

Fictional Campus: Its People and Their Lifestyle¹

MARZENA KRASZEWSKA

ELMUNDO Educational and Translational Services,
Gliwice, Poland

Abstract

Traditionally, the academic community was a small but influential group of intellectuals more closely associated with their field of study than any university or college. Such elements as individual viewpoints, belonging to a community, collaboration in commonly realised goals, academic freedom, and university autonomy were respected (Billot). Currently, the academic community is a specific type of community, which, as Zygmunt Bauman notes, agreeing with Benedict Anderson, is treated as “a figment of the imagination”² (34). Unlike in the past, this community works both locally and internationally, being involved in various networks of scholars and institutions. As a result, academic space nowadays has a less physical dimension and refers to the sphere of values, symbols, and meanings, and the community gathers around the thoughts and ideas of distinguished academics (Rogalski 32). In the 1950s, the academic community became a subject of interest in various university narratives,³ representing the uniqueness of multiple aspects of university life and practices and making critical use of them. In this article, I will concentrate on such aspects: makeup, internal organisation, way of life, affairs, and customs of the academic community.

Keywords: university narratives, female professors and students, male professors and students, administrators, secretaries, academic freedom.

The term “academic community,” as the term “community” itself, has evolved through time and may cover various meanings and aspects. This is why it cannot be characterised unambiguously. One of the numerous concepts was presented by J. N. Kaul, who claimed that the academic community has traditionally been made up of people with similar goals and ideals, and this has served to reinforce the group’s cohesion and trustworthiness: the academic community at any given university or college comprises many individuals working together to achieve common goals (Kaul 44). The heterogeneous and hierarchical structure of the academic community is just one of a number of elements that testify to the uniqueness of the academic world.

The contemporary academic community, with its structure and organisation, has its roots in the Middle Ages, and many solutions which were worked out then have been used until recently. It was a time when student guilds were founded by affluent, older, and more independent students, based on merchant guilds and craft firms, which laid the foundations for the first mediaeval university in Bologna. In turn, the first faculty corporation that selected university leaders, including the rector and deans of several faculties, was established in a similar period at the University of Paris (Mendel 33).

At first, teachers and students were equal to each other. Seniors were treated as master’s assistants, helping with lectures and other coursework. Everyone with a university diploma, knowledge, authority, and popularity could become a university teacher, and his task (they were all male at that time) was to secure his audience and a career. A doctoral degree was the only academic title accessible at the time and was developed by lawyers in the second half of the 11th century. It later gained appeal in various fields, but as time passed, the demand for it grew. However, there

were differences between doctors who gave either ordinary or extraordinary lecture courses, of which the former were regarded as more important and valuable. Although professors were once the most prominent people in Bologna, soon their positions started to depend on students who had the opportunity to choose their favourite teacher with whom they wanted to study. Free competition between professors and financial dependence on student fees disappeared when permanent pensions and employment were introduced. Then the position of the master strengthened, but university autonomy was reduced in favour of authorities that paid for the professors' work.

In the 13th-century Parisian university, a professor's position could only be filled if one became available and approved by the rest of the university's academics and the authorities who controlled the university. Apart from the removal of free competition, two other factors influenced the creation of a doctoral college: the limitation of the number of lecturers and the gradual curtailment of teaching freedom. Those factors gave rise to the classic organisation of faculties that did not exist previously. They appeared in parallel with nations⁴ that formed the basis of the organisational structure in Bologna. The establishment of distinct faculties was linked to the advancement of knowledge and specialisation in many subjects. Their development improved interactions between academics in the same academic discipline while enhancing professors' perceptions of hierarchy. The task of faculties was to organise curricula and exam systems, promote highly educated graduates, and engage in research; they were also granted the authority to confer academic degrees. Since then, the rector, chancellor, masters, and deans have preserved their positions at the top of the academic hierarchy, and their roles have varied widely from one country to the next. Later, a hierarchy of disciplines emerged, as well as disagreements between professors from various universities and specialities (Baszkiewicz 97-137). In terms of internal academic relationships, it is also worth emphasising that in the days of the Humboldt brothers⁵ a lecturer had to treat a student as an equal, resulting in a partnership that

would result in a creative discussion backed by the principles of respect for varied ideas, tolerance, respect, and openness to creative diversity (Zakowicz 63).

Like other postmodern communities, today's academic community can be treated as a "figment of the imagination" as claimed by Zygmunt Bauman (34), who agrees with Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community as a means of assessing the essence of national identity in modern society. In Anderson's view, the community is imagined since its members never see the vast majority of their compatriots and thus cannot form a concrete mental image of them (6). Nowadays, this concept has significance and use in many other communities besides that of the academic, as well as in the academic novel.

One of the reasons for seeing the academic community in terms of imagery is, as Wiesław Rogalski accurately points out, that its domain is symbolic culture, where values, meanings, and significance take centre stage. It functions within a cultural environment, defined by the customs and beliefs of communities of people who share common worldviews and emphases. This area is not necessarily associated with a particular geographical location. People from all over the world can establish a group of scholars, regardless of time or location. It is not centred on specific people but rather on the ideas and thinking of those people. Each individual's daily activities include shifting their focus among several locations. When a topic is encountered by a group of scholars and provides fodder for future scholarly discussion, he argues, that is when an academic community is formed (Rogalski 32).

In this article, on the chosen examples of Anglo-American university narratives and their Polish counterparts, I will describe the images of the representatives of the academic community, including male and female professors and students but also administrators and secretaries, and then the descriptions of internal relations, affairs, customs, and academic privileges. The article comprises a short overview of my previous research carried out between 2015 and 2020, based on ca. 550 academic sources, including about 50 academic novels and 100 college movies,

mainly from the last decades of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the new millennium. The detailed study and analysis of the subject matter described briefly in this article are presented in an extended form in my monograph prepared for publication. Due to the limited space and form of the article itself, the high level of generalisation present here is intentional.

Unlike in the past, the contemporary academic community consists of representatives characterised by such diverse factors as social and economic status, age, and gender. The stereotype of a white, male, Protestant professor who belongs to the Anglo-Saxon subgroup of the fictitious academic world matches the American reality only up to the second part of the 20th century. This is because in the United States today, apart from white faculty, Asian Americans represent the most significant ethnic minority due to their presence in large numbers in academia. Additionally, African Americans and Latinos account for more than a quarter of the academic workforce. In comparison, most British contemporary academics are white, and less than one-fifth are people of colour (Mantle). Since the 1980s, only limited representation of male professors of colour, particularly those of African American roots, as well as LGBT academics has been noticeable in popular culture which has been moulded by all those shifts which began after the Second World War. This representation is said not to reflect the academic reality adequately (Reynolds, "Representing U" 68-70).

When modern people, either in life or in fiction, then, express nostalgia for the university, they may be thinking of a time and place when most students were full-time, well-funded, middle-class whites and mostly male (or, if female, safely sequestered in women's colleges); when achieving tenure was more of a normal, reasonable expectation than a struggle in a zero-sum game; and when academic freedom was guaranteed and unquestionable. But as recent university narratives, both Polish and Anglo-Saxon, demonstrate, these conditions no longer exist.

The old-fashioned professors were respected and looked up to for their distinctive qualities and values, whereas in contemporary university narratives, including both novels and

films, there are different, not necessarily positive, psychological types of fictional male and female university teachers. They are based on stereotypes changing over the years and presented in a caricatural way. Some of those types, supplementing the list of academic types assembled by Ludmiła Gruszevska-Blaim, including cheaters, cynics, timeservers, activists, or freaks (31), are characterised below.

The first kind of professor featuring in campus movies was a funny secondary character, such as awkward and intelligent Professor Julius Kelp from *The Nutty Professor* (1963), who, thanks to the invention of a potion, turned into handsome and wanton Buddy Love. Aged men, disillusioned with their employment, like Arthur Kingfisher and Siegfried von Turpitz from David Lodge's *Small World* (1984), are an alternative type that may be found in the popular British non-Oxbridge novels of the 1960s and beyond. The former can be characterised as a legendary figure in literary criticism who is now too old to enjoy his own intellectual or sexual prowess. The latter, being a German academic with a black glove, is said to plagiarise his student's work, trying to publish it as his own. It was only in the 2010s that a senior professor of previous fame, this time from Russia, Professor Lew Michajowicz Protopopow, came back in the Polish academic novel entitled *Sto dni bez słońca* [*A Hundred Days Without Sunshine*] (2014) by Wit Szostak. He had made ground-breaking contributions to literary theory but never produced another piece of writing after that. In the 1990s, his international career came to an end and he settled in Finnegans, where he had a fruitful affair with his younger Croatian co-worker Jadranka Vidović.

The senior professors were replaced by the standard white male academic stars, who appeared in the 1960s, and whose representative was Morris Zapp from Lodge's *The Campus Trilogy* (2011). At the age of 33, he became a full professor and was an expert on Jane Austen. Privately, he was a flashy guy who had no pressing desires beyond flashy things like fast cars and girls. But by the time he reached forty, he had already attained his goals and was trapped. His worldwide reputation seemed to be flourishing in

Rummidge, so he pondered staying there for an extended period of time. When he lost interest in research, he published nearly nothing. In the 1980s, he shifted his attention to post-structuralism and deconstruction theory.

In the 1970s, the next group of a more narrowly defined group of professors called careerists appeared, replacing traditional professors. One of them was Howard Kirk from Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (1975). He experiences personal and external transformation throughout the book. At first, he has a scruffy appearance and is an old-fashioned sociology student, but as his academic career progresses, he wants to become a stylish man by dressing and grooming himself differently. He then turns into a laid-back, lefty academic and radical sociologist. He is a well-known social activist who participates in local life and fights against the rich by writing papers for scholarly publications, regularly appearing on television, and publishing in these journals.

Although not all students and teachers got along with each other in the 1970s, some of the teachers, like Adam Gaines from *Adam at 6. A. M.* (1970) suffered from feelings of alienation and defiance. In turn, others, such as Charles W. Kingsfield Jr. in *The Paper Chase* (1973), were restored to their customary place in the academic hierarchy (Hinton 103). Kingsfield, as a renowned law professor at Harvard, is known for employing the Socratic approach with his students, asking probing questions and demanding precise answers that demonstrate original thought, and publicly shaming any who fail to meet his high standards. Though preconceptions and caricatures were still used, accurate depictions of academics were widespread by the late 1980s (Hinton 111). For example, Frank Bryant in Lewis Gilbert's *Educating Rita* (1983), a middle-aged professor of literature at the Open University, and a former poet, can be mentioned here. Abandoned by his girlfriend, he drinks a lot and then falls in love with his adult student Susan/Rita. His drinking gets worse when Rita starts college, so he gets sent to Australia for a year, which is probably an academic outback.

The above-mentioned list is completed with a typical middle-class American male professor who is either a womaniser or a

divorcee experiencing a life crisis, and is depicted in college novels written in the 1990s. David Kepesh from Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* (2001), screened in 2008 as *Elegy*, and David Lurie from J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), filmed in 2008 under the same title, are admirers of women and divorcees who have affairs with their female students. The latter, as with Ted Swenson, a forty-seven-year-old English professor from Francine Prose's *Blue Angel: A Novel* (2000) and its filmed version entitled *Submission* (2017), also has to confront a disciplinary committee, being charged with sexual harassment. The following two, Grady Tripp from Curtis Hanson's film entitled *Wonder Boys* (2000), based on the novel of the same title, and Abe Lucas from Woody Allen's film *Irrational Man* (2015), while in the middle of their careers, suffer from writer's block and have marital dilemmas.

Female academics are the next category in the academic community's makeup. After women were kept out of colleges for decades, liberation and feminist movements helped make higher education accessible to women. The percentage of women in the Anglo-Saxon Academy increased over the twentieth century despite their working for less pay and less prestige. In America and the United Kingdom, they comprise approximately two-fifths of the full-time faculty (Mantle).

Analogously to men's images in university narratives, women's portrayals have also undergone change over the period. Female educators from junior colleges, women's colleges, and state universities, as well as those living in provincial dormitories with their female students, were initially shown in academic novels written in the early twentieth century (Reynolds, "Representing U" 72) and subsequently in films made in the 1930s (Inness; Marchalonis; Reynolds, "The Celluloid Ceiling").

Until the late 1950s, popular literature tended to portray women in two distinct ways: either as pretty but dim-witted academics or, alternatively, as ugly but aspirationally competent characters like Margaret Peel in Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), and hence unfit for the position of wife (Verrone 52, 96). Since the 1960s, critics of the Academy's patriarchal culture have pointed to

works by both male and female authors in which the female protagonist is a victim of a male killer. On the other hand, Amanda Cross' *Death in a Tenured Position* (1981) has a faculty detective and a victim, who are both women, emphasising a highly feminist view of the Academy (Kramer V–XIV).

Academic women have risen to prominence in the literature of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Reynolds 72), created and portrayed by women authors. Realising that women have a distinct set of experiences to draw on when it comes to engagement in the life of the academy, they give a picture of the institution that differs from that of male authors, making for a complete view of the world of higher education as a whole (Hedeman; Krasne 29). For instance, their typical employment is a distinctly female realm: compared to males, women are more likely to hold the position of lecturer or assistant professor; they are usually employed at less prestigious institutions and are underestimated in their field.

Female protagonists, such as Rose Morgan in *The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996) are often portrayed as ageing, single, and not comely women who need to undergo an exterior metamorphosis. Rose is a Romantic literature instructor who has no interest in romance in her life. She meets Gregory Larkin, a mathematics professor looking for platonic love after failed passionate relationships. He thinks that when he meets the ugly but wise Rose, they will be the ideal pair, but he is not aware of the fact that she is starting her metamorphosis.

Sometimes they are presented negatively as sexually frustrated or burned-out feminists. Delphine Roux from *The Human Stain* (2000) belongs to the former group. She is an aspiring professor of Romanticism who attended the top institutions in France and then Yale, and by the time she was twenty-six, she became the chair of the French department at Athena College. She had been recruited by Coleman Silk, but she eventually became one of his most vocal detractors on campus. Mercedes Tainot from *Larry Crowne* (2011) is a representative of the latter group. She teaches a community college course called Speech 217: The Art of Informal Remarks. Behind the scenes, she is unhappy and drinks

after classes because she is married to Dean, a former professor and writer who turned into a blogger and spends his days looking at internet porn.

But there is also a sizable group of attractive, independent women, feminists, single or divorced women who are successful in their academic careers, such as the protagonists of Lodge's *The Campus Trilogy* (2011), Fulvia Morgana, Sybil Maiden or Robyn Penrose, and Margaret Bell from *Moo* (1995) by Jane Smiley. They also become mentors to their female students, like Katherine Ann Watson in *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), who emphasises to them that there is more to life than just being a wife, and she encourages them to think for themselves and exercise their own individuality in the classroom.

In Polish academic novels, the theme of a senior professor having an affair with students as seen in Anglo-Saxon novels is reversed to middle-aged female professors, such as Małgorzata Malinowska from Inga Iwasiów's *Ku słońcu [Towards the Sun]* (2010) or Anita Komar from Nowakowski's *Plagiat [Plagiarism]* (2015). They use their influence to further their students' or assistants' careers. Additionally, a few female professors like Janina Pakowska, Melania Melpomańska, Mahulena Garażykowa, or Katarzyna are shown in Tarajło-Lipowska's *Śmierć dziekana [The Dean's Death]* as auxiliary staff whose primary concern is to provoke strong emotions in male colleagues.

In addition to faculty, students are an integral part of the academic community whose structure changed significantly during the 20th century. In America, the number of females – non-traditional, part-time, older students, and members of minority groups such as the African-, Native-, Asian American, Hispanics, and Hawaiian minorities or non-US citizens – has also grown over time, completing the representation of traditional, rich, and male students (Bronner 7). Like their American counterparts, three-fifths of today's British students are female who choose to study part-time rather than full-time. Full-time undergraduates make up the vast majority, followed by part-time graduate and postgraduate

students. Different levels and study formats have seen different percentages of overseas students (Mantle; Palfreyman 57).

The fictional representatives of this heterogeneous group tend to be portrayed as male, white, and heterosexual undergraduates rather than graduate students (Reynolds, "Representing U" 81, 86). Minorities' and women's depictions in popular culture were completely absent at the beginning of the twentieth century but gradually evolved into more symbolic representations (Reynolds, "Representing U" 81). Studies of non-traditional students have also received less attention than they deserve, and as a result, only white men have been considered "real" members of the academic community (Reynolds, "Representing U" 83), which reflects male writers' nostalgia for times when higher education was available only for them.

Non-traditional students, including those belonging to minorities, students with a wide range of socioeconomic origins, students attending community colleges, women, and international students, have been included in university narratives since the 1970s. African American students are the most extensive grouping of non-traditional students to emerge in such narratives (Gruszevska-Blaim 31; Reynolds, "Representing U" 36–37), and since the 1970s, their stereotypical portrayals have increased in each decade (Danahoo and Yakaboski 81–96). In the 1970s, black students were a novelty attraction at white students' parties; in the 1980s, they were not considered as competent as their white counterparts. The 1990s brought their portrayal as alienated from the rest of the community. Since the turn of the century, racial diversity has increased, but the role and experience of blacks have been underestimated. Additionally, apart from black ones, among non-traditional fictional students, there are isolated and odd Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians (Reynolds, "Representing U" 94).

The following subsets of non-traditional students are those coming from various socioeconomic backgrounds who attend elite institutions, as is the case of Danny from Tom Perrotta's *Joe College* (2000), a junior at Yale from central New Jersey's working class (Reynolds, "Representing U" 88), and community college

students, whose numbers exploded in the 20th century. Unlike in reality, they are presented as students without any interests, engagement, or knowledge, such as those in *Good Will Hunting* (Tyler and Nehls 19), set and portrayed in the institutions in a negative light, such as that of a lower category (LaPaglia; Tucciarone; Pittman, "Villainy, Incompetence, and Foolishness"; Pittman, "Outsiders in Academe"). The group is diversified and is made up of mostly white, traditionally aged women from lower and middle-class backgrounds, seeking higher education for the first time in their families, or members of a racial or ethnic minority who attend college to better themselves (Miller, Pope, and Steinmann 71-72; Bourke, Major and Harris 57).

In contrast to negative opinions, there are also some favourable views of fictional female and male students at community colleges. The former, as in Joyce Carrol Oates's *Them* (1969), are often portrayed as intelligent and self-improvement-oriented and have a variety of motives for enrolling in such colleges (Bourke, Major, and Harris 59). The latter are described as viewing college as an acceptable steppingstone on the way to earning a bachelor's degree, as in *Rudy* (1993), which is the true tale of American football player Rudy Ruettiger, who overcame his working-class upbringing in Chicago's South Side to achieve his lifelong goal of playing professional football despite his lack of academic success and his deteriorating physical health. It is also a place to pursue youthful unfulfilled dreams of attending college in *Back to School* (1986). Its main protagonist, sixty-year-old Thornton, decides to change his life after divorce, and go to school with his son. In turn, the eponymous protagonist of *Larry Crowne* (2011), is a military veteran who is motivated to go to college following the termination of a long-time job simply for lack of a degree. Likewise, Thornton, following his divorce, enrolls in a community college intending to start again, and it is there that he meets and befriends Taira, a young woman of mixed heritage.

Excluding those from community colleges, female students are presented as coming from American coeducational institutions in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Reynolds,

“Representing U” 92; Marchalonis) and Oxbridge as depicted in Oxbridge novels where they are considered intruders, which reflects the reality of those times (Carter 159-161). Although female college students have taken the stage in recent television shows such as *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007) and *Community* (2009-2015), they still have to contend with the pervasive influence of male faculty and administrators (Reynolds, “Representing U” 93). In turn, representatives of the last subcategory of non-traditional fictitious students (as foreigners studying at Oxbridge) have to deal with cross-cultural differences. In *Oxford Blues* (1984), for example, the protagonist, Nick Di Angelo, an American casino worker who enrolls at Oxford and joins the rowing team to impress his crush, Lady Victoria Wingate, is ultimately disappointed by the institution’s traditionalist atmosphere. In turn, in *Van Wilder 2: The Rise of Taj* (2006), the division between privileged and working-class Oxbridge students is highlighted and mocked. The action occurs at the fictional Camford University, where Taj Mahal Badalandabad enrolls in graduate school and quickly becomes the head of a gang of misfit students who form the Cock and Bulls, a new fraternity. Additionally, a novel entitled *Sophomore Switch* (McDonald, 2010) describes a pair of sophomores, Emily Lewis of Oxford and Natasha Collins of UC Santa Barbara, who participate in an exchange programme and use the internet to assist each other adjust to life in their new cities.

Contrary to their Anglo-Saxon colleagues, fictitious Polish students cannot be placed into the same neat categories. The fundamental reason for this is the rarity, in Polish university narratives, of depictions of the student body as a cohesive entity. A few images exist that show students from the 1950s and 1970s as a coherent group, often against the background of major historical events of the time. Students participating in the one-of-a-kind student cabaret phenomena of the second half of the 1950s are shown in Janusz Morgenstern's *Do widzenia do jutra* [See You Tomorrow] (1960). Both *Herkulesy* [Herculeses] (Stawiński, 1953) and *Inauguracja* [Inauguration] (Wróbel, 1954) depict students engaged in politics with the Związek Młodzieży Polskiej [the

Association of Polish Youth] in the 1950s. In the movie entitled *Barwy ochronne* [*Camouflage*] (1976), Zanussi criticises the Polish students of the 1970s, painting them as a bunch of conformists who were unable to organise and establish an alternative. Despite being published in the 21st century, Kruszyński's *Ostatni raport* [*The Last Report*] (2009) is also concerned with the depiction of the 1970s student community from Wrocław. It is seen through the reports of the main protagonist, Grzegorz. He has taken Polish and Romance studies at the University of Wrocław and works undercover for the Security Services.

In numerous recent Polish university narratives, the depiction of male students having sexual relationships with female faculty members is popular. It represents a shift from the conventional trope of older man – young woman romance that often exists in both Anglo-Saxon and Polish academic novels. It follows a pattern that first emerged in Anglo-Saxon university narratives in the late 1980s (Gruszevska-Blaim 32), reflecting sociocultural changes appearing during those times. In Iwasiów's *Ku słońcu*, Marek is enamoured with Professor Małgorzata Malinowska, an expert on fictional Hildegarda. In Nowakowski's *Plagiat*, the protagonist, Wojtek Krzykowski, is involved in a relationship with Professor Anita Komar while working on a research project on advertising. In contrast, up to Marcela, the heroine of *Erasmopeja* [*Erasmopeia*] (2014), by Jagoda Grudzień, portrayals of female students in contemporary university narratives have been uncommon. She is introduced as someone who has issues and who, at the beginning of the novel, goes shopping for a new women's suit that she ends up returning empty-handed since she does not know what to purchase for an interview for doctoral studies. The following day, she receives an invitation to a university in Norway via the Erasmus programme; thus, it was all for nothing. For now, she is not concerned about obtaining a PhD from a famous institution. Being in Norway forces her to overcome her worries by obliging her to adapt to situations she has never experienced before.

Administrators and administrative staff complete the list of characters belonging to the academic community. The first of those

subgroups, which includes rectors, deans, directors, and chancellors, is at the top of the academic hierarchy and is responsible for the efficient functioning of the university. Some of them, such as Coleman Silk from *The Human Stain* (2000), are presented as good organisers; others, such as Philip Swallow in Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) or William Henry Devereux, Jr in *Straight Man* (1997) by Richard Russo struggle with financial problems. They are often portrayed negatively as wicked, inept, or both, serving as authoritarian people to rebel against or reject. They are usually secondary characters, but recently there have been a few novels, such as *It's All Academic* (2000) by David Fleming or *The Devil and Webster* (2017) by Jean Hanff Korelitz, in which both men and women perform those functions and feature as the main characters.

In the latest Polish academic novels, it is also quite common that many administrators are controversial and become victims of murders on campus. Among them, there is Professor Mirosław Korbzieluch from Tarajło-Lipowska's *Śmierć dziekana*, dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Kuropasie, who supports the individuals he has publicly berated and yelled at, and who is characterised as a despotic figure combating ambitious people. The other professor from that group is Professor Tadeusz Zawistowski, from Anna Bińkowska's *Tu się nie zabija* [*Killing Is Not Allowed Here*] (2017), who was a leader in the humanities field and head of a major university institute that dealt with stolen property and fabricated archaeological findings. Finally, in Tarajło-Lipowska's *Recykling* [*Recycling*] (2017), Hellada Soneczny, a former communist party leader and now a professor and director of the Institute of Intercultural Semi-communications, popularised the image of a powerful woman with a whip in her hand to represent her authority.

At the bottom of the academic career ladder, there are secretaries who are often permanently linked to their employers and play a crucial role in shaping the culture of a given institution. Their rare fictional images show them to be over-ambitious, flawless, or autocratic secondary characters. One of them is

Malwina Madejska from Nowakowski's *Plagiat*, who views herself as the brain of the organisation and handles it as such. In many ways, she performs the duties of a bodyguard or guardian for President and Professor Dorobek. She feels love and gratitude for him as her patron, creator, and proud steward of this planet, and it has a profound effect on her. As a result of his passing away, she is understandably anxious about the future, even though she is certain that her secretariat will continue operating as before, and the only thing that will change is who will occupy the Rector's office chair. The other, Mrs Walker from Jane Smiley's *Moo*, is the ruthless secretary to the university's provost, Ivars Harstad. She prevents him from dealing with any of the university's administrative issues, and she uses the computer system to reroute funds to support her own designs and preferences.

In addition to the representatives of various groups of the academic community that have been discussed so far, relationships between members of the community, fierce competition for tenure, and coteries of all kinds are seen in the instances below. They are some of the key factors influencing the academic way of life.

Relationships within the community, particularly between professors and students, are rarely portrayed as significant, despite being one of the primary reasons for the university's existence and distinctiveness. Professors are depicted as influential figures in the lives of their students by various writers. In movies, the student-master connection is typically presented as romantic rather than authority-based, leading to the mockery of both parties. Since the 1980s, movies have rarely shown the negative consequences of such relationships, i.e., problems that might lead to termination of employment, except for *Disgrace* (2008). One of Woody Allen's most recent films, *Irrational Man*, and two adapted novels, Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* and Francine Prose's *Blue Angel: A Novel* explore the dynamics of a relationship between a female student and a professor. Female teachers seldom have the chance to seduce their students on the screen. However, novels written in the 1980s and 1990s, such as *The Late-Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind* (1989) by Rebecca Goldstein and *As She Climbed Across the*

Table (1997) by Jonathan Lethem, reverse traditional stereotypes appearing in the academic novel by depicting the intimate relationship of a female professor and a younger, less competent, or intellectually weaker companion (Gruszevska-Blaim 32). Two such couples can be seen in Polish academic novels: Professor Malgorzata Malinowska and Marek in *Ku słońcu* by Inga Iwasiów, and Professor Anita Komar and Wojtek Krzykowski in *Plagiat* by Maurycy Nowakowski.

It is also worth mentioning that hard core rivalry has replaced the traditional academic community values of unity, involvement, relationality, and community, which especially the older generations are nostalgic about. This rivalry is due to members' intense desire for professional advancement and acclaim. Writers of university narratives highlight the issue of individuals' different incentives for group participation. Students and faculty aim to achieve the best possible academic success and rise through the ranks as quickly as possible. People who are driven by ambition can act immorally and violate social standards. It is possible to find many stories of such inappropriate behaviour on college campuses. Professor Elżbieta Kruk, a central character in the Polish academic novel *Plagiat* by Nowakowski, is a prime example of the tactics used to advance one's career at the expense of others. Kruk is depicted as using tactics such as stifling competition for jobs and stealing others' work to advance her own.

Coteries, common in Poland's fictional academic community, provide another method that ensures rapid advancement. The case of Jan Niebiański, whose academic rise was likened to the TGV train in Albert Sowa's *Filozofia w Depresji* [*Philosophy in Depression*] (2004), is illustrative. Similarly, Zanussi's *Barwy ochronne* mocks the Polish academic world of the 1970s, claiming that its members are elitists who are not smart enough to have earned their degrees, such as Dr Magda, who, thanks to her supervisor, was awarded a doctorate despite her apparent lack of competence. Two more people with questionable academic careers are the heroes of two novels by Zofia Tarajło-Lipowska: Associate Professor Dalimil Muminek in *Śmierć*

dziekana, who, despite his lack of knowledge and involvement in the current affairs of the Institute, is favoured by its management, and Mariola Podropowa from *Recykling*, who is said to have received positive reviews of her unwritten doctoral thesis.

Finally, academic freedom, broadly understood as the freedom to teach and conduct research, and the related university autonomy are essential elements that characterise the academic community because of their uniqueness in the context of its organisation. Due to its lack or limitations in contemporary times, there is constant longing and nostalgia for times when it was guaranteed. Its absence first became apparent in the narratives of the 1930s and then again during the McCarthyist era of the 1940s and 1950s, as seen in works such as Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academy* (1952), Howard Fast's *Silas Timberman: A Novel* (1954), and Bernard Malamud's *A New Life: A Novel* (1961). Novels such as *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M. Coetzee, *The Human Stain* by Philip Roth, and *Blue Angel: A Novel* by Francine Prose are just a few examples of novels set in the 1980s and 1990s that deal with issues of racial and gender politics. The issue is not often discussed in university narratives in Poland, although academic freedom was restored after the collapse of communism in Poland and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s. The protagonist, Kazik Góral, and his wife in Albert Sowa's *Filozofia w Depresji* are prime examples of how voicing dissenting opinions in the academic world may result in repercussions such as losing one's job.

In this work, through exemplary fictional images of academic community representatives, including male and female professors and students, as well as administrators and secretaries, and descriptions of internal relations and academic privileges in Anglo-American and Polish university narratives, I have investigated the make-up, unspoken regulations, affairs and customs of the academic community in detail (although minority and provincial faculty members have yet to be tackled). It was established that the stereotypes of male professors and inconsistencies that arise when comparing them to their real-life counterparts' impact how the British and American public see the

academic community and reflect the nostalgia for the traditional organisation of the university. The portrayal of the other sex is heavily influenced by the author's or director's gender. Heroines may also be found mainly in works written in the 1990s by women with a broader range of personal experiences related to the Academy's activities than males.

Furthermore, the pictures of female students and professors in modern female academic fiction reinforce cultural standards surrounding femininity and how society perceives women. Some relatively unflattering depictions of fictional administrators and administrative personnel help illustrate the academic community's hierarchical nature, even if their position in fiction is minimal and does not match reality. It is also important to note that student-teacher interactions, rivalry for tenure, and a lack of academic freedom are all areas where the academic community is criticised for falling short of the utopian concept of an ideal academic community.

Notes:

¹ The present article was prepared on the basis of research carried out between 2015 and 2020 as part of my unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled "Representations of Academic Community in University Narratives," defended in 2021 at SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, Poland. I also presented short, partial research results in the following short papers: "Portrayals of female academicians and students in chosen female academic novels," *Proceedings of the 6th International Virtual Conference on Advanced Scientific Results*, Zlin, Slovakia (2018): 126–130; "Male professors in academic fiction," *Proceedings of QUAESTI - Virtual Multidisciplinary Conference*, Zlin, Slovakia (2017): 120–123.

² The translation of the quotation from "Bauman, Zygmunt. "Ponowoczesność czyli dekonstrukcja nieśmiertelności," *Kultura Współczesna*, 1996, is mine.

³ Academic novels, campus novels, college novels, university novels, and college movies are all subgenres of *university narratives*. This is the umbrella term used to describe works of literature and film that centre on

various aspects of university life. Three separate countries – Great Britain, the United States, and Poland – are represented, spanning the last few decades of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the new millennium.

⁴ Nations were common in mediaeval European universities as regional corporations of students.

⁵ Brothers Wilhelm and Alexander Humboldt founded the University of Berlin in 1809, which would serve as a prototype for the so-called German style of university and had a significant impact on the conception of contemporary European universities that later extended around the globe. It was governed primarily based on an ethos of ideals, free from outside economic and social forces, and proclaimed complete autonomy. It also declared independence in teaching and research. The brothers came up with the notion of merging research and teaching inseparably, treating the pursuit of the truth as the highest priority and free from any preconceptions. The university has evolved into a facility that both serves the elite in general, and provides education for the advancement of science, with a focus on safeguarding national identity and culture (Encyklopedia PWN).

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