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## *HOCUS-POCUS, OR THE ORANGE ALTERNATIVE AS A PROTEST-ART MOVEMENT AND A LITERARY PHENOMENON*

**Abstract:** *Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative (Hokus Pokus czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa)*<sup>1</sup> by Bogdan Dobosz and Waldemar Major Fydrych as an attempt at a synthesis of the protest-art movement against the background of its activities, with particular emphasis on the history of the happening movement, perpetuated along the line between the real and unreal worlds. The author of this text recalls some of the most important street events organised by the Orange Alternative, described jointly by both authors, and also touches on the relationship between the concept of “Homo Aestheticus”<sup>2</sup> and the “surrealist” described in *Hocus-pocus* – figures that are not only similar, but complementary to each other, who are also capable of making an intellectual revolution within the imaginary “Free University” described by Dobosz and Fydrych.

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

### 1. Introduction

This text contributes to the study of the multifaceted history of the Orange Alternative movement, originating in the student milieu of the city of Wrocław, which lies in southwestern Poland, and is the capital of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Wrocław Dwarfs or Wrocław Gnomes are small figurines that have appeared in the streets of the city since 2005. The dwarfs are a major tourist attraction; a monument of a dwarf was placed on Świdnicka Street to commemorate the Orange Alternative<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Bogdan Dobosz; Waldemar Fydrych, *Hokus-pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*. Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Kret, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Fydrych uses incorrect notation “Esteticus”.

<sup>3</sup> Mariusz Urbanek, *Wrocławskich krasnali historie prawdziwe*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Emka, 2022, pp. 12–45.

“Twice Major and his friends were arrested while painting dwarfs. During one of these times Major, while detained at a police station in Łódź, proclaimed yet another artistic manifesto of the so-called “dialectic painting” in reference to his own graffiti art. “The Thesis is the [anti-regime] Slogan, the Anti-thesis is the Spot and the Synthesis is the Dwarf” – he announced, furthermore defining himself to be the greatest successor in the Hegel and Marx tradition. “Quantity evolves into Quality – the more Dwarfs there are, the better it is”.<sup>4</sup> The Orange Alternative had the character of a highly individualized phenomenon. Protests organized by it, taking primarily the form of happenings, involved such elements as sometimes sarcastic humor, absurd, surreal irony and veiled criticism<sup>5</sup>.

Orange Alternative’s program texts and the books that described its subject have not only a literary dimension, but also a socio-political one. Their audiences were not intellectuals, but also simple people, hence the descriptions can be found in them and at the same time reach the imagination of any audience. They contained programmatic content (e.g. *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism (Manifest Surrealizmu Socjalistycznego)*),<sup>6</sup> a continuation of the idea of the manifesto in *Six short stories (Sześć opowiadań)*;<sup>7</sup> of the idea of the second surrealist-biographical or autobiographical in *Orange Man (Żywoty mężów pomarańczowych)*,<sup>8</sup> *Hokus-pokus, or the Orange Alternative (Hokus pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa)*<sup>9</sup> – one of the most important multithreaded publications in the history of the twentieth- and twenty-first century literature on the history of the movement, with attention to the history of happenings, political activity against the backdrop of the changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe at the time.

## 2. The Orange Alternative – between art and contestation

The Orange Alternative was the most important anti-communist happening movement in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1980s and 1990s; the “orange” in its name was not only the reference to its color, but also the ideology and values (freedom of speech, freedom of action, artistic freedom). In 1988–1992, while studying at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, I not only sympathized with the movement, but also took part in the happenings organized by Fydrych. The essence of happenings was based on various forms of organized activities

<sup>4</sup>Text on the virtual museum website in English. *1982–1983 Dwarf graffiti on the walls of the Polish cities during Martial Law*, p.1. <http://w.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#dwarfs-under-martial-law> [seen 15th May 2025].

<sup>5</sup>M. Urbanek, *op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup>Waldemar Fydrych, *Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego*, 1981 <http://www.orange-alternativemuseum.pl/#manifest-surrealizmu-socjalistycznego> [seen 27th May 2025].

<sup>7</sup>W. Fydrych, *Sześć opowiadań*, 1983–1985 <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania> [seen 27th May 2025].

<sup>8</sup>W. Fydrych, *Żywoty Mężów Pomarańczowych*, Warszawa, Fundacja Pomarańczowa Alternatywa, 2002.

<sup>9</sup>B. Dobosz, W. Fydrych, *Hokus-pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa...*

or in a specific timeframe on the basis of a general scenario in urban space with the use of props (toilet paper, writing on cardboard boxes, orange caps) with the possibility of improvisation.<sup>10</sup> The symbol of the movement became a dwarf in an orange cap, a reference to the orange caps worn by the happenings participants and, above all, by its leader.<sup>11</sup>

“Symbols can (and should) lead one away from the peripheral entanglements of being and toward its center, bringing one back to it. Thanks to this centripetal force, it can be understood why groups of symbols are widespread in almost all cultures and religions. All symbolism is formed around the two poles of being: around becoming and passing, light and darkness, good and evil.”<sup>12</sup> Lurker also stresses that in the artistic and worldview fields, symbols can send a message of “an unlimited, untouched world”,<sup>13</sup> or in the case of the Orange Alternative, freedom and unlimited imagination.

The name of the movement and the color orange were a reference to the Dutch counterculture movement Provo, which developed in 1965–1967, inspired by the street artist Robert Jasper Grootveld<sup>14</sup> – the initiator of numerous happenings and the “Provo manifesto”, and due to Roel van Duijn – a painter and anarchist, fascinated at the time by the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, and above all by his work titled *One-Dimensional Man*,<sup>15</sup> defining the concept of freedom also in the context of the impact of so-called repressive power.<sup>16</sup> The color orange is heavily featured as part of the setting of retrospective exhibitions devoted to the Orange Alternative, including *La Alternativa Naranja – la Revolucion de los Gnomos*, in the context of Spain’s experience with contemporary social movements.<sup>17</sup>

The choice of their symbolic color is important, as it is not only an aesthetic experience, but also a spiritual one, a carrier of meanings. They co-create a world of liberated imagination, associative connections between events and characters, unforced participation in its co-creation, spontaneity and even (illusory, short-term) sense of security.<sup>18</sup> The structure of Orange Alternative is based on individual

<sup>10</sup> Marta Moldovan-Cywińska „Happenings of The Orange Alternative movement as an exemple of surrealism in Poland in the 1980s”, *Филолог – часопис за језик књижевност и културу*, 2024, 2, pp. 431–432.

<sup>11</sup> M. Moldovan-Cywińska, *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa jako forma surrealizmu*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Akademii Biznesu Vistula, 2023, pp. 120–129.

<sup>12</sup> Manfred Lurker, *Przesłanie symboli w mitach, kulturach i religiach*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2023, pp. 43–44.

<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from the Polish language translated by Marta Moldovan-Cywińska.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Jasper Grootveld – painter and creator of happenings. He drew inspiration from French and Belgian surrealist painting.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1964.

<sup>16</sup> Roel van Duijn *Roel Provo: de geschiedenis van de provotarische beweging 1965–1967*, Amsterdam, Meulenhoff, 1995, pp. 11–34.

<sup>17</sup> W. Fydrych *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa – Rewolucja Krasnoludków*, Warszawa, Fundacja Pomarańczowa Alternatywa, 2008, pp. 10–12.

<sup>18</sup> M. Lurker, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

participation in a happening or a confluence, which turns into a manifestation causing the integration of circles of urban communities. The symbol of the Orange Free State – an imaginary political creation of the provos – were dwarfs in an orange cap, who were alien to the laws governing the world of humans: “Gnomes were connected to nature and suffered from modern society and new technologies. In doing so, they often went about their business at night, in secret.”<sup>19</sup>

They symbolized the intermingling of worlds: real and unreal, good and evil, children’s imagination and the ‘heaviness’ of the adult world, good-natured simplicity and ‘pictorial’ cynicism, the juxtaposition of infantilism – responsibility.<sup>20</sup> (The founders of the Orange Alternative were aware that the Security Service treated alternative youth movements not as a non-ideological, massed way of expressing generational rebellion, but as a kind of struggle against the communist system. Both Dutch youth and Polish youth – although they were separated by a socio-cultural gap due to the their respective countries being in a different political configuration – sought an effective form of overcoming the barrenness of existence in a given political system.<sup>21</sup>

Lisiunia A. Romanienko states that the Orange Alternative contained “record of dramatic, nonviolent, humanist, pacifist, feminist support, anarchist, ecological, sexual and human rights”.<sup>22</sup> The Orange Alternative became one of the most interesting forms of anti-communist opposition expressing opposition to the prevailing reality, in a way that was unconventional until then. Bronisław Misztal notes that the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative has not yet been “the subject of rigorous analysis”.<sup>23</sup> “This is why the New York Times once wrote that “Solzhenitsyn destroyed communism morally, Kolakowski philosophically, and the Orange Alternative aesthetically,” reads the website of the Virtual Museum of the Orange Alternative”<sup>24</sup>.

This movement of an artistic and protest character, involving student youth in various Polish cities in the 1980s and 1990s, was a kind of rarity on the map of European avant-garde movements directed against communist governments

<sup>19</sup> Both the Provotariat and the Orange Alternative maintained continuity for many years despite intense political changes. This continuity survived even when the Provo Movement transformed into the Dwarf Party. *Kabouterpartij 2019* <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/stukken/macht/kabouterpartij/> [seen 11th May 2025].

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> M. Moldovan-Cywińska „Wybrane publikacje w zbiorach wirtualnego Muzeum Pomarańczowej Alternatywy (od Fydrycha do Misztala) jako przykład „pamięci ocalonej” – przyczynek do analizy”, *Slavistički Studii. Journal of the Department of Slavic Studies at Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology Journal of the Department of Slavic Studies* 24, 2 (2024), pp. 95–106.

<sup>22</sup> Lisiunia A. Romanienko, „Humour and Social Protest”, *Review of Social History*, 52 (2008), pp. 135–136.

<sup>23</sup> Bronisław Misztal, “Between State and Solidarity: One Movement, Two Interpretations – The Orange Alternative Movement in Poland”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, 1 (1998), p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa 2011* <http://www.orange-alternative.org/tekst,pomaranczowa--alternatywa,232.html> [seen 11th May 2025].

by organizing street demonstrations, marches and happening actions.<sup>25</sup> Juliusz Tyszka notes that the Orange Alternative appeared in Wrocław, a multicultural city, formerly the German Breslau, in which just after the Second World War citizens had been displaced from former Polish territories of Western Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania to territories of Lower Silesia.<sup>26</sup> The most important part of the movement's legacy is exhibited in the Museum of the Orange Alternative and is an important contribution to the European history of youth avant-garde movements of hippie-anarchist provenance. This virtual Museum also included excerpts from the book *Hocus-pocus* presenting, by excerpt, the most important happenings organized by the Waldemar "Major" Fydrych. Their presentation was preceded by a theoretical interpretation of the concept of "happening". Fydrych is also an artist, happenner, poet and historian. In 1988, Fydrych received the Solidarity Award from the Puls publishing house in London and the Polkul Award from the Polish community in Australia, while in 1988 he received the Ashes and Diamonds Award. During the same period, the Interior Ministry arrested Fydrych and jailed him for three months. He was released after a wave of protests swept through Poland's largest cities.<sup>27</sup>

The first known action of the Orange Alternative was the painting of dwarfs on the walls of the houses of the largest Polish cities (on the night of August 30–31, 1982). The most intense period of happening activity was in 1987–1988; it was the antithesis of official state holidays and communist political slogans. In the early 1980s, Fydrych began creating graffiti with the motif of dwarfs, covering up the stains left by painted anti-communist slogans on city walls and house walls.<sup>28</sup> Happenings organized by the Orange Alternative featured student representatives dressed in orange hats, while Fydrych became a forerunner of the revolution known as the "carnival revolution", opening a dialogue between ordinary citizens and representatives of the communist regime<sup>29</sup>.

Each happening had something of the feel of a festive celebration, giving participants the feeling of taking part in a historic turning point, while preserving the ludic character of the event. It was also intended to revive 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.<sup>30</sup>

The New Culture Movement, whose members published the first issue of the Orange Alternative periodical, saw the further development of the joint program initiative in proclaiming the inner liberation of the individual. This approach was

<sup>25</sup> *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa. Happening ukazał w pełni bezradność służb porządkowych* 2009 <https://www.rp.pl/kraj/art15622511-pomarańczowa-alternatywa> [seen 10th May 2025].

<sup>26</sup> Juliusz Tyszka, "The Orange Alternative: Street happenings as social performance in Poland under Martial Law", *New Theatre Quarterly* 56 (1998), p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> M. Moldovan-Cywińska, *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa jako forma surrealizmu...*, pp. 12–15.

<sup>28</sup> W. Fydrych, *Żywy Mężów Pomarańczowych...*, pp. 34–45.

<sup>29</sup> M. Moldovan-Cywińska, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–24.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–45.

far removed from the atmosphere of political struggle then prevailing in Poland between Solidarity and the Communists. Solidarity circles saw a chance for freedom in mass force, Pismo implemented the ideas of the *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism* (*Manifest Surrealizmu Socjalistycznego*),<sup>31</sup> authored by Fydrych.

### 3. Two authors – one experience

Bogdan Dobosz began his career as a journalist in the 1980s. At that time he wrote articles for several newspapers classified as underground press. These included Lublin's *Solidarność Walcząca*, *Ogniwo*, *Kurs* and *Metrum*. In the early 1990s, he moved permanently to France and later became associated with the Solidarity radio. He still lives in Paris, and his acquaintance with Fydrych began in the surrealist capital of the world and resulted in the publication of a book.<sup>32</sup>

The second author of *Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative* (*Hokus-pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*)<sup>33</sup> is Waldemar “Major” Fydrych (born April 8, 1953 in Toruń, Poland), who was then a student of art history at the Wrocław University, happenner and co-founder<sup>34</sup> of the New Culture Movement. In 1981, he formulated the *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*, based on the *Surrealist Manifesto* (*Manifeste du surréalisme*) of the philosopher and poet André Breton.<sup>35</sup> Fydrych argued that the communist government was surreal<sup>36</sup> in itself and that every member of the oppressive militia could be considered a work of art.

### 4. Briefly on the method

The analysis attempted here is of a contributory nature to the research we have been conducting for many years on the Orange Alternative phenomenon, the results of which have been published in scientific journals or in the form of monographs. We use the method of contributory analysis in Polish research of an interdisciplinary nature. Such a research perspective is required by the complex phenomenon of the Orange Alternative, which is located on the borderline of research interests of specialists in literary and cultural studies and historians.

*Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative*<sup>37</sup> is one of the most important clues to the interpretation of the activities and ‘liberated imagination’ of the Orange Alternative protest-art movement. Without exploring the symbolism and events described in it, the view of the movement is incomplete. I am very surprised that none of the previous researchers of avant-garde culture and literature of the twen-

<sup>31</sup> W. Fydrych, *Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego*, 1981, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> B. Dobosz, *Emiraty francuskie*, Warszawa, Biblioteka Wolności, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> B. Dobosz, W. Fydrych, *Hokus-pokus, czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa...*

<sup>34</sup> A person who makes things happen, they participate in a happening – this is a specialist term that exists in English.

<sup>35</sup> André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Idées, 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–25.

tieth and twenty-first centuries has undertaken an analysis of this distinguished work, so important for a deeper understanding of the transformations taking place in our country at that time. *Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative*<sup>38</sup> is an ambiguous, multithreaded work. It is a literary text which we also treat as a cultural text in the ninth considerations, and the meaning of the events depicted in it, but also the dreamlike projection recurs in the cyclical conversations between the author of the text and Fydrych.

## 5. *Hocus-pocus* against the background of Fydrych's literary and artistic output

Noting the presence of "contestational surrealism", primarily in Polish literature after 1945, we note that the surrealists consistently sought to overthrow the existing system, according to the principle that another revolution is a reaction to the destruction commonly called the prevailing social order. They shocked and provoked, negating prohibitions and orders, which was sui generis designing a world different from the rational one. Based on antithetical effects, the Orange Alternative's carefully thought-out actions and program texts gave people strength in the face of repressive police behavior. Waldemar Fydrych, who identifies himself as a surrealist, even referred to "a carnival revolution that, situated initially between the communist apparatus of power and the student milieu of Poland's largest cities, has survived to this day, albeit in an altered form. Wit is the intellectual ability to create surprising images, to make brilliant speeches. In literary works it is a manifestation of comedy. The linguistic form can evoke comic content – for example, in an anecdote or a phrase, or it can be a source of comic effects itself – in the case of wordplay, puns or paronomasia".<sup>39</sup>

### 5.1. *Hocus-pocus*

Fydrych's work is the *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism* 1981 based on the model of André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto (Le Manifeste du surréalisme)*<sup>40</sup> published in 1925. Orange Alternative's happenings were inextricably linked to the notion of socialist surrealism, which fully yet metaphorically described the reality of the time: "Our feelings of disinterest – bridges made of cardboard over the Ganges. A surrealist does not need to be as much as a psychiatrist not to feel lonely".<sup>41</sup> The *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*<sup>42</sup> refers to the animalistic world, dressing human vices in animal characteristics, so its sources must be sought not only in French Surrealism, but deeper: in the La Fontaine's fables<sup>43</sup> and even

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>40</sup> A. Breton, *op. cit.*, p.33.

<sup>41</sup> W. Fydrych, *Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Jean La Fontaine, *Bajki*, Warszawa, Rój, 1920, pp. 4–19.

Aesop's.<sup>44</sup> This example is an à rebours manifesto not only because of its conforming to the idea of dreamlike associationism of combining seemingly distant associations into a single, coherent whole, but through its ironic reference to the Marxist doctrine governing the world, presented as coming from oneiric layer.<sup>45</sup>

Some literary scholars and manifesto historians refer to John L. Austin's speech act theory,<sup>46</sup> which defines every manifesto as a performative act that takes place in the very act of speaking. Considering the "reciprocal" relationship between Fydrych's literary works,<sup>47</sup> we pay special attention to performative utterances, which accomplish something by the very fact of being spoken, and illocutionary utterances, because this is the function we attribute primarily to Fydrych's programmatic texts, which – despite Dobosz's co-authorship also include the book *Hocus-pocus*<sup>48</sup>.

In the 20th century, manifestos were already a kind of rarity, not only from a stylistic point of view, but they also attracted attention with their originality of graphic design. Around 1915, another literary and artistic movement began to develop, namely Dadaism (Dada); its main slogans were: complete freedom of artistic expression, a break with all tradition and rejection of the canons of beauty of the time. Its members, witnesses to the drama of the First World War, negated commonly accepted aesthetic ideals and values.<sup>49</sup> As *The Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*<sup>50</sup> refers to the animalistic world, its sources could be in the fables of La Fontaine or even Aesop. 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<sup>51</sup>.

Both *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*<sup>52</sup> and *Hocus-pocus* are textual complements to the happenings organized by Fydrych and his friends from the Wrocław student community. A different research perspective would be required to look at the *Six Short Stories (Sześć opowiadań)*<sup>53</sup> of his short stories, which de facto contain only four: *Manifesto of Flowers (Manifest kwiatów)*<sup>54</sup>,

<sup>44</sup> Ezop, *Bajki*, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Format, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Karol Marks, Fryderyk Engels, *Manifest komunistyczny*, 1848 <https://www.marxists.org/polski/marks-engels/1848/manifest.htm> [seen 12th May 2025].

<sup>46</sup> John Ladhaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, pp. 15–56.

<sup>47</sup> Fydrych, *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa – Rewolucja Krasnoludków*; Idem. *Żywoty Mężów Pomarańczowych*.

<sup>48</sup> Fydrych: 1989.

<sup>49</sup> Gianni Ernesto Viola, *Sempre Dada/ Dada per sempre* 2013 [https://www.academia.edu/6016828/Sempre\\_Dada\\_Dada\\_per\\_se\\_mpre](https://www.academia.edu/6016828/Sempre_Dada_Dada_per_se_mpre) [seen 11th May 2025].

<sup>50</sup> Fydrych: 1981.

<sup>51</sup> Fydrych, *Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Fydrych, *Sześć opowiadań* <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania>.

<sup>54</sup> Fydrych, *Manifest kwiatów* <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania> [seen 12th April 2025].

*Mars amandi*<sup>55</sup>, *Dawn (Świt)*<sup>56</sup> and *Opera for 44 pieces of silver (Opera za 44 srebrniki)*,<sup>57</sup> forming a kind of appendix to *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism* and exemplifying the happenings presented in *Hocus-pocus*. Each of the aforementioned works is a shocking example of a story about an (imaginary) power that takes over the government of souls over citizens depreciating the concept of freedom and the right to proclaim one's views.

## 5.2. *Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative* and concept of Homo Aestheticus

The concept of Homo Aestheticus – the creator of the concept of a new system, in which power will be exercised by dwarfs – appears in the Fydrych's stories. He wears a long beard: a reference not only to the archetype of the wise man, but also to the dwarfs, who became the symbol of the Orange Alternative movement, “rebels with long beards and hair”.<sup>58</sup> Homo Aestheticus abhors the official mass media, and is an activist-oppositionist who *nolens volens* takes on the role of interrogator while watching TV programs.

In *Hocus-pocus*<sup>59</sup> Homo Aestheticus from *Six Stories* is referred to as a “surrealist”, except that he is not inside a spooky restaurant, at a ball full of unreal characters or in the office of an imaginary clerk, but he appears as a participant in a Wrocław happening: “What will be one surrealist in a realistic crowd? Fortunately, the answer finds deft confirmation at the top of the Tribune. Religion and politics are associated with sermons and hope. But hope uselessly frightens who? The existentialists. They, the enemies of fun try to be perversely indulgent, exhort – to be deprived of hope does not mean to despair. Ridiculous – in the company of hope to play with the scooter of the subconscious – impossible”<sup>60</sup>.

He can also take on other robes, he turns from a cloistered man into a punk, thus becoming 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”; an undisciplined contortionist, a victim of the artistic outbreeding of the ZOMO<sup>61</sup> representing the socialist state carrying the message of freedom.<sup>62</sup> “Homo Aestheticus” and “surrealist” are dominated by

<sup>55</sup> Fydrych, *Mars amandi* <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania> [seen 12th May 2025].

<sup>56</sup> Fydrych, *Świt* 1985 <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania> [seen 27th May 2025].

<sup>57</sup> Fydrych, *Opera za 44 srebrników* <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania> [seen 27th May 2025].

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> English translation: Marta Moldovan-Cywińska.

<sup>60</sup> Fydrych, *Sześć opowiadań*.

<sup>61</sup> The Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej), commonly known as ZOMO in Poland.

<sup>62</sup> Fydrych, *Opera za 44 srebrników*.

self-consciousness and an almost obsessive awareness of the existence of ‘others’, constructed as an expression of “ideological position”. When confronted with others, he affirms his self, while the “you” proposed by Stanisław Balbus,<sup>63</sup> to whom he addresses himself, changes his perspective as “they” (which results in a heightened awareness of the protagonists”).<sup>64</sup>

The work of Homo Aestheticus shows the whole complexity of the aspirations of the generation born in the 1980s. The characters created by Fydrych – using Huizinga’s term – are “born in play.” They play a game of mutual attraction and repulsion. Huizinga stressed that poetic forms are invariably ludic forms. They are bound by playfulness in the way of imagery, motifs and the way they are expressed. And this is by no means poetry practiced as a form of competition, but as a form of political satire, complementary to street events.<sup>65</sup>

Homo Aestheticus and the “surrealist” described in *Hocus-pocus* are figures that are not only similar, but complementary to each other; they are also capable of making an intellectual revolution within the imaginary ‘Free University’ described by Dobosz and Fydrych:

A free university is not an organised structure, it is a living organism changing even the mechanisms of its development, it pulsates like reggae music, it is alive with contradictions against the law of the exclusive measure and other similar principles that stiffen the spine. [...] if you want to know how birds fly don’t weaken their flight with your binoculars, fly with them, if you know that history will explain who you are think of mathematics and Arabic fables there you will find history, the free university is a revolution of the imagination it is a disruption of the symmetry of bureaucratic life among dogmas and institutionalised rationales, it is a rejection of politics because life is not politics<sup>66</sup>.

Fydrych’s Homo Aestheticus and Surrealist communicate in poetic language, although each is a “porte-parole” of artistic and political ideas. In connection with the multifaceted figure created in this way, existing on the border of worlds, although proclaiming real slogans of unlimited freedom – in artistic and political sense surrealism a la polonaise takes on a different meaning than the one I defined in my work *The Manufacture of Dreams: Reflections on Polish Surrealist Poetry* (*Manufaktura snów. Rozważania o polskiej poezji nadrealistycznej*),<sup>67</sup> where, drawing on the French and Belgian model, it only created a marriage of poetry and art, avoiding strictly political themes.

<sup>63</sup> Stanisław Balbus, „Wstęp”, Michał Bachtin, *Twórczość Franciszka Rabelaisa*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie 1975, pp. 13–14.

<sup>64</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *Hokus-pokus*..., pp. 88–89.

<sup>65</sup> Johann Huizinga, *Homo ludens. Zabawa jako źródło kultury*, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1985, pp. 23–44.

<sup>66</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>67</sup> Marta Cywińska, *Manufaktura snów. Z dziejów recepcji poezji nadrealistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007.

### 5.3. *Hocus-pocus* and happenings

Relevant for the present considerations may seem to be the aspirations of the Surrealists to decompose, and at the same time to create a symbiosis between art and intellectual humor, perceived as interdisciplinary, surrealist, sowing much greater interpretative requirements for the potential recipient of a Surrealist work – literary or artistic. The Orange Alternative's activities are part of the specifics of the transformation period – they take on a special dimension, as the present author, who looks at the Orange Alternative phenomenon with the eye of a scientist and with the eye of a participant in the events, is convinced. The authors of *Hocus-pocus*<sup>68</sup> convey the history of the movement's activities in a surrealist-noir convention, focusing primarily on the message concerning the happenings.

*Hocus-pocus* presents, first and foremost, the history of the Orange Alternative through the presentation of the course of happenings organised by the Orange Alternative. It is not arranged chronologically or factographically, but presents fragmentary descriptions in the convention of a dream, inspired by the work of the French Surrealists. The Orange Alternative organised its first happenings in 1986, but the street art and protest events organised in Wrocław in 1987–1988 gained the most publicity. Their theme was mainly official political events and state holidays. The Orange Alternative in Wrocław was awarded a prize for its activities by the well-known Polish director Andrzej Wajda in December 1988. Among the happenings that became a reference point for the events described in *Hocus-pocus* were: *Happening in Defence of the Communist Homeland – We won't give December!* (7 October 1988); The fundamentally apolitical event, i. e. *the Soc-Moda Revue* (6 November 1988); *The Big Joke* (29 November 1988). In *Hocus-pocus* we can also find descriptions concerning criticism from the pro-government newspapers of the time: "The Wrocław press severely criticised the Orange Alternative's activities. Similar happenings also took place in other centres. In Poznań, several people were detained during an event organised by the *Committee for the Defence of the Red Riding Hoods*."<sup>69</sup> Dobosz and Fydrych's book contains not only descriptions of street events, but also those connected with advertisements, announcements – often provocative, relating to the possibility of buying/selling scarce goods. When, at the beginning of the 1982 summer holidays, the secret services came across the Orange Alternative activists, Major decided to give a public dimension to the flat, whose address was 'suspicious' to the services of the time.

Accordingly, he hung an ad saying 'I will sell a small, Yugoslav automatic washing machine' in various visible places in Wrocław – above all on poles and fences. The ad was perceived by many as genuine, and the visiting potential "customers" made the flat vibrant. This is an example of a surreal verbal message par

<sup>68</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

excellence Polish, for a similar or identical message under completely different political conditions – French or Belgian – would not have been comprehensible to the recipient.<sup>70</sup>

In *Hocus-pocus* we also find descriptions of the Major's internment and the 'revolution of the dwarfs' – a socio-political transformation negating the hitherto "old" order. The phenomenon of the Orange Alternative also situates it in the independent art trend:

Meanwhile, the Major, released from prison, leaves for meditation in the mountains. On his return, he begins preparations for International Children's Day. The walls of Wrocław are covered with the slogans of two forthcoming events – the Orange Alternative's happening and the government theatre entitled 'Election to the National'. Walking through the streets of the city, one could come across an effective, stencilled but unconventional image of a dwarf with an invitation to "a worthy celebration of Children's Day on 1.06."<sup>71</sup>

*Hocus-pocus* surprises the viewer by redefining the work of art, which includes militiamen interfering intentionally in the course of happenings, and "even a single militiaman is a work of art".<sup>72</sup> They are also repositioned elsewhere as characters taking part in a kind of urban game: "The blues surround the reds. Are the five militiamen a colour or a poker? The reds are gone, the blues have left, the last information, peace has fallen on the city".<sup>73</sup> Their presence opens up the possibility of two parallel happenings – the real one and its oneiric variant: "Almost all the Nysas are heading for Łąkowa, only the Nysa in Solny Square is going around in circles and waiting for further instructions. The union president says to his daughters: 'oh you see what a merry-go-round you have for children's day'".<sup>74</sup> Of course, the examples presented here are exemplary and will be analysed in detail in the next monograph I am preparing.

## 6. Conclusions

As an artistic opposition organisation, however, the Orange Alternative emerged much earlier, as early as 1980 – with the emergence of the Wrocław-based opposition and counter-cultural organisations of the New Culture Movement of the 1980s, whose activities, however, did not gain much popularity, and thus at the time of the movement's first texts and Fydrych's first literary attempts,<sup>75</sup> while

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81–83.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34–78.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Robert Zybrant, "Wrocław's Opposition and Counter-cultural Organizations of the 1980s and Their Impact on the Formation of the Orange Alternative", *80s Again! A Monograph on the 1980s*, red. Aneta Jabłońska, Mariusz Koryciński, Warszawa, Jolanta Słobodzian Film Club, pp. 5–21.

the authors of *Hocus-pocus* attempt to interpret its activities from the beginning of its existence until 1988, although it should be emphasised once again, that this is a subjective interpretation in the surrealist convention.<sup>76</sup>

Considering the Orange Alternative's output without taking into account an analysis of Fydrych's work and Dobosz's accompanying reflections not only in the literary, but also in the cultural and artistic dimension, it gives a more certain picture of its achievements.<sup>77</sup> Zybrant believes that the phenomenon of the Orange Alternative did not appear in a vacuum, but at the apogee of society's disillusionment with the actions of the authorities and shortages of goods in shops,<sup>78</sup> an expression of which we can find in the pages of *Hocus-pocus*.<sup>79</sup>

Our aim was first and foremost to show the meaning and the most important motifs appearing in *Hocus-pocus* against the background of the Orange Alternative phenomenon:

1. "Homo Aestheticus" appearing in Fydrych's programme texts<sup>80</sup> also appears in *Hocus-pocus* as a "surrealist", but not in the sense of Breton, but as a participant in events of a contestation-artistic nature and as the embodiment of "the man of socialist surrealism" in an oneiric-realist world in which "every militiaman is a work of art".

2. "Homo Aestheticus" and the 'surrealist' created by Fydrych cannot be defined solely from a literary or cultural studies perspective, it requires an interdisciplinary perspective.

3. Both characters have traits of the French surrealist, primarily due to their location on the line between the real and unreal worlds, but also of the neo-surrealist according to the definition of this term used for the first time in *The Manufacture of Dreams: Reflections on Polish Surrealist Poetry (Manufaktura snów. Z dziejów recepcji poezji surrealistycznej w Polsce)*<sup>81</sup>.

4. His appearance heralds the need to abolish the old order in the political and artistic sense, as well as the emergence of a new order, whose arrival is heralded by street happenings organised by the Orange Alternative in urban spaces (Warsaw, Łódź, Gdańsk, Lublin, Wrocław).

5. His world is antithetical, based on a constant struggle between good and evil.

6. 'Hocus-pocus' is an interpretation of the 'revolution of the dwarfs', showing the mechanisms of struggles and street events that have their real counterparts in history.<sup>82</sup>

7. The Orange Alternative is the only happening movement in Poland which left a literary legacy, complementary to the protest-political activity on the streets

<sup>76</sup> M. Moldovan-Cywińska, *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa jako forma surrealizmu*, pp. 34–57.

<sup>77</sup> B. Misztal, p. 56.

<sup>78</sup> R. Zybrant, *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *Hokus-pokus...*, pp. 23–67.

<sup>80</sup> Fydrych, *Sześć opowiadań* <http://www.orangealternativemuseum.pl/#major-waldemar-fydrych-opowiadania>, pp. 3–9.

<sup>81</sup> M. Cywińska, *Manufaktura snów. Z dziejów recepcji poezji nadrealistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007, pp. 45–50.

<sup>82</sup> Dobosz, Fydrych, *Ibid.*, pp. 23–67, 34, 45, 46, 112, 115.

of the city. No other movement of this nature has introduced a “marriage” of art and literature on the streets as a form of generational rebellion, present in Poland’s largest cities and major academic centres.

My personal relationship with the Orange Alternative makes me look at it not only with the eye of a researcher but with the eye of a witness to history, and my intellectual friendship with Fydrich allows me to reinterpret his work through the new, unknown contexts it illuminates. His manifestos strengthen me in the need to create artistic and literary manifestos also inspired by French surrealism. The Orange Alternative is the only happening movement in Poland that left a literary legacy complementary to the protest-political activity on the city streets. Its best-known works include: *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*, *Six Short Stories*, *Lives of Orange Men* and the *Hocus-pocus, or the Orange Alternative* discussed here. No other movement of this nature combined art and literature as a form of generational rebellion.

Finally, it is worth asking whether Fydrich will live to see his rightful place in the pantheon of the greatest Polish interdisciplinary contestant-surrealists of the 20th and 21st centuries? The popularisation of his work – including his literary work – offers such hope, and may the work he wrote together with Dobosz be a creative testament, with future generations in mind.

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*ХОКУС-ПОКУС ИЛИ НАРАНЦАСТА АЛТЕРНАТИВА КАО  
ПРОТЕСТНО-УМЕТНИЧКИ И КЊИЖЕВНИ ФЕНОМЕН  
(Резиме)*

Овај текст допринос је вишедимензионалној анализи Наранцасте алтернативе, представљене не само као покрет протестно-уметничког карактера, већ и као књижевноуметнички феномен. Књига *Хокус-покус или Наранцаста алтернатива (Hokus Pokus czyli Pomarańczowa Alternatywa, 1989)* пољских аутора Богдана Добоша и Валдемара Фидриха једно је од фундаменталних дела о њеном раду, који укључује и догађаје и случајне уметничке активности. Програмски текстови Наранцасте алтернативе, чија публика нису били само интелектуалци, већ и обичан народ, садрже идеје изражене у Фидриховом *Манифесту социјалистичког надре-*

ализма (1981), који се позива на главни текст француског надреалистичког покрета, Бретонов *Манифест надреализма* (1924). Ауторка упоређује појам “Homo Aestheticus” и „надреалисте” приказане у Фидриховом делу, да би показала да су они не само комплементарни, већ и да имају и неке заједничке особине. Затим разматра концепт имагинарног „Слободног универзитета” као *par excellence* надреалистичког феномена, који је такође описан у књизи *Хокус-покус*, да би се на крају упитала хоће ли Фидрих доживети да види своје право место у „пантеону” највећих пољских „оспораватеља-надреалиста” двадесетог и двадесет првог века.

**Кључне речи:** Наранџаста алтернатива, *Манифест цвећа*, надреализам, Валдемар „Мајор” Фидрих (Waldemar “Major” Fydrych)

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