

Pierre Bourdieu
and Popular Art

The Case of
Science Fiction
in Poland

Stanisław Krawczyk

New Challenges in Field Theory
Strasbourg, June 9–10, 2022

The Plan

Description of my empirical study

Three conceptual points based on the study:

- Accounting for tensions between two types of taste within one person's habitus
- Developing the concept of heteronomy
- Distinguishing between the national literary field and the global literary space





LEM

Astronauci

LEM

Człowiek z Marsa

LEM

Eden

LEM

Cyberiada

LEM

Powrót z gwiazd

LEM

Bajki robotów

LEM

Fiasco

LEM

Katar

LEM

Kongres futurologiczny

LEM

Głos Pana

LEM

Golem XIV

LEM

Solaris

LEM

Niezwyciężony

LEM

Pokój na Ziemi

LEM

Summa technologiae

LEM

Szpital Przemienienia

LEM

Opowieści o pilocie Pirxie

LEM

Pamiętnik znaleziony w wannie

LEM

LEM

LEM

Śledztwo

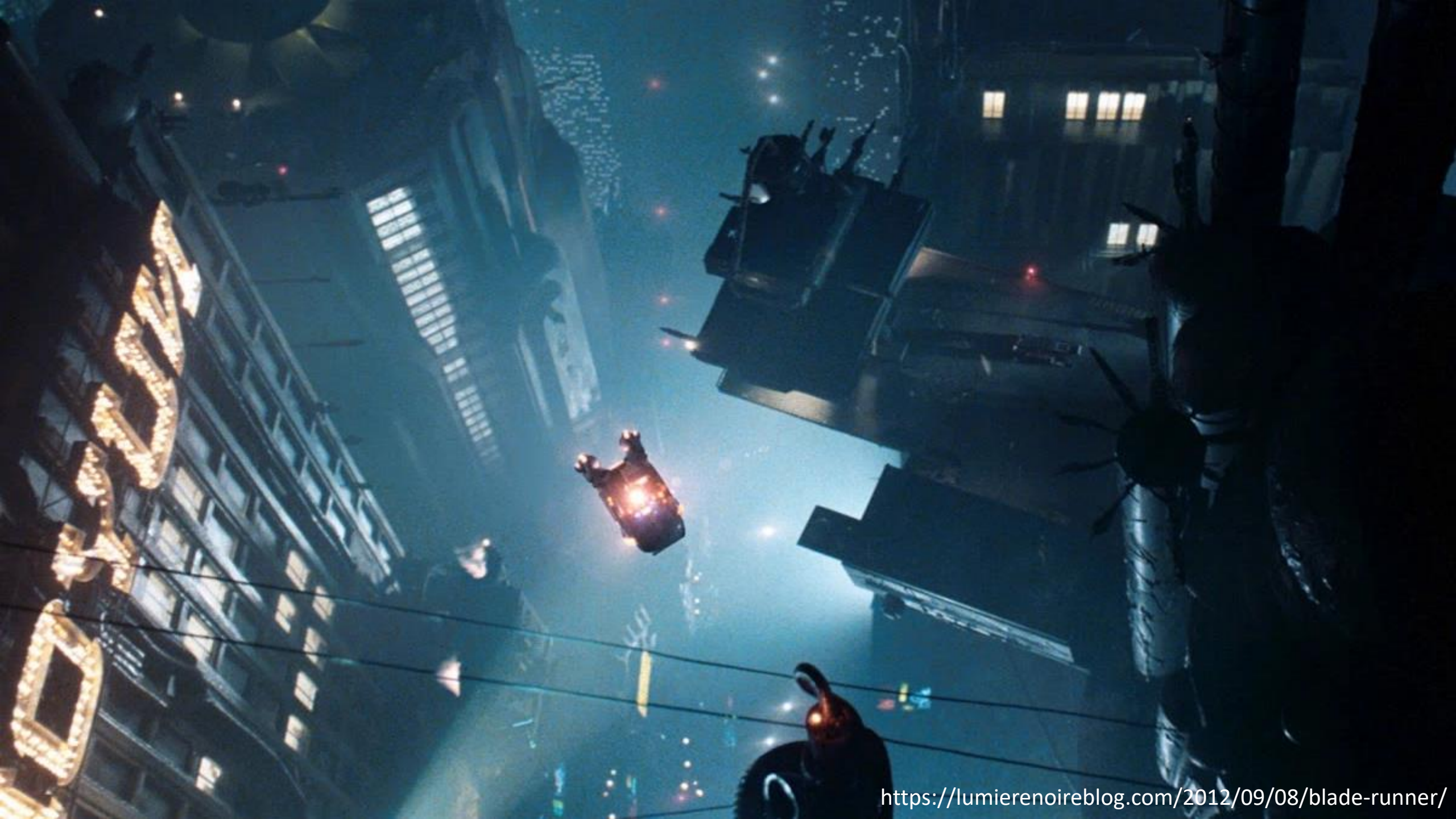
LEM

Wizja lokalna

LEM

Wysoki Zamek

<https://allegro.pl/oferta/solaris-superpakiet-23-ksiazek-stanislaw-lem-11166420365>





<https://www.vfxvoice.com/director-denis-villeneuve-maintains-a-grounded-approach-to-epic-space-saga-dune/>

Study Description

- **Focus on the Polish (sub)field of science fiction literature, 1976–2012.**
- **I have used:**
 - 361 editorials, 82 columns, 450 reviews in the *Fantastyka* magazine (sociological discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis)
 - Writers' bios published in the magazine
 - Databases compiled in the field (e.g., <http://www.fantasta.pl/>)
 - Academic publications in literary studies, sociology, and history

Study Description

- In the 1980s and 1990s, science fiction writers and commentators showed a marked interest **in the issues of the public sphere.**
- **Examples of topics in fiction and commentaries:**
 - Daily life in totalitarian or authoritarian states
 - The EU as a threat to Poland's sovereignty
 - Spiritual downfall of the West
 - Abortion
- To some cultural producers, SF was a way **to influence society through culture** rather than to cater to market preferences.

Two Tastes, One Habitus?

- In the science fiction fields in the US, UK, and Canada **college and university education** seems to have been unusually frequent.
- In Poland, at least 51% of *Fantastyka's* writers in the 1980s **received tertiary education** by 1990 (5–6 times more than Poles in general).
- The engagement of highly educated writers with large-scale cultural production is related to **a tension between two tastes in the field.**
- It seems practical to say that **two tastes may co-occur in the same person**, without the dramatic/traumatic aspect typical of *the divided habitus*.

Berger, A. I. (1977). *SF Fans in Socio-Economic Perspective: Factors in the Social Consciousness of a Genre.*

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction.*

Friedman, S. (2016). *Habitus Clivé and the Emotional Imprint of Social Mobility.*

Habitus of the Intelligentsia

1. Recognising the value of self-education.
2. Aspiring for cultural and social advancement and for creative work.
3. Putting dignity above pragmatism and non-material values above material ones.
4. Orienting oneself largely toward cultural aspirations.
5. Putting “high culture” above “mass culture.”
6. Focusing one’s social activity on the contact with works and ideas recognised by intellectual and moral authorities.
7. Yearning to be an authority for others, particularly the youth.

Bartoszek, A. (2005). Habitus polskiej inteligencji w społeczeństwach realnego socjalizmu i rynkowej transformacji (p. 79).

What Is Heteronomy?

- **Bourdieu has not shown much interest** in large-scale cultural production.
- **The conflict between “problem-oriented” and “fun-oriented” SF** seems similar to the conflict between “art for art’s sake” and “art for the masses” (e.g., there is a tension between cultural and economic capitals).
- Can large-scale production be, in some cases, **more similar to restricted production** than is usually assumed?

Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The Rules of Art*.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the Media and Cultural Production.

National
Literary Field
//
Global Literary
Space

- According to Sarah M. Corse, **popular fiction may differ *relatively* little between countries.** This is because it is not tied to the construction of nation states and national identities.
- Hence, it seems likely that some transnational qualities are **more pronounced in popular fiction** than in socially legitimate literature.
- For instance, **the Polish SF field** was heavily influenced by global forces.
- If we want to grasp the (often unequal) relationships between national fields of popular fiction, **can we use the notion of the global field?**

Corse, S. M. (1995). *Nations and Novels: Cultural Politics and Literary Use.*

Gutfeld, D. (2008). *English-Polish Translations of Science Fiction and Fantasy.*

National Literary Field // Global Literary Space

- Even popular fiction has **some relationship to the nation state** (e.g., through language, distribution, readership).
- That gives **national literary fields** a degree of institutional stability.
- This stability is not so obvious in **the global literary space**.
- For example, the global space of science fiction **lacks vertical autonomy**. It depends very strongly on the national SF fields of the United States and the United Kingdom.
- Broadly speaking, popular art provides many examples that highlight the issues with “the fieldness” of **what we might want to call “global/transnational fields.”**

Wacquant, L., & Akçaoğlu, A. (2017). Practice and Symbolic Power in Bourdieu: The View from Berkeley.

Buchholz, L. (2016). What Is a Global Field? Theorizing Fields Beyond the Nation-State.

Conclusions

- **Three conceptual points, again:**
 - Redefining the notion of taste so that two types of taste can be distinguished within one person's habitus
 - Developing the concept of heteronomy to account for heteronomous tastes of highly educated people in popular art fields
 - Using the notion of the global literary field (global art field) cautiously
- Generally, popular art requires a research stance different to Bourdieu's original approach...
- ...and studying popular art may suggest conceptual solutions applicable to Bourdieu's framework in general.