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## The roles of journalistic YouTubers in the example of drama channels in Poland

### Introduction

“Commentary channels”<sup>1</sup> are extremely popular in Poland. Suffice it to say, in this country, whose total population was ca. 38 million<sup>2</sup> in 2021, video content by Sylwester Wardęga, one of the most popular “commentary” YouTubers, reached over a million views<sup>3</sup>. Polish YouTubers who discuss “dramas” include “veterans”, such as the aforementioned Sylwester Wardęga, who has been publishing since 2011, and Tomasz Działowy (Gimper), who previously gained popularity by producing alternative types of content (pranks<sup>4</sup>, video game commentaries, and music) and have

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1 In the Polish language, the English word “commentary” is most used to describe a YouTube channel, but also its creator and video content. It is commonly used to refer to channels that are referred to in the English-language academic literature as “drama channels” or “tea channels”, which mainly involve disputes between YouTube creators, and, in a broader sense, channels whose authors create videos on issues that are important to their audience (concerning both the “real world” and the online community, i.e. what is called “commentary channels” in Polish). The term “drama channels” is not used in the Polish language, but YouTubers’ conflicts are referred to as “drama” (the English-language version of this word is used). Similarly, although the term “cancel culture” already has Polish equivalents, i.e. “kultura anulowania” and “kultura unieważniania”, the English-language phrase is still more commonly used in Poland.

2 *Population Total*, The World Bank, [on-line:] <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PL> – 25.10.2022.

3 Sylwester Wardęga has published 24 videos on his channel Wataha-Krulestwo since the beginning of 2022, and as many as 20 of them have at least one million views. His most viewed video: WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Leksiu przerywa milczenie – przesłuchanie* [Leksiu stops being silent – listening, YouTube, 2022, February, 18, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Yo78STUujk> – 4.11.2022.

4 Sylwester Wardęga was the creator of “Mutant Giant Spider Dog”, which in 2014 became the most popular YouTube video worldwide, garnering 179M views. Luckerson, V. *These Were the Most Popular Videos on YouTube in 2014*, “Time” 2014, December, 9, [on-line:] <https://time.com/3625337/youtube-most-popular-videos-2014> – 4.11.2022. In the

now found their way into the commentary creator role. “Commentary” is also published by younger creators<sup>5</sup>, such as Revo, who joined the YouTube community in 2015 but whose number of channel views and subscriptions only began to grow a little over a year ago<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, few publications in Polish academic and popular literature are dedicated to this issue. Polish researchers Julia Piotrowska and Katarzyna Bogucka, who work for the WeNet Group S.A. marketing agency, discuss “commentary channels”. Commentary (drama) channels are also mentioned by Angèle Christin and Rebecca Lewis, who focused on the content of English-speaking channels. This research is in response to their suggestion for additional scholars to address the related issues, stating, “We hope that future studies will examine drama creation beyond English-speaking social media”<sup>7</sup>.

### Commentary (drama) creators and channels in Poland

There are several reasons for the emergence of Polish commentary (drama) channels. It can be argued that their creators were inspired by the American YouTubers’ critique of *beauty* content<sup>8</sup>. In contrast to the mainstream media, Polish and English-language “commentary” channels generate information about influencers 24 hours, seven days a week, because they have the most up-to-date information<sup>9</sup>. According to Dominik Bos, a commentary creator, there has been an increased interest in creating this kind of video content in Poland since 2016, driven by the increased popularity of English-speaking YouTubers such as Calvin Lee Vail (Leafy is Here), Niall Comas (Pyrocynical), and Ian Kane Johma (born Washburn; iDubbbzTV2). Dominik Bos points out that two groups of commentary channels have emerged in Poland (and beyond):

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video, a dog named Chica, dressed up as a spider, stirs emotions among random passers-by. Mutant Giant Spider Dog has been viewed 183M[!] times to date. SA Wardega, Mutant Giant Spider Dog (SA Wardega), YouTube, 2014, September, 4, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoB8t0B4jx4> – 4.11.2022. Wikipedia contributors, *Mutant Giant Spider Dog*, [on-line:] [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mutant\\_Giant\\_Spider\\_Dog&oldid=1053648677](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mutant_Giant_Spider_Dog&oldid=1053648677) – 4.11.2022.

5 In terms of the number of subscribers and video views on YouTube.

6 Social Blade, *EssentialMusicTV*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCMj4ez5IaKJ1dLes8E54RHw> – 4.02.2023; Revo, *Konopski zacierza ślady po aferze z Leksiem (Stanowski, Popo, Unboxall, Gimper, Najman, Wardęga)* [Konopski covers his tracks after Leksiugate (Stanowski, Popo, Unboxall, Gimper, Najman, Wardęga)], YouTube, 2022, January, 15, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23-noDsHcig> – 5.11.2022.

7 A. Christin & R. Lewis, *The Drama of Metrics: Status, Spectacle, and Resistance Among YouTube Drama Creators*. “Social Media + Society” 2021, nr 7(1), pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121999660>.

8 MT, *To oni śledzą największe dramy internetu! Newsy/kejsy*, BrandBuddies. Platforma|Agencja, 2022, February, 16, [on-line:] <https://www.brandbuddies.pl/news/420-kanaly-commentary-to-hit-na-czym-polega-ich-popularnosc> – 3.02.2023.

9 WATAHA-Krulstwo, *Nowy program Wardęgi* [Wardęga’s new show], YouTube, 2016, April, 19, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK0bszzGa5c&list=PLhRtxgsX0G-Pq8pWuPWx4dJWPbBeHdb971&index=5> – 3.02.2023.

[...] from the very beginning, two types of commentary channels could be distinguished. Channels which made an effort, such as iDubbz, where the channel creator strived to ensure that his opinion was not just a stupid commentary poured into a microphone, but actually made some contribution [...] and the other category of commentary, channels which were much easier to produce, those which were much less ambitious and often consisted of vulgar or primitive commentary [...] in the analogous period in Poland [...] on the one hand we had channels that strived to do something worthwhile, and on the other hand commentaries with game play in the background, 90 per cent of which was simply low-value content [...]<sup>10</sup>.

It should be noted that this article does not directly address the role of Polish commentary channels within contemporary journalism, as the author did not assess the journalistic competence of the “commentary” channels identified. Nonetheless, Polish commentary channels present news relevant to the YouTube community and show the chronology of specific events. Their producers have been known to gather information or even conduct independent investigations, discussing the achievements of influencers and educating their audience. They, therefore, can be considered representative of a growing group of digital social actors, which Dennis Lichtenstein, Martin R. Herbers, and Halina Bause dub “journalistic YouTubers”<sup>11</sup>. As described by the aforementioned researchers, journalistic YouTubers create and disseminate up-to-date political and societal news, combining traditional text-based blogging practices with the audiovisual presentation characteristic of participatory (community) culture<sup>12</sup>. They are competent social media users (meaning interactive and having an awareness of the associated algorithms). According to Dennis Lichtenstein and his colleagues, peripheral digital actors play the roles once intended for traditional journalism; they either compete with traditional journalism or complement it. In fact, they perceive themselves as journalists (apart from amateurs who talk about the issues they find important and who see themselves as ordinary citizens). According to Lichtenstein et al., these digital actors tend to assume the monitorial role, but they also play accommodative and interventionist roles. In the cited researchers’ view, peripheral digital actors fill the gap in traditional (newsroom) journalism by discussing and giving a platform to underrepresented topics or opinions. Social media has allowed them to generate inexpensive content in line with their personal preferences and to respond to audience demand. At the same time, a dedicated algorithm tracks engagement. As Dennis Lichtenstein and his colleagues point out, for many peripheral actors, successful performance involves expressing opinions and demonstrating a personal style of communication that creates an impression of the creators’ authenticity and assumes responsibility for the content

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10 D. Bos, „Orły” – commentary sięgnęło dna [„Orły”- commentary (drama channels) hit rock bottom], YouTube, 2018, March, 31, [on-line:] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hyk2BW0K6\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hyk2BW0K6_8) – 3.02.2023.

11 D. Lichtenstein, M. R. Herbers & H. Bause, *Journalistic YouTubers and Their Role Orientations, Strategies, and Professionalization Tendencies*, “Journalism Studies” 2021, vol. 22(9), pp. 1103–1122, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2021.1922302.

12 Commentators are often also a type of influencers. It is worth adding that in accordance with the “Prawo Prasowe” [Press Law Act], YouTubers, even those who describe themselves as amateurs, are responsible for their statements, just like any journalist.

being communicated. Current digital actors consider their viewers to be well-qualified, interested, and active individuals and emphasise their personal experiences and judgments. They present their content in a playful, conversational manner, allowing for interactivity<sup>13</sup>.

### Roles of commentary (drama) creators in Poland

As mentioned, little academic research exists concerning Polish-speaking commentary channels. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question.

**RQ1:** What roles do commentators who speak to their audience on YouTube “commentary” channels attribute to themselves versus the roles their audiences assign to them?

To answer this question, the author performed a content analysis of Polish-language commentary channels published between 2016 and 2022. To select representative examples of Polish-speaking commentary channels, the author first determined which creators could be considered commentary creators. In this respect, Erwing Goffman’s understanding of a social role was adopted as a guideline:

Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance, and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a ‘part’ or ‘routine’ [...] When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, a social relationship is likely to arise. Defining social role as the enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status, we can say that a social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on a series of occasions to the same kinds of audience or to an audience of the same persons<sup>14</sup>.

According to Erwing Goffman, a social role can be considered from the perspective of the performer of the role and their audience. For the purpose of this research, a channel can be regarded as a commentary if it fulfils the following three conditions:

1. The YouTubers themselves refer to their channel as such.
2. The YouTuber is recognised as a representative of this genre by the YouTube community.
3. The YouTuber adds the “#commentary” hashtag under the videos they select for commentary to label their work’s genre<sup>15</sup>.

The content analysis began by typing the phrase “commentary” into the YouTube search engine. The following filters were applied: “Upload date” – “This year”;

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<sup>13</sup> D. Lichtenstein, M. R. Herbers & H. Bause, *Journalistic YouTubers and Their Role Orientations, Strategies, and Professionalization Tendencies*, “Journalism Studies” 2021, vol. 22(9), pp. 1103–1122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1922302>.

<sup>14</sup> E. Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, 1956, [on-line:] [https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman\\_Erving\\_The\\_Presentation\\_of\\_Self\\_in\\_Everyday\\_Life.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf) – 29.05.2023.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

“Type” – “Video”; “Sort by” – “Relevance.”<sup>16</sup> To collect current “commentary” content creator and channel data, videos published in the last calendar year (from 10 July 2021 until 10 July 2022) were considered. The resulting research material included publicly available YouTube videos diverse in language, form, and content but not necessarily related to the research question adopted. This result is because the meaning of the word “commentary” in English is very broad. However, when the search was limited to the content in Polish, the resulting material was fully relevant to this study.

Based on the analysed YouTube content, the researcher selected a preliminary group of 15 representatives from 13 “commentary” channels in Poland. There were Dominik Bos<sup>17</sup>, Boxdel (Michał Baron) and Trapulfik<sup>18</sup>, Maciej Dąbrowski<sup>19</sup>, Dramcia<sup>20</sup>, Gargamel<sup>21</sup>, Gimper<sup>22</sup> (Tomasz Działowy), Konopsky<sup>23</sup>, Nitro<sup>24</sup>, Prostracja<sup>25</sup>, Revo<sup>26</sup> (Tomasz Bagiński), Mateusz Spysiński<sup>27</sup>, Maja Staško, Sylwester Wardęga<sup>28</sup>, and Zebo<sup>29</sup>.

Snowball sampling was applied, which is the same method that Angèle Christin and Rebecca Lewis used to identify interrelated English-speaking drama

16 Search results for: “commentary” (as of 10.07.2022) and “Upload date” – “This year”, “Type” – “Video content”, “Sort by” – “Relevance”. YouTube search engine, retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=commentary&sp=EgIIBQ%253D%253D](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=commentary&sp=EgIIBQ%253D%253D).

17 Social Blade, *Dominik Bos*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCvufartoVu2ScVS7R6TsB6A> – 4.02.2023.

18 Not all YouTubers can be identified by name and surname. Some representatives of the “commentary” do not reveal their face either (for instance Zebo, who appears in a zebra mask in his videos). Social Blade, *Aferki*, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/aferkitv> – 4.02.2023.

19 Social Blade, *Z Dvpy*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/programzdupy> – 4.02.2023.

20 Social Blade, *Dramcia*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/dramcia> – 4.02.2023.

21 Social Blade, *GargamelVlog*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/gargamelvlog> – 4.02.2023.

22 Social Blade, *Tomasz gimper działowy*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/gimperr> – 4.02.2023.

23 Social Blade, *Konopsky*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/konopsky> – 4.02.2023.

24 Social Blade, *TheNitroZyniak*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/thenitrozyniak> – 4.02.2023.

25 Social Blade, *Prostracja*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/prostracja> – 4.02.2023.

26 Social Blade *EssentialMusicTV*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCMj4ez51aKj1dLes8E54RHw> – 4.02.2023.

27 Social Blade, *Mateusz Spysiński*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/zyjtakjakchcesz> – 4.02.2023.

28 Social Blade, *Wataha-Krulestwo*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/krulestwo> – 4.02.2023.

29 Social Blade, *ZeboPL*, YouTube, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/zebopl> – 4.02.2023.

channels<sup>30</sup>. The first step was to analyse the profile information, the list of current playlists, and the content of all videos on the channels of the commentary creators listed above, published between 10 July 2021 and 10 July 2022. The commentary creators' audience comments under each video were reviewed, and YouTube celebrity responses were specifically analysed. This process mirrors that of Angèle Christin and Rebecca Lewis, who watched commentary videos, one after another, to better understand the media genre they were describing in their research. They also used YouTube's algorithm prompts<sup>31</sup>. The next step was to search for information about the selected commentary creators in scholarly and popular texts, i.e., to review academic articles about the selected commentary creators. This included one about Sylwester Wardęga and his earlier activities (pranks); interviews and statements given by the representatives of commentary channels on YouTube and in other media, as well as fragments of their live shows (shorts) uploaded on YouTube. The research also accessed older commentary content published on the channels of the selected creators, electing to begin from the earliest published video<sup>32</sup>.

Thanks to the research material collected, it became apparent that not all of the selected commentary channels focus solely on creating commentary content. Some of the YouTubers described in this paper had/have more than one YouTube channel. Usually, these channels differ in terms<sup>33</sup> of content, "commentary" being the central theme in only one of them, most likely because they were/are involved in creating other types of content. For example, Sylwester Wardęga used to post pranks on his channel "SA Wardega",<sup>34</sup> garnering 3.6 million subscribers. The last video on that channel was posted in early 2019 and also saw a considerable audience (2.8 million views). Zebo, on the other hand, as a maritime enthusiast, has been running a separate channel, *Statki* (Ships), since 2021 (42.1 thousand subscribers; Social Blade

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30 A. Christin & R. Lewis, *The Drama of Metrics: Status, Spectacle, and Resistance Among YouTube Drama Creators*. "Social Media + Society" 2021, no 7(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121999660> – 4.01.2023.

31 A. Christin & R. Lewis, *The Drama of Metrics: Status, Spectacle, and Resistance Among YouTube Drama Creators*. "Social Media + Society" 2021, no. 7(1), pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121999660> – 4.01.2023.

32 Some creators, despite having set up their channel many years ago, do not currently share old material there e.g., the first video published by Zebo from the ZeboPL channel that is currently available on YouTube is an 11-second intro "Witam na moim kanale" [Welcome to my channel], which was posted on 18 March 2017, whereas his account was set up on 13 October 2012. Other creators, such as Sylwester Wardęga, although they did not officially comment on issues that are important to the YouTube community, would publish videos with such content from time to time e.g., in 2015, Sylwester Wardęga commented on his channel on a video of a young creator who allegedly slashed his face to resemble Polish rapper and MMA fighter Popek. WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Młody chłopak okaleczył swoją twarz* [The young man mutilated himself in the face], YouTube, 2015, July, 13, [on-line:] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYxq3Nt\\_tos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYxq3Nt_tos) – 3.02.2023.

33 SA Wardega, *Epic Statue Prank (SA Wardega) feat. The Hungama Films*, YouTube, 2019, February, 3, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH48ISqHdAY> – 5.01.2023.

34 Social Blade, *SA Wardega*, 2022, [on-line:] <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/wardegasa> – 4.02.2023.

Statki, 2022), where he posts interesting facts about sea vessels, including the most famous maritime disasters<sup>35</sup>. Mateusz Spysiński<sup>36</sup> has set up individual playlists for the creators he reviews and their channels, including Psycho Couple, Klaudeliza, and Queen of The Black, Ela Gawin. He dedicated a separate playlist to the lawsuits he has been threatened with or received for commenting on the behaviour and activities of various individuals online [sic!]. The playlists, due to their selective nature and the fact that there is no obligation to create them and add material to them, played only a supporting role in this study. Above all, the playlists organised chronologically the individual plots of the “dramas” described/held by the representatives of “commentary” channels. Much appreciated by the YouTube community, “commentary” creator Jakub Chuptyś (nickname Gargamel)<sup>37</sup> of the GargamelVlog channel (created in 2010), which currently has 982 thousand subscribers (On 5 November 2022; Social Blade GargamelVlog, 2022), has not added any video in the last calendar year. Although, the last video published on this channel has reached 3.8 million views<sup>38</sup>. It was also impossible to extract some of the statistics on Maja Staśko, as she does not have her own channel on YouTube.

The Sergiusz Górski’s popular channel (“The NitroZyniak”), on the other hand, is an excellent example of “commentary” videos not being the dominant content among a given creator’s material. In fact, they do not necessarily generate the highest number of views [sic!]. Currently, the highest number of views on this channel (13 million on 5 November 2022) was obtained by the music video titled “SENTINO X NITRO X MASNY BEN – TRÓJKĄT BERMUDZKI”<sup>39</sup>. The same is true for Gimper (Tomasz Działowy), whose music video BOMBSITE B saw as many as 4.2 million views on 5 November 2022<sup>40</sup>.

As mentioned, Polish commentary creators have roles in the YouTube community similar to those that Dennis Lichtenstein and his colleagues reference. However, it is difficult to assign them to one of these categories. In fact, following Erwing Goffan’s thought, it can be concluded that the creators “embody” many of such roles. Usually, they do it voluntarily, and they, in a way, announce the tasks they perform. For this reason and this research, the author developed terminology to reflect the associated nuances. This nomenclature is also used by the comment creators and other YouTube community members and includes **sheriff, leader, investigator, king of entertainment, and guide**. Some roles, however, are attributed

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35 *Information*, [in:] Statki, *YouTube*, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/c/Statki/about> – 21.07.2022.

36 *The “Mateusz Spysiński” channel. All playlists*, *YouTube*, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/c/zyitakjakchcesz/playlists?view=58> – 22.07.2023.

37 Wikipedia contributors, *Jakub Chuptyś*, [on-line:] [https://pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jakub\\_Chupty%C5%9B&oldid=68433870](https://pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jakub_Chupty%C5%9B&oldid=68433870) – 5.11.2022.

38 GargamelVlog, *Twój NAJGORSZY dzień w PRACY* [Your worst day at work], *YouTube*, 2021, March, 13, [on-line:] <https://youtu.be/-QmyosHh-kU> – 4.06.2023.

39 TheNitroZyniak, *Sentino x nitro x masny ben – Trójkąt Bermudzki* [Sentino, Nitro, Masny Ben – Bermuda Triangle], *YouTube*, 2022, March, 22, [on-line:] [https://youtu.be/0FT-PCEw\]pCY](https://youtu.be/0FT-PCEw]pCY) – 5.11.2022.

40 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Gimpson x Friz x Mamiko x Remo – BOMBSITE B.*, *YouTube*, 2022, July, 24, [on-line:] <https://youtu.be/BttjSmLiv4o> – 21.11.2022.

to commentary creators mainly by critics or by the audience who watch them, e.g., judges, manipulators, psychologists, and authority figures (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1: Example roles of commentary creators



Source: current study.

The first role discussed is sheriff, the leader of a particular community, which Sylwester Wardęga of the WATAHA-Krulestwo channel assigned to himself. He decided that, together with his audience, he would take care of the YouTube community, force creators to check diligently the advertising collaborations they establish and adopt a responsible attitude towards the content they publish. From the tone of Wardęga's speech, it could be inferred that he had a significant influence on his audience and their online activities. Moreover, his actions could cause a "domino effect" and indirectly contribute to the financial gains or losses of those YouTubers he deemed to be "dishonest" and the brands they represented. As he stated:

[...] When such a creator enters into cooperation with a big brand, we will use the force of thousands of men to boycott the brand in the media, thus leading to the termination of the collaboration or to flawing the brand's image on the Internet. This will make brands think twice before they start working with a scammer, and ultimately, in fear of lost collaborations, no more scams will get advertised. [...]<sup>41</sup>.

Sylwester Wardęga's statements seem to convey a "romantic" vision of a sheriff taken straight from classic Westerns rather than an official as traditionally defined<sup>42</sup>.

41 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Friz oskarża mnie o brak honoru* (Wersow, Natsu, Ekipa, Team X) [Friz accuses me of absence honour (Wersow, Natsu, Ekipa, Team X), YouTube, 2021, September, 14, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WnwnFEa3m4> – 5.11.2022.

42 The beginnings and development of the sheriff's office are described, among other places, on the website of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, where it is emphasised that it originated in the early Middle Ages and, historically, was an official responsible for a given county area. *History of the Sheriff. North Carolina Sheriffs' Association* [official site], [on-line:] <https://ncsheriffs.org/about/history-of-the-sheriff> – 17.01.2023.



The leader figure of “Wataha” created for the audience is more in line with a stereotypical defender, as referred to by Jakub Rudnicki<sup>43</sup>.

This is reflected in the visual layer of the video Wardęga created and in his monologue, as he declared:

I know I am going to be criticised in the influencers’ community, but I am ready for that. **I know that content will be created attacking me for being a self-appointed sheriff**<sup>44</sup>. I am fully aware that I’m a vindictive prick, but I’m fine with that. Some of you may not support the idea. Everyone has a right to have their own opinion. However, if you want to participate, I invite you to discord. You will find the link in the description [...] If you are an influencer who advertised scam, just apologise and you can rest easy, and don’t you ever do it again. [...]<sup>45</sup>.

Commentary creators realise that they perform the role of a “show” host for their audience. In 2016, Sylwester Wardęga invited viewers to watch his new broadcast/format, “Wardęga Show”<sup>46</sup>. Although he has published only five videos/episodes in this series, they provide an important example that confirms the seminal conclusions made in relation to drama channels by Rebecca Lewis and Angèle Christin as they discussed the issue of cancel culture<sup>47</sup>. Following Henry Jenkins’ thought, they characterised the video materials created by drama creators in this way:

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43 According to Jakub Rudnicki, “However, Wild West was not only about the pursuit of freedom or search for land to farm, but also about the desire for adventure, fame and fortune. The gold rush led to an upsurge in crime, which influenced the emergence of the myth of the eternal antagonists, namely the sheriff and the outlaw”. J. Rudnicki, *The myth of the Wild West in the post-war Polish prose narratives of Warmia and Masuria in 1945–1989*, “Prace Literaturoznawcze” [Papers in Literature], 2013, no. 1, pp. 129–139, [on-line:] <https://czasopisma.uwm.edu.pl/index.php/pl/article/view/1198> – 4.02.2023.

44 This excerpt from Sylwester Wardęga’s speech is illustrated with a snippet of a stock video of a sheriff putting down the newspaper and standing up, revealing his sheriff’s badge, and holstering his gun. The video is available for purchase on Shutterstock: JHDT Productions. A cowboy from the American wild west era lowers his newspaper to reveal a sheriff badge then gets up and leaves with an annoyed expression [!] [ID] 5053142. shutterstock.com.

45 SA Wardega, *Mutant Giant Spider Dog* (SA Wardega), YouTube, 2014, September, 4, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoB8t0B4jx4> – 4.11.2022.

46 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Nowy program Wardęgi* [Wardęga’s new show], YouTube, 2016, April, 19, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKObszzGa5c&list=PLhRtxgsX0G-Pq8pWuPWx4dJWPbBeHdb971&index=5> – 3.02.2023. Sylwester Wardęga named his project in the second episode of the “Wardęga Show” series of videos. Moreover, the first video in the series included some references to talk show, e.g. Sylwester Wardęga used the terms “broadcast” or “format” interchangeably. WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Jak zarabiać 5 mln z reklam na YouTube – Maciej Dąbrowski “Z Dupy” i Wardęga* [How to earn 5 million from youtube ads – Maciej Dąbrowski “Z Dupy” and “Wardęga”], YouTube, 2016, April, 25, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2klvM0F5te0&list=PLhRtxgsX0GPq8pWuPWx4dJWPbBeHdb971&index=4> – 21.10.2022.

47 R. Lewis & A. Christin, *Platform drama: “Cancel culture,” celebrity, and the struggle for accountability on YouTube*, “New Media + Society” 2022, vol. 24(7), pp. 1632–1656, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221099235>.

Their popular videos can be analysed as a hybrid genre bringing together several earlier media formats, including celebrity tabloids, reality TV, daily talk shows, and YouTube's remix culture<sup>48</sup>.

In preparation for this series, Sylwester Wardęga set up a TV-like studio. In his first video material on this subject, titled "Nowy program Wardęgi" [Wardęga's new show], he said that he was going to make his video podcast like TV shows:

[...] it's going to be professional like on TV, er, I've also bought an armchair and I'm going to invite guests, there's going to be a guest sitting here and I'm going to lean forward like Jimmy Kimmel and talk to them e.g., ask them about what they think about a particular issue. [...] What are we going to talk about? Mainly about people on social media, with a lot of emphasis on YouTubers of course, because this is where I feel most confident [...] <sup>49</sup>.

Some traces of the entertaining or satirical nature of the "commentary" material can also be found in the description of the channels, their creators' statements, the words of the influencers they comment on, web services about YouTubers<sup>50</sup>, and others. Mateusz Spysiński described himself on YouTube as the "Stańczyk<sup>51</sup> of Polish YouTube"<sup>52</sup>. The official profile of Dramcia, on the other hand, includes the following statement:

Howdy, I'm Dramcia! I create commentary-style material (which is in fact just silly stuff on the Internet with a pinch of satire, although it might be of value to someone).

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48 H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York University Press, New York, 2006; R. Lewis & A. Christin, *Platform drama: "Cancel culture," celebrity, and the struggle for accountability on YouTube* "New Media + Society" 2022, vol. 24(7), pp. 1632–1656, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221099235>.

49 WATAHA-Krullestwo, *Jak zarabiać 5 mln z reklam na YouTube – Maciej Dąbrowski "Z Dupy" i Wardęga* [How to earn 5 million from youtube ads – Maciej Dąbrowski "Z Dupy" and "Wardęga"], YouTube, 2016, April, 25, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2klvM-0F5te0&list=PLhRtxgsX0GPq8pwuPWx4dJWPbBeHdb971&index=4> – 21.10.2022.

50 Among the 13 commentary channels mentioned in the article (on 5 November 2022): three were categorised by Social Blade as "Entertainment" videos, eight were assigned to the "People" category, one to the "Games" category, and one to the "Comedy" category (Social Blade, *Aferki*, 2022; Social Blade, *Dominik Bos*, 2022; Social Blade, *Z Dupy*, 2022; Social Blade, *Dramcia*, 2022; Social Blade, *GargamelVlog*, 2022; Social Blade, *Tomasz gimper działowy*, 2022; Social Blade, *Konopsky*, 2022; Social Blade, *TheNitroZyniak*, 2022; Social Blade, *Prostracja*, 2022; Social Blade, *EssentialMusicTV*, 2022; Social Blade, *Mateusz Spysiński*, 2022; Social Blade, *Wataha-Krullestwo*, 2022; Social Blade, *ZeboPL*, 2022).

51 Stańczyk (ca. 1480-1560) (Polish pronunciation: [ˈstɔɲʧɨk]) was a Polish court jester, the most famous in Polish history. He was employed by three Polish kings: Alexander, Sigismund the Old and Sigismund Augustus. Wikipedia contributors, *Stańczyk*, [on-line:] <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sta%C5%84czyk&oldid=1106525576> – 12.11.2022.

52 *Information*, Mateusz Spysiński, YouTube, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/c/zyjtakjakchcesz/about> – 21.01.2023.

I don't aim to offend anyone, and I wouldn't want viewers to offend the creators I talk about<sup>53</sup>.

The entertaining and sensationalist nature of the content provided by the commentary creators is also evidenced by the description of the channel published by Tomasz Bagiński (Revo):

Hi, if you are, here you're probably interested in dramas and scandals, and I happen to be discussing them 😊 [...]<sup>54</sup>.

As he was describing his role as a commentary creator, Mateusz Spysiński emphasised:

When I'm making these videos here, I kind of put on a mask [to pretend] that ha ha... irony... I'm commenting. It's supposed to be all funny, it's supposed to be cool, so that you guys laugh. When you watch my live shows, it's a bit different, and I show myself more, but here on YouTube, it's a creation [...]<sup>55</sup>.

The role of an "investigator", which Revo (Tomasz Bagiński) attributed to himself, is by no means less exciting. In the material commenting on Gimper's (Tomasz Działowy) entering the ranks of the "commentary" creators, he stated:

And for it not to be too sweet, I have encountered opinions that Gimper is, in fact, simply following the trends, and, as you can see when you look at the figures, commentary arouses a lot of interest. But even if this is the case, if Gimper does his job diligently and if he verifies information and publishes well-polished material, it doesn't really matter what his motives are. Personally, I know that due to the responsibility for your own words, this sort of investigative commentary provides a lot of excitement, [and] when investigating a case, you can feel the involvement, that adrenaline rush, and that in itself is a motivation, so I can imagine that Gimper simply felt it, too<sup>56</sup>.

It is not uncommon for commentary creators to use the terminology, methods, and forms of investigation used in investigative journalism. The very word "investigation" is sometimes included in the titles of videos, e.g., *Wyjaśniam AFERĘ BUDOWLANĄ-MOJE ŚLEDZTWO!* [*I explain THE BUILDING SCANDAL – MY INVESTIGATION!*]<sup>57</sup>.

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53 *Information*, Dramcia, YouTube, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/c/Dramcia/about> – 21.01.2023.

54 *Information*, [in:] Revo, YouTube, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/c/Essential-MusicTV/about> – 21.10.2022.

55 M. Spysiński, *Umysł Klaudelizy* [the mind of KLAUDELIZA], YouTube, 2019, April, 29, [on-line:] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_eNFLe\\_G9Uk&list=PLrmZq2WctjViLgUpdK-wxb00Tubc20QjhQ&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eNFLe_G9Uk&list=PLrmZq2WctjViLgUpdK-wxb00Tubc20QjhQ&index=3) – 24.06.2023.

56 Revo, *Konopski zacięra ślady po aferze z Leksiem (Stanowski, Popo, Unboxall, Gimper, Najman, Wardęga)* [Konopski covers his tracks after Leksiugate (Stanowski, Popo, Unboxall, Gimper, Najman, Wardęga)], YouTube, 2022, January, 15, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23-noDsHcig> – 5.11.2022.

57 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Wyjaśniam aferę budowlaną – moje śledztwo!* [I'm explaining on the construction site case – my investigation!], YouTube, 2022, February, 24, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eyqE2tyZ4s> – 21.11.2022.

They often use provocation against other commentary creators; for instance, Sylwester Wardęga admitted that when he said to Konopsky:

A month ago, I predicted exactly what arguments you would use, so I decided that we should play chess, and I would let you beat yourself. So that the audience could get a clear picture of how you cheat<sup>58</sup>.

Commentary creators benefit from the support of their audience, who provide them with the latest information on influencers and even on other viewers [!]. This was mentioned, for example, by Mateusz Spysiński, who said,

I have noticed a trend, too, that viewers of commentary channels also want to play commentary on other viewers, for example [...] <sup>59</sup>.

It is sometimes the case that representatives of the “commentary” form “teams of researchers”. As an aside, the way in which such a “team” is built, financed, and works by Konopsky is criticised by some commentary creators<sup>60</sup>.

Information about controversial influencers’ “collaborations” is also provided to commentary creators by disgruntled “clients” from among the influencers’ audience. As noted by Revo (Tomasz Bagiński):

There is no point in blocking commentary channels, because very often it is your own audience, people you want to feed with crap, who submit material and videos. You can't block everyone, so it's better to just let it go<sup>61</sup>.

The extent to which the “investigative methods” used by commentary creators are substantiated by the gravity of the “crime” committed is worth pondering. As is well known, the concept of “investigative journalism” is a quasi-legal notion which, although not reflected in legal acts, is in many aspects related to the issue of criminal procedure:

[Its] subject [...] of interest is to detect and disclose to the public the crimes that harm the order of public life and make it pathological, e.g. corruption at the level of central and local authorities, nepotism, abuse of power, putting the State Treasury at a risk of a huge financial loss. Moreover, investigative journalism steps in when an individual becomes

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58 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Sprytny Konopski* (Wardęga, Konopsky) [Clever Konopski (Wardęga, Konopsky), YouTube, 2022, July, 20, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv19bs5vnLQ> – 21.03.2023.

59 M. Spysiński, *Rafatus wraca i nagrywa commentary* [Rafatus returns and records commentary (content)], YouTube, 2022, June, 4, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxvcvKrZQME> – 24.06.2023.

60 ZeboPl, *Ostateczna odpowiedź Wardęgi* [Final Wardęga's answer], YouTube, 2022, June, 23, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi1kmDaQdNg> – 5.11.2022.

61 Revo, *Magiczne mydło i znikające zegarki* (*ewelona, szponer, flychanelle, dubiel, lexy*) [The magic soap and a disappearing watches (Ewelona, Szponer, Flychanelle, Dubiel, Lexy)], YouTube, 2021, August, 21 [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TJAeKGofFw> – 21.10.2022.

powerless in the face of incompetence and unreliability of state authorities, including procedural ones<sup>62</sup>.

According to Ewa Kowalewska-Borys:

[...] In justified circumstances, investigative journalism activities may even violate privacy and the intimate sphere, including that of public figures [...]<sup>63</sup>.

Commentary creators share their reflections on a variety of issues. These range from products advertised by influencers, such as soap that “cleans our energy”, headphones<sup>64</sup>, teeth-whitening kits, and products<sup>65</sup>, to a fundraiser organised by an influencer for a dog<sup>66</sup>, videos discussing the possibility of locating TikTokers’ private addresses<sup>67</sup> or cases that could be (or are) the subject of criminal proceedings<sup>68</sup>. It is sometimes the case that representatives of “commentary” channels go beyond the role of an investigator and take on the role of a “judge” and pass their “judgments” on whether other YouTubers behaved properly towards other creators or their audience/fans. This was mentioned by Dramcia, who noted that:

[...] commentary channels are not a court before which you have to explain yourself, although I do get the impression that this kind of aura has started to build up [...]<sup>69</sup> (Dramcia, 20 May 2022).

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62 M. Kędzierska, „Śledztwo dziennikarskie” – wybrane zagadnienia [“Journalistic investigation” – selected issues], „Prokuratura i Prawo” 2007, nr 4, pp. 45–57.

63 E. Kowalewska Borys, *O śledztwie dziennikarskim uwag kilka* [A few remarks about the journalistic investigation], [in:] *System wymiaru sprawiedliwości a media* [The system of justice vs the media], red. C. Kulesza, Temida, Białystok 2009, pp. 95–103.

64 Revo, *Magiczne mydło i znikające zegarki (ewelona, szponer, flychanelle, dubiel, lexy)* [The magic soap and a disappearing watches (Ewelona, Szponer, Flychanelle, Dubiel, Lexy)], YouTube, 2021, August, 21 [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TJAeKGofFw> – 21.10.2022.

65 Revo, *Polskie influencerki nadal szkodzą swoim widzom* (LIL MASTI, WERSOW, OLA CIUPA) [Polish influencers still harm their viewers (Lil Masti, Wersow, Ola Ciupa)], YouTube, 2021, April, 15, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDVyFSf4ZaE> – 5.11.2022.

66 Revo, *Queen of the black wyłudziła hajs na “operację psa”?* [Did Queen of The Black extort money for a dog?] YouTube, 2021, October, 31, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTDOhrzmjI4> – 5.11.2022.

67 Prostracja, *Diskorolka – jak zostać stalkerem?* [Diskorolka – how to become a stalker?], YouTube, 2021, April, 17, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY9yj-nfgmE> – 13.01.2023.

68 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Leksiu – Jak zniszczyć człowieka?* [Leksiu – How to destroy a man?], YouTube, 2022, January, 12, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uod5xBR3GM> – 10.11.2022.

69 Dramcia, *Laluna utarła nosa kanałom commentary | recenzja internetu # 2*. [commentary (channels) were taken down a peg by Laluna | internet review # 2], YouTube, 2022, May, 20: [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMtQDf2nzSk> – 5.11.2022.

When the Deluxe BOX PREMIUM version of Ekipa Friza's album was released in 2021, with added goodies that were allegedly sourced "from Chinese online shops"<sup>70</sup>, Sylwester Wardęga addressed both the legality and the moral aspect of that venture. He stated,

When buying the album, fans were informed exactly what they were getting. To be fair, I cannot criticise Ekipa for the selection of goodies. Everyone got what they ordered. However, I also partly understand the audience. They hoped that the products would at least be produced by Ekipa [...] Still, no one was cheated as regards gifts, and it cannot be treated as a scam<sup>71</sup>.

The so-called "Leksiu Gate" [!], which led to the exclusion of influencer Leksiu (Krzysztof Lekstan) from the online community and to the conflict between commentators Sylwester Wardęga and Konopsky<sup>72</sup>, reverberated across the YouTube community. The allegations made by Konopsky against Leksiu were primarily related to the latter's correspondence with "young female viewers". Due to the morally controversial nature and the questionable legality of the influencer's conduct,

[...] apart from the fact that countless creators have commented on it, the most trending hashtag on Twitter over the following few days was *#leksiuisoverparty*<sup>73</sup>.

This affected the work and personal life of Krzysztof Lekstan, who confirmed that he even had suicidal thoughts as a result of the "media storm" that was unleashed around him<sup>74</sup>. On the other hand, Konopsky, in terms of his manner of conducting research, was somewhat ironically described by Prostracja, i.e.,

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70 Dymek, *Ekipa Friza sprzedaje GADŻETY Z ALIEXPRESS w boxie za 420 ZŁOTYCH?! Fani czują się oszukani: „MASAKRA”* [Friz's team sells ALIEXPRESS GADGETS in a box for PLN 420?! Fans felt cheated: "failure"], 2021, June, 30, [on-line:] <https://www.pudelek.pl/ekipa-friza-sprzedaje-gadzety-z-aliexpress-w-boxie-za-420-zlotych-fani-czuja-sie-oszukani-masakra-6656156435065376a> – 4.06.2023.

71 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Hipokryzja Ekipy Friza* (Wersow, Nowciax, Friz, Wujek Luki) [The hypocrisy of Ekipa Friza (Wersow, Nowciax, Friz, Wujek Luki)], YouTube, 2021, July, 26, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDSvyrbPXXY> – 5.11.2022.

72 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Leksiu gate [!] – Weryfikacja dowodów* (Team X, Konopsky, Wardęga) [Leksiugate – verification of evidence (Team X, Konopsky, Wardęga)], YouTube, 2022, January, 10, [on-line:] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aFCXSLN\\_Uk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aFCXSLN_Uk) – 13.11.2022; Tomasz gimper działowy, *Leksiu – Jak zniszczyć człowieka?* [Leksiu – How to destroy a man?], YouTube, 2022, January, 12, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uod5xBR3GM> – 10.11.2022.

73 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Leksiu – Jak zniszczyć człowieka?* [Leksiu – How to destroy a man?], YouTube, 2022, January, 12, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uod5xBR3GM> – 10.11.2022.

74 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Leksiu przerywa milczenie – psiestuchanie* (Konopsky, Wardęga, Team X, Rozmowa z Leksiem) [Leksiu stops being silent – listening (Konopsky, Wardęga, Team X, conversation with Leksiu)], YouTube, 2022, February, 18, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Yo78STUujk> – 4.11.2022.

another representative of commentary channels, as the “king of research”<sup>75</sup>. The case of Leksiu and the cancel culture that accompanied it were discussed in more detail by Maciej Dąbrowski on the “Z Dvpy” channel in the video “Wszyscy jesteśmy over party – Strzał z D”. Although he is sometimes referred to by the YouTube community as a “commentary” creator, Dąbrowski asserted when discussing the Leksiu’s case, that his aim was not to comment on the situation, discuss the chronology of events or take sides, but rather to address the issue of exclusion on the Internet, the impact of commentary channels on the “cancelling” of members of the community in which they function, and the reaction of the audience to the opinions they impose. As he stated, concerning the sense of infallibility that can be seen in some commentary creators,

[...] it was obvious that sooner or later, because of unreliable, unverified information and, above all, because of doing things too quickly, someone from the commentary channels would stumble and fall flat on the face<sup>76</sup>.

At the same time, he stressed that, in his opinion, the videos published by Konopsky were not an expression of the latter’s malice. He described Konopsky’s behaviour as follows:

Konop, on the other hand, thought the same because of the big boom for commentary channels in this country [...] because when you get such a bust of popularity and the classic pat on the back as a young lad, then you are doing a good job, and this is the sort of channels that is needed [...] It’s like playing God, the voice of the people. Vox populi vox commentary<sup>77</sup>.

He noted, however, that it is the audience watching the commentary content, the ordinary Internet users, who are the “harshes judges” and carry out the sentence:

[...] all hell breaks loose, the dogs are released, Leksiu falls silent, Twitter erupts, and the harshes judges the world has ever known – the people of the Internet – begin to pass their verdicts [...] some death wishes are even expressed and, best of all, there is practically nobody who would think – hey, wait a minute this is all legit, right? Yeah? All this evidence that’s out there, it’s 100 per cent [reliable], yes? [...]<sup>78</sup>.

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75 Prostracja, *Polscy influencerzy o wojnie w ukrainie* [Polish influencers about War in Ukraine], YouTube, 2022, March, 18, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjckBfI-HTI0> – 13.01.2023.

76 Z Dvpy, *Wszyscy jesteśmy OVER PARTY – Strzał z D* [Everyone are “over party”], YouTube, 2022, January, 13, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z01wOsFogis> – 13.01.2023.

77 Z Dvpy, *Wszyscy jesteśmy OVER PARTY – Strzał z D* [Everyone are “over party”], YouTube, 2022, January, 13, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z01wOsFogis> – 13.01.2023.

78 Z Dvpy, *Wszyscy jesteśmy OVER PARTY – Strzał z D* [Everyone are “over party”], YouTube, 2022, January, 13, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z01wOsFogis> – 13.01.2023.

Maciej Dąbrowski critically analysed the conduct of all dispute participants and then pointed out:

generally, in this situation, everyone is to blame, including us, the public. *Nemo nostrum sine culpa est* [!] None of us is without fault<sup>79</sup>.

He explained that certain matters should be dealt with by authorised services, such as the police, because by judging someone's conduct hastily, "we are destroying someone's life"<sup>80</sup>.

While some commentary creators spend too little time investigating thoroughly the issue they are discussing, others prepare for new productions meticulously. They want to play the role of a "guide" to their audience; a person who will "guide" their viewers and explain all the intricacies of the issue/conflict to them. This is the role adopted by Tomasz Działowy (Gimper), who keeps on repeating in his videos:

[...] there is a lot going on, it's easy to get lost in this thicket of opinions, information and news, but don't worry, dear viewer, my name is Tomasz Andrzej, and I will be your guide [...]<sup>81</sup>.

His supportive activity manifests in inviting experts, e.g., a lawyer or a sexologist, to appear in his videos. Gimper's attitude was evaluated positively by other commentary creators, including Revo and his audience. Under the video in which the statements of these experts were presented, "Leksiu – Jak zniszczyć człowieka" [Leksiu – How to Destroy a Man], viewers posted positive comments, including:

Great applause to you for the enormous amount of work you put into these videos. Reliable information, research, and consultation with specialists, objectivity. Keep it up like that, Tomek, the change in content is definitely for better<sup>82</sup>

and

Substantive, reliable, unbiased, which, in my opinion, is rare in this type of video. Calling, so to speak, for experts is also a very good and praiseworthy idea. In other words, [it is] one of the better commentary videos, and I am very keen to see more. Good job<sup>83</sup>.

It is worth noting here that the material analysed in this research project led the author to single out one more role that commentary creators can play, namely that of an "educator". This is the only role in the set of roles discussed here that has not been proposed by the commentary creators or their community. Yet, ignoring the educational value in the material gathered is impossible. The YouTubers invite

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79 Ibidem.

80 Ibidem.

81 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Przerażająca relacja Queen Of The Black* 🤩 [The terrifying story by Queen of the Black], YouTube, 2022, January, 18, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9KtLX90z1o> - 13.11.2022.

82 Tomasz gimper działowy, *Leksiu – Jak zniszczyć człowieka?* [Leksiu – How to destroy a man?], YouTube, 2022, January, 12, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uod5x-BR3GM> - 10.11.2022.

83 Ibidem.



experts in a particular field, and the latter share their knowledge with the audience. The creators themselves search for material that serves to verify the credibility of their comments and legitimise their opinions. Even though no videos in which the YouTubers referred to themselves as educators or were called so by their audience were located, this role is so significant that it remains included.

Sometimes, the roles adopted by the YouTube commentary creators align with their formal education. Such individuals include PsychoLoszka, who was mentioned by Tomasz Bagiński (Revo) in one of his videos. On her channel, she posts content that combines “commentary” with “psychological analysis”. We learn that Ewa (PsychoLoszka’s first name) obtained her master’s degree in psychology in 2021 from one of her videos.

Commentary creators who are in conflict with each other often accuse one another of manipulating the audience. The aforementioned dispute between Sylwester Wardęga and Konopsky is a prime example. The former accused the latter, among other things, of manipulation involving the way he presented the collected “evidence” and then was criticised by the opponent for the same thing, in reference to, among other things, the soundtrack of his videos (“dramatic tune”), “taking words out of context”, and “reducing the whole topic to a cropped Twitter screenshot”, etc. It is worth mentioning that although the conflict between those two commentary creators began with a dispute over the presentation of Leksiu’s case, it soon transformed into a personal conflict, in which they began to throw “evidence” at each other<sup>84</sup>.

It is interesting that Sylwester Wardęga, as a representative of the “commentary”, has lived to see a channel commenting on his work [sic!]. In those videos, he is sometimes referred to as an “authority figure”.

## Discussion and conclusions

The table below summarises the considerations and assertions made on the roles of journalistic YouTubers. It includes the results with comments written where necessary. The proposed categories of roles are apparent, yet the assignments can sometimes be questionable. Thus, the research initiated requires additional work.

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84 WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Sprytny Konopski* (Wardęga, Konopsky) [Clever Konopski (Wardęga, Konopsky), YouTube, 2022, July, 20, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-V19bs5vnLQ> – 21.03.2023; WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Konop mnie oskarża – odpowiadam* (Konopsky, Wardęga) [Konop charge me – I answer], YouTube, 2022, February, 10, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5w59wkgQho> – 13.11.2022; WATAHA-Krulestwo, *Konopski mnie straszy* (Leksiu, Wardęga, Konopsky) [Konopski threaten me (Leksiu, Wardęga, Konopsky)], YouTube, 2022, January, 18, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcmzsqCd-6NA> – 13.11.2022. Also: Konopsky, *Cała prawda o Wardędze* [The whole truth about Wardęga], YouTube, 2022, July, 14, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyYYkrazuno> – 13.11.2022; Konopsky, *Szczera spowiedź i odpowiedź* [Honest confession and answer], YouTube, 2022, January, 23, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-q0BmpLtUo> – 13.11.2022; Konopsky, *To Wardęga chce mnie zniszczyć* [It’s Wardęga, he wants to destroy me], YouTube, 2022, March, 24, [on-line:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCmw3eM6ZbM> – 13.11.2022.

Table. Roles of commentary creators of drama channels in Poland

| Commentary creators                 | roles of commentary creators   |  |  |       |          |        |  |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|-------|----------|--------|--|-----------------------------------|
|                                     | sheriff  | judge  | king of entertainment                                      | guide | educator | leader | manipulator  | authority                         |
|                                     | -1-  | -2-  | -3-  | -4-   | -5-      | -6-    | -7-  | -8-                               |
| Boxdel (Michał Baron) and Trapulfik | x  | x  | x  | +     | +        | +      | x  | +                                 |
| Dominik Bos                         | x  | x  | x  | +     | +        | +      | x  | +                                 |
| Dramcia                             | x  | x  | x  | +     | +        | x      | x  | x                                 |
| Konopskyy                           | +<br>He probably wouldn't call himself by that name, but the content of his comments indicates it. | +<br>He was criticised for rash judgments about Leksiu | x  | +     | +        | +      | +<br>This is what Wardęga called him               | +<br>He described himself as such |
| Maciej Dąbrowski                    | x  | x  | +  | +     | +        | x      | x  | +                                 |
| Mateusz Spysiński                   | +  | +  | +<br>He called himself the Stańczyk of the Polish Internet | +     | x        | +      | x  | x                                 |
| Nitro                               | x  | x  | +  | x     | x        | +      | x  | x                                 |
| Prostracja                          | x  | x  | x  | +     | +        | x      | x  | +                                 |
| Revo (Tomasz Bagiński)              | +  | +  | +<br>He described himself as such                          | +     | +        | +      | x  | +                                 |
| Sylwester Wardęga                   | +<br>He described himself as such  | +  | x  | +     | +        | +      | +<br>By this term, he was referred to by Konopskyy | +                                 |
| Gimper (Tomasz Działowy)            | +<br>He described himself as such  | x  | x  | +     | +        | +      | x  | +                                 |
| Zebo                                | x  | x  | x  | +     | +        | +      | x  | +                                 |

Source: author's assessment.

#### Comments:

It was considered from 10 July 2021 until 10 July 2022.

Grey colour in the cell: assessment based on the content.

This table is the result of the author's attempt to evaluate the roles. There are some people who directly admit to roles. Such include Wardęga or Spysinski. However, if someone in the YouTuber community does not refer to them by this term and does not behave evidently in this way, it is up to the researcher to

judge. For example, Investigator (Revo calls himself that), the term investigator is used by Tomasz Działowy (Gimper) in the title of his video. Psychologist, a role in line with her training (Psycho)<sup>85</sup>.

This research should be treated as a preliminary diagnosis of the problem. It establishes the emergence of Polish commentary (drama) channels was likely influenced by the flourishing of this genre/format on English-language YouTube. The material published by Polish commentary (drama) creators, like that of foreign creators, fills the information gaps that began to appear with the birth of social media. Some of them focused exclusively on sensationalist plots, conflicts between influencers, and the presentation of social media scandals with simple commentary. However, others not only started to produce videos on issues that are important to their audience, but also to provide solid explanations based on in-depth research. Representatives of Polish commentary channels voluntarily play various social roles for their audiences or are allowed to be assigned these roles. The most important roles that they themselves adopt are sheriff, investigator, leader, and **king of entertainment**. The audience usually attributes to them the role of **judge, manipulator, psychologist, or authority** (sometimes ironically). It is also worth appreciating their **educational** activity, the role identified by this author. It can be stated that commentary (drama) channels occupy an important place in the YouTube community. Even though they often present a biased point of view and, by their own admission, stir controversy, they do contribute to providing information to and educating their audience.

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### Abstract

This article looks at Polish commentary creators. Based on the content analysis of Polish commentary (“drama”), Polish representatives of this genre are identified and characterised. Then, the social roles of channel creators and those of their audiences are described. A corpus of thirteen YouTube channels in Poland and nine roles were identified. These roles are sheriff, judge, king of entertainment, guide, educator, psychologist, leader, manipulator, and authority. The study included commentary videos by selected creators, published on YouTube from 2016 until November 2022. The author's compilation and list of roles assumed by commentary writers provides a basis for further research for media and communications scholars, particularly those studying cancel culture, media convergence, and participatory culture, but also for psychologists, educators, and cultural experts. Using the research content analysis method, this study looks at drama channels to reflect on existing research to develop a critical literature analysis.

Keywords: YouTube, commentary channels, drama channels, cancel culture, journalistic YouTubers, Poland

### Nowe role dziennikarzy na przykładzie kanałów “commentary” w Polsce

#### Streszczenie

Przedmiotem badań były polskie kanały dramowe i tworzący je internetowi dziennikarze. W toku badań zidentyfikowano i scharakteryzowano polskich przedstawicieli tego gatunku, a następnie opisano role społeczne, które twórcy kanałów przypisywali sobie, oraz te, które przypisywali im odbiorcy. Wybrano korpus trzynastu kanałów YouTube w Polsce i zidentyfikowano dziewięć ról: szeryfa, sędziego, króla rozrywki, przewodnika, pedagoga, psychologa, lidera, manipulatora i autorytetu. Badaniem objęto filmy komentujące wybranych twórców,



które były publikowane na YouTube od 2016 roku do 5 listopada 2022 roku. Mająca autorski charakter próba opracowania listy ról przyjmowanych przez twórców komentarzy może stanowić podstawę do dalszych badań dla naukowców zajmujących się mediami i komunikacją, w szczególności badających kulturę unieważnioną, konwergencję mediów i kulturę uczestnictwa, ale także dla psychologów, pedagogów i kulturoznawców. Do badań wykorzystano metodę analizy zawartości kanałów dramowych oraz – do rozważań wokół stanu badań – krytyczną analizę literatury przedmiotu.

Słowa kluczowe: YouTube, kanały komentatorskie, kanały dramowe, cancel culture, journalistic YouTubers, Polska