

Histories of Laughter and Laughter in History

Histories of Laughter and Laughter in History:

HistoRisus

Edited by

Rafał Borysławski, Justyna Jajszcok,
Jakub Wolff and Alicja Bembien

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INTRODUCTION

When the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* was attacked by terrorists in early 2015, it reminded us all that sometimes laughter can be deadly serious. Laughter can connect but it also can divide; it can liberate but it can also destroy. There are few other social phenomena that would bond and culturally define us in the way laughter does. What, how, and when we laugh defines us strongly; it also builds interpersonal relations, as well as the hierarchy of power and dependency. Laughter does bring with it the release of emotions; it can bring joy and revival. But there is also triumphant laughter, laughter that is sardonic and sneering, scornful and transgressive, hysterical and mad, dangerous and suppressed. There is laughter that creates rapport, there is also laughter that creates isolation, sometimes at the same time, depending on who is the subject and who is the object of laughter. Moreover, we cannot laugh any time we want to; if we do, sometimes we laugh at things that representatives of other cultures would find offensive, rather than amusing. As a cultural discourse, then, laughter can be amusing in itself but it is also deadly serious. As Johan Huizinga wrote in his seminal work on the significance of play in culture: “play is the direct opposite of seriousness. [...] Examined more closely, however, the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed.”¹ Huizinga argues that play is the source of culture; so is laughter. The *homo ludens*, Huizinga’s “playful man” would not be him/herself without the *homo ridens*, Aristotle’s “laughing man.” It is laughter that Aristotle sees as an immanently human feature, and, what is more, it is the characteristic that distinguishes people from other animals. Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* summarize Aristotle’s view succinctly, defining human beings as animals that are “rational, mortal, land-dwelling, bipedal, capable of laughter.”² In laughter too, the serious is inextricably interwoven with the funny. Just like a traffic cone frequently landing on the head of a statue of the Duke of Wellington in a form of a novelty hat,

¹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1980), p. 5.

² Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 81.

so is the ballooning seriousness regularly punctured by the sting of ridicule.

The present volume is the outcome of various investigations into the diversity and importance of the roles laughter plays in culture. The common aim of these texts is the comparative examination of these functions and the significance of many faces of laughter in various contexts, from historical to literary. The first part of the volume is dedicated to the cultural and historical aspects of laughter. In the opening essay, Żychlińska attempts to trace the earliest examples of laughter in human history and ponder when, if ever, prehistoric man laughed. In the second chapter, Jajszczok discusses the initial ridicule factor of some scientific theories, arguing its usefulness within the academic discourse. Two texts that follow tackle the role of laughter in the context of war: Gorgula analyses the humour of the Great War and Musiał focuses on the comical representations of the Vietnam War. The final texts in this section look at the aspects of laughter within the popular American culture; Szubartowska studies the sources of canned laughter used in the American media, while Caputa showcases various Polish stereotypes presented in American sitcoms.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to the representation of laughter in literary narratives. In the first essay of the section, Hallila compares Bakhtin's, the early Lukács's and Kundera's approaches to humour and the novel. The following essays outline specific case studies of laughter in literature. Bartusik examines issues related to the ideas and functions of laughter in *Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, Boryślawski investigates the role of laughter in medieval romances, Lebek debates Caroline comedies and their cathartic power, Schauffler discusses the ambiguity of smiling and laughter in Hawthorne's short stories, Bemben looks at the satiric hero in Graves's novels, and Wolff presents the relation between forged past and *Mason & Dixon*. Finally, Czarnowus considers the presence of laughter as one of the medieval elements of George R. R. Martin's immensely popular *Song of Ice and Fire*.

All the texts included in *HistoRisus. Histories of Laughter and Laughter in History* remind us that the history of laughter in Western culture is also the history of attempts at suppressing and restricting it within the frames sketched by Bakhtin's categories of the carnivalesque. From Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Augustine's *The City of God*, to the political puppet show *Spitting Image* and John Stewart's *The Daily Show*, laughter still inspires fear and indignation in those who see it as a threat to the established order. Laughter thus seems to have always had a certain Promethean quality. Jorge of Burgos, the blind librarian in

Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, who guards the last copy of the supposedly lost second book of Aristotle's *Poetics*, apparently devoted to the nature of comedy, warns us all against precisely this quality of laughter: "This book could strike the Luciferine spark that would set a new fire to the whole world, and laughter would be defined as the new art, unknown even to Prometheus, for cancelling fear. [...] The prudence of our fathers made its choice: if laughter is the delight of the plebeians, the license of the plebeians must be restrained and humiliated, and intimidated by sternness."³ As the editors of the present volume, we hope that it will prove an interesting addition to the existing body of works on laughter in history and culture – especially in times when there may seem to be fewer and fewer reasons to laugh.

³ Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (Boston, New York: Mariner Books, 2014), pp. 508-509.

PART ONE:

LAUGHTER IN HISTORY AND CULTURE

CHAPTER ONE

FACES OF LAUGHTER IN PREHISTORY

JUSTYNA ŻYCHLIŃSKA

Heaven has given human beings three things to balance the odds of life: hope, sleep, and laughter.¹

The issue of laughter is hardly ever considered in prehistoric studies; if it is, it occupies a distant margin of studies of other aspects of human activity. Therefore, the answer to the question what were the faces of laughter in prehistory is difficult, especially if we appreciate that archaeology is a discipline which interprets past events predominantly on the basis of material sources.

The similarity of the Polish words for laughter [*śmiech*] and smile [*uśmiech*] suggests their close semantic relationship. On the contrary, if such criteria as acoustics, different phylogenies² or the social aspect – that is, a different semantic potential on different social levels which causes the development of different social relations – are taken into consideration, these phenomena are by no means identical, as has been recently pointed out.³

Laughter is one of the most complex human behaviours, integrating their various types: innate and culturally-conditioned, individual and social

¹ Immanuel Kant quoted in AZQuotes, accessed 6 November, 2014, <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1386857>.

² See Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Miłość i nienawiść [Love and Hatred]*, trans. Z. Stromenger (Warszawa: PWN, 1987), p. 200. Translated from German *Liebe und Hass: zur Naturgeschichte elementarer Verhaltenweisen* (München: Piper, 1970).

³ Magdalena Kubica, “Próba systematyzacji i rozróżnienia pojęć śmiech i uśmiech” [“An Attempt at Systematizing and Differentiation of the Concepts of Laughter and Smile”], *Anthropos*, No. 12-13 (2009), accessed November 19, 2014, <http://www.anthropos.us.edu.pl/anthropos7/texty/kubica.htm>.

behaviours. The evolutionary origin of human laughter could be traced back to at least 16 million years ago, to the last common ancestor of humans and apes.⁴ In the last two decades there has been an increase in interest in studies on laughter in its many aspects: neuroimaging, sound analysis, and studies on its physiological, social and health aspects.⁵ It is worth pointing out that the subject has by no means been exhausted.⁶ Classical as well as the newest etiological studies have unequivocally placed laughter in the context of signalling (game/play) and of the socialising of the advanced mammals.⁷ Far from being a stereotypically treated signal, laughter becomes one of the most important acoustic human expressions, comparable to language,⁸ playing a vital role in the emotional reception of the listener(s),⁹ as the differences between forms of laughter can be associated with positive and negative emotional states.¹⁰ An intriguing consequence of the binding function of laughter is the transposition of individual identities, especially in light of the fact that human laughter, much better than utterances, can be recognisable from

⁴ Marina Dawila Ross, Michael J. Owren and Elke Zimmermann, “Reconstructing the Evolution of Laughter in Great Apes and Humans,” *Current Biology*, Vol. 19, No. 13 (2009), pp. 1106-1111.

⁵ Anna Radomska, “Poczucie humoru jako cecha osobowości wspomagająca rozwój” [“A Sense of Humour as an Identity Trait Supporting Self-Development”], in: *Wspomaganie rozwoju – psychostymulacja i psychokorekcja, Tom 5 [Developmental Support – Psychostimulation and Psychocorrection, Vol. 5]*, ed. Barbara M. Kaja (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Bydgoszczy, 2003), pp. 94-95; Robert R. Provine, *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); Aleksander Łamek, *Terapia śmiechem. Jak rozwijać poczucie humoru [Laughter Therapy. How to Develop A Sense of Humour]* (Warszawa: Self-published, 2008).

⁶ Pedro C. Marijuán and Jorge Navarro, “The Bonds of Laughter: A Multidisciplinary Inquiry into the Information Processes of Human Laughter,” p. 3, accessed 6 November, 2014, <http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1010/1010.5602.pdf>.

⁷ Jaak Panksepp, “Psychology. Beyond a Joke: From Animal Laughter to Human Joy?,” *Science*, Vol. 308, No. 5718 (2005), p. 3.

⁸ Kazimierz Żygulski, *Wspólnota śmiechu [Laughter Community]* (Warszawa: PIW, 1985), p. 21; Marijuán and Navarro, “The Bonds of Laughter,” p. 8.

⁹ Jo-Anne Bachorowski, Michael J. Owren, “Vocal Expressions of Emotion,” in: *Handbook of Emotions*, eds. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones and Lisa Feldman Barrett (New York, London: Guilford, 2008).

¹⁰ Laurence Devillers, Laurence Vidrascu, “Positive and Negative Emotional States Behind the Laughs in Spontaneous Spoken Dialogs,” pp. 37-40, accessed 6 November, 2014, http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/conf/laughter-07/files/DEVILERS_VIDRASCU.pdf.

some distance.¹¹ It can be treated as a social symbol of health, but mostly it should be appreciated in the social category, as an integrating factor, creating bonds between individuals on many levels of their activity, both cooperative and competitive, in various stages of the human life cycle.¹² It should not be forgotten that laughter, as a tool of the conscious formation of society, has an important creative potential; it has the power of releasing one from overriding social ties such as language or communities; it also allows for a transformation of the established group into a qualitatively different one through exclusion, thus acting as a regulator of social norms.¹³ Thus, talking of laughter, one always assumes the existence of social relations, which it affects and forms.¹⁴

Laughter is closely connected with humour, although, according to Ewa Rojek, neither are these two phenomena identical, nor do they always accompany each other.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, a community of laughter unites people sharing the same sense of humour and manifests itself through the reactions to comical manifestations approved by the community.¹⁶ In any social group there can be various laughter communities which, in turn, can unite representatives of various social groups.¹⁷ The sense of humour, also known as the sense of the comic, is a multidimensional construct characterised

¹¹ Marijuán and Navarro, "The Bonds of Laughter," p. 11.

¹² Hunaid Hasan, Tasneem F. Hasan, "Laugh Yourself into a Healthier Person: A Cross Cultural Analysis of the Effects of Varying Levels of Laughter on Health," *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2009), p. 211.

¹³ Żygulski, *Wspólnota śmiechu*, pp. 20-24.

¹⁴ Henri Bergson, *Śmiech. Esej o komizmie* [*Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*], trans. Stanisław Cichowicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977), p. 51. Translated from French *Le rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris, 1900); Robert R. Provine, "Laughter," *American Scientist*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (1996), pp. 38-47.

¹⁵ Ewa Rojek, "Łaskotanie mózgu. Co wiemy o śmiechu i humorze" ["Tickling the Brain: What We Know of Laughter and Humour], *Kosmos*, Vol. 52, No. 2-3 (2003), pp. 237-247; Sam McNerney, "Dlaczego się śmiejemy i z czego się śmiejemy," *Obserwatorium psychologiczne*, accessed 6 November, 2014, <http://www.psychologia.edu.pl/obserwatorium-psychologiczne/1670-dlaczego-sie-smiejemy-i-z-czego-sie-smiejemy.html>

¹⁶ One of the simplest definitions of laughter understood as an aesthetic category depicting the properties of the phenomena which are able to trigger a smile, and the circumstances under which such a situation is triggered, is the one found in *Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, Vol. 3, s.v. "śmiech."

¹⁷ Alicja Siemak-Tylińska, "Uczmy człowieczeństwa przez uśmiech" ["Let Us Teach Humanity through a Smile"], *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, No. 3 (2005), pp. 97-132.

by various functions.¹⁸ The sense of humour, apart from constituting evidence of the theory of mind, also requires the ability to pretend; it also necessitates the awareness that there is a contradiction between the outside world and its mental counterpart.¹⁹ Moreover, it strongly correlates with such social skills as interpersonal intimacy – understood here as the ability to form and maintain very close relationships with other people, which require the emotional baring of the ego – sociability, and the satisfaction derived from role performance, all of which lead to achieving greater popularity, social attractiveness and respect, and performing the role of a group leader.²⁰

The comic and the related notions of laughter and smiling may be associated with antiquity, especially with regard to the multi-faceted role of the Greek, and later Roman theatre (religious, social, and ludic functions).²¹ Comedies, apart from employing various comic devices, whose function was to amuse the audience,²² also made use of masks. These, by displaying particular shapes, could present not just the gender or the age of the actor, but also served as a tangible means of expression of feelings and emotions a given persona was supposed to convey: smile, mockery, wit, anger or wrath.²³

Therefore, the very first association of laughter should be with play, or fun, achieved in a number of ways: by the aforementioned comedies, but also by other devices, such as toys. If we assume that smiling, laughter, a sense of humour and comic are connected with the social sphere of people's life, then these elements should be regarded as related to the culture in which people live and which they create. The beginning of the research of the topic of the relation between culture and play is usually associated with the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, who claims that the

¹⁸ Anna Rusek, “Wielowymiarowość humoru” [“Multifacetedness of Humour”], *Innowacje psychologiczne*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012), pp. 117-127.

¹⁹ Jean Piaget, *Narodziny inteligencji dziecka* [*The Origins of Intelligence in Children*], trans. Maria Przetacznikowa (Warszawa: PWN, 1966). Translated from French *Naissance de l'intelligence chez l'enfant* (Neuchâtel, Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1966); A. Radomska, “Poczucie humoru jako cecha osobowości.”

²⁰ Radomska, “Poczucie humoru jako cecha osobowości.”

²¹ Ewa Skwara, *Historia komedii rzymskiej* [*A History of Roman Comedy*] (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2001).

²² Piotr Makowski, “Śmiech Arystofanejski. Analiza środków komicznych u Arystofanesa na przykładzie ‘Żab’” [*Aristophanic Laughter. An Analysis of Comic Devices in Aristophanes on the Example of ‘Frogs’*], *Symbolae Philologorum Posnaniensium Graecae et Latinae*, Vol. XVIII (2008), pp. 103-113.

²³ Skwara, *Historia komedii rzymskiej*, pp. 188-192.

concept of play became a part of culture, and its initial source.²⁴ The term he proposed, *Homo ludens*, is a direct reference to the anthropological tradition, which endeavours to create a synthetic definition of a human being, beginning with Aristotle's *zoon politicon* and Seneca's *animal rationale*.²⁵ Also vital at this point are the remarks made by Florian Znaniecki who notes that a human being consciously creates him- or herself and the cultural life; that is why the source and base of participation in specific social systems is the social personality, which develops in childhood and adolescence. During these periods specific roles imposed by some social circles influence the development of various types of personality forming aspirations [*dążności osobotwórcze*].²⁶ Moreover, it is worth noting that there are fundamental differences between playing and a game. As Janusz Łukaszyński notes, pointing to the multitude of the names of play, Huizinga's definition – which is considered to be one of the more exhaustive – does not distinguish between the imaginary play, which is distinctly individual and has ephemeral conclusions without petrified variants of closures, and games which are systemic, which contain fixed stages independent of the number of gamers or the gaming circumstances, whose goal is known and measurable, as well as connected with competition on both sides.²⁷ Rules become an indispensable element of play the moment it acquires an institutionalised form. From this moment onward, its rules become part of its essence and it is the rules that transform the play into a fertile and vital tool of culture. The natural gift for improvising and having fun [*paidia*], accompanied by the propensity for unselfish effort [*ludus*], leads to the emergence of a variety of games and types of play which can be seen as possessing a cultural value. Games and play display the intellectual and cultural values of a given culture, contributing to their development and refinement; they reach their peak once they generate cooperation, in which case they contribute to the

²⁴ Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens. Zabawa jako źródło kultury*, trans. Maria Kurecka, Witold Wirpsza (Warszawa: Aletheia, 2007), p. 8. Translated from English *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949).

²⁵ Magdalena Banaszkiwicz, "Zabawa – i co z tego wynika?" ["The Play – What Are Its Effects?"], in: *Kultura zabawy [The Culture of Play]*, eds. Tadeusz Paleczny, Ryszard Kantor and Magdalena Banaszkiwicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), p. 9.

²⁶ Florian Znaniecki, *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości [Contemporary People and the Civilization of the Future]* (Warszawa: PWN, 1974), pp. 101-140.

²⁷ Janusz Łukaszyński, "Gry a wzajemność" ["Games and Reciprocity"], *Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (2013), p. 211.

establishment of social structures of institutional qualities.²⁸ Undoubtedly, an important function of games, apart from the historical or personal, is their cultural function, which is connected with upbringing and education, as every type and kind of game depends on a specific culture, social class, tribe or family.²⁹

It is now time to take a closer look at the issue of laughter in the prehistoric communities. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the analysis of the phenomenon of laughter in prehistory is a very difficult task, due to the fact that archaeological sources tend to be material and mute. Every attempt at interpreting the past events is therefore necessarily based on these sources, and their research potential depends on the chosen interpretative methodology. The analysis of all available archaeological sources in Poland paints a cultural picture (social and economic) so far detached from the one seen in the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations that it almost seems unimaginable to compare these two worlds: the North and South of Europe. Are then the past societies living in the lands of the present day Poland closer to the contemporary primary societies? In those societies laughter was not prohibited or forbidden.³⁰ Laughter was present during funeral ceremonies of certain tribes,³¹ although, naturally, there were exceptions to this rule, such as, for instance, the Dobu tribe of north-western Melanesia.³² On the other hand, laughter could serve a corrective function and be an expression of social disapproval of certain behaviours.³³

²⁸ Roger Caillois, *Gry i ludzie [Games and People]*, trans. Anna Tatarkiewicz, Maria Żurowska (Warszawa: Volumen, 1997), pp. 33, 45, 46. Translated from French *Les jeux et les hommes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958).

²⁹ Eric Berne, *W co grają ludzie? Psychologia stosunków międzyludzkich*, trans. Paweł Izdebski (Warszawa: PWN, 2001), pp. 142-143. Translated from English *Games People Play. The Psychology of Human Relationships* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

³⁰ The members of the Brazilian Nambikwara tribe, for instance, very often have talks full of laughter and jokes; see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Smutek tropików [A World on the Wane]*, trans. Aniela Steinberg (Warszawa: PIW, 2008), p. 293. Translated from French *Tristes tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955).

³¹ Magda Raczek, “Święto życia – teatralna forma pogrzebu na Bali” [“A Celebration of Life – The Theatrical Form of Bali Funerals”], *Fragile*, Vol. 4, No. 10 (2010), pp. 55-58.

³² Ruth Benedict, *Wzory kultury*, trans. Jerzy Prokopiuk (Warszawa: Muza, 2011), p. 50. Translated from English *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934).

³³ Edward Tylor, *Antropologia. Wstęp do badań człowieka i cywilizacji*, trans. Aleksandra Bąkowska and Ludwik Krzywicki (Cieszyn: Pro Filia, 1997), p. 383. Translated from English *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and*

The barbaric tribes, which may be included among the primary societies mentioned above, that inhabited the lands of today's western and central Europe in prehistory, very rarely were the subject of ancient writers. The sparse surviving sources inform us that they were brave and bold men of honour who, nonetheless, did not abstain from certain shows and games, including dice.³⁴ Smiling, however, can be seen only in a very few artistic depictions.³⁵

In the case of the area of Poland, to speak of smiling, laughter or play, one can refer to three types of such depictions: anthropomorphic figurines, iconographic motifs and items which can be interpreted as toys. First of all, let us take a look at the anthropomorphic figurines. Most often these are incredibly schematic visualisations of human figures which can be found in present-day Poland and date from the Neolithic period to the Middle Ages. These figurines display sexual characteristics, but not smiles.³⁶ An exception to this rule can be found in the probably best

Civilization (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010).

³⁴ Publius Cornelius Tacitus, "Księga o pochodzeniu i siedzibach Germanów" ["The Book on the Origins and Location of Germania"], in: *Germania*, ed. Jerzy Kolendo, trans. Tomasz Płóciennik (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2008), pp. 62-97. Translated from Latin "De Origine et situ Germanorum," in: *Germania*.

³⁵ See the Celtic sculpture decorating the votive monument in honour of Matrones Aufaniae in Jerzy Gąssowski, *Mitologia Celtów [Mythology of the Celts]* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1979), fig.17; or the relief of a Celtic deity from Hemmendorf in Gąssowski, *Mitologia Celtów*, fig. 58.

³⁶ See Bogusław Gediga, *Motywy figuralne w sztuce ludności kultury lużyckiej [Figural Motifs in the Art of the People of Lusatian Culture]* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1970); Hanna Jankowska, Danuta Wojciechowska, "Figurka antropomorficzna z Wrocławia-Książ Wielkiego" ["An Anthropomorphic Figurine from Wrocław-Książ Wielki"], *Silesia Antiqua*, Vol. 15 (1973), pp. 117-131; Elżbieta Gleń, Krzysztof Kaczanowski, "Próba oceny typu antropologicznego figurki znalezionej na stanowisku Kraków-Pleszów" ["An Attempt at an Evaluation of an Anthropomorphic Type of Figure Found in the Kraków-Pleszów Site"], *Sprawozdania Archeologiczne*, Vol. 28 (1974), pp. 77-78; Andrzej Krzyszowski, "Wczesnoneolityczne figurki antropomorficzne na przykładzie nowego znaleziska z Lipnicy w województwie wielkopolskim" ["Early Neolithic Anthropomorphic Figurines Exemplified by a New Find from Lipnica, Greater Poland"], *Folia Praehistorica Posnaniensia*, Vol. 12 (2004), pp. 65-80; Paweł Jarosz, "Neolithic Anthropomorphic Figurine from Zakrzowiec, Site 6, Niepołomnice Commune, Małopolskie Voivodship," *Sprawozdania Archeologiczne*, Vol. 57 (2005), pp. 443-449; Ewelina J. Kowalczyk, "Produkcja glinianych figurek w późnym średniowieczu na Śląsku" ["Production of Clay Figurines in Late Medieval Silesia"], accessed 15 September, 2014, <https://www>.

known figurines from Deszczno and Karnin which depict female figures holding dishes in front of them, whose faces are in the shape of an animal-like mask. Second of all, let us examine the iconography. Human figures and their faces in the scarce iconographic visualisations are again incredibly schematic.³⁷ This is why the Pomeranian canopic jars [*kanopy pomorskie*] are particularly valuable in the context of smile/laughter research. Although the vast majority of the jars depict human faces either without a mouth or with the mouth indicated only by a simple line, four of them are exceptional as they depict lips stretched in a smile.³⁸ Thirdly, there are items which could have been used as toys: they are usually made of clay, and include such examples as miniature dishes, wheels, discs, animal figurines and rattles.

It has been sixty years since Zoja Kołosówna published her article on toys and objects of worship.³⁹ At the time it was one of the first articles in literature to address this issue. Today one can encounter many hypotheses regarding the functions of particular items. As far as the question of the anthropomorphic figurines is concerned, these include hypotheses referring to the sphere of worship: the female figurines are interpreted as manifestations of the cult of the Mother Goddess.⁴⁰ There are, however, other ideas, including those according to which the figurines denote

academia.edu/3786971/Produkcja_glinianych_figurek_w_poznym_sredniowieczu_na_Slasku.

³⁷ See Gediga, *Motywy figuralne [Figural Motifs]*; Ewa Bugaj, and Tadeusz Makiewicz, “Ornamentyka figuralna na naczyniach glinianych okresu przedrzymskiego i rzymskiego w Polsce” [“Figural Ornaments on Pre-Roman and Roman Clay Vessels zbędne spacje in Poland”], *Przegląd Archeologiczny*, Vol. 43 (1995), pp. 87-122; Marian Kwapiński, *Korpus kanop pomorskich. Część I – Pomorze [The Canopic Jars Corpus. Part I – Pomerania]* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Muzeum Archeologicznego, 1999), tab. 171.

³⁸ Kwapiński, *Korpus kanop pomorskich. Część I*, tab. 1; Marian Kwapiński, *Korpus kanop pomorskich. Część II – Polska środkowa i południowo-zachodnia [The Canopic Jars Corpus. Part II – Central and South-Western Poland]* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Muzeum Archeologicznego, 2007), tabs. 18, 48.

³⁹ Zoja Kołosówna, “Przedmioty kultu i zabawki z grodu kultury łużyckiej w Biskupinie” [“Cult Objects and Toys from the Lusatian Settlement in Biskupin”], in: *III Sprawozdanie z prac wykopaliskowych w grodzie kultury łużyckiej w Biskupinie w powiecie żnińskim za lata 1938-1939 i 1946-1948 [3rd Report on the Archaeological Excavations in the Lusatian Culture Settlement of Biskupin, Żnin County, 1938-1939 and 1946-1948]*, ed. Józef Kostrzewski (Poznań: Polskie Towarzystwo Prehistoryczne, 1950), pp. 193-239.

⁴⁰ Maria Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

magical or sexual objects, fertility figures, representations of the dead, talismans, ceremonial objects, territory marking items, items reflecting social connections but also dolls or toys.⁴¹ One could agree with these hypotheses or not, but – as Ewa Bugaj rightly notes – it is necessary to interpret these figurines within their multi-layered meanings and contexts, and many of the present descriptions simply lack this comparative angle.⁴² That is why for these and other interpreted items the dual context of their functions (secular and sacral) is explicitly emphasised. It is clearly visible on the example of the miniature dishes or ceramic discs. The latter are usually noted either for their utilitarian purpose – such as spindle whorls [*prześliki*],⁴³ honing stones [*gladziki*],⁴⁴ or miniature casting moulds [*prawidła odlewnicze*]⁴⁵; or attributed with magical significance, symbolising the sun

⁴¹ Lauren E. Talalay, “Body Imagery of the Ancient Aegean,” *Archaeology*, No. 44, Iss.4 (1991), pp. 46-49; Douglass W. Bailey, “Reading Prehistoric Figurines as Individuals,” *World Archaeology*, No. 25, Iss. 3 (1994), pp. 321-331; Douglass W. Bailey, “The Interpretation of Figurines: The Emergence of Illusion and New Ways of Seeing,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, No 6, Iss. 2 (1996), pp. 291-295; Douglass W. Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines. Representation and Corporeality in the Neolithic* (London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

⁴² According to Lesure’s assumption of 2002, the research procedure should be conducted at four levels: iconography, function, social role and symbols. Ewa Bugaj, “Antropomorficzne figurki pradziejowe jako źródło poznania złożoności kultury ludzkiej” [“Anthropomorphic Figurines as Sources in the Complexity of Human Nature”], in: *Sztuka pradziejowa i wczesnośredniowieczna jako źródło historyczne [Prehistoric and Early Medieval Art as Historical Sources]*, eds. Bogusław Gediga, Wojciech Piotrowski (Biskupin-Wrocław: PAN, 2008), pp. 85-103.

⁴³ Zenon Woźniak, “Młodsza faza kultury lateńskiej (celtyckiej) i grupa tyniecka” [“A Younger Phase in the La Tène (Celtic) Culture and the Tyniec Group”], in: *Prahistoria Ziem Polskich, Tom V. Późny okres lateński i okres rzymski [Prehistory of Polish Lands, Vol. V. Late La Tène and Roman Periods]*, ed. Jerzy Wielowiejski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1980), pp. 248-262.

⁴⁴ Maria Kołacz, “Osada kultury przeworskiej w Izdebnie Kościelnym, stanowisko I gmina Grodzisk Mazowiecki” [“A Przeworsk Culture Settlement in Izdebno Kościelne, Site I, Grodzisk Mazowiecki Municipality”], *Barbaricum*, No. 5 (1995), pp. 5-63.

⁴⁵ See Andrzej Mierzwiński, *Znaki utrwalone w glinie. Społeczno-obrzędowe aspekty działań wytwórczych końca epoki brązu i wczesnej epoki żelaza. Model nadodrzański [Signs Preserved in Clay. Socio-ritual Aspect of Production in Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. The River Oder Model]* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, 2003).

or the moon.⁴⁶ It is important to note here that these discs, apart from fulfilling a utilitarian function, could have also served as toys for children.⁴⁷ It is very difficult to verify this hypothesis, especially considering the fact that literature does not provide us with any specific rules for identifying a distinct category of toys. What a toy is, goes without saying: it is an item that is used by children to play with – but it is used by adults, and today also by animals.⁴⁸ Moreover, the widespread opinion among scholars of the subject is that the majority of the miniature items, which sometimes are exact copies of the objects used in prehistoric households, and those which today are inseparably connected with the world of children (rattles, bird-shaped or other zoomorphic figurines, representation of shoes, drinking horns and many others) are to be associated with the sacred sphere of life.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Bogusław Gediga, *Śladami religii Prasłowian* [*On the Traces of Pre-Slavonic Religions*] (Warszawa: Ossolineum, 1976).

⁴⁷ Z. Kołosówna, “Przedmioty kultu,” p. 233, but also Tadeusz Wieczorowski, “Rzadsze wyroby gliniane (sita, zabawki, przybory tkackie i odlewnicze)” [“Rarer Clay Objects (Sieves, Toys, Weaving and Casting Objects)”], in: *Gród prasłowiański w Biskupinie w powiecie żnińskim. Sprawozdanie z prac wykopaliskowych w latach 1936-1937 z uwzględnieniem lat 1934-1935* [*Pre-Slavonic Settlement in Biskupin, Żnin County. A Report on the Archeological Excavations in 1936-1937 and 1934-1935*], ed. Józef Kostrzewski (Poznań: Instytut Prehistoryczny Uniwersytetu Poznańskiego, 1938), p. 37; Vladimír Podborský, *Die Hallstattsiedlung in Těšetice. Fontes Archaeologici Pragenses*, Vol. 9. (Praha: Nár. muzeum, 1965), p. 56; Dietmar-Wilfried Buck, *Die Billendorfer Gruppe, Teil II-Text. Veröffentlichungen des Museums für Ur- und Frühgeschichte Potsdam, Vol. 13* (Potsdam: Bernhard Gramsch 1979), p. 131; Andrzej Krzyszowski, “Osada ludności kultury łużyckiej na stanowisku 278 (AUT 191) Poznań-Nowe Miasto” [“A Lusatian Culture Settlement on Site 278”], in: *Archeostrada. Studia i materiały z badań wykopaliskowych na autostradzie A2 – odcinek wielkopolski, Vol. 2. Poznań-Nowe Miasto. Źródła archeologiczne do studiów nad pradziejami i wczesnym średniowieczem dorzecza środkowej Warty*, ed. Henryk Machajewski and Ryszard Pietrzak (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2008), pp. 62, 63.

⁴⁸ For example, the definition of toy according to Jan Bujak in: *Zabawki w Europie. Zarys dziejów – rozwój zainteresowań* [*Toys in Europe. An Outline of History and Interests*] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1988), p. 25.

⁴⁹ See for example Gediga, *Śladami religii Prasłowian*; Bogusław Gediga, „Zagadnienia religii” [“Aspects of Religion “], in: *Prahistoria ziem polskich, Tom IV. Od środkowej epoki brązu do środkowego okresu lateńskiego*, eds. Jan Dąbrowski and Zdzisław Rajewski [*Prehistory of Polish Lands. Vol. IV. From Middle Bronze Age to Middle La Tène Period*] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1979), pp.

According to the latest research, prehistoric populations are strongly correlated with primitive societies for whom the concept of magical culture has been developed and established, and this concept in turn was adapted to refer to prehistoric communities. Within the magical culture hypothesis, such societies are characterised by – among other things – the inseparability [*monodziecinowość*] of practice and culture; thus, what is symbolic is also real, and vice versa.⁵⁰ That is why the prehistoric world is not, and cannot be, seen as a simple shift of rules that characterise contemporary societies. Does it mean that the prehistoric world was devoid of the play that brought joy and laughter? Does it mean that all the actions were coded in symbols and every action was magical? Undoubtedly, the symbolic sphere fulfils a vital role in culture: it mediates between the present of a given community and the past events that it holds important. In other words, the symbolic sphere embodies the values of the community that grant meaning to their existence, and the existence of the world of which they are part. But we need to realise the importance of laughter and the play connected with it, which need not necessarily be magical/symbolic. It is crucial to realise, emphasising the socialising, preparatory, and educational functions of a game/toy, that every game/toy embedded in a specific culture reflects the reality of the person who plays it/with it, but it also possesses some timeless aspects which prove its conservatism, and certain timeless elements.⁵¹ Children's roleplaying of

320-342; Janusz Ostoja-Zagórski, "Ornament i plastyka figuralna – sztuka pradziejowa czy przetworzona magia" ["Ornament and Figural Art – Prehistoric Art or Reworked Magic"], in: *Problemy epoki brązu i wczesnej epoki żelaza w Europie Środkowej. Księga jubileuszowa poświęcona Markowi Gedlowi [Aspects of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Central Europe. A Festschrift to Marek Gedl]*, ed. Jan Chochorowski (Kraków: Oficyna Cracovia, 1996), pp. 415-422; Bogusław Gediga, Danuta Piotrowska, eds., *Kultura symboliczna kręgu pól popielnicowych epoki brązu i wczesnej epoki żelaza w Europie środkowej [The Symbolic Culture of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Ash Circles in Central Europe]* (Warszawa: Państwowe Muzeum Archeologiczne w Warszawie, 2000).

⁵⁰ Anna Pałubicka, "Kultura a działanie" ["Culture and Action"], in: *Szkice z filozofii działań [Essays on the Philosophy of Actions]*, ed. Tadeusz Buksiński (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1991), pp. 9-20.

⁵¹ This issue has already been addressed many times; see Katarzyna Kabacińska, "Od grzechotki do... – kilka słów o zabawkach dziecięcych" ["From a Rattle to... – Some Remarks on Children's Toys"], *Studia edukacyjne*, No. 11 (2010), pp. 125-138; Kora Kowalska, "Stalość idei zabawki na przestrzeni wieków a problemy interpretacyjne w archeologii," ["The Permanence of the Idea of the Toy over Centuries and Interpretative Problems in Archaeology"], in: *Zabawka – czy tylko dla dzieci? [The Toy. Is It Only for Children?]*, eds. Marta Błaszczowska et al.

men and women becomes an important element of the socialising process, of personality formation,⁵² while human interactions involving the element of imitation and roleplaying constitute the basis on which necessary skills, vital for later functioning, are developed.⁵³

Cultures differ with regard to the extent to which they are interpersonally-oriented, that is to say, to the extent people encourage others to be friendly, selfless, generous and honest. The key factor of the significance of smiling in culture may be the assumption present in those more interpersonally-oriented cultures, that a person is responsible for other people's well-being and that he or she should support others in emotionally difficult life situations. It can lead to more frequent employment of smiling in interpersonal contacts, even with strangers.⁵⁴ Undoubtedly, the prehistoric societies were interpersonally-oriented; that is why, despite the interpretative difficulties connected with some of the items and their meanings,⁵⁵ despite our own judgements deeply rooted in the present day, despite the appreciation that archaeological sources on the basis of which the prehistoric picture can be depicted are only its vague reflection, we, nonetheless, should try to interpret even such an elusive phenomenon as laughter. Just because something is not visible does not mean it is not there.

Translated by Justyna Jajszczok

(Kraków: AT Wydawnictwo, 2013), pp. 29-41; Ewa Barnaś-Baran, "Zabawy i zabawki dziadków i wnuków," ["Games and Toys of Grandparents and Grandchildren"], accessed 12 November, 2014, <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Balogova5/subor/barnas.pdf>.

⁵² Emory A. Griffin, *Podstawy komunikacji społecznej*, trans. Olga Kubińska, Wojciech Kubiński and Magdalena Kacmajor (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Pedagogiczne, 2003), pp. 79-80. Translated from English *A First Look at Communication Theory*, Fourth Edition (Columbus: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1999).

⁵³ Caillos, *Gry i ludzie*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Piotr Szarota, *Psychologia uśmiechu [The Psychology of Smiling]* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Pedagogiczne, 2006).

⁵⁵ See Jacek Wierzbicki, "Niezidentyfikowany przedmiot gliniany z osady ludności kultury pucharów lejkowatych w Poganicach, pow. słupski, stan. 4" ["An Unidentified Clay Object from a Funnelbeaker Culture Settlement in Poganice, Słupsk County, Site 4"], *Folia Praehistorica Posnaniensia*, Vol. 17 (2012), pp. 437-446.

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