

# Peripheries Are Supposed to Quote

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## Abstract

This is an angry punk collective autoethnography - we scream about inequalities in knowledge production.

This is an angry punk collective autoethnography - we scream about our experience of being rejected by so-called international journals.

This is an angry punk collective autoethnography - we scream in Polish and English according to the margin lever.

This is an angry punk collective autoethnography - we scream from the semi-periphery. We're really screwed!

## Keywords

punk collective autoethnography, semi-periphery, inequalities, internationality, academic knowledge

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## Introduction

This publication is a vehicle for a punk song that we wrote and submitted as a critical intervention. If you want, you can skip to the end where we recite the song. First, we explain what this song is about and why we wrote it.

Above all, our song is an angry punk collective autoethnography. We've received many rejections of texts in which we presented our original concepts. We've come to deeply question, resent, and now seek to unmask the apparent internationality of Anglo-Saxon scientific journals. We've stewed over this together and with others; collectively. And so, using emotions accumulated during the process of all this rejection, we wrote a punk song.

Aesthetically, punk is based on simple sentences, short, fast verses and choruses. Punk autoethnography screams, spews bile and strikes – sharp, noisy and brazen (Szwabowski, Zańko, and Mackenzie 2025). First of all, provocative, it also transforms cultural criticism into cynical parrhesia. We have employed the term “parrhesia” as developed by Michael Foucault. Parrhesia is a specific act of speech: telling truth to power. A parrhesiastic utterance is based not on the Truth, nor on expert truth (see Dyrberg 2016), but on the truth of the individual, on their ethical beliefs. This is not an expert utterance that legitimizes the social structure, but a citizen's utterance in the face of the abuses of power. In this act we take a risk because we do not know how the authority will answer. In this act we take a risk because we speak with no right to do so. And also because there are no norms for showing how safe it is to speak. The risk of parrhesia is unknown. Parrhesia is not a dialogue. It is an act of resistance. As Foucault wrote (2010, 54): ‘the person who tells the truth throws the truth in the face of his interlocutor, a truth which is so violent, so abrupt, and said in such a peremptory and definitive way that the person facing him can only fall silent, or choke with fury, or change to a different register, which in the case of Dionysius is the attempt to murder Plato’. The act of parrhesia emerges from a desire for a better world. Parrhesia is a tool for democracy, for freedom. Foucault wrote about two main kinds of parrhesia – that of a Plato/Socratic style and a more cynical/Diogenic approach. In the cynical form, parrhesia's relation to power and rhetoric is quite different. Cynical parrhesia places itself in relation to power not as an adviser. It is not that it wants to reform power, or to make the ruler ethically better. It does not get involved in any collective party. A cynic opposes power in two ways. Firstly, by mocking it. Secondly, by acting beyond it. “The rhetoric of the parrhesiast is blunt, committed, and courageous: it places critique before consensus and peace” (Shea 2010, 17). Cynics do not produce criticism simply by embodying and performing it, but at the same time they aim to launch a different way of life, they are in the practice of creating utopia. “Cynical aggression is real, physical, and verbal. It aims to change the world... It is aimed not only at offering individuals the means to a better life but also a way to transform the world” (Shea 2010, 183; see also Prozorov 2017). This type of practice is also visible in the punk approach to research.

In our song we refer to evocative autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis 2016; Ellis 2004). Autoethnography that does not so much reflect the world, but seeks to change it – in this case, to disrupt it (Denzin 2018). Our collective writing was also driven by the desire to transform and to produce effects (Wężniejewska et al. 2020). Effects such as our poetic-evocative writing, our noisy sentences, “become tools to open (new) spaces to produce social change” (de Leeuw 2019, 61). We added a punk sensibility to intensify the autoethnographic impact. Punk autoethnography emphasizes the emotional, rejecting cold theoretical distance (see Szwabowski and Zańko 2025). It is not an autoethnography written with emotions and reason

(Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011), but with emotional reason – reason pulsating with affects rather than analysis. Our dirty, collective writing comes from the gut, from the churning and dirty bodies, becoming an unbearable noise, an unbearable provocation. It is dirty writing in the rhythm of a pogo<sup>1</sup> (Szwabowski and Zańko 2025).

Autoethnography itself may place the researcher on the margins of “real” academic life (Szwabowski 2022b). Performing it in a punk manner can deepen marginalization. In the local context in which we work, this type of research may not be accepted. This is related to the dominance of positivist and post-positivist approaches in social science research and their claims to establish what is “true” science and what is not. The use of autoethnography also comes up against various problems in the didactic dimension (see Szwabowski and Wężniewska 2017; Szwabowski, Wężniewska, and Łozińska 2022). Autoethnography as a didactic practice is positioned in opposition to technological didactics (Malewski 2010), which dominates academia in Poland. Punk pedagogy, which aims to abolish alienated education and dismantle the academic machine (Haenfler 2012), seems to intensify this conflict. For this reason, this counter-hegemonic form of education requires more courage and involves risk (Torrez 2012). The university, both in terms of teaching and research, is not open to the punk-autoethnographic ways of being. They appear, rather, in the cracks, in the crevices, in the deep basements of universities. They cross the boundaries, challenge the ossified academy. They are akin to real punk rock, which – as Burø writes (2021, 687) – is “a great refusal of one-dimensionality as it commits to experimentation and to creating something other (...) It gently, and sometimes not so gently, extends its middle finger towards the Man and his established ways”. Punk ways of being are excluded; but they are also intercepted, domesticated and neutered by the system (see Furness 2012), which seems to be the fate of much cultural resistance in general (see Hebdige 1991).

Our song is one of the voices pointing out the inequalities related to the production of knowledge. The injustice of being situated in global capitalism has been raised by many researchers (Connell 2007; 2017; Murphy and Zhu 2012; Rodriguez Medina 2014; Abriszewski, Kola, and Kowalewski 2016; Tietze and Dick 2013; Mosbah-Natanson and Gingras 2014; Piller and Cho 2013; Tienari 2019; George Mwangi et al. 2018; Guzmán-Valenzuela, Queupil, and Ríos-Jara 2021; Tomaselli 2019; Wang and Zhang 2020; Al Lily 2022; Roche and Flynn 2020; Fitzgerald and Jiang 2020; Chutorański and Szwabowski 2023; Szwabowski 2022a; Timár 2004). These researchers point out, among other things, the narrow understanding of internationality, the domination of the West, and the relegation of the periphery and semi-periphery to the level of recipients rather than theory creators; often a reduction to a kind of intermediary or exoticized Other. Based on challenges we have experienced repeatedly when trying to publish basic, theory-generating texts, we write this furious, bitter, punk autoethnographic song. It may be a paradox that when signaling the problem of inequality in the production of scientific knowledge, we mostly refer to texts published in core scientific journals and publishers, which largely maintain these inequalities. However, the discussion on this topic takes place mainly in the center mentioned before. In the local, semi-peripheral scientific discourse (we mean Poland, the country we come from), a vision of science is created that is based largely on theories which are imported,

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<sup>1</sup> What we mean here is a dance derived from punk culture (see more: Hebdige 1991).

transplanted from the West (see Abriszewski 2016). These concepts are treated *a priori* as noteworthy, simply because they have been published in Western scientific journals with a high impact factor. The quality and prestige of scientific publications are identified by journals included in the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) list (cf. Paasi 2005). The political implications of the ISI's use of the impact factor as the basic criterion for creating a ranking list of scientific journals, such as neoliberalization of science and "cementing new forms of hierarchy" (see more The ACME Editorial Collective 2015, 135), are rarely the subject of critical discussion in Poland. At the same time, an inbred vision of science is also being created. The vision of inbred science is not a democratic or emancipatory one. It is characterized by other inequalities, locally, based on feudalism, cronyism, and the creation of an academic clique. Inbred science is ideologically linked to Polish nationalism (including nationalist Catholicism), which are very exclusive, repressive ideologies. An alternative view of inbred science, as a response to hegemony, appeared in the report *Mechanisms of Counter-Hegemony in Science* (Abriszewski et al. 2022), but was met with no response.

Our voice comes from a semi-periphery (Wallerstein 1974) that is not even exotic. We have little to offer the empire other than being a middleman. Production in our national language is invisible. By speaking in the so-called international area, we attempt to become visible and audible. Hear us scream!

We treat the text as a kind of intervention, another critique of the domination of the core countries in academic production. At the same time, we use the margin lever (Chutorański and Szwabowski 2023) aimed at valuing our language and way of thinking and feeling. The margin lever is one attempt to democratize the production of knowledge. In accordance with the margin lever, we are publishing our text in two languages - Polish and English. The margin lever advocates publishing in two different languages to break the hegemony of English<sup>2</sup>. This is important for two reasons. First, for researchers from semi-peripheral countries, it reduces the loss of meaning that is associated with translating terms into another language. Second, it forces those from core countries to recognize science outside of their own linguistic bubble-writing in a second language involves learning marginalized theories, terms, tools, and literature.

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<sup>2</sup> The Polish language we use in our song is, from the Anglo-Saxon perspective (dominant in the scientific world), a different, local language. However, we are aware that Polish as an official language in our country can also be perceived as hegemonic towards those languages spoken by ethnic minorities living in Poland, such as the Kashubians living in the north of Poland, in the Pomerania region near Gdańsk. Although it should be emphasized that attempts are being made in Poland to empower the value of ethnic minority languages, e.g. by introducing bilingual place names. Our use of the official Polish language in the song results from our specific geographical location. If we were Kashubians, we would probably use the Kashubian language in our intervention.

*Peryferia mają cytować*

są bramy przez które przechodzisz  
 gdy myślisz jak my  
 i o naszych problemach  
 gdy wykazujesz, że jesteś na bieżąco:  
 - z modami  
 - z autorytetami  
 - z naszymi problemami

Peryferia mają cytować

Na jakiej teorii to oparłeś  
 Kto z nas takie badania prowadził  
 Czyją metodę wzięłeś  
 Czyje idee przywołujesz  
 Na kim z nas się opierasz

*rejected rejected rejected rejected*  
*rejected by*  
*bye bye*

Możemy być pośrednikami  
 wyznaczona rola półperyferii  
 w akademickiej produkcji wiedzy  
 znaj swoje miejsce  
 a cię uznamy  
 macie uznanie jako nasze kopiarki  
 kserujcie modelujcie - ale nie za bardzo  
 nasze myśli, nasze idee  
 które wam przywozimy

*Peripheries are supposed to quote*

there are gates you pass through  
 when you think like us  
 and about our problems  
 when you show that you are up to date:  
 - with trends  
 - with authorities  
 - with our problems

Peripheries are supposed to quote

What theory did you base this on  
 Who among us conducted such research  
 Whose method did you take  
 Whose ideas are you evoking  
 Which of us are you based on

We can be middlemen  
 designated role of the semi-periphery  
 in academic production of knowledge  
 know your place  
 and we will acknowledge you  
 you are appreciated as our copiers  
 copy and mold - but not too much  
 our thoughts, our ideas  
 that we bring to you

do waszych ziem jałowych  
 na wasze pustkowia  
 perły wam dajemy  
 a wy pracę  
 ich polerowania otrzymujecie

to your barren lands  
 to your waste lands  
 we give you pearls  
 and the work of  
 polishing them you receive

Kurwa! Znowu odmowa  
 wczoraj jedna, dzisiaj dwie  
 Dziękujemy Ci, że wybrałeś nasze czasopismo  
 żeby zostać odrzuconym

Fuck! Rejected again  
 yesterday once, today twice  
 Thank you for choosing our journal  
 to be rejected

Znamy na pamięć wasze utarte szablony  
 „Z przykrością informuję”  
 akademicka „korpo” nowomowa  
 „Twoja koncepcja jest interesująca”  
 ale...  
 wymaga lepszego ugruntowania  
 w naszych anglosaskich teoriach

We know your clichés by heart  
 “I regret to inform you”  
 academic “corpo” newspeak  
 “Your concept is interesting”  
 but...  
 it requires better grounding  
 in our Anglo-Saxon theories

*rejected rejected rejected rejected*  
*rejected by*  
*bye bye*

Cytować, cytować, cytować  
 Nie kreować  
 Nie kombinować  
 Nasze patenty  
 Wasze linie produkcyjne

Quote, quote, quote  
 Don't create  
 Don't mess around  
 Our patents  
 Your production lines

Mamy być tylko platformą  
 dla waszych doskonałych idei  
 pochodzących z waszych wybitnych tekstów

We are just supposed to be a platform  
 for your perfect ideas  
 coming from your outstanding texts

starannie wyselekcjonowanych  
według imperialnych kryteriów

carefully selected  
according to imperial criteria

Mamicie nas obietnicami  
sprawiedliwej nauki  
Siedząc w wygodnych fotelach  
rozdajecie karty

You beguile us with promises  
of fair academia  
Sitting in comfortable armchairs  
you hold all the cards

Nie, nie jesteśmy zazdrośni  
Jesteśmy wkurwieni  
kiedy z uprzywilejowanej pozycji  
akademickiego hegemonia  
z taką łatwością  
chłoszczecie nasz półperyferyjny wysiłek

No, we are not jealous  
We are pissed off  
when from a position of privilege  
academic hegemon  
with so much ease  
you whip our semi-peripheral effort

*rejected rejected rejected rejected*  
*rejected by*  
*bye bye*

ouch...!

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