).

The court’s camarilla did not realize in time. The struggle against imperialism, Zionism, and the hippies was a work of strength. Hence, the first secretariat did not survive the winter. It fainted in December 1970 and, as newspapers reported, lost the perception of sight. In the early years, the ruling group of mandarins and eunuchs had no rival. The First Secretariat was a period of great mental reform. The idol was no longer a secret employee of the Security Office, no longer a partisan or a breaker of the

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<sup>29</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

norm. The idol became the television. He replaced it. The citizen, who in the period of socialist realism was afraid of interrogation, now turned on the TV and could feel like an interrogator<sup>30</sup> (Fydrych 1985).

In “Opera for 44 Pieces of Silver coin” Fydrych shows the metamorphosis of Homo Esteticus into a punk, calling him a “punk man” who despises “socialist morality” and is part of the “contestation process” of the young generation that was taking over in surrealist Poland. It was quite a challenge, especially since the authorities in Poland at the time were fighting young protesters (Fydrych 1985b). The term “contestation” is derived from the Latin “contestare,” “conterstor,” once meaning to appeal to the testimony of a higher authority. In French, on the other hand, contestation means “to question something.” The development of Homo Esteticus, who transformed from a “clochard” into a “big dwarf” (Fydrych 1985b) a hippie, and finally into a punk, shows the whole complexity of the aspirations and dreams of the generation whose youth was in the 1980s. It also illustrates the generational involvement in street protests directed against the communist authorities. Finally, it testifies to its search for a place in the new social reality, for which art and freedom of expression were the most important values.

## Conclusions

Karol Sienkiewicz underlines that the Orange Alternative did not stop its actions with the start of the Round Table talks (Sienkiewicz 2011), nor with the first (almost) free elections in Poland on June 4, 1989. On the contrary, some following actions had more precise and critical messages. The movement itself evolved in the direction of a protesting form to contest any authority – even those that described themselves as anti-communist (Sienkiewicz 2011).

It is difficult to disagree with Robert Zybrant that we cannot to determine exactly when was the Orange Alternative formed. The answer to this question is not simple. It emerged as a nationwide movement between 1987 and 1988, that is, when the wave of interest in the activities of the group led by “Major” reached other Polish cities (Zybrant 2018: 18 – 19). As an artistic protesting organization, however, the Orange Alternative appeared much earlier with the formation of the Wrocław opposition and counterculture organizations of the 1980s and the New Culture Movement. The activities of the latter, however, did not gain much popularity, when the first texts of the Orange Alternative and Fydrych’s first literary appeared. His stories are inextricably linked to the happening actions over the thirty years of the movement’s existence. Considering the Orange Alternative’s achievements without considering an analysis of Fydrych’s work in the literary, cultural and artistic dimensions gives a more uncertain picture of his achievements. Zybrant thinks that the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative did not appear in a vacuum, but at the apogee of the public disillusionment with the actions of the authorities and shortages of goods in stores (Zybrant 2018: 18).

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<sup>30</sup> Moldovan-Cywińska’s translation.

Fydrych's "Six Short Stories" (in fact, four) is a kind of artistic and contestation testament of the writer based on surrealist associations paradox, and multiplication of internally contradictory images with the inclusion of seemingly distant concepts. The author employed tools of surrealist prose description like word games, ambiguities, metaphors, comparisons, *pars pro toto*, phraseological ellipsis glorifying semantic neologisms. By doing this, in a certain sense, the series complements the theoretical assumptions of the Orange Alternative movement.

Our aim was primarily to show the symbolic meaning of *Homo Esteticus*. The results of the analysis could be summed up as follow:

1. The *Homo Esteticus* appears in Waldemar Fydrych's programmatic texts (Fydrych 2013; Fydrych 1981; Fydrych 1983 – 1985). He is a reference to the "man of socialist surrealism," presented by the creator in the "Manifesto of Socialist Socialism." In other words, it is a surrealist image based on oneiric visions and on prophetic dream symbolism in a world where "every policeman is a work of art."

2. The *Homo Esteticus* is a peculiar form of self-creation. He has the characteristics of the author himself but also represents the voice of a whole generation during the time of Solidarity and martial law in Poland.

3. The *Homo Esteticus* is a multidimensional figure: a hero, a contestant, a participant in happenings.

4. The *Homo Esteticus* cannot be defined solely from the perspective of literary or cultural studies. The analysis of this figure requires an interdisciplinary perspective.

5. The *Homo Esteticus* hides the features of a classic French surrealist (behaviour, attitude, associative associations in his speech), but also a surrealist à la polonaise, according to the definition of the term used for the first time in "Manufaktura snów. Z dziejów recepcji poezji surrealistycznej w Polsce" (Cywińska 2007; Moldovan-Cywińska 2023b).

6. The *Homo Esteticus* has the characteristics of real and historical figures (Fydrych, Andrzej Dziewit<sup>31</sup>).

7. His appearance heralds the overthrow of the old order and the creation of a new one. He symbolises the "young" in generational conflict with the "old."

8. The *Homo Esteticus* functions with surrealist "props." At the same time, he takes part in artistic and protest undertakings of the Orange Alternative.

9. He symbolises the authority of the Orange Alternative generation.

Fydrych's stories complement the basic tenets of the "Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism", presenting in more detail the concept of *Homo Esteticus* as a figure symbolising the Orange Alternative movement. Furthermore, the *Homo Esteticus*

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<sup>31</sup> Andrzej Dziewit (born 17.11.1955, died 26.05.2014 in Wrocław) was a political scientist, evangelical and cultural activist. In 1981, he was the main organiser of street actions in Wrocław like the Easter Peace March and the Anarchist Saturator.

exemplifies the author's interests in military themes, French surrealism, oneiric world, the artist's mission and dance as a metaphor for political struggle.

The stories are a multifaceted exposition of the possibilities of Fydrych's "liberated imagination." The writer can be considered not only as a contemporary author of collages or street happenings, but as an artist moving on the border of various artistic forms as well. Fydrych mixes different tendencies to reinterpret concepts and phenomena characteristic of futurism and surrealism. Fydrych blurs the boundaries between these two artistic currents. The result is a kind of sublimation, a renewal of *-isms* for the purposes of universally understood political contestation against a system that limits civil and creative freedoms.

The Orange Alternative is the only happening movement in Poland to have left a literary legacy, complementary to the protest-political activity on the urban streets. The works of Fydrych discussed here are a peculiar phenomenon against the background of Polish literature of the so-called "second circulation"<sup>32</sup>. In Polish largest cities and major academic centres, no other movement of this nature has introduced a "marriage" of art and literature on the streets as a form of generational rebellion.

My personal ties with the Orange Alternative trigger me to look at it not only with the eye of a researcher, but as a witness as well. My intellectual friendship with Fydrych allows me to reinterpret his work thanks to the new, unknown information he provided me. His programmatic texts convinced me in the need to create artistic and literary manifestos inspired by French surrealism (Moldovan-Cywińska 2024).

One question remains open: will Fydrych's oeuvre be evaluated or analysed only from a literary, cultural, or artistic perspective and see its rightful place in the pantheon of the greatest Polish interdisciplinary contestant-surrealists of the 20th century? I will continue to find an answer to this and other similar research questions, always inspired by my personal conversations with Fydrych. They date back several years ago but still are a topic for intellectual dispute. Moreover, they are a proof of a deep and artistic friendship.

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<sup>32</sup> i.e. the unofficial publishing circuit operating in the 1980s. These texts were printed in a cottage industry manner, secretly distributed in the form of leaflets during protests or street happenings.

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