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## Orphans and objects. Materiality of longing and anxiety in Bronka Nowicka's *To Feed the Stone*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to analyse how longing emanates through the interconnections of intimacy and materiality in Bronka Nowicka's *To Feed the Stone*. In the light of selected materialist theories and psychoanalysis, I trace how the recurring figure of a comb exhibits *Thing-Power*, creating new material and semiotic connections. It disturbs the seemingly fixed dyads of presence/absence, present/past, passivity/activity, or life/death. Moreover, it marks the work of longing and anxiety as this object accompanies the child-narrator during her journey in search of touch through an uncanny world.

**Keywords:** Bronka Nowicka, materiality, longing, intimacy, anxiety

Each object in this river looks for its hand. Each person by the riverbank looks for their object. You can't enter the water. You can only look. The child will wait here until she wakes up. Maybe she'll spot what she once knew by touch, and now, only by name.<sup>1</sup>

All kinds of nonhumans are already involved in the existence of a poem. So poems, whether they like it or not, always speak, whether consciously or deliberately or not, about their physical architecture. A poem is a material entity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bronka Nowicka, "Chestnut," in Bronka Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, trans. Katarzyna Szuster (Dallas–Dublin: Dalke Archive, 2021), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Morton, "The Liminal Space between Things. Epiphany and the Physical," in *Material Ecocriticism*, eds. Serenella Iovino, and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 271.

## Introduction

This paper predominantly concerns the life of things. However, it points at neither consumerist orders of production, disposal and modification, nor utilitarian shifts in value, usability and purpose that might metaphorically mark such 'life' and its 'end.' Instead, it aims to contribute to a broader field within 21<sup>st</sup> century humanities, which for more than a decade now has successfully rendered the anthropocentric subject fragile and conceptualised the nonhuman. Even though this field prescribes a crisis of sovereignty, historically rooted in climatic turmoil and the exhaustion of a paradigm rooted in representational thinking, it makes it possible to affirmatively recognise nonhuman agency – vibrancy, dynamism, activity, creativity, or even vitality – as qualities inherent in the entities whose liveliness can be widely contested. New materialist, neovitalist, speculative, and object-oriented cartographies, albeit each in its own fashion, demarcate the network-realms of intimacy between humans and nonhumans that have previously been barely thinkable. Despite substantial differences in their aims, methods, poetics and politics, what these discourses share seems to be a formative sense of longing. More precisely, it is longing for more direct encounters with corporeality, materiality, or objectivity that post-Kantian Western thought has rendered mundane or inappropriate. Both of these are true, although in a perverse sense. Objects are indeed mundane, yet this overlooked mundaneness makes us notice their agency, especially in the disruptive effect they have on us when they are missing. Objects are indeed inappropriate as well; they resist appropriation by showing that most of what we say about them is a reflection of a cracked anthropocentric agenda, ill-equipped to describe brute materiality. Perhaps this is why longing and anxiety fit this narrative so well. Longing recognises an absence or loss within its excessive return in the present; it reconciles transience with the unexpected intensity of what is gone. Yet, longing is hardly a peaceful process, for its excessive demands – often going beyond sentiment or nostalgia – transcend the limits of the known world. Both familiar and uncanny, objects might become instances in which our stories of the unknown might be safely invested.

Following these premises, the purpose of this article is to probe the interconnections of intimacy, longing, anxiety, and objects in Bronka Nowicka's *To Feed the Stone* (2017, 2021): four elements that I regard to be of paramount importance in her book. Each section of *To Feed the Stone* is associated with a single thing, revitalising our interest in the unfamiliarity of the everyday and the semiosis of objects. In a homage to this strategy, I would also like to limit the scope of my text to a single item in her work – a

comb. This choice is inspired by Aleksander Nawarecki's research, who re-connects things with their often forgotten root and treats them as *paraphernalia*, that is, private objects.<sup>3</sup> Writing about objects often privileges abstract narratives of excess/void, as if oblivious to the fact that the materiality of objects seems vivid partly because we form personal relationships with them, opening ourselves up to their influence. Longing and intimacy, in addition, are relationships that rely on such a degree of closeness that it becomes extremely difficult to consider them outside of their private, subjective, and personal contexts. Having said that, this paper is going to be devoted to particular and private stories of a comb, stemming from both actual and imaginary experiences.

### Tragedy of objects

*To Feed the Stone* is a collection of meditative narrative poetry or poetic fiction, organised around a child and her attempts to make sense of an incomprehensible and often brutal reality. In a quasi-Lacanian way, we might note that the girl struggles with recognising the limits of her 'I,' as the overwhelming material reality around her is gradually subdued to its linguistic – and thus cultural – interpretation.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, actual separation never entirely takes place, forcing her to navigate through the confusing world of adults and their affairs. *To Feed the Stone*, then, is not a poetic *Bildungsroman*; it focuses on a unique perspective that compensates the child's own dearth of closeness and intimacy with her greater connection with the material world, neglected by adults. She is guided in this journey by everyday objects, sometimes mundane, sometimes inappropriate, which mark the intensity of sensual, corporeal, and material immersion in the world and the existential angst that permeates it. Because of these tensions, we observe everyday reality as deeply defamiliarised and uncanny, which blurs the boundaries between observations and fantasies, memory and reality, or anxiety and actuality. Each chapter-poem is named after the single object it is dedicated to; at the same time, each item resurfaces elsewhere in new contexts and situations, changing its purpose, form, or use. As Marian Stala notes, "such a sensual-material-emotional image of one's surroundings is

<sup>3</sup> Aleksander Nawarecki, *Parafernalia* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014), 310.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink in collaboration with Héloïse Fink, and Russel Grigg (London–New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 75–76.

unusually evocative, but that is not to say that the world manifests itself to a child completely, that it becomes her world.”<sup>5</sup> Nowicka’s book demarcates a speculative realm, where the private is elevated to the universal, the fictional becomes integrated into the personal, and the complete happens to be indiscernible from the fragmentary.

Nowicka’s work comprises her longer fascination with the way we form personal relationships with objects and approach them from our entirely human perspective. In her essay on the interconnections between memory and matter, she writes:

I might assume that every object has its human dimension, for it belongs to the human world. In other words, the world of objects is a *theatrum* in which the human world is reflected. What I am interested in is the human – this is what I would like to focus on in my work. However, I select objects to be the protagonists of my works, rooted in documentary practices. Why? Because I consider the sense of tragedy transmitted by the images of things as equally – if not more – poignant than tragedy manifested by means of human fate and the mortal body. The tragedy of objects seems to rely on their ability to prolong one’s life only for a few more steps. *Objects which outlive their owners become their representations, but, then again, each object that preserves what is lost eventually dies as well. Yet, before matter disintegrates, it remembers, symbolises, and causes a part of us to be present.* When I speak of the spiritual through the material, and the alive through the dead, and when I make objects the visible protagonists of my works more often than human beings, as their equals, I might talk about humans without the pathos that stems from direct representations.<sup>6</sup>

For Nowicka, objects are vehicles for human agency, which are capable of rendering it deconstructively, outside of cultural and social burden imprinted on any representation. More importantly, it seems that human stories are not only evoked through contact with matter, but also are deeply carved in it. Their connections with their respective owners result in an inverted figure of survival, which is accomplished despite the demise of the person; consequently, objects concurrently render durability and vulnerability. Hence, such objects become tragic. Although they preserve a part of their owners, they are signs of loss, gradually more dispersed as they deteriorate. Yet, their deterioration is also a story: a story abundant in traces of the past, absent figures, and earlier encounters, which remind us of their intrinsic fragility. However, we widely accept such fragility as long as it allows us to postpone the sense of longing and definite loss. What we observe

<sup>5</sup> Marian Stala, “Nike 2016. Bronka Nowicka i *Nakarmić kamień*, czyli dziecko nad rzeką rzeczy,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12.09.2016, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75410,20678889,nowicka-dziecko-nad-rzeka-rzeczy.html>. Translation mine.

<sup>6</sup> Bronka Nowicka, “Wymiana ciała na obraz. Próba pochwycenia drogi rzeczy od materii do wspomnienia,” *Załącznik Kulturoznawczy* 3 (2016): 363. Emphasis mine. Translation mine.

here, to use Jane Bennett's phrase, is "*Thing-Power*: a curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle."<sup>7</sup> Having replaced their departed owners, objects disturb temporal divisions into the past and the present, and fixed orders of presence and absence, as if situated in a weird state of 'in-betweenness'. They are material counterparts of individual memory, despite being static 'containers' or 'archives'. Empowered, they produce and disseminate meaning, testify to human fragility, and participate in the semiosis of life and death, no longer understood as fixed categories.

## Orphaned world

Thing-Power, re-educated by Nowicka's understanding of the tragedy of objects, manifests itself very early in the collection, in the section entitled "Comb". This chapter-poem is dedicated to the child's experience of brushing her grandfather's hair, and then stealing a comb after his death as she wants to "keep something as a memento".<sup>8</sup> Yet, death is an interesting process in this case, for it marks a transformation of the grandfather into an object, and the parallel animation of his belongings into vibrant entities. The child claims "his hands are made of wax".<sup>9</sup> The sense of reification intensifies when the child compares his body to a "wrapper [that] needs to be buried".<sup>10</sup> As she points out elsewhere, "I get close and kiss him. His skin feels like it's not there: unwarm, unsoft. Nobody lives underneath".<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, these reflections are barely associated with bitterness or despair. Rather, they seem to partake in silent acceptance. The child decides to take a sweater at first. Importantly, when the "sweaty [...] rag"<sup>12</sup> is washed and then ironed, it ceases to be a desirable object: the child steals a comb instead since "it still has grandpa".<sup>13</sup> The longing for grandpa's presence is associated with the need to possess an object that still bears a degree of physical connection with him. The piece of clothing is appealing as long as it is sweaty; then, the threads of the sweater are contaminated with a fluid released by the grandfather's body, causing him, thereby, to live for a while longer. Washing and

<sup>7</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2010), 6. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>8</sup> Bronka Nowicka, "Comb," in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 19.

<sup>10</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 19.

<sup>11</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 19.

<sup>12</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 19.

<sup>13</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 19.

ironing turns the sweater into an empty object, comparable to many others, without any traces of the past. In order to avoid a similar tragedy, the comb – as an alternative – is stolen, so that nobody might interfere with the way the child cheats death.

The choice of the comb is a peculiar one. In the text, the comb definitely functions as an “orphaned object”. Remo Bodei writes that

[t]here exists, in general, an enormous quantity of “orphaned objects,” left behind by their previous owners, which we are called upon to adopt, reject, or ignore. There is a sort of *translatio imperii* or metempsychosis that causes objects to pass from hand to hand so that their life can continue even after the death or departure of whoever owned them. Through legal documents such as wills, or through purchases, or by simple discovery, objects become material links of continuity between generations, something that can be enjoyed by turns.<sup>14</sup>

Even though Bodei does not say much more than the already cited passage from Nowicka’s essay, the very phrasing is rather interesting here. A reference to an ancient idea of metempsychosis prescribes orphaned objects through their capacity to transmit and materialise a spirit. Similar reasoning is by all means accepted by the child, who affirms the comb as an extension of the grandfather’s presence. In a way, the cultural function of a comb also contributes to this idea. Combs are everyday objects, which are equally widespread and intimate. We all have a couple of them, sometimes even stored in visible places as if on display. And yet, combs, unless washed, are rarely shared; in a hairdresser’s or barber’s shop they have to be sanitised, while in hotel rooms they are hermetically packed in plastic bags. Sometimes, when covered with hair and skin, they turn into objects of disgust; after all, they carry dead tissue which not so long ago was part of our living body. Just like the child in *To Feed the Stone*, we invest our human stories in combs; however, these items have their own material stories as well. Combs are *storied matter* – that is, sites of both narrative and material stories<sup>15</sup> – whose scratched surface, missing teeth, and deteriorating condition, as well as the torn hair and injured skin they carry, create new material, semiotic, and symbolic connections. In a sense, they testify to the story of a no-longer orphaned object, but of an ‘orphaned world’ that surpasses it instead. They carry materiality and corporeality through the orders of the living and the dead, deconstructing their stable boundaries and replacing them with a

<sup>14</sup> Remo Bodei, *The Life of Things, the Love of Things*, trans. Murtha Baca (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), np. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>15</sup> Serpil Oppermann, “From Ecological Postmodernism to Material Ecocriticism: Creative Materiality and Narrative Agency,” in *Material Ecocriticism*, 28–32.

sense of “material continuity”.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, they link us with other nonhuman entities, expose our vulnerability to their usually unnoticed activity, and bring us closer to the alien realms that exceed the human world and yet co-exist with it. Finally, what seems to be especially important for our reading of Nowicka’s work, is that the Polish word for a comb conjures up Thanatic connotations. *Grzebień* is related to *grzebanie*, which connotes the burial of the dead [*grzebanie umarłych*] and the funeral [*pogrzeb*].

In her essay, Nowicka refers to the objects in her artistic-documentary work as “an archive”;<sup>17</sup> indeed, there is something deeply archival, or *pharmakonic*, in the way the child treats the comb. For Jacques Derrida, the archive – which turns out to be one of the central figures organising his thought<sup>18</sup> – marks the iteration of difference in the form of a trace. The archive is a figure of neither sovereignty, that is, control over what is stored in it and then retrieved, nor closure, for what is retrieved is irreversibly transformed and deprived of its source.<sup>19</sup> The comb is archival as an attempt to preserve the past which is at odds with both the transient progression of time and the immaterial memory: by no means can the child accept the grandfather’s absence. Yet, the comb only provisionally carries the grandfather, supposedly carrying the deposits of his – after all, dead – skin, gathered when it was scraping his head, leaving “white lines that soon turn[ed] pink”.<sup>20</sup> Being closest to the skin, the comb functions as a convoluted metaphor for death and the child’s longing for analogous proximity. Interestingly, through its association with physical wounds, the comb becomes a sign of trauma, in which the child invests her libidinal energy. Just like trauma, the comb confuses the past with the present, and turns absence or loss into an intensive feeling of presence.<sup>21</sup> It does not, therefore, surprise us that the child decides to take the “comb, to be [her] memento”;<sup>22</sup> importantly, this line is more obscure in the original. “Biorę sobie ciebie, grzebieniu, za pamięć,”<sup>23</sup> through its irregular phrasing, indicates another interpretative

<sup>16</sup> Bodei, *The Life of Things, the Love of Things*, np.

<sup>17</sup> Nowicka, “Wymiana ciała na obraz. Próba pochwylenia drogi rzeczy od materii do wspomnienia,” 362. Translation mine.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Naas, *The End of the World and Other Teachable Moments: Jacques Derrida’s Final Seminar* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 125.

<sup>19</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1–3.

<sup>20</sup> Nowicka, “Comb,” 19.

<sup>21</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore–London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 76–82.

<sup>22</sup> Nowicka, “Comb,” 19.

<sup>23</sup> Nowicka, “Comb,” 18.

path. “[Z]a pamięć” might be roughly translated into ‘instead of memory,’ as if the material comb replaced and renounced the memory of the grandfather. Yet, this is also a function of trauma, which, instead of completing memory, disturbs it and makes it disintegrate.

## Vulnerability and care

In *To Feed the Stone*, the comb returns in several episodes associated with the paternal figure. The father is a strange person, whose behaviour evokes the child’s repulsion and fear. He is an oppressive being, whose existence is hardly justified, as if undermined by the narrator’s defensive mechanism. At first, he is presented as a short, childlike caricature, who, as a matter of fact, lacks the independence and resourcefulness of the child-narrator. Moreover, his very existence is called into question as the child finds hardly any reason for it, which neatly contrasts with the patriarchal aspirations of the father to be a figure of power. In “Door”, the child claims: “I had never seen anyone do so little but be”;<sup>24</sup> by the same token, in “Shoes” she notes: “There are days when father stops happening and the whole narrative about him switches to things”.<sup>25</sup> The orphaned world – as a shared plane of objects – demands organisation, nevertheless; the material world starts to seek its counterpart that would provide it with sense and order. The comb, as an item used to arrange hair, becomes a figure responsible for this task.

“Sink” presents the growing father, as he persistently arranges his hair in the fashion of a demiurge creating and destroying worlds. He “wear[s] out his comb too fast”,<sup>26</sup> supposedly convinced that “the direction he combs his hair will also determine the course of other things”.<sup>27</sup> As the child adds, “He does his part [sic] as if he were creating a planet. He destroys it and another one emerges. More to the left”.<sup>28</sup> The father’s actions do not merely mark his inability, ridiculed by the narrator; his attentiveness to restore the order of both his hair and the universe stems from a greater awareness of not fitting into the world he inhabits. Eventually, he resigns and then – incapable of opening the door – creates a fantasy of a way out. The father imagines he has disappeared with the flow of water in the sink, leaving the detested home forever. Contrarily to the previous instance, the use of the comb does not indicate a situation in which an object outlives its owner. Having been an

<sup>24</sup> Bronka Nowicka, “Door,” in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Bronka Nowicka, “Shoes,” in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 109.

<sup>26</sup> Bronka Nowicka, “Sink,” in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Nowicka, “Sink,” 39.

<sup>28</sup> Nowicka, “Sink,” 39.



object imprinted with loss, in “Comb” the titular item marked grieving partly disguised as a work of melancholy.<sup>29</sup> In “Sink,” the comb is predominantly a material instance of melancholy, prompting the father to turn unbearable absence into anger directed at the stability of his ego.<sup>30</sup> In fact, “Sink” demonstrates a more familiar situation, in which the condition of the comb deteriorates with its excessive use. Yet, at the same time, this object does not function as a mediator of intimacy, but rather one of detachment. Compulsive combing, compared to the creation and destruction of the world, marks the absence of a desired dwelling, which fuels a compulsive need to organise the accessible world.

When in “Shoes” the father is completely static and dumb, it is the realm of objects that persistently tries to bring him to life. Here, the comb is granted a superior agency, forcing the hand of the child to participate “for the sake of some symmetry”.<sup>31</sup> At first, it seems as if the realm of objects is reversed, making it possible for things to care for their owners. In a way, this time, the objects care for and pass the ‘orphaned people’ among themselves. The comb is portrayed here as having a significant influence on the child, controlling her actions. Hence, it makes her comb her father’s hair, and later, tap the beat of the song played by an animated cassette player, “[f]aster and faster”.<sup>32</sup> That is not to say that the other objects do not come to live and assist the father; still, the comb remains the only object that binds the child and the father together. Suddenly, the child – arguably deprived of any bond with her father – repeats the gesture of proximity, playfulness, and care which we recognise from the past, when she combed her grandfather’s hair. The agency of the comb emphasises the child’s vulnerability which underlies her unsuccessful resistance. As the father “stops happening”, he demands attention. The child finds herself stuck between emotional distance and duty. Even though she does not want to help, she does so and cedes responsibility for her actions to the comb as the entity that breaks her down despite notable struggle. Beneath this transference or denial, an intensifying tension, or even frustration, might be sensed in the tapping as it accelerates. The child yearns for closeness with her father, which is juxtaposed with various instances of the father’s detachment. Objects, and the comb in particular, serve

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<sup>29</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XIV (1914–1916). On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 2001), 244–245.

<sup>30</sup> Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 244–245.

<sup>31</sup> Nowicka, “Shoes,” 109.

<sup>32</sup> Nowicka, “Shoes,” 109.

as the media of this relationship. Although they unmask the child's vulnerability, they make it possible for her to connect with him and to care for him in a way that is indirect for both of them.

The turn towards care is by no means accidental; in *To Feed the Stone*, the world presented is starved of care and finds a soothing substitute for personal and existential angst. In "Sack," we read:

The child is standing over the bed, holding a comb. She would love to find and shut the door on the bodies that can only be opened from the side of the world. Mother and father would pound on it from the side of the dream but the child would only hear the moth busying between the dough and the sack. The child would comb some hair.<sup>33</sup>

This moment concludes a recollection of the child observing her sleeping parents: the mother's naked body becomes "dough [...] spilling over father that's lying there like a sack. A moth has landed on him".<sup>34</sup> The unfamiliarity of this experience results in the child's attempt to domesticate it in material reality. The child is accompanied by a comb, that is, a medium of intimacy, whose Thanatic connotations are commensurate with intensifying anxiety. What cannot be domesticated releases a disquieting charge that simultaneously provokes the child's desire to take her parents' places or to merge with them. She expresses a need to return to their bodies and to embrace corporeality, and use them as barriers, separating the child from the parents altogether. In a way, closeness with them seems inaccessible and out of place, even traumatic; still, it exposes an underlying sense of longing for proximity and care, conveyed in the child's compulsion to "comb some hair".<sup>35</sup>

### In search of touch

In an epilogue to *To Feed the Stone*, Nowicka writes a mythological account on *Terra Memoria* and its domains, where what has been remembered exists in mental images, cultural representations, and material artifacts. According to this account, memory has been disconnected from its original function to materialise the past. As she notes, back then "people pilgrimage[d] to Memoria" since "[t]hey travelled for touch, the only revered sense of that world".<sup>36</sup>

The child's journey through the unfamiliar world is also a pilgrimage for touch. It is a journey that is both carnal and internal. Alienated, she longs for

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<sup>33</sup> Bronka Nowicka, "Sack," in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 61.

<sup>35</sup> Nowicka, "Comb," 61.

<sup>36</sup> Bronka Nowicka, "Epilogue," in Nowicka, *To Feed the Stone*, 121.

closeness and intimacy commensurate with her sense of vulnerability. Unlike that of people, the world of objects is abundant in touch through its material configurations. Yet, those objects have their own stories and meanings, which they share as they unfold the world for the child. The comb is a precarious guide here; once close to the human body, it breaks the orders of memory and reality, of the past and the present, of the alive and the dead. It demonstrates its unique agency since it unmask and encodes the father's need for detachment, and the child's need for closeness and care. Being itself a figure of absence of life, the comb is endowed with thing-power or vitality, which allows us to use it as a guide through the world where loss and absence structure indirect patterns of longing. As everyday reality is deeply uncanny, the meanings it mediates might only result in a greater sense of alienation. In *To Feed the Stone*, material objects unlock the dimensions of touch – closeness, intimacy, proximity – that are not reduced to presence, but rather excessive in the way they affect and transform reality. Perhaps therein lies the desirable potential of this reversed perspective. Unburdened with the weight of human relations, objects make it possible for the child to support a fantasy of furnishing her own reality beyond anxiety, aloneness, and otherness: the reality where she would “spot what she once knew by touch, and now, only by name”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nowicka, “Chestnut,” 106.

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## **Waisenkinder und Objekte. Die Materialität von Sehnsucht und Angst in Bronka Nowickas *Nakarmić kamień***

**Abstract:** In dem Artikel wird analysiert, wie Sehnsucht durch die Verbindung von Intimität und Materialität in Bronka Nowickas *Nakarmić kamień* entsteht. Im Lichte ausgewählter materialistischer Theorien und der Psychoanalyse wird bewiesen, wie die wiederkehrende Figur des Kammes eine Ding-Macht (Jane Bennett) ausübt und neue materielle und semiotische Verbindungen schafft. Sie stört die scheinbar festen Dyaden von Präsenz/Abwesenheit, Gegenwart/Vergangenheit, Passivität/Aktivität oder Leben/Tod. Darüber hinaus verweist diese Figur auf die Sehnsucht und Angst, da sie die kindliche Erzählerin auf ihrer Reise auf der Suche nach Berührung durch eine *unheimliche* Welt begleitet.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Bronka Nowicka, Materialität, Sehnsucht, Nähe, Angst

## Sieroty i przedmioty. Materialność tęsknoty i lęku w *Nakarmić kamień* Bronki Nowickiej

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł stawia sobie za cel analizę tęsknoty oraz lęku w *Nakarmić kamień* Bronki Nowickiej, poprzez ich powiązania z kategoriami materialności i bliskości. Posługując się wybranymi pojęciami materialistycznymi oraz psychoanalitycznymi, pokazano, w jaki sposób figura grzebienia ujawnia swoją „moc rzeczy” (pojęcie Jane Bennett), tworząc nowe materialne i semiotyczne połączenia. W wyniku ożywczej materialności grzebienia, zakwestionowaniu ulegają na pozór stałe binarne podziały: obecne/nieobecne, teraźniejsze/przeszłe, czynne/bierne czy żywe/martwe. Co więcej, grzebień uruchamia pracę tęsknoty oraz lęku, towarzysząc bohaterce-podmiotce w jej podróży poprzez *niesamowity* świat w poszukiwaniu dotyku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Bronka Nowicka, materialność, tęsknota, bliskość, lęk