

Polish Gender, Subgender, and Quasi-Gender

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Abstract: The question as to how many genders there are in Polish has absorbed linguists for well over half a century. Almost everyone approaching this question has applied a different criterion to the exclusion of other criteria in order to obtain an answer, and answers have ranged from every number from three through nine, or even more. One matter that has never been given due importance is the evidence of third-person pronouns which, in both nominative and accusative cases, would seem to have come into existence partly in order to be able to refer to nouns by their gender. All told, evidence points to the existence of four main Polish grammatical genders, consisting of the traditional three (masculine, feminine, neuter) and the Polish innovative one of “masculine personal.” These comprise a tightly knit coherent system. Other gender candidates can be considered to be either “subgenders” (masculine animate and masculine depreciative) or “quasi-genders,” of which there are around half a dozen. The existence and behaviors of the quasi-genders, i.e., nouns that would appear to belong to one gender but can act like another (an example being “facultative animate” nouns, i.e., referentially inanimate nouns that behave as if animate) shows that users of the language remain sensitive to mismatches between declension-type, gender, and sexual or animate reference, and will allow referential reality to assert itself against grammatical gender in accordance with Corbett’s observation as to the increasing instability of agreement targets the farther they are from the agreement controller.

If we take an Indo-European-type three-gender system (as in German, Polish, or Russian, ignoring subgenders), we find that the meanings we can identify for the personal pronouns are “male,” “female,” and “neither male nor female.” Thus the meaning of the pronouns matches part of the meaning of prototypical nouns of the corresponding genders; it reflects the core meaning of the genders. (Corbett 1991: 245–46)

1. Polish Gender

1.1. The Three Core Polish Genders

A conservative estimate of the number of Polish genders is three (see Klemensiewicz 1960: 51–52). It is natural to single out the genders inherited from Indo-European as being their best examples, and not just because the division reflects the traditions of Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit grammar. In the singular, every Polish noun must be masculine, feminine, or neuter. To a much greater extent than in the languages of classical antiquity, gender and declension in Slavic in general, and in Polish in particular, are not, to any significant degree, independent of one another. It is possible, for example, to speak of a particular inflectional type of Polish noun—taking into account a noun’s ending-set, that is, all of its endings in six grammatical cases and two numbers, singular and plural—and there are around 50 such possible sets—as being intrinsically masculine, feminine, or neuter, a reality illustrated in detail in *Gramatyka współczesnego języka polskiego* (GWJP 220ff). In addition, the relationship between sex and gender in Polish is fairly tight. With few exceptions, inherently gendered nouns in Polish (i.e., nouns naming referentially male personal, female personal, or barnyard and certain other sexed animals) are assigned to the “masculine” and “feminine” genders on a natural basis. Words for animals as yet too young to be considered sexually mature, including children, can be neuter, for example, *dziecko* ‘child’, *dziewczę* ‘maiden’, *cielę* ‘calf’. Other nouns are distributed over the basic three genders on a largely arbitrary basis. For example, *księżyc* ‘moon’ is masculine, *słońce* ‘sun’ is neuter, and *Ziemia* ‘the Earth’ is feminine. Although names for animals tend to be masculine or feminine, not neuter, *pszczola* ‘bee’ and *osa* ‘wasp’ are feminine, while *sizerszeń* ‘hornet’ and *trzmiel* ‘bumblebee’ are masculine.¹ If the ability to accept random, non-semantically determined assignment of membership is the primary basis for distinguishing a gender from a “subgender” in Polish, as Wertz (1977) seemingly claims it is, then indeed the number of Polish genders is three. One need not agree with Wertz, but it is true that assignment to the two other main Polish gender candidates,

¹ A certain amount of sexual association attaches to animal and plant names assigned to the masculine and feminine genders. For example, Poles will sometimes remark that they think of a ‘bee’ as literally female (i.e., not as just grammatically feminine) because its pronoun is *ona* ‘she’.

“masculine personal” and “masculine animate,” is to a large extent determined by natural affinity. Thus, masculine nouns designating adult males (for example, *mężczyzna* ‘man’, *lekarz* ‘physician’, *żołnierz* ‘soldier’) are assigned to masculine personal gender, and masculine names for animals, whether sexed or not (for example, *baran* ‘ram’, *byk* ‘bull’, *kogut* ‘rooster’, but also *chomik* ‘hamster’, *gołąb* ‘pigeon’, *ropuch* ‘toad’), are automatically treated as masculine animate, as reflected by a set of inflectional endings that are unique in some respect to them.

Corbett is correct to emphasize that gender in Indo-European and Polish is sexual at its core and is reflected in pronouns (see the epigraph). Of the three inherited Polish genders, masculine is semantically full—some might say, over-loaded—with various mostly male-tinged semantic nuances, statuses, or resonances that are not only latent but have, over time, become manifest to varying degrees in the grammar of the language.² Feminine in turn, carrying at least latent resonances of female animacy and personhood (Zaron 2004 and Ampel-Rudolf 2009),³ is more sexually resonant than neuter, which, as Corbett suggests in the epigraph, is largely devoid of sexual or any kind of resonances. Another way of putting this is that neuter gender is the “least referentially encumbered,” “least embodied,” or the “least sexually empowered” of the genders, while masculine gender is the most. A hierarchy of the traditional Polish genders, based on the overall strength of their “sexual embodiment,” for want of a better term, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Hierarchy of the three core Polish genders, based on the relative strength of their “sexual embodiment”

+male	-male	
	+female	-female
masculine gender	feminine gender	neuter gender

² See continuing discussion and Tables 4 and 5. Among masculine resonances that have achieved formal status in the language are masculine personal, masculine personal depreciative, masculine animate, masculine inanimate, masculine facultatively animate. Formally less easily definable resonances within feminine gender include feminine personal (but see Saloni’s test sentences (1a–b) below) and feminine animate.

³ These authors stress the cognitive reality of animacy and personhood among feminine nouns, which in their descriptions need to be so marked in order to explain why given nouns can perform some syntactic roles and not others. This is usually called lexical subcategorization, as distinct from gender.

1.2. Gender Encoded in the Noun

Most linguists seem to agree that Polish gender is encoded in the stem of a noun (thus Wróbel 2001: 90), although the quasi-gendered nouns (§5) challenge this idea. A case could also be made that Polish gender is, alternatively, encoded in a noun's entire ending-set which, as noted, almost always specifies its gender. Wide consensus also exists among linguists that gender refers to classes of nouns that are "reflected in the behavior of associated words" (Hockett 1958: 231). This understanding, vague as it is, is commonly taken to exclude considering lexical sub-categorization by itself, which probably any language has, without the accompanying "behavior of associated words," to be a kind of gender. However, the question as to exactly how many genders there are in Polish, and how to determine that number, has challenged linguists for well over half a century. Almost everyone approaching this question has applied a different criterion to the exclusion of other criteria in order to obtain an answer, which has ranged from the traditional three to four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, or to an almost unlimited number. Our aim here will be to look at all criteria and proposals taken together and arrive at a compositely determined answer, seeking essences, without giving priority to any particular approach, perspective, or methodology—and, to an extent, looking at the historical aspect of the matter.

1.3. Szober

On the observation that nominative-case modifiers have five agreement-forms, Szober (1963) concludes that Polish has the traditional three genders in the singular and two additional, innovative ones in the plural, as in Table 2:

Table 2. Szober's five Polish genders, based on nominative-case modifier endings

nominative singular			nominative plural	
masculine	feminine	neuter	masc.personal	non-masc.personal
<i>ten list</i>	<i>ta droga</i>	<i>to miasto</i>	<i>ci studenci</i>	<i>te domy</i>
'that letter'	'that road'	'that town'	'those students'	'those homes'

This description can still be found in characterizations of the Polish gender system written for the general reader not interested in gen-

der theory and it is also used in Polish schools. Because Szober looks only at nominative-case modifiers, his method does not identify masculine animate nouns, distinguished by a genitive-accusative syncretism in the accusative singular. For him this would presumably be a “subgender.”

1.4. Mańczak

In a short but influential study, Mańczak (1956) also identifies five Polish genders, but not the same five as Szober. He argues that, for the sake of descriptive consistency, one should project the same genders in the singular and plural combined, regardless of syncretisms found in one place and not the other, just as one does with case and person. He bases his analysis not on the nominative, but on the slightly more differentiated accusative case forms of modifiers, creating a description that is still used by most specialists in Poland up to the present day (Table 3). Mańczak dismisses the concept of subgender, claiming (1956: 121) that it stems from the desire of traditionalists’ not wanting to exceed the classical number of three.

Table 3. Mańczak’s five genders, based on accusative-case singular and plural adjective oppositions and syncretisms

accusative singular adjectives	accusative plural adjectives
<i>dobrego</i> : masculine personal	<i>dobrych</i>
<i>dobrego</i> : masculine animate	
<i>dobry</i> : masculine inanimate	<i>dobre</i>
<i>dobrą</i> : feminine	
<i>dobre</i> : neuter	

Of Mańczak’s five genders, masculine animate and masculine personal do not have a special noun or adjective ending in the accusative case set aside specifically for them. Instead they owe their status as genders to their pattern of borrowing accusative-case endings from the genitive case: both do so in the singular, and masculine personal do in the plural, with modifiers following suit. Corbett and Fraser (1993) consider the fact that masculine animate nouns do not have their own

dedicated ending in the accusative to be sufficient grounds for considering that class to be a subgender.

1.5. Szober and Mańczak Combined

Szober's and Mańczak's systems look no farther than contiguously modifying adjectives in a single case in determining gender. Neither methodology identifies so-called "de-virilized" nouns (§1.10), characterized by the lack of personal endings and agreement in the nominative plural of the noun and its modifiers, combined with the personal genitive-accusative syncretism in the accusative plural. This class emerges only if one compares agreeing adjectives in both cases (nominative and accusative) and both numbers, as, for example, do Brooks and Nalibow (1977), Brown and Hippisley (2012: 95–106), and others; see Table 4. This model projects six gender candidates, a number advocated by Brooks and Nalibow (1977: 137) but not, in fact, by Brown and Hippisley, who like Corbett (1983) consider masculine animate and masculine devirile to be subgenders; see further discussion in §1.10.

Table 4. Six Polish gender distinctions as they emerge from the comparison of nominative and accusative-case modifiers in both singular and plural

	nom.sg.	acc.sg.	nom.pl.	acc.pl.
masc. personal	<i>dobry</i>	<i>dobrego</i>	<i>dobrzy</i>	<i>dobrych</i>
masc. de-virile	<i>dobry</i>	<i>dobrego</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobrych</i>
masc. animate	<i>dobry</i>	<i>dobrego</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>
masc. inanimate	<i>dobry</i>	<i>dobry</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>
feminine	<i>dobra</i>	<i>dobrą</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>
neuter	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>	<i>dobre</i>

1.6. Schenker

Schenker (1955) considers the collocational properties of the numerical modifiers *jed/n-* 'one' and *dw-* 'two' with nouns in all six (i.e., not counting the vocative) cases. He chooses these items (neither of which, it must be said, are typical modifiers)⁴ for reason of their being overall maximally differentiating in the singular and plural numbers, respectively, taking all grammatical cases into consideration. Schenker's choice of *dwa*_{M/N}, *dwie*_F, *dwaj*_{M.PERS} 'two' as a test modifier in the plural leads him to distinguish five noun genders there, including feminine plural, which only emerges in connection with the two items *dwie* and *obie/obydwie* 'both'.⁵ In the end, Schenker specifies nine genders in all, defined compositely according to what he considers to be a noun's singular gender and its plural gender. For example, for him, feminine nouns are Feminine+Feminine, i.e., feminine in both singular and plural; masculine personal nouns are Masculine Animate+Masculine Personal; and so on.⁶ Translating into terms of the present paper, Schenker's nine genders are: feminine, masculine personal, masculine personal depreciative (§1.10 below), masculine animate, masculine inanimate, neuter, common-gender (§5.6 below), common-gender personal depreciative (§5.6 below), and a novel and small class, consisting of male/female-referencing declensional doublets having homomorphic stems, e.g., *matżonek* 'spouse_M', *matżonka* 'spouse_F', which share the stem *matżon/k-*. Schenker's analysis, while insightful in many ways, has found few if any followers. Wertz (1977), who does not refer to Schenker's article, applies almost the identical methodology to arrive at the alternative number of seven.

1.7. Agreement Controllers and Targets

Most recent studies of Polish gender, including investigations into child language acquisition (e.g., Smoczyńska 1972, Łuczyński 2005, Krajew-

⁴ For one thing, numerals divide nouns into those that can be counted and those that cannot, a distinction that is not usually considered to be one of gender.

⁵ In Russian, Zaliznjak (1964: 30) solves the *dwie/obie* (Russian *dve/obe*) problem by considering *dve* and *obe* 'both' to be obsolescent. That the distinction between *dwa* and *dwie* is also artificially maintained in Polish is evidenced by the difficulty Polish children can have learning it, often up until school age.

⁶ Schenker's genders are strikingly similar to Zaliznjak's later concept of the "agreement class," which are based on diagnostic sentences that contrast the plural agreement patterns of a noun with those in the singular.

ski 2005, Brehmer and Rothweiler 2012), take their departure both from Mańczak and from the evidence of what are called agreement classes (*soglasovatel'nye klassy*, from Zaliznjak 1964), which come into existence from an examination of agreement controllers (i.e., the gender-bearing nouns themselves) in combination with the forms of agreement-targets which, in Polish, are commonly considered to include demonstrative pronouns, attributive and predicate adjectives, relative pronouns, and past-tense and future imperfective verb endings. Strikingly, these do not normally include anaphoric pronouns nor, contra Schenker and Saloni, numerals. Although Zaliznjak's agreement classes, which are largely obtained by applying diagnostic sentence frames, encompass the Russian genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter), they also include such subdistinctions as masculine animate, feminine animate, neuter animate, and plural-only nouns.

1.8. Saloni

In a study in which both Mańczak's and Zaliznjak's influence is acknowledged and Schenker's is evident, Saloni (1976) extends agreement targets to include numerals higher than *cztery* and to collective numerals *dwoje*, *troje*, *czworo*, *pięcioro*, like Schenker arriving at the number of nine primary genders, although they are not the same nine.⁷ In fact, Saloni's number of genders is fluid and almost indefinitely expandable, depending on how finely grained the idea of gender target is taken to be. By looking at the *łączliwość* 'combinability, connectivity, collocability' holding between nouns and both primary and collective numerals, as judged by diagnostic sentences, Saloni adds to Mańczak's basic five: (a) *dziecko* 'child' and neuter nouns naming animal young ending in *-ę* like *cielę* 'calf'; (b) plural-only 'count' nouns like *skrzypce* 'violin'; (c) plural-only nouns countable in pairs like *spodnie* 'trousers'; and (d) masculine personal plural nouns of mixed gender like *państwo* 'Mr. and Mrs., ladies and gentlemen', all four of which types are or can be counted with collective numerals.⁸

A reservation concerning Saloni's analysis is that it produces tiny categories based solely on the criterion of combinability with collective

⁷ Woliński (2001), employing the same basic methodology, pares the number down to eight by simplifying the description of plural-only nouns.

⁸ Words like *spodnie* 'trousers' are theoretically countable with collective numerals, but they are normally counted with *para* 'pair' plus the genitive plural.

numerals—categories that Corbett (1988: 6–7) might call “inquate,” i.e., too small to count. A more serious problem is that, whereas the five main genders besides using numeral-based diagnostic sentences can also be established by the evidence of ending-to-ending gender-number-case modifier agreement, numerals ‘five’ and above and all the collective numerals do not show ending-to-ending agreement in the nominative and accusative cases, and collective numerals do not show it in the instrumental case. Instead they take the genitive plural of the counted noun and hence do not exactly “change behavior” according to the gender of a nominal controller in the two most frequently occurring cases.⁹ In this way, the agreement on which Saloni’s extra four genders depend seems more lexemic than desinential, and looks more like lexical subcategorization than gender proper, the criterion of *łączliwość* ‘connectivity’ being looser than that of *zgoda* ‘agreement’, and producing different results.¹⁰ An additional problem with the Saloni analysis is that in the end it is based on forcing the two paradigms of *pięć* and *pięcioro*-type numerals into what amounts to a “morpho-lexeme” *pięć~pięcioro* ‘five’, the aim being to create sub-paradigms which are then selected in response to the putative gender of the noun, a gender which, virtually circularly, one otherwise might not know but for alternations like *pięć~pięcioro*. The collapse of *pięć* and *pięcioro*-type numerals into single lexemes is complicated by the fact that the two items show different syntax in the instrumental case (*pięć* takes agreement syntax, whereas *pięcioro* takes the genitive plural).

The diagnostic frames used by Saloni to illustrate his nine genders (1976: 62) are similar to those used by Zaliznak to establish his “agreement classes,” and it seems to the present author that, in order to avoid terminological confusion, this is the appropriate term to be used with numeral-projected “genders.” The issue of numeral combinability,

⁹ The use of collectives with plural-only nouns is pretty clearly a case of gender-choice avoidance that can be traced to the primary numeral *dwa*_{JM.PERS} ~ *dwa*_{M/N} ~ *dwie*_F ‘two’, the use of which requires that one make a choice as to singular gender, which is impossible in the case of plural-only nouns. Collective numerals ‘three’ and ‘four’ follow suit largely by analogy. With collectives ‘five’ and above, and in oblique cases for all collectives, the system is highly degraded. The same motive of gender-choice avoidance can be observed with *każd-* ‘each’, *żad/n-* ‘none’, *jed/n-* ‘one’, which default to the neuter form when applied to a plural noun of mixed gender; see *jedno z tych państw* ‘one_N of those (male and female) people’. Gender-choice avoidance is not the same thing as gender agreement, but might seem more like its opposite.

¹⁰ It also strikes me that for Saloni the word *rodzaj* ‘type, kind, sort, gender’ may have a broader meaning than the word *gender* does for English-speaking researchers.

while it is an interesting one and characteristically Polish, needs to be examined separately from that of gender proper (similarly, Brown 1998: 200).¹¹

Saloni goes beyond his nine genders by examining several diagnostic sentences like (1a–b), which aim to show a formally demonstrable distinction between feminine nouns that are personal or animate from those that are not:

- (1) a. Dziewczyna należy do tych, które lubię.
 girl belongs to those whom like_{1SG}
 ‘The girl belongs to those whom_{NON-M.PERS} I like.’
- b. Dziewczyna należy do tych, których lubię.
 girl belongs to those whom like_{1SG}
 ‘The girl belongs to those whom_{M.PERS} I like.’

The question as to whether *dziewczyna* and other feminine nouns naming persons are gradually acquiring personhood in a grammatical sense is a legitimate question; see the discussion in §3.2.

1.9. Laskowski

A final important discussant on the subject of Polish gender is Laskowski in *GWJP* (220ff.), the more prominent for this grammar’s being published under the aegis of the Polish Academy of Sciences. As noted earlier, *GWJP* observes that the Polish genders (it recognizes Mańczak’s five) have for all intents and purposes become elaborately encoded in inflection, of which some fifty types and subtypes are listed. As Laskowski demonstrates, by and large gender in Polish can be defined inflectionally, as long as one knows what the genders are. This analysis is formally air-tight, as long as Polish declension-to-gender mapping is stable, as it largely appears to be (but see §5). However, it does not contribute to the number-of-genders question. It would be equally airtight with three, six, or nine genders as it is with five.

¹¹ This in fact seems to be the position adopted in the more pedagogically directed Saloni and Świdziński 2001: 178–80. Another issue is that collective-numeral use is not uniform in all varieties of the language, including regional ones.

1.10. De-Virilized Nouns

A class of masculine personal nouns frequently discussed relative to the Polish gender question (e.g., in Schenker 1955, Saloni 1988, Brown 1998, and elsewhere) is the already-mentioned one infelicitously called by many de-virilized. These are referentially masculine personal nouns of a predominantly masculine declensional type with pejorative coloration,¹² distinguished by their failure to take either the stem-mutating nominative masculine personal plural ending {-i} (in the instance of so-called hard stems) or the less frequent personal ending {-owie} (with either hard or soft stems), and by their inability to select nominative plural personal endings on agreement targets, as de-virilized *ten brudas*, nom.pl. *te brudasy* 'that slob/those slobs' compared to virile *ten Sas*, nom.pl. *ci Sasi* 'that Saxon/those Saxons', or de-virilized *ten Szwab*, nom.pl. *te Szwabzy* 'that Kraut/those Krauts' compared to *ten Szwab*, nom.pl. *ci Szwabowie* 'that Swabian/those Swabians'. Soft-stem nouns reflect de-virilization only on agreement targets, as de-virilized *ten hycel*, nom.pl. *te hycle* 'that dogcatcher/those dogcatchers', as compared to *ten nauczyciel*, nom.pl. *ci nauczyciele* 'that teacher/those teachers'. As such, if they are a gender, soft-stem de-virilized nouns could be said to violate Laskowski's principle that a noun's ending set specifies its gender. The process by which de-virilized nouns are created, even though it does seem to involve, with hard stems, the subtraction of a morphological feature (stem softening), does not involve the subtraction of a semantic feature virile, as the term de-virilized implies, but rather the addition to virile of pejorative coloration.¹³ Such nouns typically retain the virile genitive-accusative syncretism in the plural, so even morphologically they are not totally de-virile. In "especially pejorative" use such nouns may exhibit the non-personal nominative-accusative syncretism, in effect adopting the animate paradigm. Another characteristic feature is that they are unable to combine with the personal paucal numerals *dwa*, *trzy*, *cztery* ('two', 'three', 'four') but with all numerals must use instead the alternate (but still personal) genitive-accusative construction (*dwu/dwóch*, *trzech*, *czterech*, *pięciu*, etc.). The term "depreciative"

¹² Saloni points to a need to distinguish archaicizing "quasi-depreciation" in words such as *króle* (instead of standard *królowie* 'kings') from depreciation proper since, while the formal process is similar, the semantic effect is more or less the opposite.

¹³ To be sure, not in every single instance: non-personal *chłopaki*, more usual than masculine personal *chłopacy* 'lads, boys', sounds merely robust and hearty.

has been suggested by Saloni as a term for referring to the de-virilized class, and we adopt it here. We also adopt the term masculine personal (based on Polish *męskoosobowy*) in preference to virile.

Saloni (1988) goes to considerable length to argue that the process of depreciation is available to all masculine personal nouns, including even last names, such that in principle any masculine personal noun can be depreciated and any depreciative noun can be upgraded (“ameliorated”) to non-depreciative status, given the appropriate circumstances. His motive is a desire to demonstrate that depreciative is not a gender, but an intra-gender derivational status available to any masculine personal noun. He follows through on this position in *SGJP* (2012) by providing mostly hypothetical forms such as nom.pl. *brudasi*, normal *brudasy* ‘slobs’. Actually, the particular form *brudasi* does yield four hits in Narodowy korpus języka polskiego (NKJP, the Polish national corpus), for the ameliorative plural of *brudas* ‘slob’, but the alternate depreciative/ameliorative status of the majority of personal nouns cannot in practice be authenticated by examining existing usage corpora. *SGJP* does not include, in support of its thesis, depreciative forms for most personal nouns (for example, there is no proposed depreciative **mężczyzny* for *mężczyźni* ‘men’ or **kolegi* for *koledzy* ‘colleagues’). The notion that depreciative and non-depreciative nouns are merely alternate derivational states remains debatable. The question hinges on whether there are any masculine personal lexemes that are basically depreciative, and the answer to that question is surely yes, *brudas* being one of many examples. See similar commentary and more examples in Schenker 1964: 59ff. and Wertz 1977: 60.

1.11. Masculine Noun Types Summarized

Table 5 summarizes the various classes of masculine nouns that have been discussed under the heading of gender. A point to observe here is that declension alone, even without the evidence of modifiers, is sufficient for distinguishing all of these classes but two. The ending set of especially depreciative *brudas* is the same as that for animate *kot*, and the ending-set of ameliorative *brudas* is the same as that for personal *mnich*. These two types are not distinct as to inflection or accompanying agreement but only in their affective coloration, and they therefore represent not genders but derivational statuses.

Table 5. Masculine noun types

masculine:	nom.sg.	gen.sg.	acc.sg.	nom.pl.	gen.pl.	acc.pl.
inanimate	<i>list</i> 'letter'	<i>listu</i> ¹⁴	<i>list</i>	<i>listy</i>	<i>listów</i>	<i>listy</i>
animate	<i>kot</i> 'cat'	<i>kota</i>	<i>kota</i>	<i>koty</i>	<i>kotów</i>	<i>koty</i>
depreciative	<i>brudas</i> 'slob'	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>brudasy</i>	<i>brudasów</i>	<i>brudasów</i>
"especially depreciative"	<i>brudas</i>	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>brudasy</i>	<i>brudasów</i>	<i>!brudasy</i>
"ameliorative"	<i>brudas</i>	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>brudasa</i>	<i>!brudasi</i>	<i>brudasów</i>	<i>brudasów</i>
personal	<i>mnich</i> 'monk'	<i>mnicha</i>	<i>mnicha</i>	<i>mnisi</i>	<i>mnichów</i>	<i>mnichów</i>

1.12. Subgender

American and British scholars—among them Wertz (1977), Corbett (1983), Brown (1988), Brown and Hippisley (2012)—have been particularly interested in investigating depreciative nouns and distinguishing gender from subgender, i.e., classes (such as depreciative) felt not to exist on the same level of importance as the main genders. Corbett proposes (1983: 5) that “Subgenders are agreement classes which control minimally different sets of agreements [...] typically [...] not including the most basic form (usually the nominative singular).” Logically, of course, a subgender should also fit inside a main gender. Corbett’s definition works well for classifying both masculine animate and depreciative as subgenders of masculine (neither is identified by looking at the nominative singular). Corbett also requires “consistent agreement patterns” (1983: 7) as a subgender qualification, and on such basis depreciative nouns occasionally fail, since they can vary as to whether they follow in the plural the genitive-accusative or, especially depreciatively, a nominative-accusative syncretism. He recognizes four Polish genders, as also do Brown and Hippisley: masculine, feminine, neuter, masculine personal; and two subgenders: masculine animate and masculine depreciative. My estimate is the same, but alongside these other

¹⁴ The usual inanimate genitive singular ending is *-u*, although many take *-a*, which is also the required ending for masculine animate nouns. There is no effect on agreement targets, hence no basis for claiming a gender distinction here.

authors' largely definitional arguments I would emphasize the especially strong supporting evidence of pronouns and other agreement targets; see §2. While we would not exclude masculine depreciative as a subgender for its not being entirely stable, we would have to concede that its status is not as firmly established as that of masculine animate.

2. Pronouns and Gender

2.1. The History of the Polish Third-Person Anaphoric Pronouns

Joseph Greenberg's language universal #43 (Greenberg 1963: 75, 90) states, "If a language has gender categories in the noun, it has gender categories in the pronoun," suggesting that pronouns may be of help in identifying what the genders are in languages that have gender. In Slavic, and hence in Polish, anaphoric third-person pronouns developed out of the fusion of two separate pronominal adjectives,¹⁵ *on-* in nominative functions and *j-* in oblique functions, into a third-person morphological hybrid. One of this hybrid's advantages was to have a means of referring back to antecedent nouns by gender, gender already being distinguished in the original pronominal adjectives, which modified nouns according to their gender. According to Corbett (1991: 139) this is a not infrequent way in which anaphoric pronouns become formed across languages. Accordingly, he recognizes anaphoric reference as a possible agreement phenomenon alongside other kinds (1991: 112, 241ff.). In Polish, third-person pronouns developed into a system peculiar to that language. Zagorska-Brooks (1973: 65) writes, "In general, [...] only the personal pronouns *on_M*, *ona_F*, *ono_N*, *oni_{M.PERS.PL}}*, *one_{NON-PERS.PL}}* faithfully reflect the grammatical gender of the nouns to which they refer" [my translation—OS].

Notwithstanding this seemingly important guidepost, Rothstein (1973b: 310–11), in listing four defining characteristics of masculine personal plural nouns, does not observe that a fifth reliable indicator is that they may be uniquely referred to with the pronoun *oni* 'they_{M.PERS.PL}}'. Similarly Laskowski, in *GWJP* (195), does not mention third-person pronouns as being of relevance to gender determination; nor does Schenker in his 1955 study, nor Mańczak in his of 1956, nor Saloni in 1976.

¹⁵ The Common Slavic pronominal adjective *on-* was demonstrative, while *j-* was of-ten relative.

2.2. Pronouns as a Guide to Gender

If the historical fusion of the pronominal adjectives *on-* and *j-* into a single third-person anaphoric pronoun was a response to the felt need to be able to identify nouns by gender at long distance, as it seems to have been, it is natural to use pronouns as an additional avenue of approach to the number-of-genders question. Simply, the pronouns indicate by their form the gender of the noun to which they refer. There are five Polish third-person anaphoric pronouns, the nominative-case forms of which are *on_M*, *ona_F*, *ono_N*, *oni_{M.PERS}*, *one_{NON-M.PERS}*. Of these, the last one, *one*, merely represents the plural of any combination of *ona*, *ono*, or non-masculine-personal *on*. Hence, under an analysis that projects the same genders in both singular and plural, *one* does not signal an independent gender by itself, but merely the syncretism, in the plural, of all non-masculine-personal genders. The evidence of the five nominative-case third-person pronouns, then, points to the existence of four Polish genders: masculine, feminine, neuter, masculine personal. This conclusion is strongly and uniformly supported by (a) the evidence of nominative-case modifiers (where each gender has its own distinctive ending, not borrowed from another case); (b) the equally distinctive third-person past-tense and future imperfective¹⁶ endings of verbs; and, additionally, (c) the similarly distinctive accusative-case forms of the same third-person pronouns; see Table 6 on p. 98.

This analysis leaves masculine animate and masculine depreciative, neither of which are as richly accompanied by Hockett's "behavior of associated words," as subgenres. Subgenres in this understanding are merely less elaborately exemplified genders; one could equally well call them "minor genders." We are thus in agreement with Corbett and Brown and Hippisley as to the number and identity of the Polish genders and subgenres but, we would like to think, on more clearly articulated language-internal grounds. At the same time, of these four, one may rank masculine personal as fourth, because it emerges formally only in the plural (where it is, nevertheless, just as firmly integrated into the system of grammatical agreement as any of the other genders).

¹⁶ The compound future imperfective expressed with forms of the auxiliary *będę* 'will' may utilize the imperfective infinitive, but colloquially, the *ł-*form is more often used.

Table 6. The four Polish genders as reflected in major agreement targets: nominative- and accusative-case pronouns, nominative-case modifier endings, and 3rd-person past-tense and future imperfective verb endings

	singular	plural
masc. personal	<i>on</i> <i>(je)go</i> <i>-y</i> <i>-ł</i>	<i>oni</i> <i>ich</i> <i>-i</i> <i>-li</i>
masculine		<i>one</i> <i>je</i> <i>-e</i> <i>-ły</i>
feminine	<i>ona</i> <i>-ją</i> <i>-a</i> <i>-ła</i>	
neuter	<i>ono</i> <i>je</i> <i>-e ~ -o</i> <i>-ło</i>	

2.3. Accusative-Case Pronouns

The history of the accusative-case pronouns provides an indirect commentary on the secondary status of masculine animate. In principle, there should have been no obstacle to the creation of the inanimate vs. animate distinction in the masculine accusative singular pronoun based on the Common Slavic distinction of *i* 'nom.-acc.sg.non-personal' vs. *(je)go* 'gen.-acc.sg.personal',¹⁷ but this did not happen, *(je)go* eventually being generalized as the accusative-case pronoun for all masc.sg. pronouns: personal, depreciative, animate, and inanimate.

¹⁷ In early Slavic the status personal was usually accorded only persons of social standing.

3. Personal Gender

3.1. From Masculine Personal to Personal

Because of the development in Polish of the innovative gender masculine personal,¹⁸ resulting in four genders instead of the three inherited from Indo-European, the arrangement depicted in Table 1 must be revised; see Table 7:

Table 7. The four contemporary Polish genders, based on strength of sexual and personal embodiment

gender:	male embodiment	female embodiment
neuter	–	–
feminine	–	+
masculine	+	–
personal	+	+/-

In this chart we have changed, anticipatorily, the designation of the gender masculine personal to personal. This designation describes an evolving state in which nouns referring to women are slowly acquiring the status of grammatical persons in the plural. As of yet, they are only incipiently, but not completely, personal, indicated here by +/- . In other words, the system is unstable, and can be expected to change in the future. It is unnecessary as yet to include personal as a lexical marker for feminine nouns designating persons, as there are no repercussions for inflection (for example, a plural genitive-accusative syncretism is never a possibility).¹⁹ All markers of feminine personal are morpho-syntactic in nature, as will be discussed in §3.2.

¹⁸ This innovation would have occurred around the 15th century. Historically, the gender masculine personal arose through the relinquishing by masculine non-personal nouns of the special softening nominative plural ending {-i} and the ending {-owie} in the 15th century, leaving these endings in place with personal nouns, followed a century or so later by the spread into the plural of the personal genitive=accusative syncretism (Mazur 1993: 221–22).

¹⁹ Unless feminine personal declension acquires some distinctive feature, they cannot be considered to be fully integrated into the Polish gender system, in which a noun's gender can be predicted from its ending set.

3.2. Feminine Gender and Grammatical Personhood

Of course, no one doubts that Polish women are referentially personal, as can in any case be demonstrated by the fact that they are referred to with forms of the personal pronoun *kto* ‘who’, not *co* ‘what’. However, Polish nouns referring to women are rather far from being fully grammatically personal. Only referentially male nouns of masculine gender—unless they are inherently depreciative—qualify by themselves as grammatically personal in the plural. Referentially female personal nouns of feminine gender require the “help” of at least one accompanying other-gendered noun, preferably masculine but not necessarily personal, to qualify as grammatically personal. This rule is taken from *GWJP* (195), where it is illustrated with the sentences: *chłopiec i łódka zbliżali się do siebie* ‘the boy_M and the boat_F drew closer_{PERS} to one another’; *dziewczyna i łódka zbliżały się do siebie* ‘the girl_F and the boat_F drew closer_{NON-PERS} to one another’; *dziewczyna i kajak zbliżali się do siebie* ‘the girl_F and the kayak_M drew closer_{PERS} to one another’.²⁰ The actual situation is more nuanced than this rule would indicate; see Zieniuchowa 1979 and Łaziński 2007.²¹ For example, Łaziński’s titular *wino, kobieta, i śpiew* ‘wine_N, woman_F, and song_M’ would more naturally take *były* ‘were_{NON-PERS}’, despite the three different genders of the compound noun phrase, because ‘woman’ here merely appears in a laundry list of items, while *Ewa i jej rodzina* ‘Ewa and her family’, despite the two feminine nouns, could easily take *byli*_{PERS}, because ‘Ewa and family’ can be figuratively construed as masculine personal plural. Rothstein (1973b: 310) cites examples from the normative literature showing that personal gender can sometimes be extended to all-female groups (especially “serious” groups), and offers (2) below, showing that the masculine personal plural pronoun *wszyscy* ‘everyone’ can be used on appro-

²⁰ In a creative analysis, Corbett hypothesizes that only if female persons are combined with masculine-gender nouns can plural gender become personal, with the features personal from the feminine noun and masculine from the masculine noun each contributing a feature, adding up to masculine personal. This analysis seems not to be confirmed by Łaziński’s observations on wine, women, and song.

²¹ Łaziński is of the opinion that not everything that is logical can be expressed in a language, and that the sentence combining a kayak and a girl sounds sufficiently awkward in Polish as to justify stating it in an entirely different way.

priate occasions to refer to females alone, even without the help of an other-gendered noun:

- (2) Na posiedzeniu zarządu głównego Ligi Kobiet
 at meeting of-board main of-league of-women,
 wszyscy byli w dobrym humorze.
all_{PERS} were_{PERS} in good mood'
 'At the meeting of the board of directors of the League of
 Women, all were in a good mood.'

Similarly, Łaziński observes that two female editors of *GWJP* refer to themselves in the first-person personal plural (overriding *GWJP*'s own rule), apparently considering that to call attention to themselves as women editors would be inappropriate. In the People's Republic of Poland, it was routine for female comrades to be addressed with personal plural past-tense verb endings, as in *mieliście rację, towarzyszynko* 'you were_{PERS.PL} right, comrade_F'. In contemporary informal speech among younger speakers, addressing a group of Polish women with personal past-tense verb endings has roughly the same value as it does in English to address a group of young women as "guys." It happens not infrequently, and it signals a chummy manner of speech. Poles not infrequently make the normative mistake of referring to female-only groups as *oni* 'they_{PERS}'. Usage is becoming more relaxed in this regard, and there is reason to expect that the rule as formulated by *GWJP* will someday be simplified, although it is difficult to predict just what form that might take.²² Note that the rule as presently constituted places speakers in the awkward position of constantly having to calculate the complex grammatical consequences of shifting combinations of nouns in the subject position of their sentences. While some of the impetus for change could come from increased societal sensitivity to the apparent sexism of traditional grammar's treating women as "persons only if there is a man around" (Łaziński 2007: 78, paraphrasing Miemetz: 1996), a prime motive would be simplicity.

²² One can imagine as a first step the extension of the pronoun *oni* to all personal groups, of whatever composition.

4. Recapitulation: The Main Characteristics of Polish Gender and Subgender

The Polish genders are: masculine, feminine, neuter, personal. Polish gender has these characteristics: (a) it is constituted on an originally underlying tripartite system of sexual embodiment (or lack of such embodiment), with masculine gender being “most strongly embodied,” of which speakers to an extent remain aware; (b) over time the markers of sexual embodiment have become realigned so as to make room for an innovative masculine personal gender, a class that is slowly and tentatively being extended to referentially female persons; (c) except for the not fully integrated nor fully grammatical class of feminine personal nouns, it can almost always be associated with the declensional type of the noun, taking into account the noun’s entire ending set; (d) for each of the four genders, it is accompanied by overt, distinctive, and stable agreement phenomena, shown in attributive adjectives, predicate adjectives, relative adjectives, past-tense and future imperfective verbs, and in both nominative- and accusative-case pronouns. There are no adjective, verb, or pronoun forms which, by themselves, signal any gender other than these four. The subgenders are outsiders to this tightly knit system.

Masculine animate subgender, besides being largely referentially dependent,²³ is distinguished within masculine gender by the single and quite stable morphosyntactic feature of a genitive-accusative syncretism in the singular, plus corresponding genitive modifier agreement. Depreciative personal subgender is distinguished from personal gender by two features in combination: the lack of a distinct personal ending in the nominative plural (with corresponding non-personal agreement), combined with a personal, genitive-accusative ending in the accusative plural (with corresponding personal agreement). Saloni (1988) is undoubtedly correct in holding that the status of depreciative nouns as a gender is weakened by the state of considerable interderivability between them and personal nouns. That judgment strengthens the decision to consider them as a subgender of personal nouns rather than as a full-status gender.

²³ Sensing a challenge to its status as a gender in its being referentially definable, defenders of masculine animate as a gender—for example, Wertz—emphasize the existence of nouns that are grammatically but not referentially animate, a class we treat as a quasi-gender; see §5.5.

5. Quasi-Gender²⁴

5.1. When Gender Meets Reference

In a language in which gender, inflection, and reference are tightly interlocked, a degree of cognitive dissonance inevitably accompanies the application of a noun of a given gender and declension outside the range of reference expected of such a noun. Ultimately, this dissonance can be revealed in (a) the instability of a noun's set of inflectional endings and (b) the instability of a noun's mid- and long-distance agreement targets.²⁵ A recent monograph (Wojdak 2013) highlights some 992 common nouns exhibiting mostly reference-inspired gender instability. To the extent that such nouns exhibit a pattern associated with a specific inflectional type, we will consider them here under the label of "quasi-genders."²⁶ One could also call them "unstable genders."

5.2. Inherent or Facultative?

All of the quasi-genders raise the question of whether grammatical gender with them is a feature that is inherent to the noun, as gender in Polish is generally considered to be, or is instead, speaker-determined and malleable according to a facultative decision on the part of the user. It seems reasonable enough to maintain, for example, that the stem of the noun *kaleka* 'disabled person' is not specified for gender, masculine or feminine, and that it is capable of being construed, inflected, and agreed with in at least three different ways, depending on reference and speaker intent (Table 8). On the other hand, one may also sensibly maintain that this is instead a fixed declensional triplet, i.e., three different subinflections based on a predominantly feminine inflectional

²⁴ Dahl (2000) and I independently arrive at this term for identifying peripheral gender-like classes in Polish that, in the end, can be discarded as full gender-candidates, even while one needs to distinguish and discuss them in some way.

²⁵ "Mid-distance" does not mean contiguous, but still in the same clause as the controller. "Long-distance" means that the target is in a following clause; typically, it is a verb, participle, or relative or anaphoric pronoun.

²⁶ Some of Wojdak's examples of gender-malleability involve ad hoc metaphorical extensions, such as the application of *as* 'ace_M' to a footballer or fighter pilot, or *eminencja* 'eminence_F' to certain people of the cloth. Coinages like this, involving nouns of different inflectional types, will not be treated here as quasi-genders but as belonging to residual gender issues; see also §5.11 'Gender Chameleons'.

type for the speaker to choose from. *GWJP*'s presentation might seem to come down on the side of inflectional triplets, while Kryk-Kastovsky (2000) who, for example, urges Poles not to worry about rules but to follow their instincts, seems to side with the idea of different construals of gender-malleable stems.

Table 8. *Kaleka* 'disabled person': Three declensions or three different speaker-determined construals?

gender	nom.sg.	gen.sg.	acc.sg.	nom.pl.	gen.pl.	acc.pl.
fem.	<i>ta kaleka</i>	<i>tej kaleki</i>	<i>tę kalekę</i>	<i>te kaleki</i>	<i>tych kalek</i>	<i>te kaleki</i>
masc. depr.	<i>ten kaleka</i>	<i>tego kaleki</i>	<i>tego kalekę</i>	<i>te kaleki</i>	<i>tych kaleków</i>	<i>tych kaleków</i>
masc. pers.	<i>ten kaleka</i>	<i>tego kaleki</i>	<i>tego kalekę</i>	<i>ci kalecy</i>	<i>tych kaleków</i>	<i>tych kaleków</i>

One can also imagine sg./pl. hybrids, say, masculine acc.sg. *tego kalekę* combined with feminine acc.pl. *te kaleki*, making the inflection especially pejorative. If these are different inflections, then perhaps they are different lexemes as well: KALEKA₁, KALEKA₂, KALEKA₃, etc., although no dictionary or grammar of which I am aware has adopted that line of reasoning. In short, the quasi-genders challenge the idea of a Polish noun's having a stable set of inflectional endings and a stable corresponding gender. The ability of a noun to display more than one gender is called in Polish scholarship *wielorodzajowość* 'multi-genderedness' (Saloni 1976: 70; Wojdak 2012).

5.3. Inquoracy

The quasi-genders could all qualify as "inquorate" (having too few members). Some quasi-genders, such as those in the neuter suffix *-(i)sko* referring to females, come to no more than a few members; see §5.10. The item *sierota* 'orphan' seems to be unique; see §5.6.

5.4. Quasi-Genders, Dictionaries of Correct Polish, and the National Corpus

Information pertaining to most of the quasi-genders is well known, and even better known since Wojdak. Because their very existence tends to perplex linguistically less sophisticated native speakers, they are wide-

ly discussed in grammatical advice columns and on blogs and websites devoted to language use. Information on them, not always helpful, is contained in various “dictionaries of correct Polish,” noteworthy being *Słownik poprawnej polszczyzny* (SPP 1980), *Nowy słownik poprawnej polszczyzny* (NSPP 2005), and *Wielki słownik poprawnej polszczyzny* (WSPP 2006/2012). Among regular dictionaries, *Inny słownik języka polskiego* (ISJP) can usually stand up to any of the foregoing. For living-language citations, the NKJP, currently at 1800 million words, is valuable, although gender-indicative citations for exactly the nouns of interest here are often lacking. NKJP’s automatic grammatical tagging of words is highly erratic and can in no way be relied on; one has to determine case and gender on one’s own. Of course, global internet searches are also valuable.

One of the reasons dictionaries of correct Polish are not always helpful in answering gender questions is that they can forget that gender is ultimately not an inflectional category but is indicated by the behavior of associated words, i.e., by morphosyntax. For example, both SPP and NSPP give the accusative singular of *sierota* ‘orphan’ as *sierotę*, but both fail to note that one may choose either *tę sierotę* (feminine gender) or *tego sierotę* (masculine animate subgender), depending on speaker preference (masculine construal is optional in the case of male reference). These same sources describe *chłopisko* ‘stout lad’ as either masculine or neuter and of neuter declension, leaving it unclear whether the accusative singular will be neuter *to chłopisko*, masculine animate *tego chłopiska*, or, as it happens, either (in which case declension is not simply “neuter”). For such and similar information, one must sometimes scan pages and pages of citations in NKJP—often fruitlessly. For example, one cannot tell from NKJP whether the noun *chłopisko* exhibits the plural genitive-accusative syncretism or even what its genitive plural form is, *chłopisk* or *chłopisków*.

Below we survey the most important Polish quasi-genders, covering only their highlights and not aiming to make any new discoveries, but focusing instead on the characteristic aspect of their origin out of dissonance among declensional type, implied gender, and referential application.

5.5. Facultatively Animate Nouns

This well-studied category (see Grappin 1951, Kucała 1970, Wertz 1977, Swan 1988) refers to a large, expanding, and semantically various class

of referentially inanimate nouns that have come to be treated by the language in at least some of their uses as animate, in that the accusative singular is like the genitive singular, ending in *-a*, with accompanying genitive-accusative agreement phenomena. Most of Wojdak's examples of multigendered nouns belong to this class. This category includes such things as names for dances, card games, sports, makes of automobiles, strikes and blows, cloud types, mushrooms, cigarettes and cigarette brands, stubs (of cigarettes, candles, limbs, etc.), dread diseases, slang terms for mental states, footwear, tropical fruits, candies, pastry varieties, certain plants and plant parts, computer and internet terms (e.g., *email* 'email message', *laptop* 'laptop computer', *blog* 'blog', etc.), and other semantic categories that would be difficult to gather under a single unifying concept. Here is an example:

- (3) Ktoś skopiował całego mojego bloga. Co robić?
 someone copied whole my blog_{GENIACC} what to-do
 'Someone copied my whole blog. What can I do?'²⁷

Facultatively animate nouns fail Corbett's (1988) test of "consistent agreement patterns," in that other factors can take precedence over straightforward grammatically determined animate agreement. In Swan 1988 I note that the animate treatment of a facultatively animate noun can be affected not only by the semantic class concerned, but also by how "transitive" a verb is (Hopper and Thompson, 1980) and by the relative informality vs. formality of the discourse.

5.6. Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy

An important measure of facultative animacy, and of quasi-gender status generally, related to the gender instability of quasi-gendered nouns, is Corbett's (1991: ch. 8) agreement hierarchy, according to which agreement by grammatical gender yields to agreement according to natural gender the farther an agreement target is from its controller, in the order: attributive adjective > predicate adjective > relative adjective > verb > pronoun. Of these, only relative adjectives are revealing for facultative animacy, and they can be used as a diagnostic for the category. By

²⁷ Taken from <http://forum.blogowicz.info/topics105/>. The citation illustrates how masculine names for possessions toward which one harbors special affection are often animized.

this measure few if any facultatively animate nouns, even traditionally sanctioned ones like *papieros* ‘cigarette’, appear to be wholly immune to optional inanimate treatment in the relative-pronoun position; see (4):

- (4) W kąćniku ust papieros, który zapala
 in corner of-mouth cigarette which_{INAN.ACC} he-lights
 ciężką benzynową zapalniczką.
 with-heavy gasoline lighter’

‘In the corner of his mouth is a cigarette, which he lights with a heavy fluid lighter.’ (Janusz Machulski, *Kiler*, 1997)²⁸

Most of the other quasi-genders described below, dealing with male- and female-referencing items, are susceptible to the diagnostic of the tendency of verbs and anaphoric pronouns to adopt referential gender when it conflicts with grammatical gender. Herbert and Nykiel-Herbert (1986: 60) note that pronoun replacement is easier in the case of male-referential items than female, which they take to be an expression of linguistic sexism. One might instead take it as a reflection of the greater semantic weight of male over female in Slavic in general, evidenced also in the greater resistance of masculine-gender nouns to adopt feminine gender rather than the reverse (see §5.9). If this is linguistic sexism, then it goes farther back in time than Polish.

5.7. Common-Gender Nouns with Nsg in -a

The usual examples cited in grammars are *sierota* ‘orphan’ and *kaleka* ‘disabled person’, but if putting aside concerns of political correctness, the class is taken to extend to pejoratively tinged personal nouns with nom.sg. in -a with male or female reference (see *ciamajda* ‘lazy-bones’, *łachmyta* ‘bum’, *łamaga* ‘bungler’, *niezdara* ‘good-for-nothing’, and many others), it is rather large. Nouns of this class belong to a predominantly feminine declensional type; they are also, without specific reference, correspondingly feminine in agreement (hence in gender). In “especially pejorative use” with reference to males, they may take feminine endings and morphosyntax throughout. However, male-referencing nouns of this type often (a) take masculine animate modifier syntax in the acc.sg. (e.g., *tego niezdareę* as opposed to fem. *tę niezdareę*); (b) take geni-

²⁸ The animate accusative of the relative pronoun would be *którego*. Except where otherwise noted, usage citations are gathered from NKJP.

tive plural in *-ów* rather than *-Ø* (*tych niezdarów* instead of *tych niezdary*); (c) exhibit the personal gen./acc. syncretism in the plural (acc.pl. *tych niezdarów* instead of *te niezdary*); (d) are counted with masculine personal genitive-like syntax (*dwóch niezdarów* as opposed to *dwie niezdary*). Sporadically, on a word-by-word basis, ameliorative nominative plural {-*i*}—apparently never {-*owie*}—can occur, as in *niezdarzy*, *łachmyci*, both attested in NKJP, but not, say, **ciamajdowie* or **łamadzy*. Such nouns are said by Laskowski (1974: 121) to be equipollent or “epicene,” i.e., facultatively either masculine or feminine according to male or female reference, although they are more feminine-leaning in gender and declension and more male-leaning in reference (although this differs from word to word). Seemingly only *sierota* ‘orphan’ can adapt to male reference in the singular but not in the plural, leaving it as unique in the language, a “semi-epicene,” as it were. Here are two citations from NKJP, for *łajza* ‘loafer’ (5a) and *łachmyta* ‘bum’ (5b):

- (5) a. To nie jest książka dla maminsynków, ani dla
 this not is book for momma’s-boys nor for
łajz, które przez całe lata chcą
loafers_{GEN.PL} who_{NON-PERS} through whole years want
 jedynie lizać cukierki przez papierek.
 merely to-suck candies through wrapper
 ‘This is no book for momma’s boys, or for loafers who year
 after year prefer to suck candies through the wrapper.’
 (Piotr Pyton, 2009)

Since reference here is to males, and since NKJP does give a couple of examples of male-indicating genitive plural *łajzów*, the genitive plural in *-Ø* here suggests feminine gender used in especially pejorative male reference. The non-personal relative pronoun *które* is compatible with such a reading.

- (5) b. Później—wrzeszczy—przeniósł taki łachmyta
 later he-roars he-transported some_M bum
 gazetkę, zamknęli go na 24 godziny i dziś
 leaflet they-locked-up him for 24 hours and today

odcina kupon...
 he-clips coupons

““Later,” he roars, “some bum transported a leaflet, they locked him up for 24 hours, and today he’s clipping coupons.””
 (Henryk Sekulski, 2001)

The masculine forms *przeniósł, taki* and *go* indicate masculine gender treatment with male reference. Natural gender with these gender-malleable nouns can assert itself with relative ease in mid- and long-distance agreement targets (e.g., male-referential *te łajzy, które były/którzy byli... oni* (not *one*)... ‘those loafers who were... they...’, illustrating three successively more natural-gender patternings the farther one gets from the agreement-controller. Not surprisingly, the multiple inflectional and agreement subvarieties of this type cause dictionaries descriptive difficulty,²⁹ and the type deserves a more thoroughgoing description than we are able to give it here.

5.8. Traditionally Male Professional Names Applied to Women

Because of the interest in language developments occurring in response to changing social reality, such nouns have long attracted attention (see Pawłowski 1951, Klemensiewicz 1957, Nalibow 1971, Rothstein 1980, Herbert and Nykiel-Herbert 1986). When applied to females, traditionally male titles and professional names such as *profesor* ‘professor’, *laryngolog* ‘ear, nose, and throat specialist’, *redaktor* ‘editor’, etc., lose their ability to be inflected.³⁰ They may take feminine agreement despite lack of inflection on the noun (e.g., *naczelna redaktor*, gen. *naczelnej*

²⁹ For example, the *New Kościuszko Foundation Polish-English Dictionary* (Fisiak 2003) inaccurately describes *sierota* ‘orphan’ as masculine personal, wrongly implying nom. pers.pl. **ci sieroci* and gen./acc.pl. **tych sierotów* (not a single hit in NKJP in either instance), while Dunaj (1996), barely more correctly, describes the word as feminine, correctly implying nom.sg.fem. *ta sierota*, acc.sg. *tę sierotę*, but not allowing for possible nom.sg.masc. *ten sierota*, or acc.sg. *tego sierotę*.

³⁰ Such nouns vary widely as to their ability to form relatively neutral feminine-declension variants, used in less formal contexts. *Adwokatka* ‘woman lawyer’, *redaktorka* ‘woman editor’, and *lekarka* ‘woman doctor’ can all be used less formally; *profesorka* exists in the sense ‘school-teacher’, but not usually in the sense ‘woman professor’; *laryngolożka* ‘woman ear, nose, and throat specialist’ can be used jocularly (although, in fact, there are seven hits in NKJP, all on internet sites asking about its correctness, and it seems to be gaining in acceptability). It is beyond our ambition here to give any kind of account of gender- and socio-determined usage for names of professions,

redaktor, etc. ‘editor-in-chief’), although the alternative use of the masculine-gender noun and adjective may also be used, gender-inclusively, with female reference (e.g., *naczelny redaktor*, gen. *naczelnego redaktora*, etc.), although masculine-personal plural forms will be avoided, and mid- and long-distance agreement targets will often be feminine. When the undeclined feminine noun is used without a modifier, the case-marking function is often borne by a preceding case-form of *pani* ‘Ms., Madam’, although in the singular the fact of the noun’s indeclinability can stand by itself as a token of female reference, as in *idę do laryngolog* ‘I’m going to a (woman) laryngologist’ (masculine would be *laryngologa*). The following example shows an accusative plural of undeclined female-referencing *profesor* used after the case-holding accusative plural *panie*:

- (6) W tym roku są nimi same kobiety, od
 in this year they-are them all women from
 doktorantek po uznane w świecie
 doctoral-students up-to recognized in world
panie_{NOM/ACC.PL} profesor.
 ladies professor

‘This year they [the awardees] are all women, ranging from doctoral students to world-renowned professors (“madams professor”).’ (Kamila Mróz, *Gazeta Pomorska*, 2010)

Rothstein notes that feminine agreement with male professional terms, as well as the use of existing female alternatives to male professional terms, occurs more often with referentially individuating usage, not when a noun is used as an exemplar or ideal member of a set, a fact illustrated by the obituary notices studied by Nalibow (1971); see (7):

- (7) W wieku 43 zmarła Elżbieta Szaniawska, publicystka...
 in age 43 has-died Elżbieta Szaniawska publicist_F
 długoletni pracownik... były więzień Stutthofa...
 long-time worker_M former prisoner_M of-Stutthof

‘At the age of 43 Elżbieta Szaniawska has died, publicist... long-time worker... former-prisoner of Stutthof...’

Laskowski (1974: 121) claims that, for example, *redaktor*_{M.PERS} and *redaktor*_{F.INDECL} are nothing more than gender doublets, one declined and the other not, hence they are not examples of gender-malleable nouns. I would say, precisely not: they are male professional labels applied to females, in the process losing their ability to be declined, which some women interpret as a veritable indignity. Lack of inflection in Polish is highly exceptional, and usually signals that a word for some reason does not meet the expectations of the system and its available formalities. The use of case-marked *pani* as a compensation for the lack of a titled word's inflection can be taken as an additional token of the grammar's impulse, as it were, to single out women editors, rectors, laryngologists, etc. as being somehow different. What for some people is sexism but in any case the lack of stylistic neutrality claimed by Laskowski, of applying undeclined male labels to females was recently (March 2012) underscored by Minister of Sport Joanna Mucha, who mandated in the name of female equality that she henceforth be referred to with a fully declined and previously non-existing feminine-gender *ministra*, which she concocted by pasting feminine declensional endings onto a formerly masculine noun stem. In effect, she was building on the tradition of stem-sharing gender doublets of the not particularly productive type *kochanek*_M/*kochanka*_F 'paramour', *modniś*_M/*modnisia*_F 'fashion-plate', *małżonek*_M/*małżonka*_F 'spouse', etc., i.e., Schenker's ninth gender.³¹ The proposal was widely discussed in the Polish media, and even earned the cautious approval of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Polish Language Council. A similar tempest erupted in 2012 in the Polish Sejm (parliament) over whether female representatives are properly to be referred to as *posłanki* or *panie posel*. The former *marszałek* 'marshal' (speaker) of the Sejm, Ewa Kopacz (who in similar spirit could have asked to be called *marszałkini* instead of *pani marszałek*), along with 95 out of 110 female parliamentary representatives, came out in favor of *pani posel*, while allowing the 15 dissenting *posłanki*, including the current female vice-speaker, to call themselves as they wished on their stationery (after first checking on the constitutionality of the decision,

³¹ See wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci_1,114873,11439666,_Pani_ministra__jest_poprawna__Ale_prawo_nie_sprawi_.html. There is also a certain precedent for this device among old Polish first names (e.g., masc. *Kazimierz*, fem. *Kazimiera*; masc. *Bogdan*, fem. *Bogdana*, masc. *Bronisław*, fem. *Bronisława*, and so forth).

since only *poseł* appears in the Polish constitution).³² Ms. Kopacz's statement on the matter illustrates the difference between using a noun to describe one's objective status, where few would object to the feminine noun, vs. one's official title, where most women find the male label, despite the grammatical and socio-linguistic issues it raises, preferable:

- (8) "Większość posłanek chce, by zwracano się do nich tradycyjnie: pani poseł."
 majority of-representatives_F wants COND one-address
 to them traditionally lady representative
 "The majority of female representatives prefer that one address them traditionally, as 'madam representative.'"

Ms. Kopacz has since moved into the position of premier of the Republic of Poland, taking on the title of *pani premier*, thereby bringing the socio-linguistic issue with her into the Council of Ministers.

5.9. Masculine-Gender Nouns Referring to Females

Masculine-gender nouns referring specifically to females are typically denigrating, e.g., *babsztyl* 'hag', *kociak* 'chick', *podlotek* 'flighty teen-age girl'. Although they are much less numerous, in a way this is the other side of the coin of feminine-gender pejorative names for males (§5.7 above), and they illustrate that masculine nouns are generally more resistant to cross-sexual gender modification than are feminine nouns. Some are nicknames, usually belittling, as *Kopciuszek* 'Cinderella' and *Czerwony Kapturek* 'Little Red Riding Hood'. The present author observed a girl who went through the first years of her life being called *Żuczek* 'little bug', with accordingly masculine animate agreement being used in all circumstances. Such nouns are treated as if masculine animate, in that the accusative singular equals the genitive (*siostry wykpily Kopciuszka* 'the sisters mocked Cinderella_{M.GEN/ACC}'). Contiguous modifiers and verbs will take masculine agreement (*biedny Kopciuszek* 'poor_M Cinderella', *Kopciuszek uśmiechnął się* 'Cinderella smiled_M').³³ With pronouns, natural gender often asserts itself. Compare (9a), show-

³² http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,103454,15407047,Kopacz__wiekszosc_poslanek_chce__by_zwracano_sie_do.html

³³ Because Wojdak (2013) looks mainly at contiguous modifiers, he does not consider nouns of this type to be "nouns of multiple gender."

ing grammatical gender preference throughout, to (9b), showing reversion to natural gender in the third-person pronoun:

- (9) a. Kopciuszek musiał się umyć i ubrać w Cinderella had_M REFL to-wash and to-dress in cudowne szaty, bo inaczej królewicz nie marvelous garb because otherwise prince not dostrzegłby jego urody. would-notice his beauty
 ‘Cinderella had to wash and dress up in marvelous clothes, because otherwise the prince would not have noticed his [=her] beauty.’ (Halina Samson, 2000)
- b. Kopciuszek widząc, że i dla niej (not niego) jeszcze Cinderella seeing that also for her still znalazłaby-się piękna suknia, rzecze do macochy... could-be-found beautiful gown says to stepmother
 ‘Cinderella, seeing that a pretty gown might also be found for her, says to her step-mother...’ (M. Rościszewski, 1921)

Here is a more contemporary example, where the feminine pronoun is especially appropriate in view of the female anatomy being highlighted:

- (10) ...naprzeciw mnie zmierza jakiś babsztyl, [...]. Mundur toward me heads some_M hag_M uniform niemal pęka jej na piersi pod naporem almost bursts to-her on bosom under pressure wydatnego biustu. of-prominent bust
 ‘... here comes some hag heading toward me. Her uniform practically bursts open at the breast under the pressure of her prominent bosom.’

With the few nouns of neuter gender designating immature females—which might also be mentioned here—natural gender can assert itself readily with non-contiguous modifiers and verbs.

- (11) *Weszło dziewczątko krokiem pewnym i choć*
 entered_N little-girl_N with-step certain and although
usmolona, nie zawstydzila się królewskiego sługi.
 soot-covered_F not was-embarrassed_F of-royal servant
 'The little girl entered with a self-assured step and, although
 covered with soot, she was not embarrassed in the presence of
 the king's servant.' (M. Rościszewski, 1921)

5.10. Neuter-Gender Personal Augmentatives in *-(i)sko*

In non-personal reference, nouns in the augmentative suffix *-(i)sko* are neuter, as *domisko* 'large or outsized house', *lodowisko* 'skating rink', *widowisko* 'spectacle'. Nouns in *-(i)sko* with male or animate reference (e.g., *chłopisko* 'stout fellow', *psisko* 'big shaggy dog') are not necessarily denigrating and may be admiring. Full declensional information is difficult to glean from NKJP (or any other source), but male-referential nouns in *-(i)sko* can apparently alternatively be figured as neuter, masculine animate, or masculine personal depreciative; see Table 9.

Table 9. Gender-indicative forms of *chłopisko*

gender	nom.sg.	acc.sg.	nom.pl.	gen.pl.	acc.pl.
neut.	<i>to chłopisko</i>	<i>to chłopisko</i>	<i>te chłopiska</i>	<i>tych chłopisków</i> ³⁴	<i>te chłopiska</i>
masc. anim.	<i>to chłopisko</i>	<i>tego chłopiska</i>	<i>te chłopiska</i>	<i>tych chłopisków</i>	<i>te chłopiska</i>
masc. depr.	<i>to chłopisko</i>	<i>tego chłopiska</i>	<i>te chłopiska</i>	<i>tych chłopisków</i>	<i>tych chłopisków</i>

Even if they are formally grammatically depreciative, personal agreement on verbs easily occurs; see

- (12) ... bo to przecież ogromne chłopiska,
 for INDIC.PART after-all enormous lads_{NON-PERS}
 potrafili podporządkować sobie wiele
 they-were-able_{M.PERS} to-subordinate to-oneself many

³⁴ The gen.pl. ending is given in *SGJP* and *NSPP* as *-ów*, but the form *chłopisków* is not attested in *NKJP*.

osób...

people

'... for after all those are immense guys, they were able to subordinate many people...' (Dziennik Polski, 2001).

With female reference (e.g., *babsko* 'old bag'), nouns in *-(i)sko* are either pejorative or pathetic, and they are indistinguishable from neuters by inflection. Contiguous modifier and verb agreement are usually neuter, but anaphoric pronouns are more often feminine, and verbs may be. In (13), the contiguous verb is neuter, but female reference asserts itself on the verb in a following clause in the same sentence:

- (13) Poczerwieniało babsko, ale że gębę ma jak maszynka
blushed_N old-bag_N but since jaw has as machine
do mielenia, od razu język znalazła.
for grinding immediately tongue she-found_F
'The old bag grew red as a beet, but, having a jaw like a meat-grinder, she found her tongue right away.' (Wolna Trybuna, 1985)

5.11. Gender Chameleons

Wojdak 2013 contains a number of nouns of mostly feminine gender (which is more malleable than masculine gender) that can adapt to the gender of a generic noun connoted by a referent. For example, basically feminine *angora* 'angora cat' can take masculine agreement (*ten angora* 'that angora_M', etc.) by adopting the masculine gender of *kot* 'cat'. *Capuccino* can be either neuter or feminine by adapting to *kawa* 'coffee_F', the noun in both instances being undeclined but taking either neuter or feminine agreement. The most interesting example cites masc. *ten paskuda* 'that monstrosity', said of a building, showing adaptation to *budynek_M*, vs. fem. *ta paskuda*, said of a sofa, replicating the gender of *sofa_F* or *kanapa_F*.

5.12. Quasi-Genders and Dictionary Descriptors

Although the matter is only one of notation, lexicographers could do more to elaborate helpful (and consistent) descriptors for words belonging to the quasi-genders. Wojdak's faithful tracking of the descriptors of seven major dictionaries regarding 992 listed words capable

of gender multiplicity shows an at times startling lack of consistency and agreement among them. For facultative animate nouns, the designation *fac.an.* would be helpful. No standard dictionary has developed a satisfactory way of indicating them. The *New Kościuszko Foundation Polish-English Dictionary* (Fisiak 2003) is inconsistent from word to word and cannot be relied on in matters of gender subtlety. It describes *ślamazara* ‘sluggard’ as (translating into our terms) fem. or masc. decl. like fem., gen.pl. in $-\emptyset$ or $-\acute{o}w$. By contrast, *łajza* ‘loafer’, of the same type, is described as masc.pers.decl. like fem., which seems self-contradictory. In both instances a better description would be fem. or masc.deprec. From this, the grammar-savvy user would be able to generate the singular and plural inflections of *łajza* shown in Table 10. No doubt hybrids can occur here as well, i.e., acc.sg. *tego łajzę* but gen.pl. *tych łajz*, acc.pl. *te łajzy* (i.e., similar to *sierota*).

Table 10. Standard inflectional forms of *łajza* ‘loafer’

gender	nom.sg.	gen.sg.	acc. sg.	nom.pl.	gen.pl.	acc.pl.
fem.	<i>ta łajza</i>	<i>tej łajzy</i>	<i>tę łajzę</i>	<i>te łajzy</i>	<i>tych łajz</i>	<i>te łajzy</i>
masc. depr.	<i>ten łajza</i>	<i>tego łajzy</i>	<i>tego łajzę</i>	<i>te łajzy</i>	<i>tych łajzów</i>	<i>tych łajzów</i>

6. Conclusion

Gender in Polish is not only elaborately and complexly exemplified in the grammar, but it is also, at least residually, embodied, in that it reflects a world ultimately seen through the prisms of sexual identity and, as a specifically Polish development, personhood, secondarily through animacy, status, and value judgments. By recognizing gender’s ultimate embodiment, we can better understand the development of the modern Polish gender system over time, involving its coalescence around a four-gender system based on potential sexual and personal embodiment, and the tendency toward the grammaticalization of many of its secondary resonances.

As a category, Polish gender resembles a fuzzy set, in that some members are more central to the category, others less so, and yet others are marginal—existing on the fringes of the system and to an extent playing off its conventions. Still other members operate completely outside the main conventions of the system, the best examples being Salo-

ni's numeral-projected agreement classes. This continuum is conveyed here by the designations: gender, subgender, quasi-gender, and "other issues." Obviously, if a category is a subcategory of another category, it begins to look like a subgender. On that basis masculine personal might logically be said to be a subgender of masculine. Here, however, the fact that the language itself (in the form of modifiers, verb endings, and pronouns) distinguishes masculine personal nouns on an equal basis with the other core genders, while it does not do so with masculine animate or masculine depreciative nouns, tips the balance in favor of our according it full gender status, leaving the other two as subgenders—in our judgment. The class masculine depreciative in some respects resembles a gender, in others a subgender, and in others a quasi-gender. The Polish genders, subgenders, quasi-genders, and a set of remainder gender issues, are summarized in Table 11:

Table 11. Polish genders, subgenders, quasi-genders, and remainder issues, listed in order of relative centrality

genders:	masculine feminine neuter personal
subgender of masculine:	masculine animate
subgender of personal:	masculine depreciative
quasi-genders (listed in approximate order of size):	facultatively animate nouns common-gender nouns in <i>-a</i> male professional names applied to females non-feminine words designating females neuter augmentatives in <i>-(i)sko</i> used personally
other gender-related issues	agreement classes as projected by numeral combinability gender shift through metaphorical extension gender chameleons nouns of either sex built on a common stem

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