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MULTISENSUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ISOLATION VERSUS  
INTIMACY CRISIS IN POLISH FILMS ABOUT YOUTH: *LOVE  
TASTING, SWEAT AND ALL THESE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS*

INTRODUCTION

To analyse multisensual representations of crises, we chose three films: *Love Tasting* (dir. Dawid Nickel, 2020), *Sweat* (dir. Magnus von Horn, 2020), and *All These Sleepless Nights* (dir. Michał Marczak, 2016). There are several reasons why we decided to analyse these productions. On the one hand, there are many differences among these movies—the presented characters are teenagers and young adults, coming from a big city or a small Polish town. Our aim was to show a wide range of characters in the first place. On the other hand, there are many similarities in these stories which we intend to highlight. The films were created by young directors, all born in the 1980s. They tell stories of protagonists living in contemporary Poland who struggle to find intimacy. The characters attempt to form close relationships, fight for their position in professional life or among peers and, at the same time, they try to escape from solitude. They experience very strong and powerful emotions represented on the somatic level. We observe these emotions through their reactions, their gaze or facial expression, we also recognize it in their bodies and in their sensual perceptions of the world. The characters often find themselves in a liminal space,

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struggling with their emotions, which is exhibited through their bodily reactions. These three films represent stories typical for a generation, not in the meaning of a generational voice, but rather as a fragment of reality experienced by people of a certain age. To interpret their experiences we connected perspectives derived from two disciplines—psychology and film studies. The aim of this article is a film analysis resulting from the combination of these two perspectives, highlighting the sensual aspect and focusing on the body and the emotions of the characters. So far we have not found research regarding coming-of-age movies based on connecting the psychological and sensual approach to film studies.

Despite intersectionality between psychology and film analysis,<sup>1</sup> demonstrated especially through applying the neurocognitive perspective,<sup>2</sup> the psychosocial context of film stories tends to be overlooked in film studies. In our analysis, we would like to demonstrate how the recent Polish works are underpinned by their psychosocial context. To interpret the characters' experiences, we have adopted Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which identifies eight stages of life, from infancy to late adulthood.<sup>3</sup> The theory emerged in the first half of the previous century, however, it is still applied in the current psychological research on romantic loneliness among young people.<sup>4</sup> Romantic loneliness is a term derived from the multidimensional understanding of loneliness, which divides this phenomenon into emotional and social domains.<sup>5</sup> Social loneliness depicts a lack of community ties or a network of peers, while emotional loneliness exhibits an unwelcome absence of important, close relationships, including family and romantic connections. The protagonists of *Love Tasting*, *Sweat* and *All These Sleepless Nights* experience an unmet need for intimate partnerships. Therefore, their stories are mainly concerned with the romantic kind of emotional loneliness.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed TAN, "A Psychology of the Film," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1–20.

<sup>2</sup> Vittorio GALLESSE and Michele GUERRA, "Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies," *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 3 (2012): 183–210.

<sup>3</sup> Erik H. ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1950).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Katarzyna ADAMCZYK, Jung Yeon PARK, and Chris SEGRIN, "Patterns of Intimacy Crisis Resolution and Their Associations with Romantic Loneliness in Polish and US Young Adults," *Developmental Psychology* 58, no. 8 (2022): 1600–1613.

<sup>5</sup> Robert WEISS, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (Baskerville: MIT Press, 1975).

Erikson's theory has also been referred to by Ogaga Okuyade in his essay about coming of age in Hollywood films,<sup>6</sup> where he depicted the formation and negotiations of identity of young protagonists and the crises they experience. Since the three Polish films chosen by us illustrate the struggle to find closeness, we have also looked at the works from Erikson's theory perspective. According to Erikson, each stage of life is characterised around a critical point. The sixth stage, young adulthood, is defined through the conflict between intimacy and isolation. This stage begins after the adolescent phase, during which individuals face the identity crisis. Erikson views intimacy as a process allowing a person to fuse their identity with somebody else's, without the fear of losing themselves. However, this merging is only possible if their individuality has developed sufficiently and they are not attempting to build their own identity based on another person.<sup>7</sup> Another obstacle in the crisis resolution is the fear of self-disclosure—revealing one's true self to the lover. Overcoming these difficulties should lead to the value of love, the basic virtue of this stage.<sup>8</sup> Love is actualised in intimate relationships, close friendships and partnerships characterised with commitment, vulnerability and defencelessness.

The liminal phase of life between adolescence and adulthood was also described by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett as emerging adulthood<sup>9</sup>—a period connected with transitioning and considering different options. Based on Arnett's research, identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between and possibilities/optimism distinguish emerging adulthood from other life stages.<sup>10</sup> These qualities can be found in the plot of the three films, together with the intimacy versus isolation crisis, typical for the age of both the creators and the protagonists. The film characters are surrounded by people: friends, classmates, fans, followers and strangers met at parties. Yet, they experience the void and the longing to get closer, to self-disclose, and to become intimate with someone. This unfulfilled longing

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<sup>6</sup> In the essay the author analyses Hollywood films: *Gridiron Gang*, *Finding Forrester*, *Take the Lead* and *You Got Served*, focusing on their growth and identity formation: Ogaga OKUYADE, "Teaming to Grow Up: Patterns of Development in Recent American Films," *East-West Cultural Passage* 11, no. 2 (2000): 46–67.

<sup>7</sup> ERIKSON, *Identity*.

<sup>8</sup> ERIKSON, *Identity*.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Jensen ARNETT, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8–16.

<sup>10</sup> ARNETT, *Emerging Adulthood*, 8–16.

creates affective tension which the spectator can feel. The characters express their yearning through the need for touch, smell, breathing the same air, and other sensory experiences. The representations of these experiences are multisensory, and the viewer also perceives them in a multisensory way. The viewers embodied perception of the protagonists' experiences is explained through neural mechanisms and the properties of mirror neurons.<sup>11</sup> According to Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, being a witness of someone's actions activates the same brain areas as performing these actions.<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon also applies to emotions and sensual impressions, which is why the protagonists' feelings are often shared by the viewers. In our article we would like to describe how the tension arising from the intimacy versus isolation crisis can be grasped by the viewers' bodies.

#### FROM THE *SENSUOUS THEORY* TO INTERPRETATION

In this analysis, we chose the sensual theory of cinema, which we treat as an analytical tool. We believe that the sensual theory allows us to discover previously overlooked meanings. The sensual theory of cinema assumes that audiovisual works appeal to senses other than sight and hearing. Additionally, we would like to focus on the potential of this theory to perceive the characters' affects and emotions. The sensual theory will bring us closer to the characters' bodies—and in this space we will be looking for the affects—in line with the fact that cultural texts, including films, may transmit these affects.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, we aim to look for the affects or strong emotional reactions in characters' bodies and senses, assuming that they are most pronounced there. That is why we intend to analyse these three movies through the lens of sensual theory. The sensual theory of cinema originates from the sensual theory of art. As Susan Sontag wrote in the essay *Against Interpretation*: "In a place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art."<sup>14</sup> Instead of a methodical, hermeneutic interpretation of art, we should focus on its influence on the audience. The emotions felt on the somatic level become a part

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<sup>11</sup> GALLESE and GUERRA, "Embodying Movies," 183–210.

<sup>12</sup> GALLESE and GUERRA, 183–210.

<sup>13</sup> Katarzyna BOJARSKA, "Poczuć myślenie: afektywne procedury historii i krytyki (dziś)," *Teksty drugie: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, no. 6 (2013): 13.

<sup>14</sup> Susan SONTAG, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 10.

of work description and penetrate the interpretative tools, allowing the audience to focus on relating to the characters and their feelings. Moreover, the stillness of the audience sitting in the movie theatre encourages fuller emotional and sensual immersion with the art.<sup>15</sup>

Vivian Sobchack created the *sensuous theory*, emphasising the communicative importance of cinema—based on bodily perception.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Laura U. Marks proposed the term ‘haptic visuality’.<sup>17</sup> Marks referred to the hypotheses of Alois Riegel, as did Antonia Lant. In this context, the latter explored what is tactile, haptic or optical.<sup>18</sup> Both Marks and Lant reflected on the feeling of film touch, and, therefore, they wrote about affects and emotions which are visible to us in the characters’ bodies. Haptic visuality means being touched, either physically or emotionally, by how a film is made or through our memories. People have many tactile experiences. They remember the sensation: the touch of the skin, of the human body, and the touch in general. Crucially, when viewers watch movies, they may also relate with their previous experiences—the touch on the screen reminds them of touching from their reality and that is why they can almost feel it. The audience looks at the characters and observes their reactions to reality. Their emotions are revealed by facial expressions or small wrinkles around the eyes; an unexpected fit of laughter, tears, a grimace of the lips, mouth open in amazement. When characters touch someone in the film, the audience can recall their own tactile experiences. Similarly, when the sun warms a character’s skin, the viewers then remember what it is like. Filmmakers can enhance these impressions with the means of cinematic expressions, such as using a close-up to express the aforementioned aspects—like facial expressions, smile or tears—and make them more visible to the audience.

Youth is an important category for us, because we define youth as full of affects, full of changes, and full of strong emotions. Young people are constantly searching for their place in life, shaping their identity, and experiencing many liminal situations. Therefore, an important element includes the challenging emotions experienced by young individuals. Young people

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<sup>15</sup> GALLESSE and GUERRA, “Embodying Movies,” 183–210.

<sup>16</sup> Vivian SOBCHACK, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Laura U. MARKS, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 139.

<sup>18</sup> Antonia LANT, “Haptical Cinema,” *October* 74 (1995): 45–73.

attempt to cope with these emotions in different ways—trying to express their feelings, seeking media that will make it possible to convey their emotions, and sometimes even choosing not to discuss their emotions at all. On the other hand, the creators of these films aim to present their characters' crises utilising various cinematic expressions. However, these films share a strong focus on feelings, experiences and emotions. It follows that the worlds that have been portrayed represent the reality of young people, which we look at through the prism of their perception. These worlds are therefore intense, full of changes and feelings, which can easily make you confused. Examining them through the lens of the sensual theory of cinema can evoke similar feelings in the space of the viewers' experience.

As Siegfried Kracauer wrote, cinema stimulates the audience sensually, becoming an almost physiological experience. Films move us emotionally and sensually before we even begin to understand or interpret them.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, when we treat sensuous theory as an analytical tool, we broaden our research field, focusing on the senses, affects and emotions, and their possible impact. The directors of *Love Tasting*, *Sweat* and *All These Sleepless Nights* use the means of cinematic expression to render the characters' emotions very persuasively. On the one hand, the audience can simply feel them (through the impact of haptic visuality) but on the other hand, according to the sensuous theory, these feelings appeal directly to our senses.

#### LOVE TASTING: HIDDEN EMOTIONS, GAZE AND DANCE

From the very first shots of the film it is clear that the creator put a strong emphasis on combining the formal layer (means of cinematic expression) with the layer of the content (plot, story). In the movie space the audience observes a small Polish town. The image is followed by a representation of a grey block of flats. Then, the viewers recognise a close-up of a man smoking a cigarette, while on the opposite balcony, there is a dancing woman. Her pose suggests that she is dancing for the man. The way she is presented can be described in Laura Mulvey's words—it appears that the female character is the source of the man's pleasure.<sup>20</sup> The woman is clearly aware of the male observer; she is half-naked and she moves sensually.

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<sup>19</sup> Siegfried KRACAUER, *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 179.

<sup>20</sup> Laura MULVEY, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6–18.

The gaze is crucial in this story due to the lack of words the characters use to share their emotions. It is the way they look at each other that reveals the objects of their desires.

The importance of sound also seems obvious from the beginning of the film. In the sound layer the audience hears the song “This Is the Day”—a type of religious song. At the same time, when the camera presents a sunny day full of possibilities, the song’s lyrics guide the audience towards similar impressions, evoking sensations associated with peace, such as hope for a new day or joy from the experienced moments. According to multimodal analysis,<sup>21</sup> it develops a form of parallelism, where what we see corresponds to what we hear. The religious aspect of the song seems equally important. In *Love Tasting* we are dealing with two spaces combined: the sacred and the profane. The film tells a story of young people who are involved with the church, singing in a church choir, while also rebelling and engaging in parties loaded with stimulants. Adolescents smoothly and freely navigate between these spaces and the integral parts of their personality that are not mutually exclusive. Undoubtedly, this is clear from the first scene: a religious piece is combined with voyeurism, sensual dance and emerging desire.

In the film, viewers spectate the characters more often in a group of peers than alone. These social fragments gain clarity when the characters are actually alone, whether in the dimension of the plot or in the frame space. Once again, we follow the characters’ eyes, allowing us to speculate about their wants and desires. For example, we recognize that Tomek has unrequited feelings for a male friend of his. In one sequence we can clearly see the developing closeness between Tomek and Kuba. The two spend time together, and Kuba shaves Tomek’s head, which leads to them sharing very personal thoughts on a balcony. In the formal dimension, the sequence is characterised by a mood shift—due to the editing, colours and lighting. Colour, often serving as our first contact with the film, may influence us on a preconscious level.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, *Love Tasting* undergoes a remarkable change in the colour layer. Throughout the lively partying and dancing scenes including energetic music, the hue is closer to purple, inducing a feeling of unreality for viewers. However, when the characters share their

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<sup>21</sup> Janina WILDFEUER, *Film Discourse Interpretation Towards a New Paradigm for Multimodal Film Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Patti BELLANTONI, *If It’s Purple Someone’s Gonna Die. The Power of Color in Visual Storytelling* (New York: Focal Press, 2013).

personal experiences, the audience observes a dim light from the street, distancing them from the plot.

The film presents a very intimate atmosphere through a combination of colour and light, which emphasises the need for closeness and the confusion experienced by young people. Scenes exhibiting strong emotions consist of close film sets and long shots that elicit contemplation. The characters seldom speak about their feelings; instead, we see the emotions that torment them in their facial expressions and their bodies. On the contrary, there are instances where the filming approach changes, for example in scenes where emotions between Tomek and Kuba are shared—here, there are no close film sets, we do not see the boys at all, we only hear their words.

From a certain point of view, this film is about solitude.<sup>23</sup> Despite predominating shots of characters in their peer group, Tomek's portrayal emphasises his loneliness in a few manners. For example, in frames showing laughing characters, Tomek is the only one not smiling. There are also plenty of images of him alone, looking at his reflection in the mirror or with the frame filled with the back of his head. In his peer group, he often tags along as a third wheel. When he watches the couple—Monika and Kuba—touching each other, the audience can sense his need for touch through his gaze. According to haptic visuality, we can feel this imaginary touch just like him. This style of filming appropriately emphasises the vulnerability of the character.

In our perception of the film, it is important to combine the formal and the content layers in the perspective of the sensuous theory. The cinematic expression in *Love Tasting* corresponds to the story. Tomek, who often fills the frame on his own, feels lonely. He fears missing out on something, being excluded from the group and unable to express emotions—with the latter being a form of communicative exclusion. When the protagonist finally decides to speak about his feelings, he does that in a text message—his sister reads it aloud. However, Tomek is not the only protagonist in this film who finds himself experiencing communicative exclusion. One of the other teenagers, Oliwia, who finds out that she is pregnant, uses a similar approach. She informs the boy about her pregnancy via text message, avoiding direct discussion, which leaves the two silently staring at each other for a long time after that. Again, either there is no way of expressing

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<sup>23</sup> Robert KOLKER, *A Cinema of Loneliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).



and verbalising one's emotions, or the characters simply do not want to talk about these emotions at all. By observing emotions in characters' bodies and reactions, we acknowledge that significant events may occur between words. As audience members, we witness what the characters may be experiencing, almost feeling their emotions.

According to our findings, the most sensual aspect in *Love Tasting* is dance. The first dance scene, shown at the beginning, is voyeuristic and arouses desire, which influences the plot later on. The second dance scene is directly related to its effects and to liminal situations. The first scene highlights the character with whom Kuba cheated on Monika. In the second one we only see Monika dancing. Upon finding out about her partner's betrayal, Monika freezes and closes her eyes, which suggests the severity and seriousness of her pain as the pain seems to stop her. On the contrary, we see her dancing expressively in the next scene. The dance can be interpreted as a haptic measure of cinematic expression, immersing us in shots of a double movement, close to emotion. Furthermore, it can be considered as a creative and aesthetic extension of our bodies as the body and dance are intertwined.<sup>24</sup> In the space of *Love Tasting*, the protagonist's despair is exhibited through her body, clearly shown in the dance scene, emphasising the corporeality of the dance. Subsequent shots focus on the character's body, in which we notice her hidden emotions.

Gilles Deleuze pointed out the existence of the Cinema-corps phenomenon, which prioritises gestures and close-ups rather than narration or storytelling.<sup>25</sup> That is exactly what we are dealing with in *Love Tasting*—what is being told is less important than how the director has presented it. The emotions experienced by the characters, how they perceive them, and how they show up in their bodies are more important than the events. The films' depiction of sensitivity, vulnerability and intensity of the characters' perception of reality reinforces the viewers sense of tenderness. The audience feels close to the characters, and thanks to haptic visuality, it feels what they can feel: the warm feeling of the sun on the skin, excitement before a great party, anxiety prior to expressing one's feelings. These recalled expe-

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<sup>24</sup> Anna WOLANIN, "Ciało jest tańcem, taniec jest ciałem. Wprowadzenie do analizy tańca tybetańskiego z perspektywy fenomenologii egzystencjalnej Sondry Horton Fraleigh," *The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture* 16 (2015): 211–31.

<sup>25</sup> Gilles DELEUZE, "Cinema 1: The Movement Image" in *Philosophers on Film from Bergson to Badiou: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christopher Kul-Want (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019): 152–76.

riences function both on the emotional and the sensual level. Unquestionably, our perception of the film combines these two spheres and is intensified by the way the work was created and filmed.

#### *SWEAT*: TRYING TO GET OUT OF LONELINESS

In this film, the protagonist's actions suggest she is attempting to emerge from solitude. Her name is Sylwia and she is trying to improve her relationships, specifically with her mother, with a friend met by chance, and with a random man who happens to like her. Sylwia is portrayed as lonely from the very first scene. Just before the scene brightens a sound is heard, and then the main character appears in the foreground, looking at herself in the mirror. The mirror is crucial in this story, because it seems that the protagonist undergoes constant self-observation—we are dealing here with its classic example, as in the words of John Berger.<sup>26</sup> On some level, we could also look for references to the visual pleasure proposed by Laura Mulvey, but it seems that the most important aspect is precisely this self-observation.<sup>27</sup>

The main character, an influencer, manages an Instagram account where she encourages people to exercise and she advertises products. Her audience of followers is large, but they are different from the ones Sylwia has when she conducts a workout session in a shopping mall. The audience of followers accompanies her even when she is alone and prepares coverage for Instagram, recording herself. This audience is imaginary but constantly present. Sylwia's apartment is filled with mirrors and pictures of herself, giving off the impression that she is constantly under the supervision of the imaginary gaze, yet she is alone, in fact. The director portrays Sylwia in various ways to emphasise her loneliness, for example, by showing her alone in the frame and shown to look away into the distant space of the city. Moreover, there are many cuts and large close-ups, the cinematic form seems to amplify the energy of the scenes, perhaps even a simulated energy, similar to the one shown by the main character. The frame is dominated by the pink colour, especially through the character's outfit and the lighting. We, as viewers, are brought very close to the characters—close-

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<sup>26</sup> John BERGER, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1973).

<sup>27</sup> MULVEY, "Visual Pleasure," 6–18.

ups reveal their skin texture and facial expressions. From the very beginning, we see Sylwia on the verge of a mental breakdown, actively attempting to escape from loneliness but repeatedly experiencing rejection. Crucially, we observe it closely, in both close frames and long shots. This way of filming allows viewers to feel the emotions of the protagonist. The rapid editing of emotional scenes also allows the audience to sense what she may be feeling.

However, what plays out closest to the senses are complicated relationships between striving for intimacy and experiencing rejection, as well as the interactions between lust, desire and oppression. As mentioned before, the main character is struggling with loneliness but attempting to improve her relationships. In order to carry out her plan, Sylwia meets with her mother, she helps her to prepare a birthday party and buys her gifts. During a conversation, Sylwia tries to hug her mother. We see that this touch is important for the main character, but she is rejected as her mom pushes her away and leaves the room. The misery in her gaze is visible, so is her disappointment, rejection, and vulnerability. This scene contains many close-ups and changes of plans. The close-up, focusing on the details of her face, is followed by one showing Sylwia's whole figure. She stands somewhat unsteadily and does not know what to do with her hands. On a formal level, it is emphasised that her first attempt to improve the relationships has failed.

Gaze is the basis of this story. In the scene where the heroine looks at herself in the mirror, we may see emotions of rejection in her eyes, as if reality was focalised through her gaze. This effect also works conversely: Sylvia is instantly observed by people. On the one hand, it is a part of her job, but on the other hand, the gaze can also be oppressive. The film features, among other things, a threat from a stalker. While she walks, we find out that she is being watched all the time—a particular car often appears in her vicinity and the man hidden inside spends long hours watching her. After noticing him several times, she knocks on the window and asks if she can help him, realising that the man is masturbating.

Later in the movie, Sylwia invites a colleague from work to her apartment. They begin kissing, but then she pulls away and shows him a car with a stalker out of the window. He goes downstairs and beats the man severely. When he returns, he hopes to continue making out with the protagonist. When she rejects him, he starts masturbating while looking at Sylwia—doing exactly what the stalker did before. Sylwia freezes and cannot say a word—but the audience sees all the complex emotions in her gaze.

At the end of the film, it becomes clear that the controlled gaze of the characters is crucial. Furthermore, authenticity and the ability to express emotions are also very important. In one of the last sequences, Sylwia is on a live show—a kind of a morning television talk show. An interview with the influencer is planned, followed by a short exercise demonstration. During the discussion, tears well up in her eyes. The journalist is perplexed, he asks if he should interrupt the programme, or if Sylwia is ready to demonstrate the exercises. She replies that today is the best time for practice and suggests not hiding hard and complex emotions.

Throughout the film, its form enables the audience to closely identify with the main character. We accompany Sylwia in these hard few days—laden with rejection, violence, despair and loneliness. Our identification is even stronger because successive formal elements elicit sensual and bodily sensations. Close-ups let us experience “cinema as a skin”.<sup>28</sup> We see every twitch of the muscles, every drop of sweat, every grimace on Sylwia’s face, and we notice how much effort she puts into her work. Following her gaze, we can also see how much she misses closeness and intimacy and how intensely she tries to change her life—we see a flash of suffering when she fails. It is in this context that we see the events shown at the end of the movie. As we mentioned before, Sylwia decides to perform in front of the audience. Some of the last scenes are shot in detail. The viewers of the film can see a fragment of her face, tense, strained and contorted with the effort put into the activity. At the same time, we see that she is now the master of the gaze directed at her: that these looks, given directly by the studio crew and indirectly by the audience, are pleasing for her. She may not have improved her relationships with others throughout the story, but she has managed to improve her relationship with herself, and perhaps, this is the first step of her transition from isolation to intimacy—self-acceptance.

#### *ALL THESE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS: SEARCHING FOR INTIMACY*

*All These Sleepless Nights* is a journey through endless parties and afterparties taking place in Warsaw. It does not contain a clear plot but conveys the atmosphere of unfulfillment and a continuous search for intimacy.

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas ELSAESSER and Malte HAGENER, *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 148.

The film depicts nightlife and, even though it is beautifully shot and visually captivating, it gives much depth to the meaning of sound, while engaging all senses.

In *All These Sleepless Nights* the sound competes with the visual layer in several ways. First, it seems more defined and clearer than the dark frames, due to post-synchronous sound recording. The clearly pronounced words of the main character clash with the hazy images of nightlife. Second, the music composed by Lubomir Grzelak, combined with the soundtrack selected by Krzysztof Bagiński (who also plays the main character), spins a story that contributes to the narrative on equal terms with the visual content. It transmits the affect and tension that are not always visible on the screen. Third, sound-wise, the film engages the viewer's body, making it pulse with the rhythm and echo the main characters' emotional distortions. The relationship between the sound of the film and the embodied perception of it is what Laura Marks conceptualises as haptic hearing.<sup>29</sup> Club music can be viewed as the essence of experiencing the sound kinaesthetically, as it aims to engage the body of the listeners even when they are not dancing. As the audiovisual layers are often prioritised in film analyses, in our work we would like to focus on how the film appeals to other senses, particularly kinesthetics and the sense of touch.

Although alluring, the nightlife stills are often blurry, while grainy and dark images engage the viewer to complete the vague shapes with their own imagination. This type of frames encourage haptic seeing. According to Laura Marks, haptic visuality, a term contrary to optical visuality, draws from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinesthetics.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the author suggests that haptic visuality makes the viewer constitute the image by filling the gaps in the undefined and getting involved in a mutual relationship with the film.<sup>31</sup> In our detailed analysis of three fragments of *All the Sleepless Nights* we would like to describe the embodied cinematic experience.

The film does not have a clear chronological timeline, it is full of retrospective takes. In one of the initial scenes the main character, Krzysztof, reminisces about the end of his 5-year-long relationship with Monika. The camera approaches the ex-lovers at the New Year's Eve house party. With-

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<sup>29</sup> MARKS, *The Skin of the Film*.

<sup>30</sup> Laura U. MARKS, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Laura U. MARKS, "Video Haptics and Erotics," *Screen* 39, no. 4 (1998): 331–48.

out anything particular said or shown, the audience gets the impression that Krzysztof is drunk. The sensation appears in the viewer not through decoding the signs on the screen but as a physiological response to the unsteady camera movement. Haptic visuality, by creating not only visual but also kinaesthetic experience, enables the spectator to feel dizziness as a bodily reaction to shaky frames. In the scene, Krzysztof asks Monika to dance with him. She refuses but he keeps trying to get close to her and touch her. When they start dancing and embracing each other, the camera moves closer to them. It slowly spins around them and with them, making the viewer engage in their dance through this motion and through the sound. At the same time, dark and unclear close-ups of the couple attain an intimate quality that appeals to our senses. As Laura Marks contends, blurry frames make eroticism more participatory than voyeuristic,<sup>32</sup> open to the audience's imagination. Images of Krzysztof's hands stroking Monika's hair and touching her arms evoke tactile memories that are encoded in the spectator's body. The scenes are interrupted with black stills resembling black-outs and giving the impression of something missing. Even though Krzysztof knows that his relationship is over and he is not planning to change the course of events, he cannot escape the need for being close to his ex-lover. As an audience, we do not know whether the intimacy he seeks is based on a strong feeling of attachment or just a physiological sensation. However, we feel his longing expressed through touch, as our tactile memory relates to his. When the ex-lovers talk, Monika reminds Krzysztof that the break-up was what he wanted. The sequence ends with the image of Krzysztof vomiting outside and sitting alone in a dark and cold environment. The set of scenes makes the viewer engage with the film on a multisensual, bodily level. We may not understand Krzysztof's selfish actions, but, through tactile memory,<sup>33</sup> we feel what his body is missing and craving for.

A very similar sequence is shown in the middle of the film, when Krzysztof ends another relationship. This time it is with one of the main characters, Ewa, whom he met through his best friend Michał. The break-up occurs at a party for the same reason as before: Krzysztof was not fully involved in the relationship and could not express his feelings. It was particularly his inability to tell his girlfriend that he loved her that caused the lovers to split. The camera films the couple up-close, sitting together and

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<sup>32</sup> MARKS, 331–48.

<sup>33</sup> On tactile memory see MARKS, *The Skin of the Film*.

holding each other. When Krzysztof tells Eva that he had never wanted to hurt her, he looks into the distance, his eyes appearing detached, while he is still touching her. The scene gives the impression that he is still affectionate towards Eva because his body remembers the feelings that he no longer appreciates. The emotions encoded in the bodies keep the couple close, even when their relationship is falling apart. Similar to the previous breakup scene, the grainy and dark images of Krzysztof and Eva lack a visible surrounding. It makes the viewers co-create the undefined with their own imagination. The close-ups of Krzysztof's neck, stroked and caressed by Eva's hand, appeal to the spectators' senses, when they watch her hand moving through his hair and skin. As Laura Marks suggests, the audience's eyes serve as organs of touch,<sup>34</sup> drawing the cinematic experience from their tactile memory. The depicted scenes of crises correspond to shots representing intimacy with Eva. They also appeal to the sense of touch of the viewers.

The retrospective takes, showing Krzysztof and Eva's relationship, encourage haptic seeing through the warmth represented in the frames. The couple's relationship begins with a strong physical connection— they almost immediately hug each other and dance. The sensual images showing them after their first night together trigger tactile memories and reactions in the viewer. Close-ups of the embraced, sleeping couple, with the golden sunlight caressing their bare skin, evoke the feeling of intimacy and comfort. Even if this feeling is based on decoding the visual signs, it is experienced as an affective bodily response. The warmth emanating from the shots can be felt both on the surface and inside the spectator's body. It makes the viewer recall the sensation of direct sunlight felt on the skin and its warmth, as well as the warmth of embracing the loved-one body.

However, the idyllic experience of intimacy is shattered by affective tension coming from the awareness that the observed relationship ended. The main character goes through his memories while spending the subsequent New Year's Eve alone. Watching Krzysztof's struggle between intimacy and isolation leaves the viewer feeling anxious. As the audience, we are left with the impression that the protagonist's body is ready and longing for closeness but the character has not grown enough to fully embrace it.

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<sup>34</sup> MARKS, *Touch*, 2.

## CONCLUSION

In our analysis we looked at the cinematic means used to portray the struggle between intimacy and isolation. The crisis is depicted in Erikson's theory of psychosocial development as typically experienced during young adulthood.<sup>35</sup> We have explored how the cinematic representations of critical points trigger physical reactions in viewers. The characters appearing in *Love Tasting*, *Sweat* and *All These Sleepless Nights* go through difficult situations related to their attempts to form close relationships. The period of their life can be defined as emerging adulthood.<sup>36</sup> They are striving to find intimacy, while their strongest affects and emotions are associated with this unfulfilled need, which can be referred to as romantic loneliness.<sup>37</sup> The protagonists' longing is represented multisensually—with touch, sound and movement. The audience shares their experiences through mirror neurons, activated both while observing and performing certain actions.<sup>38</sup> While some of the protagonists verbalise their yearning for intimacy, others may not be ready or may not feel the need to disclose their emotions in conversations. However, all of the characters reveal their longing with their bodies. In *Love Tasting* we observe it in the dance scene, where Monika manifests her emotions through her movement. Sylwia, the protagonist of *Sweat*, shows it through her facial expression, her gaze and the tension we see in the muscles of her face when she experiences hardships. The spectators find out more about Sylwia's loneliness from the close-ups than from the dialogues. In *All These Sleepless Nights*, even though the characters talk about feelings, their emotions are often more detectable in the sensual sphere than in the verbal one. Krzysztof's ambivalence in the break up scenes can be observed in his body movement. He ends his relationships but, at the same time, his body finds it difficult to detach and let the loved one go, so it remains in a close embrace.

Despite the differences among the protagonists of the three films, the failed attempts to get closer connect their stories as they represent a collec-

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<sup>35</sup> ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*; ERIKSON, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*.

<sup>36</sup> ARNETT, *Emerging Adulthood*, 8–16.

<sup>37</sup> Katarzyna ADAMCZYK, "Voluntary and Involuntary Singlehood and Young Adults' Mental Health: An Investigation of Mediating Role of Romantic Loneliness," *Current Psychology* 36, no. 4 (2017): 891.

<sup>38</sup> GALLESE and GUERRA, "Embodying Movies," 183–210.



tive, perhaps generational, experience. As Skip Dine Young suggests,<sup>39</sup> movies may serve as a reflection of both the filmmakers psyche and the psychology of the viewers. Young adults appearing in the described films go through their experiences alone, but their expressions connect with the audience on a universal and multisensual level.

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<sup>39</sup> Skip D. YOUNG, *Psychology at the Movies* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2012), 38.

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MULTISENSUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ISOLATION  
VERSUS INTIMACY CRISIS IN POLISH FILMS ABOUT YOUTH:  
*LOVE TASTING, SWEAT, AND ALL THESE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS*

Summary

The aim of the paper is to analyse three Polish films in terms of sensuous theory and the theory of affects. We focused particularly on fragments of works portraying characters' intense emotional states. We were curious how the emotions and affects are presented in the plot and form—and how the viewers can feel them. We have chosen three films by young Polish directors about young people: *Love Tasting* (2020), *All These Sleepless Nights* (2016) and *Sweat* (2020). All three works tell stories of failed relationships and rejection, but also portray young people's identity building. The films show their characters in vulnerable positions, when they are prone to crisis. We wondered how the sensuous theory can combine the analysed categories.

**Keywords:** sensuous theory; haptic visuality; senses; isolation; intimacy; crisis

WIELOZMYŚLOWE PRZEDSTAWIENIA KRYZYSU  
MIĘDZY IZOLACJĄ A INTYMNOŚCIĄ W POLSKICH FILMACH  
O MŁODYCH LUDZIACH:  
*OSTATNI KOMERS, SWEAT I WSZYSTKIE NIEPRZESPANE NOCE*

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza trzech polskich filmów pod kątem zmysłowej teorii kina i teorii afektów. Autorki skupiły się szczególnie na fragmentach filmów, w których zostały ukazane intensywne stany emocjonalne bohaterów, analizując w jaki sposób emocje i afekty zostały

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przekazane za pomocą fabuły i formy, a także w jaki sposób widzowie mogą je odczuć. Wybrane zostały trzy filmy o młodych ludziach, nakręcone przez młodych polskich reżyserów: *Ostatni komers* (2020), *Wszystkie nieprzespane noce* (2016) i *Sweat* (2020). Wszystkie trzy filmy traktują o nieudanych związkach, odrzuceniu, ale także o budowaniu tożsamości przez młodych ludzi. Ukazują bohaterów w sytuacjach, w których są oni narażeni na kryzys. Autorki rozważają, w jaki sposób zmysłowa teoria kina może połączyć analizowane tutaj kategorie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zmysłowa teoria kina; haptyczna wizualność; zmysły; izolacja; intymność; kryzys

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