

AUTOBIOGRAPHY—BIOGRAPHY—NARRATION

RESEARCH PRACTICE FOR BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

We put in the hands of the Reader Volume 2 of the 'Biographical Perspectives' 1 book series. This series is a part of a broader project, initiated several years ago in the Department of Education Studies, University of Łódź with a purpose to put it in a nutshell to promote multidimensional, transdisciplinary auto/biographical research. The 'Biograph Autobiography' Research Practice for Biographical Perspectives is a new and way publishing trend associated with the translation of English and American biographical literature into the Polish language. This creates a paradoxical situation in which the Polish readers may easily track the achievements of their foreign colleagues, but at the same time here is a lack of works promoting the Polish research thought developed within the interpretive paradigm. To offset this disproportion, at least to a small extent, we have decided to publish this volume in Polish.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY
STORY

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EDITED BY
MARCIN KAFAR &
MONIKA MODRZEJEWSKA-ŚWIGULSKA

REFUGEE NARRATIVE-BIOGRAPHICAL

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MINORITY EXPERIENCE

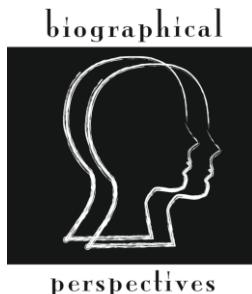
BIOGRAPHY PEOPLE NARRATIVE

WORLD IMMIGRANTS COMMUNITIES PERSONAL

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY—BIOGRAPHY—NARRATION
RESEARCH PRACTICE FOR BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Volume II



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The 'Biographical Perspectives' book series is a meeting place for representatives of the humanities and social sciences who situate their research practices in the auto/biographical paradigm horizon in its various guises.

The subsequent volumes will cover considerations on the theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects of auto/biographical research, as well as systematic studies devoted to an issue little explored so far, namely scientific auto/biographies. The latter research area in particular shows a huge heuristic potential. Located on the fringes of classic trends in the history and philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge and anthropology, it points to the weighty, though usually ignored or strongly marginalized personal, cultural, social, moral and axiological issues underlying the construction of the given domains of knowledge.

The publishing initiative of 'Biographical Perspectives' is also conceived as a project aimed at supporting the broader idea of the 'humanization' of science, which—in the belief of its originators—will contribute to consolidating the thought-social platform focused on creating the dialogic and autoformative space.

Books in the series:

*Volume 1, Scientific Biographies: Between the 'Professional' and 'Non-Professional'
Dimensions of Humanistic Experiences*, Marcin Kafar, editor

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY—BIOGRAPHY—NARRATION
RESEARCH PRACTICE FOR BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES**

EDITED BY
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MONIKA MODRZEJEWSKA-ŚWIGULSKA**

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INTRODUCTION

by Marcin Kafar & Monika Modrzejewska-Świgulska

We put in the hands of the Reader Volume 2 of the ‘Biographical Perspectives’¹ book series. This series is a part of a broader project, initiated several years ago in the Department of Educational Studies, University of Łódź with a purpose—to put it in a nutshell—to promote multidimensional, transdisciplinary auto/biographical studies.²

The monograph *Autobiography—Biography—Narration: Research Practice for Biographical Perspectives* breaks down a one-way publishing trend associated with the translation of English and German works undertaking multithreaded auto/biographical research issues into Polish. This creates a paradoxical situation in which the Polish readers may easily track the achievements of their foreign colleagues, but—at the same time—here is a lack of works promoting the Polish research thought developed within the interpretive paradigm. To offset this disproportion, at least to a small extent, we have decided to prepare a publication that springs from our subsoil of social sciences and humanities. We hope that the locality, in its positive meaning, manifested in this manner will arouse interest in supra-local recipients, while introducing a ‘fresh note’ into the auto/biographical conceptual mainstream, and perhaps it will become an incentive to take up the challenge of inspired exchange of ideas in the subsequent volumes of ‘Biographical Perspectives.’

¹ The whole book has been standardized in terms of inverted commas; we have used two types of quotation marks, single one for words and phrases that do not come directly from other authors, double one—in all other cases.

² For more details on the institutional, biographical and thematic context of the ‘Biographical Perspectives’ project cf. Kafar (2013).

This volume includes eight complementary articles that relate to the empirical, methodological, analytical, interpretive and theoretical aspects of the narrative-biographical research. The basic linking assumption of these works is a departure from the trend, still dominant in Poland and especially visible in the social sciences, modeled on the ideas taken from the natural sciences. The co-authors of *Autobiography—Biography—Narration*, positioning themselves between their source areas of knowledge (pedagogy, psychology, anthropology, sociology and literary studies) and a trans-disciplinary auto/biographical research plane, pick up as their starting point the processual perspective of the socio-cultural world, whose central element is the active subject as the creator of his/her own biography. Such assumptions (expressed explicitly and implicitly) provided the basis for reports on the Authors' own research projects (cf. in particular the texts by Karolina Dudek and Anna Kurpiel) and a framework for ordering the purely theoretical aspects of narrative-biographical studies (cf. the article by Katarzyna Gajek).

Some subjects were tackled using well-known methods and approaches, including the biographical method and the grounded theory method, but they were 'tailored' to the needs of individual research projects (e.g. Patrycja Trzeszczyńska reached for the life-study method of Fritz Schütze and applied it to analyze the existing texts). The authors, depending on the traditions behind their disciplinary affiliations, discussed different narrative material—literary works (dealt with by Katarzyna Olszewska), the literature of fact (analyzed by Wioletta Bogucka), historical narratives (interpreted by Joanna Bielecka-Prus) and narratives created as a response to research instructions/questions (as is the case in the studies presented by Karolina Dudek). The said researchers treat their narrators/interlocutors as 'wanderers' that interact with the socio-cultural world, thereby drawing the attention to the historical volatility, temporality, and relativity of human life and, consequently, human biography. In other words, the authors are interested in people 'immersed in life,' they 'listen to' the narrators in order to reach their visions of the world, the interpretation truth 'hidden' in the oral tales as well as letters, diaries, and memoirs. The conducted deliberations are centered around the issue of 'inter-mediating' dimensions of *individual* and *collective identity*. Personal stories, documented by specific representatives of various communities (e.g. national, professional—cf. Kurpiel and Dudek) and the generation experiencing the same 'space-time' (the Holocaust, labor camps, war and its consequences, forced migration—c.f. Bielecka-Prus, Olszewska and Ligus) are important *personally*, but eventually they become the contributions to the *collective* 'portraits,' which make specific testimony of their time.

Clifford Geertz introduced, after Heinz Kohut, the “experience-near” concept. The eminent anthropologist writes, “An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone—a patient, a subject, in our case an informant—might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define that he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others” (Geertz, 2000, p. 57). It seems that the research sensitivity of the Contributors to this volume pushes them towards such ‘experience-near’ concept. Thus, the panorama of utterances contained in this publication provides the foundations for a strong belief of the editors that there is no universal language, which can be used to describe the reality of human life. For this reason, among other things, we have decided to compose a volume that would be ‘language capacious’ in the literal and metaphorical sense. An inquisitive reader will easily find here a reflective practitioner (Anna Kurpiel), a theory-based lecturer (Katarzyna Gajek), a sensitive fellow researcher (Rozalia Ligus), a skilled methodologist (Patrycja Trzeszczyńska), an expert in literature who can grab our hearts (Katarzyna Olszewska), an expert interviewer (Karolina Dudek), a dialogical interpreter (Wioletta Bogucka), a careful reader (Joanna Bielecka-Prus), as well as... an ordinary man wanting to share his story with us.

We hope that the volume elaborated in this way will prove helpful for both the seasoned and the novice researchers practicing the difficult art of qualitative research, and that—due to the general humanistic message contained on its pages—it will be appreciated among the ‘non-professional’ readers looking for friendly-to-read publications concerning the ‘vulnerable topics,’ such as the suffering lived to the bottom of existence, the breakthroughs of entering adulthood, coping with the stigma of the real and the imagined ‘emigrant’ or a struggle with the ambivalence that characterizes the identity of a ‘citizen of the world-a vagabond.’

Włodzimierzów-Polanka / Łódź
December 2013

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AUTO/NARRATIVE AS A MEANS OF STRUCTURING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

by Katarzyna Gajek

Introduction

The turning point concerning the narrative that took place in the twentieth century was associated with the development of reflection on the narrative and extending its scope of meaning. In addition to being the theoretical-literary term it became a philosophical, anthropological, psychological, sociological and pedagogical category, a concept contained in the domain of history, law, politics or medicine (cf. Burzyńska, 2004, p. 12; 2008, p. 26). Creating stories, natural and characteristic for people, enabled taking up multi-faceted research, making the category of the narrative very roomy and interdisciplinary.

The concept of the narrative may occur in two basic meanings. Some researchers (e.g. Barbara Hardy, David Carr, or cognitive scientists) assume that *narrative is a human cognitive structure*, a kind of ability to capture events and processes changing over time in complex structures of meaning. Others (such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Anthony Giddens, Paul Ricoeur) refer to *narrative as a product of culture*, which is the matrix for the organization of our experiences in the narrative structure (cf. Rosner, 2003, pp. 122-123).

In the literature on the subject, we may find a variety of ways to define the narrative, which is related to adopting different underlying assumptions. Though I will not attempt to make clear-cut decisions, this article will present various, sometimes inseparable, perspectives of the category of narrative and issues related to it, in order to shed some light of the

multiplicity of viewpoints recognizing it and disputes on its essence. Thus, my text will try to order the terms used in the narrative-biographical research.

Auto/narrative—Contexts and Definitions

The above-mentioned turning point entailed certain modifications of the previously used definitions of narrative. The theory of literature and esthetic theories that apply this category recognized it as a monologue, presenting a structured sequence of events developing over time and associated with the world presented, i.e. with the characters situated in a particular environment. The generalization of this concept contributed to its recognition as one equipped with the communication aspect of *the representation of the world* and *the self-presentation of the subject* by the subject itself. Referring to the work of contemporary philosophers (such as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur), some people began to recognize the narrative as *a way of understanding the world* expressing also the dynamic and historic properties of the temporality of being. The discovery of the fact that the word 'narrare' (to tell) was formed by a transformation from the word 'gna' functioning in Sanskrit, through the Latin term 'gnarus' (having knowledge, knowledgeable) strengthened the position treating narrative as *the general structure of knowledge* or *the general cognitive structure*. The narrative in such an understanding has become an interdisciplinary concept serving the description of, *inter alia*, the history of philosophical ideas as well as the history and dynamics of social phenomena or processes of constructing an identity (Burzyńska, 2008, p. 27).

The term 'narrative' (Latin: *narratio*) means *a story* if it refers to an utterance presenting events that are ordered in time and have their cause and effect (dynamic elements), and *a description* when it describes the characters and the environment associated with these events—(static elements) (Skibińska, 2006, p. 333).

Marianne Horsdal (2004, p. 12) notes that *the sequence of time* and *the transformation of one situation to another* make the definitional and constitutive features of narrative. The sequential construction of a story comprises the cause or interpretation of the development of the events, about which the listener/reader is forced to conclude, and therefore the course of events can be interpreted and understood in many ways. Cultural axioms regarding people and the world can be ingrained in the content of various narratives, and thus be repeatedly duplicated, but each story makes a statement situated in a specific context, often saturated with emotional

and evaluative elements, i.e. characterized by a particular perspective, plot and configuration of meanings.

Peter Alheit (2002, pp. 103-107) points out that in the course of telling a story, which is a way of reviving the past, we are obliged to follow the story-telling principles. A narrative is conducted in accordance with the pattern: "Introduction—climax—solution" and its pre-condition is that it should be worth telling. A story commenced needs to be finished ("the rule of the end"), and to make it understandable we need to tell it providing all the details ("the rule of details"), but remembering about the details we must not forget about the important things ("the rule of validity and conciseness"). Storytelling takes time and requires confidentiality as well as an intimate and friendly atmosphere, since it showcases the narrator, who shares his/her personal experiences with the listeners.

Marcin Karłowski (1996, pp. 71-72 et seq.), based on the work of Theodore R. Sarbin (1986) as well as Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen (1988), argues that narrative is the method applied for the purpose of organization of episodes, activities and reports concerning them by the use of the categories of time and space. It combines the facts with the products of the imagination, points to the causes of events, and also takes into account the motives driving the behavior of the characters. On the other hand, auto/narratives are created as a result of the use of the first person singular pronouns, and are therefore the outcome of a grammar rule. The pronoun 'I' allows for recognizing oneself as the author of the constructed story, and its declination facilitates the description of 'me' as the leading character, whose fate is intertwined in the system of events. Therefore, auto/narratives become a tool by which people explain events external to them, representing their causal relationships, and understand themselves as the main characters. The formal traits of auto/narratives are: (i) establishing a valued punchline, (ii) selecting and ordering the events adequately to the goal set by the author, (iii) establishing causal relationships and determining the interdependencies between the participants in the interactions, and (iv) establishing a marked beginning and end of the story.

Auto/narrative organizes the experiences of an individual, anchoring him/her in the past and making his/her life purposeful and meaningful. A man telling his/her own story cites one possible version of it, depending on the context in which he/she is located. The narrator reconstructs the events by presenting the links between them, which allows for rendering the processual nature of the phenomena and provides the internal dynamics of the narrative. This retrospection is accompanied by an ongoing reflection of the narrator who continually interprets his/her own

biography, trying to explain the personal motives or the reasons for particular situations. He/she explains, comments and valorizes past events from the current point of view undertaking, sometimes explicitly, the effort for arranging the past and the present perspective. In this way, the narrative documents the changes taking place in the biographical identity of the individual and the social process of its development (Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 2002, p. 56).

Narrativists have had numerous philosophical disputes, mainly concerning the relationship of *narrative* and *experience*, as well as *narrative* and *facts*. The most famous among them are those participated by 'naturalists' and 'culturalists' as well as 'realists' and 'constructivists.' Naturalists, such as Jerome Bruner (one of the founders of the concept of narrative thinking), thought that creating a story is *an innate ability* of human beings in whose development *narrative competence* precedes *linguistic competence* (grammar), and thus the narrative is *the primary basis of cognitive processes*. On the other hand, culturalists, especially those that (such as Paul Ricoeur) originated from a group of hermeneutists, argued that *an experience obtains a narrative form only through the influence of cultural codes*. The second conflict was associated with a difference of views between realists who claimed that *facts exist objectively and autonomously towards the narrative* and constructivists who were affirmative that *there are no facts that exist independently of it* (Burzyńska, 2008, p. 28).

Regardless of the effect of the considerations concerning the primacy of the narrative competence and the linguistic competence in human life, the thesis used by Jerome Bruner (1987), which had previously been offered by Paul Ricoeur (1984; 1985; 1988) states that *we have no other possible means to describe the time we have lived apart from the narrative*. Alternative ways of experiencing time as the clock time, calendar time or a cyclic or serial order are not able to grasp the meanings we assign to our past. Therefore, the narrative is the only way for man to refer to his past and link it with the present attributing meaning to his own activities.

Social scientists, using the theoretical-literary comprehension of the category of narrative, evoke it in the context of autobiography, capturing it as:

- *structured human experience that is the subject of research*—auto/narrative is a construct of the human mind, and creating a story of the self requires constant interpretation and reinterpretation of one's experiences. Additionally, auto/narratives are converted under the influence of cultural conventions;
- *product of social constructivism which is also a way of knowing intermediated by social contexts*—auto/narrative text is the story of a man's

life who talks about it, while making a simultaneous interpretation of events from the current perspective. He/she creates a unique autobiographical narrative, one of the possible versions of it, constructed depending on the situation. In this process, the narrator also shapes his/her identity, which, like the narratives of personal experiences may undergo disintegration. Then, it is necessary to resort to their reinterpretation and reconfiguration;

- *phenomenon and the method of research*—narratives as a means of structuring human experiences have a particular nature if their content is an autobiography of a specific person, at the same time, however, they reflect the social and historical context of such person's life.
- *construct, which taking the form of an 'auto' expression allows a person to understand the reality and oneself in the world* (including one's own situation, motives, consequences of decisions). While telling one's own story, a man uses narrative patterns, shaping his or her narrative identity (Skibińska, 2006, pp. 333-335).

Auto/biography as the Content of Auto/narrative —Multiplicity of Definition Perspectives

A narrative is a story that has an author, who guided by more or less conscious needs makes an effort to construct the history of life, thus justifying the need for telling the story (see Oleś, 2008, pp. 39-41). If the story concerns the personal experiences of the narrator (the author of the narrative and its main character are the same person), we are dealing with an autonarrative, the content of which is an autobiographical account of the author of the utterance/text, presenting his/her story. On the other hand, a biography is a 'bios' (Greek: *bios*—life), i.e. the course of life of a particular person or an account of its conduct established in the form of a text (Urbanik-Zajac, 2005, pp. 115-116).

Pierre Dominicé (2000) is of the opinion, however, that the content of both an autobiography and a biography is the life history of the person who is also the author and the hero. At the same time, a source of inspiration for the creation of the story is the criterion for distinguishing between these two concepts: an autobiography arises *from the author's personal motivation*, and the biography *from the inspiration of a researcher*.

In the nineteenth century, anthropologists began to use the term 'life story,' often associated with the contemporary 'autonarrative.' This term

indicated a story whose subject is the life of an individual, who is at the same time the narrator of the story. There was also coined a term 'life history,' indicating that the content of the narrator's personal experience has been enhanced with the information from additional sources (e.g. utterances of other people, institutional documents, etc.) (Golczyńska-Grondas & Dunajew-Tarnowska, 2006, p. 8).

Norman K. Denzin (1990, p. 68) identified a number of terms synonymous with a narrative, which were formed on the basis of different methods related to biographical research, including 'life history,' 'case history,' 'case study,' 'life story,' or 'self-story':

- life history is associated with collecting data (from multiple sources), their interpretation, and then the presentation of experiences of an individual, group or social organization, with the terms used in the story; it is essential to preserve the sense and the meanings given by the person telling the history;
- case history, in contrast to life history, focuses on studying the history of a particular event or process, such as the history of the AIDS epidemic or the experiences of an alcoholic that belongs to AA;
- case study is an analysis of the specificity and uniqueness of the individual case or a number of individual cases, which illustrate the same process and make the basis for the creation of a theory, a case study can coexist with a case history and often includes a history of the life of the main characters of the related events;
- life story is a story told by the author, as opposed to the life history this does not comprise conclusions based on the later interpretive work of the researcher;
- self-story is an essential part of life story; it is a personal narrative of a certain man, situated in a specific context, often containing an account describing groundbreaking or critical life events; what is significant here is the very process of the formation of the story about one's own experiences that can be repeated many times.

Elżbieta Hałas, referring to the ideas presented by Herbert Blumer, is of the opinion that biographies are reports expressed in the first person, tackling the personal experiences of a man, which show this man as an acting figure, eagerly participating in social life (Blumer, 1949; after Hałas, 1987, p. 71). Furthermore, Hałas claims that *a biography is primarily a social phenomenon* (secondarily it can be a source of knowledge or the subject of research), and *life in a society is related to having lived a particular biography* (*ibid.*). In view of the fact that our existence is autobiographical, but also

historical, new events constitute for us the context for ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of our own lives.

An autobiography can be understood as a form of a narrative, in which the narrator and the main hero of events are the same person, and the subject of the story is the personal experience. The hermeneutic perspective of understanding narrative facilitates a look at the category of autobiography comprising two opposing views. Under the first point of view, autobiography is recognized as *an account on the history of life told from a subjective perspective of the narrator*, which includes, among other things, a description of the situation or participants of the events. The presented object may be a biography, conceived as *a real life lived* (Giza, 1991, p. 101), having an additional advantage of objectivity. According to such a standpoint, which is close to naive realism and is often subject to criticism, *the life told*, i.e. an autobiography, is clearly separated from *the life actually lived*, which makes the content of the biography. The second point of view, places no such sharp boundary between these categories. Its followers believe that *we do not have a direct access to the life lived* (or speaking more generally to the reality) without the mediation of the language, and thus without interpretation. Therefore, the author of the autobiographical narrative, telling the story of his/her life, uses the symbols and at the same time creates a kind of reality. The language he/she speaks becomes a carrier of personal meaning and significance (Grzegorek, 2003, pp. 214-215).

Duccio Demetrio (2000, p. 16) believes that the creation of an autobiography consists of three phases: *retrospection* (recalling memories of past situations), *interpretation* (discovery of the meaning of past events, explanation of the past, taking into account the current context), and *formation of heroes and events* (characteristics of the self and other heroes, presentation of the fate of people against the background of processes, phenomena, situations). A person undertaking an effort to create an autobiographical story cites some facts from the history of his/her life, rarely, however, are they a faithful reflection of the actual experiences. Recalling the experiences makes it possible to analyze them in relation to the present time, and to order as well as to remember them through the deployment of the memories in the appropriate context. Past events also serve the purpose of a reflection on the present and the future, providing a reference point for them, enriching the perspective of viewing the present day, as well as stimulating the ability to anticipate the likely situations. The past facilitates using and transforming the earlier experiences, which makes, *inter alia*, the basis for the learning process and deriving from one's own biography.

Summing up the discussion on the essence of auto/biography, Anna Giza-Poleszczuk (1990, p. 96) points to the aspects that are shared by the researchers:

- auto/biography is the product of the activity performed by an individual;
- it is always subjective in nature;
- an individual constructing the auto/biography selects events that are important to him/her and then attributes certain meaning to them; creating auto/biography is a process and the way of presenting it changes during the life of an individual;
- auto/biography is affected by various factors (circumstances, situations);
- auto/biography exists thanks to the linguistic message, and therefore the way it is read and understood takes on special meaning;
- auto/biography depends on the consciousness of a man (we can talk about "constitutive nature of consciousness"), because (i) it exists only when someone tells it, (ii) imagining and understanding life is dependent on the structure of the story as well as the sense and significance contained therein.

Auto/narratives of Personal Experiences

Anthony Giddens (1991, p. 23) argues that essentially "all human experience is mediated—through socialization and in particular the acquisition of language." The ability to speak gave people the chance to ensure mutual transfer of knowledge, and the possibility of using mass communication and media allowed for experiencing events distant in time and space. Language is also closely associated with memory and the ability to reconstruct the past events, both in terms of socially fixed collective experiences and personal retrospections.

Language is a constitutive part of creating a biographical narrative. Thanks to it, an individual may dress his/her own sensations in public expression and objectify his/her individual experiences by assigning certain meaning and significance to them and ordering them in relation to previous experiences. Telling the self-story, an individual conducts social construction of the reality. A biography reflects the social world in which man lives (and which is a reference point for his ideas about himself), and it becomes a specific interpretation of the reality (Kaźmierska, 1990, p. 114).

Referring to the work of Karl Mannheim, Ralf Bohnsack (2004, p. 21 et seq.) distinguished two types of understanding the insight into verbal

expressions (or more broadly—the mental products of a man), taking into account their double structure. They contain *the public content* and are therefore of ‘objective’ and *communicative importance*, as well as *the non-public content*, which acquires the proper sense only within a particular group or environment, and thus it has *the conjunctive importance*. The basis of conjunctive communication is the community of the experienced reality that not always is the result of personal contact and interactions, but can arise from having structurally similar experiences. The space of conjunctive experience enables direct understanding based on habitual conformity and a similar method of organizing and categorizing the experiences. The second type of communication allows for crossing the borders between different spaces of experience and is related to the communicative demonstration and explanation of different working practices. It also involves interpretation and definitional generation of reality on the basis of assigned and read motives of activity.

The acquisition of language skills and mastering linguistic rules, as well as developing narrative competences, takes place in the course of social (verbal) relationships and is dependent on these interactions. Creating a narrative is thus a social issue, even if it relates to the internal experience of the individual. Personal experiences, despite the fact that they are products of culture, give a unique, individual shape to our lives. At the same time, however, each person is physically and environmentally situated, which entails social mediation of self-understanding and interpretation of reality. We cannot talk about the social and cultural determinism, because we are able to take into account different available perspectives and negotiate meanings (Horsdal, 2004, pp. 15-16).

Biographical narratives are placed in a specific historical, cultural and social context, so they are not narrowed down to a subjective, individual experience and can be included in a broader, objectified background. They become then the trademark of their time, it does not mean, however, that they are statements of historical facts. Epochal events are subjected to interpretation and included in the narrative as determinants for the course of personal experience. This procedure allows for multithreaded analyses of biographies, as well as extending the perspective of reading them embracing various contexts (Koczanowicz, 2007, p. 38).

One of the important functions of a narrative is assigning the meaning to personal experiences, the actions taken or events. The individual interprets the circumstances, takes up reflection on the historical and socio-cultural context, often presenting them against the background of his/her own experiences. Creating a biographical narrative also allows for a distanced insight into the history of one’s life. An analysis of the past

situations with the current outlook makes it possible to redefine them, and it can also be a starting point for the work on one's own biography (Grzegorek, 2005, pp. 127-128; 2003, p. 213).

Telling one's history is related to the configuration of events, important for an individual and occurring at a particular time, into sequences. While creating a story, a man explains to himself/herself and his/her partner in the interaction, the situations which are being described and then discovers the meaning of events and constructs his/her own identity. During our lives, we build a lot of narratives about ourselves, taking into account relationships with other people, interpreting the reality and granting a specific meaning to it. The dominant narratives about the past affect our present and future (cf. Morgan, 2000). In new social situations, we create different versions of the story about ourselves for different recipients. They are dependent on cultural and collective narratives, on what other people think and say about us (cf. Horsdal, 2004, p. 21).

Gabriele Rosenthal (1990, pp. 98-99) believes that the retrospective vision of our life and the way of organizing stories are dependent on the present time and our current perspective. The situations and events that are deliberately selected from the past facilitate constructing a narrative that from our point of view is coherent, credible and meaningful, through which we can explain our earlier choices, decisions and actions, or justify our judgments or evaluations. The narrator displays these experiences placing them in the coherent context of meanings. They form a sequence of individual stories that are treated by him/her as elements integrated with one another, despite the fact that it may not be confirmed by the chronological course of the narrative.

Our understanding of the reality and our own lives can be shattered by an event 'stripped of meaning,' and then an autobiographical narrative gets destroyed. In such a situation, we need to create another, reconfigured narrative, in accordance with other interpretive assumptions to integrate new experiences with it. Our narrative competences develop gradually and derive from the discursive cultural potential. That is why we cannot create meanings in the conditions of social isolation. The presence of other people ensures the possibility of participation in the practices of communication and provides us with the opportunity to share stories (Horsdal, 2004, p. 21).

Narrativeness of Biographical Experiences

The susceptibility of personal experiences to becoming a story, or *narrativeness*, depends on their nature. Tragic events causing trauma are hard to be told. Talking about such moments involves enormous emotional effort,

and the most dramatic events may be omitted or their presentation is schematic and laconic. Recalling harrowing memories very often revives the distress related to them, which is also, due to its nature, impossible to communicate (Kaźmierska, 1996, p. 86; 1999, pp. 22-23).

Narrativeness may be stimulated by certain factors. Placing the experiences in a specific sequential order facilitates describing them. Then, the background for personal experiences is a broader historical, social or cultural context, namely the events of high importance, reaching beyond an individual level that took place at a particular time. Similarly, a change in the circumstances and places of the unfolding events helps to organize one's experiences. Another factor facilitating the narrative creation process is presenting the experiences in a unique situation, detaching us from the monotony of daily life, which makes us lose the track of time. They provide a benchmark for determining the chronological order of the presented plot (Kaźmierska, 1999, pp. 24-25; 1996, p. 87).

The Memory of Personal Experiences

The ability to revive memories is formed in humans already during childhood. We are able to systematize and prioritize past experiences, taking into account their intensity. We recall past events preserving their chronological order and the categories of organizing the presentation of changes in time are cause-and-effect relationships or the terms 'before'—'after.' However, the ability to integrate experiences into a coherent structure and to distinguish the turning points in the life course appears much later (cf. Demetrio, 2000, p. 20).

Philosophical tradition associates the notion of experience with the category of memory. Memory is comprehended as a system of internalized data, the global sum of what we know and accumulate in the course of life. Collecting memories requires experiencing the reality, and therefore is connected with a particular person and his/her past. 'Playing back' past events in one's memory is a reproduction of facts, interpreted from the perspective of today (Leśniewski, 2001, pp. 141-142).

There are at least two sources of knowledge about oneself and the surrounding reality, based on the memory possessed by an individual (see Baran, 2005, p. 131). *Episodic memory* keeps track of the events located in time and space, experienced by us directly and the relationships between them. It provides the individual with his/her own 'I', allows this person to maintain a sense of identity through being aware of the continuity of existence in time. *Semantic memory* makes it possible to associate facts, categorize and label information of similar nature communicated through

language. It includes a universal knowledge of the world, without the conscious access to specific experiences that lie at its core.

According to Marianne Horsdal (2004, p. 14), autobiographical episodic memory allows us to keep the memories of ourselves as participants in various past events, and the ability to store and 'playback' words or objects is ensured by semantic memory. Our personal experiences and those that have been told to us, or read by us, have a narrative structure. Telling our own story we alternatively use the experiences (current or imagined) of others. There can also occur difficulty in determining whether we were participants in the particular event, and it has been remembered by us, or we have heard about it. Encoding, storing and replaying information serves our orientation in the present and in the future, and establishing the compatibility between the past, present and future is the ongoing pursuit of the narrative identity.

The issue of memory has also been dealt with by Kaja Kaźmierska (2007, p. 15). She distinguishes, referring to, *inter alia*, the findings of Marek Ziółkowski (2001), three dimensions of memory (and oblivion), which are correlated with specific categories of *the memory subjects*. *Collective memory* (official or public) is created within institutions included in the system of state and local government, *social memory* is created by institutions of the civil society, and *biographical memory* is generated by persons outside the institutional network, forming informal groups, such as family or circles of friends.

The category of autobiographical memory (cf. Niedźwieńska, 2000, pp. 111-112) refers to the memories of autobiographical facts and personal events, and it is most commonly used in three ways. It may refer to (i) *a given memory system with neurobiological foundation*, (ii) an umbrella term for *knowledge and schemes, which make the memory bases of identity* (then it is used in relation to a specific item and includes memory factors as well as social and emotional ones that are relevant at the time of the event and in the process of re-playing it), (iii) *mechanisms and processes involved in remembering and identifying situations experienced by an individual* (both emotional, and at the same time significant for the identity structure formation, and marginal).

Biographical memory includes personal experiences accumulated over a lifetime. The biographic character of memories on the one hand emphasizes the perspective of an individual man, and on the other concerns the continuous (re)interpretation of the experience carried out from the current point of view. Biographical memory is not knowledge about the past, it facilitates re-playing information, sensations, images or sequences of events gathered and stored in the mind. Autobiographical narrative is

a communicative activity, recalling one of the possible versions of the past, created in a given situation and for the particular listener. Methods of storing and re-playing biographical experience are determined by the course of the life of the narrator, as well as the socio-cultural context and the collective memory resources. Collective memory, built through intergenerational transmission input, allows a person to exceed the limitations of time and space of individual experience. Biographical narratives become a field of discourse between several generations, and so the biographical memory resources comprise personal experiences as well as narratives of others. The boundaries between what was actually experienced by us and what we were told can be blurred. Socially shared memories of the past and interpretations of past events affect the process of building individual and collective identity (Kaźmierska, 2007, pp. 18-19).

People have an unusually large number of memories in their biographical memory resources. Potentially, they are available to us, however, which one and in what configuration will be recalled depends on the circumstances of the recollection process. The selection of data and the manner of re-playing information are affected by cognitive schemas—available and active at a given time—including the general human knowledge about the reality and the image of oneself. Quarrying the memories from the storage resources is also steered through questions or guidelines generated by the narrator or his/her surroundings (Niedźwieńska, 2005, pp. 27-28).

Narrative Identity

Anthony Giddens (1991, pp. 5-19) believes that building identity is a process that constitutes for an individual a specific task organized by reflexivity. Reflexive designing of “self-identity” is constantly accompanied by making choices mediated by “abstract systems,” which include “symbolic tokens” (“media of exchange”) and “expert systems” (knowledge). This process requires maintaining biographical narratives—coherent and forming a meaningful whole—that should be subject to ongoing verification.

Identity cannot be understood as something static and brought down to a particular trait or a set of traits that characterize a person. It is a reflectively recognized awareness of the individual, providing him/her with the durability of existence in time and space. Building personal narratives lets us reflect on the biographical continuity, because stories show the course of human life and include an account of the changes that have taken place in it over the years (despite the differences, we can still recognize an individual as the same person). The identity, shaped in the process of creating

the narrative, embraces the way of understanding the reality, self-image and the structure of meanings, which are used by the individual (*ibid.*, pp. 50-51, 145-146).

Identity, through which we retain a sense of empowerment and biographical consistency and continuity, may be to some extent manifested, as well as presented to others in the course of communication, through constructing and maintaining the personal narrative. Auto/narratives are extremely impermanent, they undergo constant modifications, since new experiences and events important for us must be integrated with the prior experience. Similarly, the process of identity formation is never surmounted with a ready, finite structure (Rosner, 2003, p. 42).

Designing our own identity in the late modern age is, according to Giddens (1991, pp. 181-208; see also, Mamzer, 2007a, p. 52; 2007b, p. 44), an extremely complex task. He projected a field of identity dilemmas, located between four poles, whose settlement is the condition of preserving a "coherent narrative of self-identity." These are:

- unification/fragmentation—due to the changes generated by modernity, integration trends are becoming desirable associated with modifications and protection of identity narratives, however, the diversity of contexts of interactions requires that the individual should adapt to them in his/her self-presentation, which leads to partitioning, or in the worst case, disintegration of identity;
- powerlessness/appropriation—they exist simultaneously in a dynamic relationship; the variety of social reality brings about both a sense of powerlessness in the face of external factors affecting the life of the individual and interfering in it, and an increase in human capabilities and broadening of the scope of control over the course of his/her life;
- authority/uncertainty—the existence of conflicting authorities and the lack of unquestionable sources of normative references reinforce a sense of uncertainty beyond the areas of routine activity;
- personalized experience/commodified experience—reflexive project of the self is dependent upon commodification processes that shape specific lifestyles; individuals can express themselves through choices made in the sphere of consumption and possession of certain goods or struggles with the impact of the market, individually interpreting the incoming information.

Alasdair MacIntyre (2007, p. 204 et seq.; see also, Rosner, 2003, pp. 24-31) made an analysis of historical and social circumstances of constructing narrative self-representations and maintaining selfhood (strict identity).

He noted that every story about individual life is a part of a set of stories coupled together. Therefore, we are only the co-authors of our own narratives in which other people also participate and contribute to them, "I am forever whatever I have been at any time for others—and I may at any time be called upon to answer for it," says the author of *After Virtue* (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 217). Similarly, our actions are important for the lives of others, we are the 'supporting cast' and partial creators of their history. Social coexistence requires some agreement on the self-narratives and the mutual recognition of different identities, and each activity, which serves as an episode in the story, should be logically explained so that it retains meaning for all people involved. Our social location and certain identifications at the level of collective life exert influence on the shape of personal narratives. Social identities are a part of our self-definitions, while in the process of socialization we learn the meanings inscribed in them, through which we read out the meaning of all the stories. Another factor crucial for the creation of self-narratives and building identity is tradition. It is a source of moral references, the starting point for the determination of the values important for a man, and supporting it ensures people situatedness in a historical context.

Charles Taylor (2012), characterizing the context of understanding the modern identity, defined it, *inter alia*, as something that an individual recognizes as *his/her own*, as something *personal*. Every person is involved in shaping their own identity (by abandoning the social purpose and being faithful to the imperative of self-realization), but does not make an arbitrary choice concerning it. Individual self-interpretation in the vocabulary used by Taylor (2012, 1985) requires self-acceptance, which arises on the basis of negotiation with the environment, one's own history and destiny, and needs social recognition, which is a prerequisite of fulfilled identity. The latter is conditional—it is largely a matter of postulativeness of the author of *Sources of the Self* and his unwavering confidence in man—upon the deep inherent good in us, and it "has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. [...] making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra; [...] our lives exist in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and where we are going," says Taylor (2012, p. 47).

According to Paul Ricoeur (1984; 1985; 1988), the situation of narrative communication that distinguishes man from the world of other beings, allows the storyteller to take the benefit of narrative reasoning. Creating stories about our own lives, the content of which are individual experiences, shows, among other things, our ways of interpreting situations,

understanding others, and it is also an attempt of self-presentation and of defining ourselves. Past experiences can take the form of a narrative by referring them to cultural codes, and in connection with this, a narrative is a set of narrative codes developed within culture that allow for the presentation of our experience. It is a position that differs from the recognition of the narrative as a primordial structure of the human mind (present in the deliberations of David Carr and Roy Schafer), used and developed in the stories. Paul Ricoeur believes that understanding the story of the self and the narrative creation of individual identity is only possible thanks to the reference to the historical-literary tradition mediated by culture codes. The interpretation of texts, representing the cultural heritage, can give meaning and significance to our experiences (Rosner, 2003, pp. 131-134; Kociuba, 2007, p. 61; Mamzer, 2007a, p. 55).

The identity of man, according to the concept coined by Ricoeur, is always the narrative identity, and as such it comprises three integral elements: *continuity in time* (sense of stability), *sense of coherence* and *distinctiveness from others* (Mamzer, 2002, pp. 51-59):

- continuity in time is maintained by referring to autobiographical memory; identity building is a process that will never be completed and takes place in the course of the interaction between the individual and the social environment; the awareness of one's 'self,' based on the self-determination of the individual, recognized in the context of the passage of time (taking into account the time dimension allows a person to link the past with the present and the future), enables recognition of oneself as the same person (the continuity of the forms of identity is preserved) and gives us a sense of sustainability;
- a sense of coherence is a feeling of inner harmony, reasonableness and lack of contradiction between all elements of identity; each part is significant for the constitution of the awareness of one's 'self,' and its existence can be justified; fragmentation and episodic character of life trigger the possibility of unlimited creation of self-identity, taking decisions about its shape; on the other hand, the uncertainty felt by man and fragility (eventually disintegration) of the structure of identity encourage the exploration of reference points and reducing personal responsibility;
- a sense of separateness gives evidence of man's individuality and uniqueness, enables him to distinguish himself from the others, on the other hand, it may be associated with emphasizing non-dependence, withdrawal from seeking the approval of others or lack

of need of cherishing social ties; in the process of creating identities we are forced to choose between exposing ones autonomy (desire for individualization and non-conformism) and the drive for belonging; social acceptance and positive self-esteem support attempts to build one's own separateness.

The concept of narrative identity, developed on the basis of numerous scientific disciplines, allowed to argue redefining the understanding of human beings in the context of the debate concerning the philosophy of the subject. In the philosophical thought, there was a shift from the substantial understanding of the human as a being, characterized by certain properties, to the dynamic approach recognizing the subject as a being that develops and changes over time, and, at the same time, whose existence takes on a finite form, because it is limited by the birth and death. Anna Burzyńska (2004, p. 16) believes that the direction of changes in the philosophical thinking leads from the Cartesian assertion "I think, therefore I am" through hermeneutic "I understand, therefore I am" to a narrativist idea "I tell, therefore I am."

Summary

Generalizing the ways of defining the narrative, and thus expanding its range of meanings, allowed for the use of this category in more and more areas of expertise, but it also required determination of the constitutive characteristics.

The ways of recognizing the concept of narrative reflect a dispute concerning the primordial nature of one of human competences: *linguistic* or *narrative*. Irrespective of them, telling the history of one's own life is *the only possibility to describe our experiences*.

A narrative can be recognized as a monologue, which is a communicative form of self-presentation of the narrator and representation of the world as seen by him/her. It presents a chronologically ordered sequence of events, developing over time and related to persons and events. Its content can be the life of the storyteller or other people, located in the socio-cultural context, including an account of personal experiences or supplemented by information from other sources.

Narrative connects the world of individual human experience with the broader historical and socio-cultural context as regards the time perspective. The description of life is based on the distance between the retrospective point of view and the daily course of life. It is a structure significant for the narrator, which embraces his/her constant interpretation

of the past, tailored to the current perspective. It should be mentioned that we do not recreate our experiences or events faithfully, but we reconstruct them in the course of building the narrative (auto/biographical memory is associated with the accumulation of human experiences, which are subject to constant reinterpretation depending on the course of life of the individual and his/her location). By means of the language, we present the experienced world, although not all events are possible to be displayed and are tellable. Moreover, we are also entangled in the communication processes, creating a report for a specific recipient. From all the past events, we select those that fit our interpretation of reality and our own 'self,' and also lend credence to our story. Therefore, we can create an infinite number of narratives, depending on our self-presentation and the current assessment of the situation.

The narratives comprise some version of the stored memories and fictional elements that in the studies aiming at objectification can be resolved in terms of *truth* and *falsehood*, but there are also reflected narratives of the earlier generations, situating the narrator in the historical, socio-cultural context. The autobiographical accounts are susceptible to cultural, interpersonal and language influences, and therefore become extremely perishable and undergo constant transformations, similarly to the narrative identity constructed in the course of narration.

The narrative identity allows for maintaining a unique, consistent and sustainable self-image. A man must be recognizable for himself, which confirms his continuity in time and space and the existence of a link between the past and the present. On the other hand, a man creates ever new identities that are not stable and are subject to transformations depending on the grand narratives or opinions of us, entailing changes in the interpretation. In addition to this, there coexist many narratives created by other people, in which we also act as heroes, and this requires their reconciliation and mutual acceptance of the constructed identities.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STRATEGY AND ATTITUDE OF HALINA BIRENBAUM AS A FORM OF PASSING ON A WITNESS OF THE HOLOCAUST

by Katarzyna Olszewska

Halina Birenbaum, born in Poland and living since 1947 in Israel, is a poet and writer. She spent her childhood in the Warsaw ghetto, from where in 1943 she was transported to Majdanek and next to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 1945, she survived the death march, which led her to the camps of Ravensbrück and Neustadt-Glewe, where she stayed until liberation. The post-war period spent in Warsaw 'kibbutzim' Ichud and Hashomer Hatzair made her seek refuge in the 'land of the forefathers.' She emigrated from Poland during the 'Bricha' action and went through months of wandering, leading her, *inter alia*, to Bratislava, Prague, the camp in Airing, Bad Reichenhall, Eschweige and France. She began her life in the new motherland in kibbutzim to finally settle down with her husband and children in the town of Herzliya, where she still lives today.

Halina Birenbaum is a member of the Polish Writers' Association in Israel. She translates Polish literature into Hebrew and takes up a number of initiatives aimed at—as she says—"more reconciliation than repairing the Polish-Jewish relations" (Kuryłek, 2006, p. 277) as well as the relations between the Jews and the Germans. For her social activity, the writer was awarded the medal 'Pax 1939-1945' (1996), the 'Auschwitz Cross' (1997), the 'Officer's Cross of the Order of the Rebirth of Poland' (1999), and the Polish Council of Christians and Jews granted her the title of the 'Reconciliation Person of 2001.' The books written by Halina Birenbaum in Polish have had numerous translations, also into Hebrew and German. Her prose achievements include: *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* (*Hope is the last*

to die)¹ (1967), *Powrót do ziemi praojców* (*Return to ancestors' land*) (1991), *Każdy odzyskany dzień: Wspomnienia* (*Every recovered day: Memories*) (1998) and *Wołanie o pamięć* (*Scream for remembrance*) (1999), as well as a collection of texts enriched with photographs taken by Adam Bujak, *Życie każdemu drogie* (*Life treasured by everyone*) (2005).² The poetic achievements of Halina Birenbaum have been collected in volumes of poetry: *Wiersze Haliny Birenbaum* (*Poems of Halina Birenbaum*) (1987), *Nawet gdy się śmieję* (*Even when I laugh*) (1990), *Nie o kwiatach* (*Not about flowers*) (1993), *Jak można w słowach* (*How in words*) (1995), *Echa bliskie i dalekie: Spotkania z młodzieżą* (*Echoes, close and far: Meetings with young people*) (2004), *Moje życie rozpoczęło się od końca* (*My life began with the end*) (2010).³

The genesis and the prevailing theme of all her works is the war, and especially the Holocaust, whose unique nature and moral obligation associated with it induced the writer to embed her creative efforts in the autobiographical material, recalled from memory or experienced in parallel with the elaboration of the literary pieces. As a survivor of the Holocaust, at the urging of her husband (Maliszewski, 1988, p. 11), and also under the influence of a discourse aroused by Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem (Kuryłek, 2006, p. 258), in 1963 she decided to take a stand on the Shoah: "[...] something very important was missing for me—the atmosphere of unceasing horror of everyday life spent in the midst of all the atrocities of war, when every hour was an eternity, or an hour preceding this eternity" (Birenbaum, 1991, p. 231). The writer has attempted to oppose the anonymity of the crime and its impersonal dimension, building in her texts personal monuments commemorating those who were exterminated, as well as constructing a story not only by events, but also sensations and emotions experienced by people condemned to death.

Scholars researching the literature devoted to the Holocaust generally emphasize its cleansing and therapeutic nature, consisting in shifting the burden of various traumatic experiences from the author to the reader, which allows for commencing a new life. This psychological mechanism also applies to the writing practiced by Halina Birenbaum (1993, p. 32, 37) (*uspokaja, kiedy piszę*) (*writing calms me down*), who always stresses, though, that the Holocaust is an inherent and indelible part of the personality of the witness. Separating oneself from the past with the wall of oblivion leads

¹ In the main text, the original titles are followed by their counterparts in English. Halina Birenbaum has used a specific wordplay involving the peculiar use of small and capital letters and we have done our best to reflect the Author's intentions in the translations of the titles.

² There are also some poems in this book.

³ The volume comprises the whole of poetic achievements of Halina Birenbaum.

to mental disability (Birenbaum, 1999, p. 148), and that is why the poet ‘screams for remembrance’ of the Shoah. The autobiographical attitude of her creative output shows an attempt undertaken by the author to process the trauma, understand herself and melt her Polish-Jewish-Israeli identity into one wholeness. The specific addressee of the poet’s works turns out to be the subject of the utterances seeking the truth about itself. However, the testimony of the Holocaust first and foremost must reach the widest possible group of readers and fit in the space of collective memory. The task which the author has set for her works faces resistance from the recipient, defending himself/herself against difficult and sometimes controversial as well as overwhelming knowledge (*temat—niepożądany*) (*topic—unwanted*) (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 9). Conscious of the response on the part of the readers (*nie zawsze tam dobrze*) (*not always good there*) (Birenbaum, 2010, p. 311), the poet firmly and consistently strives to establish communication, requests even somewhat insistently to be heard, which undoubtedly is facilitated by autobiographism chosen as the key literary strategy.

Halina Birenbaum’s artistic path already at the very beginning was marked by a number of hindrances. The circumstances of her book debut did not provide a conducive atmosphere for the topics tackled by the author. At that time, in Israel, manifesting the Polish past was considered unnecessary and shameful (Rybak, 1996, p. 28). Jewish society felt aversion to Poles, due to a sense of neighborly betrayal and wrongs suffered by its members (*ibid.*, p. 28). The Israeli had enough troubles of their own and unpleasant experiences which they did not want to aggravate through other people’s misfortunes. Everyone lacked the strength to confront the painful past (Meloch, 1999, p. 67). Over the years, the Holocaust was a taboo subject among the Jews, also because their young country, fighting for independence, needed positive reinforcement constituting the nation and the army, and that was felt to be damaged by accounts of—as was then thought—“passive and helpless victims” (Tuszyńska, 1993, p. 31). Despite the difficulties outlined above, *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* (*Hope is the last to die*) was a publishing success and reached a significantly broad audience. The publication of subsequent books of the author has confirmed the effectiveness of the autobiographical strategy and attitude, the discussion of which requires some theoretical introduction.

The **autobiographical attitude** is a subject of considerations of Małgorzata Czermińska (1982, pp. 226-227), who indicates the category of similarity or full identification of the author with the main character (the narrator) as a prerequisite for the existence of that attitude. According to the researcher, the recognition of the identity hidden in the text is primarily based on the beyond-the-text knowledge of the author, sometimes camouflaging

the authenticity of the narrative, and playing a game with the reader. Małgorzata Czermińska distinguishes two extreme variations of this phenomenon: the extraverted one ("where we see the world through the prism of the experiences of 'I'") and the introverted one ("where the world is only the source of impulses for the experiences taking place inside 'I'"') (*ibid.*, p. 229), supplementing them in the later work with the attitude of a challenge, where the recipient is placed in the foreground (*ibid.*, pp. 12-16).

The theory coined by Małgorzata Czermińska was modified by Jerzy Smulski (1988, pp. 83-101), who linked the autobiographical approach to the signals given in the structure of a literary text or in the inter-text relationships covering the entire artistic output of an artist (e.g. repetition of scenes and themes in several works created by the same person). On the other hand, a direct relationship of the author's biography and the fictional events contained in his/her works is defined by Smulski as an **autobiographical strategy**, implemented by, among other means, giving interviews and writing memoirs.

The artistic activity of Halina Birenbaum follows the above-described model of autobiographism. The key interpretation context of her books is the biography concentrated on the subject of the Holocaust experience, emigration to the Holy Land and life in Israel. The literary pieces written by Halina Birenbaum, which are not easy to receive, need a proper setting, and so she consciously assumes an autobiographical attitude together with its strategy of communication with the reader: "They do not have to listen to me. [...] I'm interested in their listening to me" (Kuryłek, 2006, p. 274). The author willingly participates in interviews, talking about what she lived through in Poland, confirming in that way the authenticity of the events portrayed in her literary texts (Magdziak-Miszewska, 2001, pp. 64-70; Wałęcki, 2001, p. 4). She takes part in meetings with the readers, which often turn into evenings filled with memories and stories that are almost ready passages of prose. According to Katarzyna Meloch (1999, pp. 68-69), the writing of Halina Birenbaum, similarly to folk epic poetry, is born from stories told aloud. The writer herself values spoken sources more than the written ones, because of the greater effect caused by the contact with the living human being and engraving personal experience in the memory of the listeners (Kuryłek, 2006, p. 259). The writer engages herself in meetings with young people from all around the world⁴ to build a bridge of understanding

⁴ Halina Birenbaum took part, *inter alia*, in: international meetings with 'Evangelical Young Working People' and 'A Sign of Penance' organized by "Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag," meetings at the Youth Meeting House and the Center for Dialogue, Education and Prayer in Oświęcim, the Polish-German Symposium in Ustronie on *Anti-Semitism and Hatred towards Foreigners Yesterday and Today*, readings in many places in Israel (since 1966), travels with the Jewish youth to Poland (since 1996).

between people. In addition to this, she participates in creating radio programs⁵ and movies,⁶ and she publishes memoirs. She also replied to the survey organized by *Więź (Tie)*⁷ regarding the message of the Pope, John Paul II. Apart from that, the poet regularly hosts, in her own house, pupils and students from different religious backgrounds (*ibid.*).

The autobiographical strategy is also present at the level of the relationship between poetry and paraliterary texts (Smulski, 1988, pp. 83-85), which include: a diary with the Author's introduction and epilogue depicting the years of World War II, *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* (*Hope is the last to die*); a diary from the emigration period, *Powrót do ziemi praojców* (*Return to ancestors' land*); a diary enriched with memories and metatextual reflections covering the period 1966-1997, *Każdy odzyskany dzień* (*Every recovered day*) and memories devoted to the lives of twenty Survivors of the Holocaust, *Wołanie o pamięć* (*Scream for remembrance*). The comparative analysis of the strictly literary and paraliterary texts of Halina Birenbaum reveals the relationship between her poems and her biography through identifying the sources of literary motifs and archetypes of the characters of brother Chilek or son Yakov. The most important symbols-keys include the theme of bereavement and the night spent in a gas chamber. The painful feeling of missing the mother is mentioned by the author in *Powrót do ziemi praojców*: "In general, I clung to people older than myself, as if I was looking for a replacement for my mother and father whom I lost so early" (Birenbaum, 1991, p. 202). The theme of bereavement also appears in *Wołanie o pamięć*: "Many years ago I met by chance an old, lonely woman. [...] She had a similar Auschwitz tattoo on her forearm. I could not break in any way from the effect of this look. To this day" (Birenbaum, 1999, pp. 11-12). In *Każdy odzyskany dzień*, the writer confesses, "I know that burning pain when the mother is taken away from the child. [...] I know this biting helplessness at the sight of the torment and death of the loved ones" (Birenbaum, 1988, p. 46). The diary *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia* includes a description of the moment of her being separated from the mother in Majdanek: "I felt as if I suddenly had my hands and feet chopped off. [...] She had just been taken away. Why? I could not reconcile with the idea that she was gone, that I would never see her again! [...] I was going in circles like a machine and repeating mechanically, 'My mum is gone'" (*ibid.*, p. 96). The figure of the mother appears quite often in the poems of Halina Birenbaum: "I am always with you, Mom / Your figure

⁵ *I was 10 when the war broke out*—a broadcast of the Polish Radio (1989).

⁶ *Because of the war*—a biographical film, in which Halina Birenbaum talks about the experiences of the years 1939-1945, as well as about her life in Israel.

⁷ Catholic monthly magazine published in Poland, with a short break, since 1958.

is impressed in me / and lasts / they tore You away before the deceptive bath / in Majdanek" (*Nie o kwiatach*) (*Not about flowers*) (Birenbaum, 1993, p. 3). The scene of being accidentally saved from the gas chamber (Birenbaum, 1988, p. 256)—the author mentions it, *inter alia*, in the book *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia*—is also depicted in the poems, *chciałam* (*I wanted*) (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 11): "I lived through all here / all my life / my death", *Frum* (*ibid.*, p. 15): "I was dragged to Birkenau / from the ghetto of Warsaw / from the Majdanek gas chamber", *Nie warto śnić* (*Not worth dreaming*) (Birenbaum, 2001, p. 51), and *Biada temu kto się zblizy* (*Woe to whoever comes near*) (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 22). In the writings of the Shoah Survivor, we can indicate a lot of similar themes and topics, returning also in her poetry, for example, a train leaving the station in Warsaw in 1942, images of the ghetto along with the names of the streets: Muranowska and Nowolipie or number 27 of the camp block, where she stayed in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The author includes in her notes reflections on her own creative work and the way of telling the story of the Holocaust, whose dimension is hard to be expressed in the "language of the living people" (*ona tam czekała*) (*she was there waiting*) (Birenbaum, 2001, pp. 42-44). The writer's diaries contain information approximating problems with publishers⁸ and those regarding the perception of the literary pieces, carefully tracked and reported by the poet. The concerns related to the reaction of the readers are also present in the poem *temat—niepożądany* (*topic—unwanted*) (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 9): "Is my book story poem / again?!... about the Holocaust? /—I defend explain justify [...] / the topic unwanted difficult." Furthermore, in her collections of poems, there can be found pieces on specific events, such as the one with the date of December 10, 1982, titled *do następnego spotkania* (*to the next meeting*) (Birenbaum, 2001, p. 56), describing the discussions with young people in Massuah. The diary, under the same date, presents an account of that meeting. All these efforts shown above make up a consistently implemented autobiographical strategy, acting for the recipient as a guarantee of the truth contained in a literary text.

Also the autobiographical attitude, along the autobiographical strategy, serves making the message from the author authentic. This is most significantly emphasized by the identity of the author and narrator in the text. In the case of poems by Halina Birenbaum, it is difficult to verify the compatibility of the name or surname, but their role is fulfilled by the camp tattoo, referred to by the lyrical subject as the "identity card from Auschwitz" (*numer na moim ramieniu*) (*the number on my arm*) (*ibid.*, p 52). Similarly, in the

⁸ The author mentions in *Every recovered day*, on August 8, 1966, the impending date of publication of her first book which was released in 1967.

poem *tam mój duch* (*there my spirit*), the lyrical subject says, “no matter where I live / when how where I will die / wherever in the world / they will bury my body / labeled with the number 48693 here / tattooed” (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 16). This number also appears on the cover of the volume and is consistent with the number assigned to the artist in Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁹ By indicating the camp number, the author makes with the reader “the autobiographical pact” (Lejeune, 1989, pp. 3-30), which allows for receiving her poems as an autobiography. Despite the fact that the construction of the volumes shows no cyclical character or chronology consisting of childhood and youth, many poems strive to offer an overview of the author’s life and conduct. The subject of the utterances ponders on her attitude to other people and is looking in herself for the signs of the desire for revenge and hate (*czy nienawidzę Niemców*) (*do I hate the Germans*) (ibid.). The comparison of the girl from the time of the Holocaust and the mature woman provides evidence indicating that the poet’s works are autobiographical in nature.

What can be noticed while looking at all poetic achievements of Halina Birenbaum is the persevering character of several motifs. The recurrent subjects are indicated by the titles of the poems, such as *19 kwietnia przed czterdziestu laty, po czterdziestu latach, dopóki Ich wspominamy Oni żyją, jestem ich nagrobiem, turystka grobów, szukam życia u umarłych, nie daję umrzeć* (April 19 forty years ago, after forty years, They live as long as They are remembered, I am their tomb, tourist of the graves, I am looking for life in the dead, I do not let die), outlining the regions of the author’s poetic imagination. The poems may be divided into several interrelated thematic circles, including the childhood marked with fear and starvation in the Warsaw Ghetto (*W naszym pokoju w getcie, pociągi po prostu, Miałam przyjaciółkę w Warszawskim Getcie, Tego lata, To był tylko początek, zapach chleba z getta*) (In our room in the ghetto, just trains, I had a friend in the Warsaw Ghetto, That summer, It was just the beginning, the smell of bread in the ghetto), the mother’s death in Majdanek (*Gefilte Fish, jestem Zawsze z Tobą, ona tam czekała, zapach chleba w getcie, jestem, jej już nie było, Czy mnie widzisz, Mamo?*) (Gefilte Fish, I am Always with You, she was there waiting, the smell of bread in the ghetto, I am, she was already gone, Can you see me, Mom?), the Holocaust (extermination) camps symbolized by the chimneys and crematoria (*chciałam, Fruma, tam mój duch, Biada temu kto się zbliży, turystka grobów, byłam tylko okruchem, jesień w Treblince, Długie Domki, Tutaj, Jedźcie do Treblinki, jestem, styczeń*) (I wanted, Frum, my spirit there, Woe to whoever comes near, tourist of the graves, I was only a crumb, fall in Treblinka, Long Little Houses, Here, Go to Treblinka, I am, January) and the dual

⁹ Halina Birenbaum was registered and imprisoned at Auschwitz as Hala Grynsztein (see Birenbaum, 2003).

Polish-Israeli identity (*Jamim Noraim, polska nostalgia, Alte Zachen, Tęsknota, Wróciłam do domu, moja polska zima, moje dwie ojczyzny*) (*Yamim Noraim, Polish nostalgia, Alte Zachen, Longing, I came home, my Polish winter, my two homelands*). The recurring themes and images, rooted in the memory of the lyrical subject and the matter of the texts demonstrate continuous experiencing of the traumatic past, which finds an outlet in creative work.

Lyrical 'I' appears in the majority of these poems in the first person. Establishing the memories as the subject of the utterances, the lyrical subject adopts the attitude of the witness, but sometimes also focuses its attention on its own experiences, adopting then the attitude of testimony (Czermińska, 2000, pp. 12-16) and confidences. The atmosphere of sincerity and privacy of expression corresponds to an invitation offered to the reader to be heard: "I'm sad / it is hard to part with Warsaw / [...] makes me want to cry / [...]—what huge baggage / I carry away from here in my soul to home" (*W drodze powrotnej do Izraela*) (*On the way back to Israel*) (Birenbaum, 2010, p. 180).

The poetry of Halina Birenbaum comprises self-reflexive elements, making it easier to identify the poet with the hero of the poems. An eloquent component of an autobiographical attitude are the dates marking when the majority of the poems was created and later placed in the books of poetry.¹⁰ A characteristic example is the poem with the date of January 1, 1968, titled *pierwsza godzina w nowym roku* (*the first hour of the new year*): "It's one o'clock at night / there has already come the new year / embraced the rule over us / and I have not managed / to summarize what I experienced / in the year which left one hour ago / or to think about / what can be expected in this new one" (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 40). In addition, lyrical I weaves a reflection on the creation of poetry. Birenbaum's texts are soaked with the awareness of the recorded words becoming a document (Michalski, 1992, p. 276): "no one can / break my pen / snatch my mightiest weapon away / my ability to remember / —record / and they are life / or even a lot more" (*franges non flectes*) (Birenbaum, 1995, p. 7). The revelation of the professional role of the narrator makes the reader treat the words of a literary text as utterances of a genuine person.

The identification of the narrator with the author is evidenced in the so-called mental unity (Smulski, 1988, p. 100). The life experiences of Halina Birenbaum (1995, p. 37) are reflected in the feeling of the fragility and transience of human life emerging in her poetry: "We are in this world like flowers / Soft or less sensitive / lasting more or less—but all / one-off and temporary" (*Jesteśmy jak kwiaty*) (*We are like flowers*), as well as in mourning "Other flowers are planted—but the smell and the image / of Those that

¹⁰ Under some poems of Halina Birenbaum, in addition to the date, there is recorded the place where the poem was created, for example Herzliya, or annotations, such as "after returning from Poland."

are gone, yet still present in the memory—do not come back” (*Jesteśmy jak kwiaty*) (*We are like flowers*), and in the fear of the Holocaust happening again piercing through the verses. Lyrical I often indicates domestication of death, accompanying her since an early age (*czego się bać, Moje życie rozpoczęło się od końca*) (*what to fear, My life began with the end*). The knowledge brought to the lyrical subject of the poems through the Holocaust facilitates a deeper look at the war and the contemporary conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinians, “to die by suicidal death in the name of hatred / sanctification of the self / alleged glory family wealth / [...] once again prove what blind faith is / and what hatred can do / and I remember longing for life / in the midst of infamous mass death” (*w raju fanatyzmu*) (*in the paradise of fanaticism*) (Birenbaum, 2010, p. 224). The Arab-Israeli war evokes traumatic memories, ideas and thoughts about the Shoah regardless of the will of the Shoah witness. A similar reaction is caused by apparently inconspicuous stimuli, such as the Christmas supper (*w ciszy wielkich świąt*) (*in the silence of the great feast*) (ibid., p 222). The person speaking in the poems reveals a sense of alienation from the society that does not share her tragic past (“*Pianista*”) (“*The Pianist*”) (ibid., p 25). She appreciates the value of each day lived, but she cannot enjoy it like other people. Relief sometimes comes along with loneliness, far from the uncomprehending glances. Lyrical ‘I’ is constantly struggling with her own memory, from which she escapes, to come back to it after a while. The suspension of life between times is reflected in the sense of her own identity: “I am / the inability of being divided / between the two countries / that are mine” (*moje dwie ojczyzny*) (*my two homelands*) (Birenbaum, 2001, p. 78).

The creativity and publishing success of Halina Birenbaum show that autobiographical attitude can be an extremely effective, but also a painful and exhausting artistic practice. Sentences supported by life matter sometimes convince more strongly than sophisticated poetry. The authenticity of simple words is the strength of these literary pieces, because today, in the stories of the Holocaust, what is the most frightening is the awareness that they occurred not so long ago—indeed—and that they can happen again.

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DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES

ON THE BASIS OF PRISON CAMP LITERATURE

by Joanna Bielecka-Prus

Biographical narratives are an integral part of the human life: we relate our stories, tell ourselves about ourselves, and others about others. By virtue of being so common, they have become an area of interest in many academic disciplines, with each field providing researchers with distinct analytical tools. As the interest in narratives increased, social sciences saw the emergence of the “narrative turn,” and, subsequently, the “linguistic-textualist turn,” which appeared in the 1980s (Wengraf, Chamberlayne & Bornat, 2002). Biographical narrative has been investigated by such disciplines as literary criticism, history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, ethnography, culture studies, and gender studies (Rak, 2005). Despite sharing a common area of interest, researchers’ use of analytic tools from fields other than their own remains very limited. The resulting hermeticism may be rooted in the lack of understanding of other perspectives, inability to employ analytic terms in research, or fear of losing one’s own research identity. By overcoming these concerns and expanding the analytical framework, it may be possible to discover new insights into the research subject.

The Discursive Turn in Narrative Studies

Following the anthropological distinction between *life as experience* (what the individuals experience, what meaning they give to the events, what the accompanying emotions are) and *life as a narrative* (a text embedded in

a context, addressed to a recipient, the rules governing its creation) (Bruner, 1984, p. 7), it can be noted that each approach involves different methodological implications. Whereas the former emphasizes the ways in which the narrator interprets the world and the accompanying emotional states (a phenomenological, naturalistic approach) (cf. Denzin, 1989), the latter entails a ‘cold,’ post-positivist analytical perspective. It is the approach where “a storied narrative is the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts” (Polkinghorne, 2005/1995, p. 7). The crisis of representation undermined the previously held assumptions of realism, which concerned the authenticity of the related events (Sermijn, Devlieger, & Loots, 2008), as well as the thesis about the story’s coherence and linearity. The narrative outlines thematic areas which can be rather loosely interlinked and ordered in a series of non-linear events. It is a “rhizomatic story” that grows in a number of different directions without a clearly marked beginning or end.

Post-structuralism has expanded the narrative analysis by introducing a ‘hidden power’ dimension, which produces “speaking selves” (e.g. Foucault, 1972). Communicative competence of the speaker is closely linked to the socially established systems validating individual’s actions. Not all narratives are equally powerful, as their strength depends on the “felicity conditions” (Searle, 1969, p. 60) and establishing credibility through linguistic as well as visual means, for instance by illustrating a biography with photos (cf. Howarth, 2000).

On the other hand, constructivism has drawn attention to the fact that a narrative is not only a linguistic attempt at representing past events, but also a speech act in Searle’s understanding: communication creates social reality. Narratives constitute the reality in which the individual lives, his/her relationship with the world, and his/her identity (Bruner, 1991). A story about one’s self is never a story about the real ‘I’; rather, it is an “attempt at reconstruction,” as noted the renowned Polish sociologist Jadwiga Staniszak (2008), who used the phrase in her autobiographical memoir. The narrator’s self is fragmented, unstable, developing, and changing as the story advances. Furthermore, constructivism regards narratives as joint activities of the speaker and the listener, where their mutual interaction shapes both what is told and how it is described. According to this approach, a narrative is not a product, but an “embodied social practice” (Sclater, 2003, p. 622), a story embedded in two contexts: on the one hand, it recounts events that took place in a certain social space and social time; on the other, telling a story is in itself an act situated in a particular place, time, and within given social relations.

Autobiography as a Narrative

As a special type of narrative, autobiography is regarded as a form of literary expression, a personal document whose author tries to recreate his/her life. More precisely, it is a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (Lejeune, 1989, p. 4). In this type of texts the author is identified with the narrator (Tutak, 2003). Autobiographies differ from journals and diaries in that entries are not made on a daily basis, but rather with a delay, creating a time perspective. By doing so, the author is able to select and arrange the events into a coherent whole. In terms of literary genres, what makes it different from biography is greater emphasis on shaping the identity or revealing the agent (Rak, 2005). Autobiography is a communicative act through which the author tries to convince the reader that their report is true, their memory fresh, and that he/she is capable of self-reflection, of accurately interpreting his/her own life, and of being sincere (Mathien & Wright, 2006).

On the other hand, rather than being an objective account of events, an autobiography is an active process of remembering. It resembles a portfolio of images from the past, often unordered, incomplete, with numerous gaps (cf. Gudmundsdóttir, 2003). While some events are brought to the fore, other provide a background, and other still, deemed unimportant, are altogether removed from the story.

If we assume that narrative is a form of investing events, objects, and actions with a meaning through a text, autobiography becomes a way of endowing with sense one's own life embedded in a social context. Thus, the story told is not merely a story about the self, but also about communities, groups, and people related to the narrator through an individual interpretation of events as well as via the collective memory (Polkinghorne, 2005/1995). Just like the biographical memory, the collective memory is selective and ideologized (Kaźmierska, 2008); it is also a story of other community's members, those whose voice is unheard, on whose behalf the author speaks (Denzin, 2001).

Autobiography is more than an account of events: it can take the form of a thorough self-analysis taking into consideration given ethical standards, as well as the form of self-defense against a possible attack by contestants (Mathien & Wright, 2006). Immersed in a moral order, it is a history of a certain career, a trajectory of social roles, a story of fall and rebirth (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Similarly to other narratives, autobiographies can be investigated from a linguistic perspective, in which case what matters is how the

autobiographical text is constructed, what cultural resources it employs, what linguistic resources are used to create meaning, and finally—what rhetorical strategies the author uses to convince the reader of the authenticity of the description.

Discourse Analysis

Biographical narratives can be regarded as a resource as well as a primary subject of research. The latter, following the constructivist paradigm, focuses on analyzing the ways of creating meaning, showing *how* something is told, and not only *what* the text is about (Silverman, 2011). Language is not a mirror reflecting the world, but an active factor organizing the reality within discourse practices (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As a result, some researchers question the coding procedure used most commonly in quantitative studies, which imposes a scheme external to the narrative. The alternative involves a multi-layered model (e.g. Mello, 2002) or a multifocal zoom model (Pamphilon, 1999), which distinguishes the following levels of analysis:

- the macro-zoom: collective dimensions of biography, discursive practices, dominant discourse, historical context;
- the meso-zoom: individual dimension of biography, discursive strategies, discourse absent from narrative;
- the micro-zoom: emotions expressed in a narrative with verbal and non-verbal means;
- the interactional-zoom: interaction between the narrator and the researcher, the sender and the recipient, as well as researcher's emotional responses to narrator's statements.

In accordance with the research schema, discourse analysis becomes the central analytic procedure, allowing for a reflection on the constructive role of language. Discourse stands for “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). It creates a system of meanings centered around a theme, and is realized in the form of a text created by the sender with a real or potential recipient in mind. Discourse enters into relationships with elements of the reality beyond it (social structures, social practices, agents, power, ideology) as well as with other discourses (cf. Foucault, 1972; van Dijk, 1997).

Discourse analysis “refers to the process of analysing signifying practices as discursive forms” (Howarth, 2000, p. 10). It focuses on studying linguistic means of expression: choices on the lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels, rules governing texts' creation, interpenetration of genres,

intertextuality, and relations between the linguistic and non-linguistic contexts (social, historical, political, cultural) of the analyzed utterances. Notwithstanding the differences among analytic approaches developed as part of the discourse analysis, one can outline general assumptions concerning the relationship between the social and the linguistic phenomena:

- discourse constitutes the social world, and not only represents it;
- there are no 'true' representations, only better validated, since reality is polymorphic;
- discourse is a form of social action that influences individual and collective modes of thinking and acting, social relations, and individual's identity;
- there are social rules for creating, communicating, and interpreting discourse (discursive practices);
- discourse becomes institutionalized and is in that scope linked to social practices.

Discourse analysis assumes that one event can be told using various linguistic resources, and it is the narrator who chooses particular means of expression from the repertory of language and potential meanings in order to create his/her own representation of what happened (Halliday, 1978). The choice of linguistic means is contingent on a number of factors: writer's communicative competence, intentions, assumed recipient, communication context, and discursive practices accepted in a given community. Since narrative analysis can be centered around many aspects of language, their choice depends on the research problem and the type of the investigated text. However, the following issues seem to be of particular interest:

- the context: references to other texts (intertextuality) as well as embedding in a social context;
- the syntactic level: structure of the content, relationships between its segments, active/passive voice, subject's position, way of building complex sentences, coherence, focalization (perspective from which the narrative is presented);
- the lexical level: choice of words, their emotional value, associated ideologies, courtesies, naming and attribution strategies, hyperboles intensifying the story, epithets, personification, animation;
- the semantic level: thematic organization (primary and secondary themes), semantic macrostructures, common and assumed knowledge;
- the rhetorical structure level, including repetitions, similes, metaphors, metonymies, irony (van Dijk, 1998).

Some researchers have observed that discourse analysis proves to be particularly useful in the identity and self-presentation studies. Analyzed with a discourse perspective in mind, a biographical narrative is a complex text containing multiple voices, often incompatible with one another. The analysis involves a survey of the categorization process applied to the roles of oneself and others, of the creation of oppositions, such as 'us–them,' through the use of personal and reflexive pronouns marking agency, of demonstratives which position the speaker in space (here/there/somewhere/those and so on), at the same time indicating social distance, and of possessive pronouns which link individuals with objects (Meinhof & Galasiński, 2000). What is also studied is positioning, or social and emotional attitude of the individual toward others. Unlike the role, positioning is a dynamic relation which can be analyzed on two levels: that of a relationship between the protagonists of the story, and that of a relationship between the sender and the recipient (cf. Bamberg, 1997). The associations can be divided into the following types: *intimacy*, where a relationship develops between the narrator and the recipient; *intensity*, where the narrator's feelings about the described objects and events are expressed; and finally *evaluation*, where the narrator reveals his/her positive or negative attitude. The listed aspects of analysis should not be regarded as an exhaustive set, as the analytical tools used by researchers are dependent on the research problem and the investigated data.

Example of Discourse Analysis: Prison Camp Autobiographies

To demonstrate how to employ the most important terms provided by discourse analysis, I will discuss examples of two texts written by different authors, whose biographies, though different, have a particularly distressing experience in common: a stay in Soviet gulags, which became the central theme of the autobiographies. The first narrative was penned by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński (1919–2000), who describes his story as an exile in the Yertsevo camp, near Arkhangelsk, in *Inny świat* (*A World Apart*).¹ The second autobiography, entitled *Journey into the Whirlwind* (1995 [1967]),²

¹ The first English edition of Herling-Grudziński's book, translated from Polish, came out in 1951 as *A World Apart* and was published by William Heinemann Limited. Quotations in the article are drawn from this translation.

² The English (1995) and Polish (2010) translations differ from the Russian original (1990). In the English version some passages were omitted, and the translator chose not to use a number of phrases from the camp language. In the analyzed excerpt, the Polish subchapter title was altered (Russian: *Run for your life*, Polish and English: *Salvation*

was written by Eugenia Solomonovna Ginzburg (1904 or 1906-1977), who had been exiled to the Kolyma camp

Owing to the multitude of themes mentioned in the memoirs, I will focus on the passages describing the work of cutting down the taiga. Called “general work,” it was one of the toughest, most grueling forms of forced labor, with time turning into a symbol of the exile: “But the father of all is our Russian forest with its genuinely golden tree trunks (gold is mined from them). And the oldest of all the kinds of work in the Archipelago is logging. [...] During the war years (on war rations) the camp inmates called three weeks at logging ‘dry execution,’” explained emphatically Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1973, p. 199). Anne Applebaum (2003) observed that work was the function of the camps, while prisoners received full food rations only if they fulfilled the production norms, which under the given conditions proved exorbitant. Prisoners had to be useful; their suffering and subsequent death were merely a side effect, unintended and regarded by the authorities with indifference. Felling of the forests is described in the memoirs of both Herling-Grudziński and Ginzburg.

However, before commencing an in-depth analysis of the selected passages, I will briefly discuss the social and historical context in which both autobiographies are embedded. Ginzburg was arrested in 1937, at the beginning of the Great Purge, and released in 1949. Herling-Grudziński, an active member of the Polish underground resistance movement, was arrested in 1940 by the NKVD³ during a failed attempt to escape to Lithuania. He was released after a hunger strike protest aimed at forcing the camp authorities to respect the 1942 amnesty following the Sikorski-Majski agreement. Both Herling-Grudziński and Ginzburg came from Jewish families, wrote politically-charged articles before the arrests, and were sentenced as political prisoners: the author of *A World Apart* was given 5 years for attempting to “fight against the Soviet Union” (Herling-Grudziński, 1951, p. 3), and Ginzburg received a 10-year sentence for “terrorist activity.” Recollections of their stays in the prison camps were written down with a certain time perspective (7 years in the case of Herling-Grudziński, 10 years in the case of Ginzburg) and eventually came out in the West. Whereas Herling-Grudziński worked on his book while living in exile in London between 1949-50 (i.e. before the death of Joseph Stalin), Ginzburg’s

from heaven). The article is based largely on the English translation, sometimes also referring to the Russian one.

³ *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (NKVD) is a large and complex police force, whose objective was tracking down and removing the assumed or real political opponents as well as maintaining control over the forced labor camps. NKVD is responsible for mass arrests, deportations, and executions of civilians.

autobiography was written after the dictator's death, yet still—in spite of the post-Stalinist era surge of criticism—it stood no chance of being officially published. The manuscript (so called *samizdat*) was circled around until 1967, when it finally came out in Italy. Apart from certain similarities, there are also important differences separating the two biographies. Herling-Grudziński was Polish. He became actively involved in the life of pro-independence organizations of a socialist, but not pro-Russian, provenance. After the release he was a soldier in Anders' army, settled in Western Europe, worked for Radio Free Europe, and never moved back to Poland for good. On the other hand, Ginzburg was Russian. Having been a very active communist before her arrest, she was rehabilitated in 1955. After being released from the camp she moved to Moscow, where she worked as a journalist. She never left the Soviet Union.

Turning to the analysis of the narrative structure, one can note that both autobiographical stories begin with the arrest, which is followed by a description of the stay in prison, transport to the place of exile, time at the camp, and close with an epilogue of the protagonists regaining freedom. Ginzburg was often transferred between different camps in Kolyma as a result of the peculiar operating mode of the 'Gulag machine,' which moved human resources from one place to another. Herling-Grudziński stayed only in one camp. It can be therefore said that the account in *Journey into the Whirlwind* provides a broader context of the events in terms of temporal and spatial dimensions, also owing to diversified camp experiences.

In my analysis, I focus on the "meso-zoom" level, as described by Barbara Pamphilon (1999), taking into account the structure and style of the narratives as well as the singled out themes of place, people, and work. The analysis will address the following research problems: 1. What significance is attributed to the described place? 2. How are the relations between people described, how are the naming and attribution strategies implemented? and 3. What is the importance attached to work understood as a characteristic of the daily camp reality?

Text Structure and Positioning of the Author

The theme I would like to analyze was highlighted by the author of *A World Apart* in the chapter entitled *Work* (pp. 32-55); in Ginzburg's work, it covers several thematically related chapters: *Elgen* is the Yakut word for "dead," *Free felling*, *Salvation from heaven* (Ginzburg, 1994, pp. 395-416).

Ginzburg's narrative begins with her arrival in April 1940 in the female camp in Elgen, yet another place of work she was 'assigned to' through an

anonymous administrative decision. What follows are the details concerning a part of the camp situated in the taiga, and an account of the meeting with a doctor who helped her find a better job ‘under the roof.’ The events are presented in the chronological order which is disrupted only once, when a song sung by a female prisoner brings back memories of the family home (p. 399). A few smaller sequences can be distinguished within the passage: arrival in the taiga, work, appearance of the evil foreman, struggle for survival, escape from death (“Once again, I had given death the slip” (p. 416)).

The investigated passage in Herling-Grudziński’s work begins with a description of waking up in the morning, subsequently followed by an account of eating a meal, leaving for work, and coming back in the evening to the “zone” (the area overlooked by camp guards). The structure of the chapter is reminiscent of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The events are presented chronologically, although sometimes the narrative is interwoven with author’s contemplations of the camp life, or even philosophical reflections on the universal problems of mankind (such as freedom, destiny, loneliness).

As far as intertextuality is concerned, only Ginzburg’s memoirs include direct references to other texts, which assume the form of literary associations. For instance, Jack London’s *White Fang* is recalled in the context of the endless winter in Kolyma (pp. 395-396). In addition, the text contains allusions to works by Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (cf. p. 220, 222, 255, 292, 295, 320) and Sasha Chorny (p. 266); there are also fragments of lullabies and prison songs.⁴ Furthermore, *Journey into the Whirlwind* presents voices of other people—female prisoners, supervisors. They take the form of a dramatic dialogue or monologue, which adds to the authenticity of the narrative. Internal focalization is prevalent throughout the text: the reader learns about the events predominantly from the author’s point of view and through her feelings. There are, however, instances of external focalization, which is used when the narrator recounts the events she witnessed, but was not directly involved in. Internal focalization makes the description emotionally charged, which causes the sender and the recipient to become deeply involved in the story. Importantly, verbs are used in the present tense.

As a rule, Herling-Grudziński prefers external focalization. The narrative style is low-key, with the author’s preference for reflections on the fate

⁴ The Russian original (1990) and the Polish translation (2010) recall also: proverbs („gość w dom—Bóg w dom,” literally: “a guest in the house is God in the house”), a quote from Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, and excerpts from a poem by Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva.

of all prisoners—which are absent from Ginzburg's work (e.g. "not one of them can ever know with any certainty when his sentence will come to an end" (p. 32)), complemented by exemplifications of camp life observations. In this case, authenticity is achieved through stressing personal experience ("I remember an old railwayman from Kiev" (p. 33)) and detailed descriptions. Activities performed by prisoners (getting up, having their first meal) as well as procedures related to calculating working norms and food distribution are described in a meticulous manner reminding one of the academic style (e.g. "by a quarter to six" (p. 34), "about three quarters of all prisoners" (p. 34)). The verbs are most frequently used in the past tense, while the way of capturing the events resembles reports of the anthropologists who investigated 'other worlds' only to stress in their accounts they did not belong to 'that' reality. Herling-Grudziński's text does not include any dialogues or references to texts beyond the prison camp discourse.

What is shared by both autobiographies is the inclusion of everyday prisoner vocabulary in authors' repertoires (e.g. "zone," "vokhra," "czunie," "toufta"), which further adds to the authenticity of the message, at the same time enhancing the narrator's authority.

The Place

Elgen, where Ginzburg was sent off, was an atrocious, frightening place: "the thing we dreaded had come upon us—transportation to Elgen, which had hung over us like a sword of Damocles" (p. 395). Elgen was considered a certain death sentence, which is conveyed on a number of occasions through utterances such as "Elgen is the Yakut word for 'dead'" (p. 397), or "in summer there was haymaking on rough ground, if we lived to see it" (p. 400). Just like the author supposes, the place may stand not only for the end of her life, but also for the end of the human world, the end of civilization. The conjured image is monochromatic, with the dominating colors of white and grey. Descriptions of landscapes, observed while traveling from one place to another, have an aesthetic value, yet at the same time reveal the dreadful side of inanimate nature along with its dormant destructive power: "It was the fourth of April, but there was still a forty-degree frost and stiff breeze. The only sign of the approach of spring was the blinding splendour of the pure snow and the iridescent play of the sun's rays upon I, from which we could not tear our eyes. Alas, we did not yet know that the word 'blinding' was literally true: the fairy-tale beauty was treacherous" ... (p. 396); used in this context, the "blinding splendour" metaphor can be understood literally as referring to eye

inflammation prisoners often suffered from ("the word 'blinding' was literally true [...] the reflection of ultra-violet rays from the snow did indeed make people blind" (p. 396)). In the boundless space, the only clear-cut, man-made points are those linked with the "zone" and its attributes: barbed wire, guard towers, gates, barracks, and a demarcated area for infants. Although squalid, the barrack, with its warm stove, boiler with hot water, smoke, and bread, becomes a 'homestead' providing a sense of security. It stands in stark contrast to the post in the depths of the taiga, a 'hen hut' with knotty bunks and a cell where the prisoner is deprived of the heat source and lair. Nevertheless, nature also turns out to be the source of salvation, which the author mentions writing about berries, the source of essential minerals for the prisoners suffering from avitaminosis: "Their taste was indescribable, like that of old wine—and not to be compared with ordinary cranberries: its sweetness heady flavor were those of victory over suffering and winter. What a discovery... I ate the first two clusters all by myself; only on finding a third one did I remember my fellow creatures and call excitedly to Galya: 'Throw away your ax and come here. I've found «berries of golden wine».' With this quotation from Severyanin I described my treasure trove. From then on we went into the forest not in despair but in hope" (p. 412). The civilization/nature dualism is broken down: both lead to destruction, yet at the same time offer salvation.

Herling-Grudziński's description of the natural environment was minimized, leaving mere sketches of such items as snow, forest, stars, and the moon. However, the prisoners interpreted the immutable landscape and the "unchanging laws of nature" (p. 38) as a confirmation that living involved the ability to exist-in-the-world. The dominant characteristic of the narrative are—absent in Ginzburg's text—descriptions of objects: clothes, food, everyday items.

The People

In both analyzed narratives, the authors employ the strategies of 'naming' and 'attribution,' which make it possible to categorize the social world they situate themselves in. However, the texts differ between themselves with regard to the accepted mode of describing the social roles and relations.

Recalling her arrival in Elgen, Ginzburg speaks in the first person plural, using the verbs to report both actions (e.g. "we all fell silent" (p. 395), "we were getting farther and farther away" (p. 396)) and feelings ("We did indeed seem to have reached the back of beyond" (p. 395)). The 'we'

constructed through such linguistic means gives prominence to the communal nature of women's fates, who came to the camp as novices sentenced for political reasons. While first-person narrative is a rhetorical strategy adding credibility to Ginzburg's story, by employing the plural, the author speaks on behalf of a group which is made up of the survivors and those who died in the camps. In addition, third-person narrative is used when describing the story or actions of a particular person, either known or watched by the narrator (e.g. "she skewered," "she roasted," "she's sweeping"), as well as other people the author tries to distance herself from (for instance when relating stories of wet nurses, criminal prisoners, or peasant women).

When it comes to outlining a general image of prisoners, the author often uses the strategy of 'dehumanization,' comparing her own group to "sheep [transported] to the slaughter" (p. 395). Other women become in Ginzburg's eyes "the muffled sexless figures" (p. 400). Although the author still considers herself a woman, she has a premonition she would be soon stripped of her sex, degraded and dehumanized, turning into a mere accessory to working tools. Possessive pronouns in the analyzed passage are fairly infrequent and usually refer to work ("our place of work" (p. 404)), clothing ("our own clothes" (p. 206)), and food ("our starvation diet" (p. 408)). Despite the fact that these three dimensions (work, clothing, food) are fundamental to and uniting all "zehks,"⁵ the author distinguishes two groups from the 'amorphous' crowd: the decent people who help others, and the demoralized. The division is further multiplied by the institutional categorization, whose two main criteria are prison sentences and roles (political prisoners: counter-revolutionaries, Trotskyists and ordinary criminals, prostitutes, recidivists). Among the people evaluated positively are the team leader—a hard-working and generous peasant woman, and the 'real' doctor, who acts in accordance with medical ethics. As can be seen, the performed functions do not necessarily imply a negative moral evaluation. There are also groups of which the author is deeply contemptuous. They include, among others, common criminals, who, described as "strange," "offensive," and "ruthless," "thought nothing of stealing other people's footwear, pushing us away from the stove, or grabbing a sharper saw" (p. 406). Another group of people presented in a negative or mocking way are those who were assigned functions in the camp. The initial narrative sequences make no mention of the camp guards, except for the synecdoche "white, quilted sheepskin coats" (p. 397),

⁵ Zehk or Z/K (abbreviated from the Russian *zaklyuchennyj*): prisoner in a camp (cf. Galler & Marquess, 1972).

which implies a better life situation in spite of (or maybe by virtue of) being uneducated, as proven by the books they read: "It was an elementary school textbook" (p. 416). The text also mentions other representatives of the camp regime, such as the health care administrator who decided if a female prisoner could be transported into the taiga instead of walking on her own. Still, the motivation behind such behavior was not entirely clear, as it could have been prompted by the fear of exceeding the set mortality threshold for "zehks" (p. 402). This may lead to the conclusion that norms were established not only in reference to work or food, but also death. Furthermore, one of the protagonists of *Journey into the Whirlwind*, foreman Kostik, inspected rows of prisoners "like a commander before a battle" (p. 403), seeking a victim he would harass sexually. Ginzburg comments on the miserable and off-putting appearance of the women, trying to reconstruct his way of thinking: "perhaps they had been women once, but they weren't much to look at now, just walking skeletons—a real travesty" (p. 403). Another negative character is the second foreman, "the brute," who strictly adheres to the rules that impose excessively demanding working norms and is more than keen on resorting to detention. His appearance and the introduction of a new deadly order nearly cost the author her life. The process of 'reaching the shore' (*dokhodyaga*),⁶ which is a metaphor for a gradual death, forces the narrator to face the situation she has feared: she renounces herself. "This is not me!" (Ginzburg, 1990, p. 266) voiced as an exclamation is the last shout of a dying person who is struggling to stay alive. Thus, undoubtedly, the social world in *Journey into the Whirlwind* is closely linked with the moral order where Good clashes with Evil.

In terms of the description of relations between the prisoners and the camp administrators, the strategies of 'activization' and 'passivization' play a crucial role. The entities that make decisions regarding the prisoners' lives have been 'hidden' in sentences using the passive verb forms and the indeterminate 'they' ("we were taken out there on tractor-drawn trailers" (p. 402), "Several times a day they counted and recounted us, drew up lists and copied them out" (p. 328)). By employing this sentence structure, prisoners' actions are devoid of any intentionality; they are like objects moved around on the conveyor belt, like subjects surrendering to the power of authority. Besides, authority is assigned both to undefined decision-making groups (the omission strategy) and to fate, which ultimately brings salvation, proving that Good exists (cf. chapter *Salvation from heaven*).

⁶ Last-legger (*legger* from the Russian *dokhodyaga*, or 'reaching the shore,' 'goner'): a person extremely exhausted physically by hunger and hard labour.

Contrarily to Ginzburg, Herling-Grudziński rarely uses the first-person narration. It is usually employed when describing the porters' brigade to which the author belongs. When talking about other protagonists, he most often uses the third-person narration, resorting to such terms as "prisoners" (see p. 32, 35, 37) and "slaves" (p. 37). Unlike in *Journey into the Whirlwind*, his categorization is not dependent on a set of moral criteria accepted *a priori*, but stems directly from the rules governing the camp life. Thus, bearing in mind the working norms and assigned food rations, the reader learns about "stakhanovites" (p. 37), whose daily work output exceeded 100% of the accepted norm, about prisoners who fulfilled the daily norm, and about "last-leggers." The second criterion for division is the type of the work carried out and the functions performed by the individuals in the camp. No clear distinction between the 'good' and 'bad' people exists; the worlds of prisoners and administrators are interwoven to the extent allowing for a "degree of friendliness" (p. 38) and the consent for "toufta" (pp. 40-41), which nevertheless does not protect this peculiar community from atomization ("There was in all this something inhuman, mercilessly breaking the only natural bond between prisoners—their solidarity in the face of their persecutors" (p. 37)); when struggling for life, each prisoner turned into a cog in the machine.

The Work

In Ginzburg's text, the hardships and suffering of the working women are pushed into the background; their pain is mentioned only sporadically. The author focuses mainly on presenting the struggle of women intellectuals, unaccustomed to hard physical labor, who were assigned the task of felling and sawing trees. For Ginzburg and her companions in misery the observed peasants, who met the assigned norms, turned into unattainable role models. The working day began with a painful awakening and a sensation of crippling hunger—consequences of failing to fulfill the norms. In her memoirs, the author demonstrates how making jokes about their clothing improved the mood, while the sense of humor proved they still "were human" (p. 408).

Descriptions of work in *A World Apart* are filled with details explaining the operation of biopower in the camp. It presents the division of labor, procedures for marching out and returning with brigades, complex system of committing "toufta," and calculating the fulfilled norms. The use of language filled with technical specifications, numerous nominalizations (e.g. "admissions of the porters' brigade" (p. 42), "the percentage figures were then passed to the supply office" (p. 43)), and 'hiding' the

decision-making entities by employing the passive voice, as well as aggregation and/or omission all have direct bearing on the message: the description details the operations of a machine that puts living people “through the forest” (p. 41), at the same time picturing the impersonality of evil and its pointlessness.

Conclusions

By analyzing fragments of the prison camp discourse, it has been possible to demonstrate that in spite of functioning under similar conditions, the authors of autobiographies use different linguistic means to create distinct representations of their experiences. The texts differ in terms of the level of expressiveness. Ginzburg’s work is more intimate, written from a personal perspective; her feelings and moral judgments are strongly emphasized. The narration in *A World Apart* is more objective, which makes it similar to a traditional fieldwork description. The two strategies correspond to distinct ways of adding credibility to the story: in one case the reader encounters captivating personal confessions, in the other—a distant description of the situation. What were the reasons for their use? Perhaps the answer lies in the differences between each author’s camp experiences and the roles they played, including those related to their gender. The analysis of the writing styles in the autobiographies indicates considerable discrepancies between narratives constructed by women and men. Women are more interested in interpersonal relations and describe themselves as socially and emotionally involved. Conversely, men seem to be more autonomous, presenting themselves as independent and focused on achieving their own goals (Fivush & Buckner, 2003). Furthermore, it is possible that in both discussed cases some other factors proved crucial, such as the authors’ nationalities or their political background. Ginzburg was at the same time the victim and the creator of the system, which could explain why her emotional involvement in the events was significantly more intense than that of Herling-Grudziński, who was thrown into a foreign world he had been tied to neither historically nor politically. Moreover, it cannot be ruled out that the relatively short time spent in the camp—as compared to Ginzburg—meant that the author of *A World Apart* did not have to ‘put down his roots.’

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IDENTITY AND DIGNITY IN NARRATIVE BIOGRAPHICAL EPISODES OF CONTEMPORARY POLISH ‘NON-MIGRANTS’

by *Rozalia Ligus*

Theoretical and Methodological Position, Project Participants and Empirical Material

The results presented in the paper comprise the outcome of five projects carried out in the years 2000-2012. The inspiration for the preparation of a comparative analysis and ‘going across’ the acquired data was the similarity between the semantic categories ‘extracted’ from each subsequent portion of the material collected in the selected projects. This led to the formation of a collective, qualitative case study in the sense coined by Robert Stake (2005), in which I set the goal of monitoring the process of redefining the meaning that the narrators (affected indirectly or directly by contemporary migration processes) attribute to **identity** and **dignity**. Both these categories are the result of the analyses and interpretation of the gathered empirical material, and not concepts imposed *a priori*. They are also hulled from the entire collection of meanings assigned by the interlocutors to the experiences of their life and their selected “biographical episodes.”¹

¹ ‘Biographical episode’ is a term used by modern methodologists (N. Denzin, I. Helling, K. Konecki, F. Schütze and others). I use the definition of Piotr Jaksa Bykowski who applied this term in his *Dwór Królewski w Grodnie: Epizod biograficzny 1795-1797 (The Royal Court in Grodno: Biographical episode 1795-1797)*, published in 1884, considering that it describes best the work that is an analysis and interpretation of the selected set of documents on the last visit of King Stanislaus Augustus and his court in Grodno. In the opinion of Bykowski, the term ‘biographical episode’ determines the publication content more accurately than usurping the right to call it ‘history,’ since the knowledge of the author was fragmentary

Thanks to a vast collection of categories proposed by the project participants, the analysis of the input material allowed me to build a continuum of meanings (conditions), indicated by them as crucial in the process of redefining their identity inextricably interwoven with a sense of dignity. This continuum is going to be presented at the end of this text. The starting point for the construction of the continuum of meanings that constitute personal identity in the context of migration was the concept of the “universe of obligation” by Helen Fein (Fein, 1995; Gamson, 1996), rooted in ancient history of the Jews (Gamson, 1996) and characterized by the process of social inclusion/exclusion.

The theoretical justification for the empirical material presented here is the idea of the modern identity of Charles Taylor (1994a, 1994b), Ricoeur’s concept of recognition, the need of being socially recognized and accepted (Ricoeur, 2005) and Habermas’s concept of a dialogue (Habermas, 2003). I also use the postmodern worldview characterized by Zygmunt Bauman (2000) and the above-mentioned concept of the universe of obligation proposed by Helen Fein (1995).

All five projects were implemented in line with the qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm. In case of four of them, the applied method of gathering empirical material was that of a narrative interview. One of the projects was expanded to embrace biographical interviews,² and another one was used to collect empirical material in the form of anonymous statements, namely one-page letters sent by e-mail. The participants represented four generations (the oldest were over 70 years old, the youngest were in their twenties). Only nine out of 32 narrators interviewed by me

and composed from a variety of sources collected by other authors. By analogy, I collected narrative interviews and letters that provide a description of biographical episodes selected by the authors, which they considered important in the process of redefining their identity.

² The term ‘biographical narrative interview’ is used referring to the method of F. Schütze, popularized in Poland by Marek Czyżewski, Kaja Kaźmierska, Danuta Urbaniak-Zajac, Jacek Piekarski and the author himself. The analysis and interpretation cover the story of life told by the narrator, which reveals his/her unique, personal vision and understanding of the world. There appear ‘facts’ qualitatively different from those that in the standard way refer to the socio-cultural knowledge of the narrators. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of methodology, a lot of attention is paid to distinguishing narrative interviews from biographical narrative interviews. For example, Donald E. Polkinghorne (2005/1995, p. 21) suggests two types of narrative inquiry—“the paradigmatic type” and “the narrative type.” Polkinghorne justifies this proposal claiming that, despite the fact that each of these types is related to collecting stories, they differ qualitatively—in the paradigmatic approach we simply collect data and the narrative type is aimed at gathering accounts of events, adventures and activities, in which the narrator participates. The result of a paradigmatic analysis may be new categories and concepts, and in the case of the narrative inquiry we focus on the creation of knowledge relating to a specific, individual situation.

lived abroad (outside Poland) and took on the status of 'migrants.' The overall empirical material includes 32 narrative interviews and 170 letters describing the experience of 'being involved' in the migration processes directly or indirectly. The general research question was: 'What meanings are given by the narrators to their experiences while interpreting their being incorporated in the migration processes (in a direct or indirect way)?'

Inspiration to Undertake Research on Migration—Permeability of the Worlds of the Researcher and the Narrator

The presented article makes a window of opportunity to 'reveal' my personal path that I followed as a researcher, engaging in the accumulation of further empirical material, often at the urge of the narrators-participants in my research. It was them who skillfully 'guided' my attention to the issue, which I previously had not connected directly to the research objectives.

This was the case of the research carried out by me in the years 2000-2004, the aim of which was to investigate the course of professional development of teachers and their career. The objectives and the questions raised in this pedagogically rooted project were far from considerations upon migration processes. Then, in 2000, that is four years before Poland joined other Member States in the European Union, I was interested in teachers' 'here and now.' Meanwhile, my narrators demanded of me understanding their generational experience and recognition of their identity as a weave of their own experiences in relation with the events regarding their ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents), and they made the category of migration the center of constituting their identity. Shelley Jackson (2009) calls it a "patchwork identity," which consists in using the history of the family members to identify with their experiences and the constitution in this way of one's own identity.³ Paul Ricoeur talks in turn about "self-identity" (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 104) and the "genealogical method" (*ibid.*, p. 152), forming our source identity.

Since my first major research, prepared for my Ph.D. thesis, more than ten years have elapsed, and I keep coming back to the experience of 'removing the cataract from the researcher's eyes,' which I owe to my project participants. They inspired me to expand my field of research and include in it the problem of migration, which at first was quite surprising for me.

As it turned out, both the pedagogical issues that I was dealing with and also the choice of the study area proved to be significant. Conducting

³ Shelley Jackson (born in 1963) is a contemporary American writer dealing with the so-called hyperfiction. In one of her most popular novels, *Patchwork Girl* (1995), drafted in the convention of a hypertext, she writes about constituting one's identity by identifying with the stories of relatives.

the research in the north-west Polish border region (burdened with the history of the post-war frontier changes and resettlement) enabled me to bring to light the specifics of the socio-cultural context in which the careers of the teachers working there were formed, but also, even more importantly, their biographical identity (Ligus, 2009).

Now I know that my first major research project became a turning point in building my understanding of the social implications of migration processes and their importance to the quality of social life. It showed me as well how essential it is to follow the voice of the narrators who extend the originally outlined area of interest and enrich the researcher not only with new knowledge, but also through sharpening his/her sensitivity towards the fresh, overlooked aspects of the issues that such researcher is dealing with.

I would like to return for a moment to the category of migration distinguished in the course of these studies and emphasize a fact that I found thoroughly astounding. The collected biographical narrative interviews revealed that being incorporated in the migration processes, even only in an indirect way (for example, as a child of immigrants), we become the 'heirs' of the experience. Many of the participants in this study were born in the 1960s and 1970s and did not suffer the trauma related to the resettlement, the "eradication" or "cutting off the roots" (Kaźmierska, 1999, pp. 180-192), and yet their narratives provide plenty of motifs that relate to the experience of earlier generations as well as family genealogy and make a crucial element in the constitution of one's own biographical identity (Ligus, 2009; 2011a; b).

This experience of a young researcher who—asking the question about the quality and nature of teachers' work—is given the task of reconstructing the history of life of their ancestors even up to the third generation, triggered in me a lot of thought over dimensionality and the phenomenon of migration, which after all is inscribed in the daily life of the modern world and, in a sense, has touched all of us (since Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller announced that the twenty-first century will be "the age of migration" (Castles & Miller, 1993) we have had no other option but to enter this category into the social everyday life). In fact, since that experience I have not thought about migration as a sociological phenomenon,⁴ but it has assumed for me the psycho-cultural, anthropological importance embedded deep in the human experience and collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). Soon after it, what became clear was the fact that the political and economic changes taking place in Poland after the accession

⁴ The modern definition of the word 'migration' still evokes the traditional meaning of the term 'migrant' as "a person or animal that moves from one region, place, or country to another" (*Collins...*, entry: migrant). It is against this sense of the word that young people are protesting today, even if they leave the country for economic reasons.

to the European Union, finalized in 2004, have generated further migration processes that have left their mark on every aspect of our lives, be it the socio-economic or cultural aspect (Kozak, 2010, pp. 112-162). And so, following the traces of migration as one of the dimensions of the experience of modern man, I commenced my consecutive research projects.

The migration wave counting nearly two million people that spilled out from Poland after 2004 reaching the British Isles and swiping over every country in Western Europe on its way, left a mark on the families and close friends of Polish 'migrants.' Although these people remained in the country (Ligus, 2011a), they were involved in the migration processes through a personal relationship with the 'migrants.' This situation has also shown the outdated nature of the vocabulary describing the contemporary phenomena of migration and the fact that we need a new kit of concepts, which would be adequate to circumscribe the feelings and experiences of young, mobile Poles and other EU citizens. For now, we resort to the metaphorical expressions coined by Zygmunt Bauman (2000), such as "tourists" and "vagabonds," because young Poles living abroad do not agree to being called 'migrants' (Ligus, 2011). They say they are the "citizens of the world" (Ligus, 2011a; b).

My first research made me realize that the experience of migration, just as stigmatization, is transferred to the persons closest to the 'migrants.' Erving Goffman (1963) refers to this phenomenon as "passing the sigma."

Justifying the sense of the comparative analyses undertaken by me, regarding the results of the selected projects, I want to draw attention to the oddity that I found in the utterances of all study subjects. Regardless of their age and the time their experiences came from, the categories the narrators pointed to were characterized by amazing likeness. No matter whether I interviewed practicing teachers about the experiences related to their current work, or people living abroad or their families about issues of great concern to them, I received similar responses. Therefore, the results of the research made me think that one of the forces of migration is the provocative role to re-pose questions about the source of one's own identity, but also about new constructs required for its re-constitution. Migration, like a pebble breaking a smooth surface of the lake, produces countless rings radiating and resulting in successive waves that picture the involvement of consecutive generations.

In conclusion, I can say that the inspiration to carry out a comparative analysis of the experiences of people entangled in different aspects of migration was, on the one hand, the obtained research results and my personal experience of the researcher derived from each subsequent project, in which the narrators pointed to the categories meaningful for them—e.g.

experiencing migration. On the other hand, my interest in migration issues was launched by its pervasive presence, which led to the socio-cultural and political changes that directly translate into everyday life. The balance of these events generated my own questions of methodological and ethical nature. What kind of obligation does a researcher impose on himself/herself while conducting narrative interviews, including the biographical ones? Are we, as biographical researchers, actually sensitive to the voice of our narrators? Do we open to their message, or maybe 'we take' from the interview what we came for abandoning them 'half-way'? How should we deal with the themes 'neglected' or temporarily 'deserted' by us—researchers?

Due to the course of my present considerations, I will refrain here from the development of those vital questions, leaving their analysis for another occasion.

Dignity and Identity Redefined in Biographical Episodes: Selected Pieces of Analyses and Interpretation

The decisive characteristic that induced me to take up a deeper analysis of the meanings ascribed to the experience of narrators involved in migration processes (the post-war and contemporary ones) was the reproducibility of the categories indicated by the participants taking the form of values, characteristics and conditions, which constitute for them an inherent aspect of their life in dignity.

The extraction and compilation of these categories led to the creation of a matrix (Table 1) comprising the propositions of the narrators. The categories are placed horizontally so as to make it easy to see their reproducibility in the sequentially undertaken projects. Vertical columns indicate the time frame of the research and the number of participants and provide an overview of the objectives of the research tasks. In the vertical layout of the categories, I adopted the alphabetical order which facilitates locating and reviewing them. The extraction of categories such as: acceptance, authenticity, humanity, appreciation, respect, independence, self-direction, dignity (which narrators explicitly refer to in their statements), freedom, sensitivity to other cultures, forced me to pose 'immanent questions'⁵ concerning the message hidden in these categories.

⁵ The term 'immanent questions' is related to the biographical method of F. Schütze. It defines the kind of questions asked by the investigator usually after the 'first story' of the narrator. They directly result from the narrator's story, go deep into his/her history, inquire about what still needs to be specified following the initial research meeting (cf. Schütze, 1983).

Table 1. Matrix of categories derived from the analyses and interpretations

<i>The Concept of Dignity for the Contemporary 'Citizens of the World'</i>	<i>Migration and Global Spaces of Learning</i>	<i>Migration Experience in the Interpretation of Adult Children of Migrants</i>	<i>Polish Migration after 2004 from the Perspective of the Families of Those who have Left the Country</i>	<i>Biographical Identity of Teachers</i>
5 narrative interviews; age of interviewees: 20-30 years (2010-2012)	12 narrative interviews; age of interviewees: 30-45 years (2008-2010)	4 narrative interviews; age of interviewees: 20-35 years (2007-2008)	170 anonymous written statements sent via email; age of interviewees: 20-50 years; (2006-2008)	11 biographical narrative interviews; age of interviewees: 35-80 years; (2002-2004)
Acceptance	Acceptance	Acceptance	Acceptance	Acceptance
Authenticity			Authenticity	Authenticity
Humanity		Humanity	Humanity	
		Trauma due to non-recognition	Trauma due to non-recognition	Trauma due to non-recognition
		Family heritage		Family heritage
Dignity	Dignity	Dignity	Dignity	Dignity
	Independence		Independence	
		Dissimilarity	Dissimilarity	
Citizen of the world	Citizen of the world		Citizen of the world	
			Courage	Courage
Belonging		Belonging	Belonging	Belonging
	Confidence		Confidence	
Recognition	Recognition		Recognition	Recognition
Recognition and appreciation		Recognition and appreciation	Recognition and appreciation	Recognition and appreciation

Self-direction	Self-direction	Self-direction		
Self-sufficiency		Self-sufficiency		
Social status	Social status		Social status	
				Stigmatization—lack of acceptance
	Respect			
Visibility	Visibility			Visibility
Inclusion		Inclusion	Inclusion	Inclusion
Freedom	Freedom	Freedom		
Sensitivity to other cultures	Sensitivity to other cultures		Sensitivity to other cultures	

Source: Author's own elaboration

The categories proposed by me, such as 'dignity' and 'identity,' may seem overwhelming due to their monumentality and the abundance of scientific references. At first, I felt strongly subdued by their weight. It is impossible to refer to all semantically saturated theories and concepts, all interdisciplinary discussions participated by philosophers with their moral-ethical considerations, all analyzes carried out by psychologists, anthropologists, lawyers and sociologists. Similar conclusions were probably reached by an artist presenting in a humorous way a conversation between two individuals from an undefined era (which is meant to create the impression of universality). One of the characters says, 'Ah, dignity, it is a great philosophical concept, but do you think that people are ready to understand what dignity is?' To which the second person responds, 'Will we, people, ever mature enough to fully understand what human dignity is?'⁶

Authenticity, Recognition, Visibility: Theoretical Background of the Concept of Modern Identity

Among the many theoretical analyzes, I want to pay special attention to the concept of modern dignity by Charles Taylor, which is a response to 18th century social transformation progressing alongside the process of transition from a hierarchic society to a democratic society. This change

⁶ http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/h/human_dignity [last accessed: March 20, 2012].

also brought about different thinking about the concept of identity. In the hierarchical society, identity was granted along with the social status and had a permanent basis. "High-born" people were automatically entitled to being honored in a unique way. They enjoyed 'respect since birth.' In the egalitarian society, respect has been replaced by modern dignity that every citizen has the right to. According to Taylor, dignity and identity have become mutually interpenetrating concepts and are inextricably related. They do not, however, exempt any person from discovering his/her source identity, the inner 'self.' Reaching to the inner self to articulate its most indigenous authenticity is the condition of "being true to myself" (Taylor, 1994a, pp. 43-47, see also, Ricoeur, 2005). "Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity, and to the goals of self-fulfillment and self-realization in which the ideal is usually couched" (Taylor, 1994a, p. 45).

In Table 1, already the first items indicate how important it is to the narrators to be authentic, accepted, recognized and socially appreciated. They point to these constructs as conditions elementary for their well-being, but also highlight them as the determinants of their high or low self-esteem.

Revealing oneself before oneself, but also the possibility of 'being oneself' in the public space, as indicated by Herder, are the features of originality, which for a human is always essential at both the individual and the social level (Taylor, 1994a, p. 46). This also confirms the dialogic nature of human life (Habermas, 2003). Thus, the sense of personal dignity, at the root of which there lie authenticity and identity, is dependent by its very nature on social acceptance, respect and recognition (Taylor, 1994a, p. 43). In ancient Greece, the socially constructed respect and recognition were rooted in the organization of public life. One's sense of being respected, recognized and treated with dignity, both in the private sphere and in the public one, is dependent on recognition, appreciation, acceptance and respect manifested by others. People desire dignity which they can only receive from others—through their recognition and appreciation for what they are. What makes people true to themselves is another prerequisite for the creation of modern identity. Recognition, appreciation, and authenticity are essential to the constitution of personal dignity. People who suffer from non-recognition related to what they are have lower self-esteem and feel that they belong to the second, inferior class (Taylor, 1994a, p. 46; Ricoeur, 2005, p. 83).

Universe of Obligation and Social Visibility, Transparency, Inclusion, Exclusion

The concept of the universe of obligation, elaborated by Helen Fein (Fein, 1995, after Gamson, 1996), comprises, to cut a long story short, culturally established duties which allow to distinguish US from THEM. Given that in the social world there operate at the same time a number of different 'universes of obligation,' and each of them precisely defines how to treat the members of a particular universe as opposed to 'outsiders,' a lot of questions emerge, already old but worth being reminded: 'who am I(?), who are We(?), and who are They?' These difficult questions, however, generate further questions: 'For whom does a specific universe of obligation pose a threat of exclusion or, vice versa, is an opportunity of inclusion?' (Gamson, 1996, p 3).

Following the thought of Fein, we can assume that the social inclusion process takes place when the boundaries of the universe of obligation—the culturally defined duties—are in line with the duties of the given community. On the other hand, the universe of obligation assumes the exclusive character when one or more of the socially accepted values does/do not fit within the limits of the specified universe (Gamson, 1996, p. 6). As justified by Fein (1995), contemporary transformations of social and economic structures trigger the need to rethink the place and role of the various minority groups, including those that regard people with different types of dysfunctions and impairments. If we want to expand the boundaries of the universe, rather than enhance the processes of social exclusion, we are forced to continually broaden the array of ways of counteracting exclusion. The researcher warns that social exclusion usually starts with small steps leading to social transparency and being invisible. Social invisibility already is a soft form of exclusion, which can very quickly turn into active exclusion or hidden, indirect one (*ibid.*).

From the utterances of the narrators it can be gathered that being noticed (visible) is one of the first steps in the construction of their own dignity, followed by the inner desire to be true to oneself, and then the need to be seen, recognized, accepted, and eventually included into a social group, with which one can identify oneself at different levels and with different engagement (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 142). On the one hand, visibility and recognition make the inherent conditions of building one's self-esteem and constructing one's sense of dignity in the new milieu; but visibility also has its other face.

The Paradox of Being Visible

Being socially noticed, visible, does not necessarily mean the social acceptance and consent to the inclusion or admission to the culturally established universe of obligation. Paradoxically, visibility may well lead to subtle indirect forms of exclusion, such as stigmatization and segregation, followed by active exclusion, until total genocide (Gamson, 1996, p. 10). Therefore, social sensitivity should be sharpened at the time when "transparency" becomes "visibility" (*ibid.*). This is a turning point in which a recognizable subject and its associated social status can take on two very different forms. The status may be elevated or lowered. When transparent members of the society become visible, surely this means that their presence is gaining significance, that they are becoming important, but such a situation does not necessarily guarantee them a sense of security. As claimed by Gamson (1996, p. 10), "It is better not to be seen at all than to be beaten, raped, or killed."

'Non-migrants' versus 'Global Citizens'

The term 'migrant,' in addition to the traditional meaning, is the carrier of information, which from the point of view of the concept of the universe of obligation questions belonging to US. Since a migrant does not belong to US, he/she does not fulfill the responsibilities valid in the universe of obligation and therefore can be threatened by exclusion. In this case, the privilege alone of being a man who has the right to equality, dignity and respect is not sufficient. These values are overridden by a set of culturally established rights and obligations of the universe, which no migrant—by definition—is able to meet. This kind of experience is documented in all 32 narrative interviews. What seems very interesting is the fact that 21 narratives out of 32 (provided by the youngest generation of narrators) contain similar, repetitive, phrases, "I am not a migrant, I am a citizen of the world," "I feel a citizen of the world" or "I do not consider myself to be a migrant, but a citizen of the world." In their further statements, the narrators argue that the concept of a 'migrant' is outdated, because it does not take into account the difference between those who emigrate voluntarily and the 'migrants of the past,' in whose case it was the political or economic coercion that dictated the terms which they had to accept. "In the EU we are not migrants. We're just like at home. It's our choice. We can simply move to a place where we can live comfortably. It's like in the past when people used to move from town to town in their own country. Now, the world has become a little wider for us"—they repeat.

Probably none of the narrators, who today call themselves the 'citizens of the world,' knows that not only do they refer to Diogenes (413-323 BC) and his idea of a cosmopolitan world, but they often choose the same way of life as he did. This Greek cynic dared to refuse to belong exclusively to his own local world. He was poor by choice and lived in a barrel at the market, treating it like his home. He identified poverty with independence. By freedom of thought he promoted freedom of speech. He advocated as well complete independence and self-sufficiency, which was to encourage the release of the unnecessary ballast and restrictive privileges (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 50-84).⁷

Tourists, Vagabonds or Citizens of Two Worlds?

Freedom, independence, and self-sufficiency are also mentioned by the narrators. I have not found descriptions which would reflect the dilemmas of modern wanderers more accurately than Bauman's metaphorical "tourists" and "vagabonds." Zygmunt Bauman perceives in them both the heroes and victims of postmodernity. According to him, they are their own *alter ego* (cf. Bauman, 2000, p. 94, 96). They can see themselves in their own reflections—just as in a mirror. The difference between them is, however, essential. The highest value for a tourist is mobility and the ability to wander following one's own choice. The freedom of choice and the need of roaming wide spaces are the incentives for incessant moving from one location to another. Stressing self-reliance and freedom in choosing the destination appears in numerous interviews conducted by me. Similarly to the work of the sociologist referred to above, what is most accentuated here is mobility, identified by a tourist with freedom, autonomy and independence. A tourist is convinced that his/her choices depend only on his/her decisions (*ibid.*, p. 92). Bauman emphasizes the distance a tourist keeps towards the world in which he/she resides, agreeing to casualness, but also readily escaping from the non-benevolence of the world, seeking refuge in an imitation of an air bubble. Such person comes to the world as much as he/she must, but has the feeling of being self-sufficient.

⁷ According to Martha Nussbaum, Diogenes's cosmopolitanism has had an impact not only on the Western philosophical thought, but has also become a part of Hindu philosophy. A representative of Indian cosmopolitanism is, among others, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who deliberately combined the ancient Bengal philosophy with the cosmopolitanism of the West. A similar position is represented by Kwame Anthony Appiah (1954), a contemporary philosopher from Ghana, who suggests that human problems should be considered regardless of the country or continent of one's origin. In his view, the same problems apply to all people irrespective of their place of residence (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 50-84).

Vagabonds make a counterweight to tourists since whatever place they reach, they are unwelcome. A vagabond wanders because he/she has to protect himself/herself. His/her fate depends on the whims of the natives. However, an underappreciated strength of a vagabond is the ability to expose the false face of a tourist (*ibid.*, pp. 94-97). A biographical trajectory of a vagabond is filled with failures and falls. In my opinion, Bauman puts forward a quite clear-cut question, 'To what extent do the paths followed by tourists and vagabonds depend on their own choices?'

In the light of the meanings hidden behind the metaphors of a tourist and a vagabond it is worth considering the possibilities and strategies of constituting one's (post)modern identity in a heterogeneous world where, by choice or not, people assume the roles of tourists and/or vagabonds.

The gathered empirical materials also suggest a certain doubt, namely: 'How can we make sure that tourists and vagabonds are not the same persons?' Following blindly Bauman's division into tourists and vagabonds we can fall under the illusion that each of these groups is represented by other people. However, the narrators participating in my projects identify themselves both with tourists and vagabonds. More interestingly, they state that they use the benefit of the privileges of tourists typically outside their own country. We may risk a claim that they feel safer where the universe of obligation is strange to them, or at least less understandable than the one in their own country. Paradoxically, they feel as vagabonds every time they return to their home country. This is the beginning of their being perceived as 'They' instead of 'We'. They say about themselves: "I do not know anymore where I belong. Where is my place—more out there, or more here? I live in two worlds, and yet I am fully in neither of them"; "I do not know how long I will stay abroad. I have here a job, the family, I develop, I can afford a decent vacation and a trip to the south of Europe. The thought of returning to the country scares me. There is no work, my bonds are broken, there is virtually nothing... The worst thing is probably that neither the government of my country nor even my former neighbors—no one is waiting here for me."

Is it so, sometimes, that postmodern transformations by definition make us "citizens of two worlds" as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1992, pp. 209-220) tries to remind us? He indicates that "A type of self-encounter can also occur with another and in relation on to what is different. However, the task of learning to recognize the common in another and in something different, is more pressing than ever. In our ever smaller world, cultures, religions, customs, and values of the most different variety are encountered. [...] The science of humans in their complete diversity becomes a moral and philosophical task for us all" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 220).

I think that Gadamer's position is a delicate suggestion, which is to encourage the next generations to further development of sensitivity to other people as well as to stimulate us to use all possible means in order to build "the communicative communalities" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 220). Nevertheless, the knowledge that can support comprehending the needs of a man comes from his/her real experience.

Terms of the Constitution of Postmodern Identity and Dignity

Following the path of Gadamer and summarizing the presented research results, I want to propose a continuum of meanings established on the basis of categories (extracted from the empirical material) indicated by the study participants through the sublimation of their own experiences. The categories obtained in this way form a string composed of fifteen items that can be considered as conditions essential in the constitution of postmodern identity and dignity in a heterogeneous world. The inspiration for the broadening of this continuum was a continuum consisting of six stages, characterizing social inclusion/exclusion elaborated by Helen Fein.

Table 2. Summary of A) continuum of social inclusion/exclusion by Helen Fein, B) continuum of the constitution of postmodern identity based on H. Fein and the author's own research

Continuum of social inclusion/exclusion Helen Fein (1995)	Continuum of the constitution of postmodern identity based on the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material
A	B
Positive conditions	
	Being true to myself
Being visible and respected	Being visible and respected
	Recognition (appreciation)
	Authenticity in a social group
	Belonging
	Acceptance
Active participation (inclusion)	Active participation (inclusion)
Negative conditions	

Transparency, being invisible, overlooked	Transparency, being invisible, overlooked
	Trauma due to non-recognition
Being visible, but stigmatized	Being visible, but stigmatized
	Assuming false identity
	Discredit
Hidden exclusion (indirect)	Hidden exclusion (indirect)
	Discrimination
Active exclusion	Active exclusion

Source: H. Fein (1995) and the author's own research

I marked in bold the categories distinguished by Fein and echoed by the participants of my projects. In the left column, Fein puts six stages of the transition from social exclusion to inclusion. Her scale, starting with "visibility" and ending with "active exclusion" is 'drawn apart' and supplemented with the meanings indicated by the narrators. Thus, a fifteen-grade continuum of meanings was established, going from positive to negative expressions characterizing the experiences of the participants in the projects. The continuum opens with the category of "being true to myself" (Taylor, 1994a; 1994b; Ricoeur, 2005) and ends—as proposed by Fein—with the total (active) exclusion, which in the interpretation of the narrators becomes a blockade hampering the constitution of their identity and which, while discrediting them, triggers the feeling of being second-class man (Taylor, 1994a).

The right part of the table contains a richer list of 'conditions' referred to by the narrators as regards giving them a sense of security in the process of constituting their identity while maintaining personal dignity. Thus, the narrators point to delicacy and sensitivity of their feelings in the social world, in which they come to face daily the current universe of obligation.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF MACEDONIAN REFUGEES

by Anna Kurpiel

Introduction

Recently, in Poland, a number of anthropological and historical works have been written based on ‘oral histories’ or biographical narratives induced through an interview (cf. *inter alia* Włodarek & Ziolkowski, 1990; Engelking, 1994; Czyżewski, Piotrowski & Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 1996; Kurkowska-Budzan, 2009; Filipkowski, 2010). However, less interest is taken in written autobiographies issued in print, often in very limited editions, to satisfy the needs of family, friends, organizations and associations. During the research for my doctoral dissertation, dedicated to Macedonian refugees,¹ I encountered people who published their autobiographies as books and I would like to take a closer look at such texts in this paper.

Autobiographies of Macedonian refugees are unknown to a wider audience, just like the whole issue of Macedonian emigration from the time of the Greek Civil War. Aegean Macedonia, one of the parts of Macedonia, is the region of the Balkans that was the last to be liberated from the Turkish occupation. As a result of the Balkan wars it was incorporated by Greece, forming its northern province. Then, the autochthonous Slavic population living in this area—the Macedonians—became the largest ethnic minority in northern Greece, occupying mainly the Kosturski and Lerinski regions. During the Greek Civil War, which lasted from 1946

¹ The Ph.D. thesis entitled *Macedońscy uchodźcy wojenni w Polsce: Adaptacja, migracje, pamięć* (*Macedonian War Refugees in Poland: Adaptation, Migration, Memory*), was written under the supervision of professor Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and defended at the Institute of History at the University of Wrocław in 2012.

to 1949, partly voluntarily, partly under duress, the Macedonians joined the communist Greek guerrilla militias stationed in the mountain areas of the Aegean Macedonia.

The first wave of emigration from Greece took place in 1948 and embraced only children younger than sixteen years of age. The official reason for the expulsion was shielding the children from the turmoil of the war and, in particular, intensifying bombing. Children under the care of young women, the so-called *majki* ('mothers') and guerrillas, crossed on foot the mountain border between Greece and Yugoslavia, and then were sent by train from Yugoslavia, following the earlier agreement concluded with the communist parties of different countries, to the then Eastern bloc countries—Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

In 1949, the Greek communists lost the war, which resulted in another wave of emigration, this time mainly consisting of the adult population. As a result of the conflict between Stalin and Tito, Yugoslavia closed the border for the Greek communists supporting Stalin, and that made the Greeks and Macedonians flee to Albania, and next sail to Poland, the Soviet Union (Tashkent), and other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe. In total, until 1950, Poland accepted 3,015 children and 9,282 adults from Greece (Wojecki, 1989). Later, this number changed due to the ongoing migration of refugees (for instance the family reunification action pursued by the Red Cross). According to the data cited by Arkadiusz Ślabiga (2008), in 1955, there were 15,215 Greek refugees in Poland, including 7,410 Macedonians, 7,357 Greeks and 448 Koutsovlachos, but the latter often declared that they were Greeks.

Since the return to Greece and more specifically to the Aegean Macedonia for many years was impossible, the Macedonians emigrated from Poland to the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as Bulgaria, Canada and Australia. This resulted in a significant decrease in the number of Macedonian refugees in Poland and the disappearance of organizations associating them. Today, the Macedonians who in 1948 were children are now elderly. I interviewed some of them and I got most of the autobiographies included in my analysis from them.

Dimensions of Autobiographical Learning about Oneself and the World

Written autobiographies, as opposed to induced biographical interviews, are created at the initiative of the author himself/herself. Therefore, they are closer to memoirs written of one's own accord, and not for a competition,

but unlike them they are a collection of memories selected by the author, often situated—for a better understanding—in a broader perspective of a given historical time and the fate of the community. However, just as in the case of biographical interviews, the present imposes here the way of talking about the past and its interpretation. At the same time, such memories as noted by Antonina Kłoskowska make “global flashback and reconstruction of the author’s life” (after Żurko, 2003, p. 128), and show the life of the author in whole or in large parts of it. This type of autobiographies can be and is a source of scientific analysis—historical, because they contain a description of the specific reality of the past, sociological and anthropological—focusing on the analysis of the experiences of particular individuals, ways of writing about their own lives, models of self-creation, etc.

In this article, I would like to take an anthropological perspective to look at autobiographies in terms of their motifs (not always explicit), their origin and the function they perform in the lives of the authors and the community. I am pursuing answers to two questions: ‘Why would someone decide to take the effort of autobiographical work, the result of which is a published book?’ and ‘What is such an autobiography for the author and for a wider group of stakeholders?’

These motifs and functions relate to three complementary dimensions. Firstly, autobiographies may be an attempt to talk about painful experiences, written ‘for oneself’ when they take the form of a self-analysis with a strong therapeutic color. Secondly, autobiographies are a result of the need to tell the story of an individual for the sake of the present reference groups, co-existing acquaintances and future generations. Thirdly, autobiographies become the ‘glue’ of a group often transnational in nature; they are written for a given community, immersed in the concrete world of meanings, serving specific type of communication.

Autobiographies as an Attempt to Tell about Painful Experiences (Writing for Oneself)

This is probably the most recognized theme related to writing an autobiography, which—understood as a specific ‘cleansing tool’—becomes the object of analysis of sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists. The process of creating an autobiography is combined with an attempt to reconcile with and organize the difficult past. This approach is presented by, among others, Wiesław Theiss (2007), dealing with the history of the “wandering children” from the army of General Anders, i.e. a group very similar to the young Macedonians expelled *en masse* from northern Greece. Theiss calls autobi-

ographies, memoirs, diaries, letters and the like literary pieces the “texts of life.” According to him, the authors try to answer the question: ‘Who am I?’, the question appearing when talking about the broken identity, inability to cope with the childhood trauma, the situation of emigration, etc.

The cathartic aspect of autobiographical writings is based on the *need for expression*, which Duccio Demetrio (2000) explains in his book, *Autobiografia: Terapeutyczny wymiar pisania o sobie* (*Autobiography: Therapeutic Dimension of Writing about Oneself*), as follows: “In everyone’s life, there comes a moment when an overwhelming desire is born to tell about one’s life in a different way than usually. Similar feelings are evoked, sooner or later, in each of us—this experience is shared both by women and men, and, above all, those grown in the culture of the West. The desire to tell about oneself has been felt by human beings for hundreds of years, probably starting from the moment in which writing as a creative act took the form of stories about life, told in the first person, with the intention of saving specific experiences and sensations from falling into oblivion” (p. 9).

The drive for autobiographical expression, according to the Italian researcher, depending on the circumstances, sometimes is “the necessity, duty, or even imperative, but at the same time the right” (*ibid.*). Interestingly, Demetrio sees in the effort of self-reflection an educational travel rather than the final summary of life.

Autobiographies and the “Biographical Necessity” (Writing for Oneself and for Others)

Taking up autobiographical work is also related to another phenomenon, namely the “biographical necessity.” This term, originally developed by Gabriele Rosenthal, has been successfully adapted into Polish social studies by Kaja Kaźmierska (1996). Generally speaking, in the outlined context, the narrative necessity boils down to a compulsion to share ones experiences linked with the awareness of having participated in important events. In the case of research conducted by Kaźmierska, it was the experience of World War II, put in the form of border land narratives, and in the case of Macedonian children it was the displacement, refuge and the dramatic events related to them.

Autobiographers following their narrative necessity see themselves as witnesses to history, and treat their story as a testimony passed on to future generations, including obviously their families. The story is treated here as an important part of the mission, and the biographer is elevated to the rank of a self-appointed hero-guard of the tradition threatened with disintegration.

One of the aspects of biographical narrative necessity is, as noted by Kaźmierska, "a particular story of the space, which the narrators are close to" (*ibid.*, p. 98). In the case of the Aegean Macedonians, a call for stories manifests itself not only in the form of autobiographies or memoirs, but all kinds of texts tackling the homeland problem. This is due to the particular situation of Aegean Macedonia, which since 1913 has been a part of Greece. In spite of the fact that most Macedonians are of the opinion that Aegean Macedonia in terms of the cultural and moral aspects is no different from Vardar Macedonia (now the Republic of Macedonia), the gap between these two areas is continually emphasized. The Aegean Macedonia is a contested, multicultural, tragic, and even dangerous land. At the same time, it is longed for and dreamed about.

Autobiographies as the 'Glue' of the Group

An autobiography, though written by one person, is the work *about* a certain community and *for* a certain community—nation, ethnic group, generation, etc. The primary manifestation of it is the collective 'I' occurring in the autobiographical narrative. Although narrators describe an individual story, they are aware that it is also, and sometimes primarily, collective history—for example of Macedonians born in northern Greece in the 1930s and 1940s, and even more broadly—all Aegean Macedonians who share their wandering fate.

Fania Martinowa-Bućkowa, in her semi-autobiographical work, declares, "I want to write in my book about this generation of children, their dignity, that they are Macedonians, and that their homeland is called Macedonia, about children, who, although dispersed over many countries in the world remain faithful to the order of their teacher and their ancestors: carry Macedonia in your hearts and love it" (Martinowa-Bućkowa, 1998, pp. 12-13). In another work, also prepared by Aegean Macedonians, we read as follows: "How have we sinned, God, that you have given us such fate [...]. What makes us different from those who were born in Bitola, [a city in the Republic of Macedonia—A.K.] why are we disconnected?" (Profilovski & Bojačev, 1998, p. 10).

In both quoted passages we can see an irresistible urge—expressed more or less explicitly—to tell not only about oneself, but about all those who experienced and survived the same things as the narrators. Martinowa-Bućkowa determines her own reference group as the "generation of children," and Profilovski and Bojačev leave no doubts as to who are these 'we' by consistently using the first person plural.

Written and published autobiographies are also of purely practical value. They make a real connection of Macedonian children that during the Greek Civil War had to leave their homeland and now are scattered throughout the world. It is no longer just an area of memory or collective identity, people mentally present in the books, but also a real object, having a symbolic meaning. At the Society of Aegean Macedonians "Nezaborav" in Skopje, we can find almost in every autobiography, nay, every work written by Aegean Macedonians.

It often happens that the issuance of an autobiography is completed with the help of Macedonian friends residing in other countries—mostly in Canada. The materials needed for the development of books keep flowing from numerous places. The goal of these publications is enhancing the transnational community of Aegean Macedonians and providing a point of reference and identification for individual refugees.

***Nemirno vreme* and *Pożegnanie z ojczyzną* as Examples of Autobiographical Literature Elaborated by Refugees**

Throughout the last two decades, Macedonian refugees have prepared dozens of autobiographical works in the form of classic autobiographies as well as collections of short stories and poems. Because of the research area, limited to the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Macedonia, I got acquainted only with a part of them, most of which are works written by people I have interviewed. Among the books published in Poland it is worth mentioning: *Kokardy z powojennych tasiemek* (*Bows with Postwar Ribbons*) by Józef Wyspiński (2004), *Pożegnanie z ojczyzną* (*Farewell to the Homeland*) by Spiro Gagaczowski (2007) and *Prom do raju* (*Ferry to Paradise*) by Nicole Nascova (2000). As for the texts in the original language—I have already mentioned *I nije sme deca na majkata zemja* (*I my jesteśmy dziećmi naszej matki ziemi*, *And We are also Children of our Mother Earth*) by Fania Martinova-Bučkova (1998), *Istrkalan Kamen* (*Toczący się kamień, Rolling Stone*) by Vasilka Geogrievska-Bandevska (2003), *Otidoa so vetrov* (*Przemienięło z wiatrem, Gone with the Wind*) written by her husband, Jane Bandevski (2003) and *Nemirno vreme* (*Niespokojny czas, Restless Time*) by Hristo Ristovski (2011). Two of the above-mentioned works deserve special attention because of their representativeness of the species, namely: *Pożegnanie z ojczyzną* by Spiro Gagaczowski and *Nemirno vreme* by Hristo Ristovski.

Their authors during the civil war and political emigration were still children. Spiro Gagaczowski came to Poland as a twelve-year-old boy, married a Polish woman and decided to settle here. He currently lives in Lubin and is a trained chemist. Hristo Ristovski came to Poland from

an orphanage in Czechoslovakia. He graduated from a high school with a pedagogical profile in Jelenia Góra and then began studying at the Polish Studies in Opole. After the first year at the university, he was brought to Skopje, where he graduated from the local university, majoring in history, and where he has lived to this day.

Both autobiographers, in our conversations, shared with me their insights concerning their creative work. One of the topics discussed by us concerned the reasons why they took up autobiographical work.

In the case of Gagaczowski, the idea of writing an autobiography arose in part accidentally and in part was inspired by the earlier literary efforts of his colleague—Józef Wyspiński who told the story of himself and his Macedonian wife in the book *Kokardy z powojennych tasiemek* (2004). Nevertheless, Spiro acknowledges that the ultimate impulse to delve into the personal recollections appeared relatively recently:

And so you do not remember these things... and who then would have thought that once someone will have an idea at all to tell or write or whatever. Five years ago, I was not thinking about any writing, about my book, and so on and memories and so on.²

The immediate motivation for his elaborating the literary revelations was provided by the questions from the grandchildren and children stimulating the future author to reflection:

Well, a little bit, I mean my kids already knew a little, but the grandchildren began to ask: and what is that, once they heard me talking in Macedonian with my brother. What language do you speak, what's the language of your talking?

In the *Introduction* to *Pożegnanie z ojczyzną* we read about the obligation to save the traces of the past from sinking into oblivion. Still vivid images of the loss of the old house make the narrator try to rely on his own memory and the memories of his loved ones in order to reconstruct and maintain the identity essence:

I decided to try to save a little something from those years from total oblivion. I gathered some materials. I looked into several books. I ordered in my head the memories passed on to me by my father and siblings and I contained them in this elaboration. (Gagaczowski, 2007, pp. 5-6)

Gagaczowski then adds:

² All quotations from the utterances of the interviewed Macedonians (passages highlighted in the main text in italics) are derived from the interviews that I conducted in Poland and in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 2009-2011.

With this book and all the memories comprised in it I wanted to say goodbye to my place of birth, to my homeland. (*ibid.*, p. 6)

The trace of the farewell to the homeland (probably contained in the title for a reason!) is *de facto* a kind of a final reconciliation with fate—expressed by an expatriate, refugee, sentenced to life away from the country where he was born. In many cases, also of the Macedonians from Greece, this phase never comes, and the yearning for the place lost is permanently stronger than the cleansing (in the spirit of Demetrio) ‘saying goodbye’ to it.

The autobiography of Spiro Gagaczowski explicitly manifests the biographical narrative necessity; it is a testimony given primarily to younger generations of the dispersed family of the Aegean Macedonians:

I sincerely hope that the younger generations of our large family will become interested in the book, that they, in the age of computers, mobile phones, in the era of pursuing material goods, will notice in it the values that should be cultivated and protected. (*ibid.*, p. 6)

Pożegnanie z ojczyzną is a complete piece of literature and—most likely—will remain the only literary attempt of the author. The situation is quite different in the case of Hristo Ristovski who has elaborated a number of publications (mostly memories or poems). His writing necessity was revealed quite early, while he was staying in an orphanage in Czechoslovakia; his flair for writing, carefully nurtured after arriving in Poland, resulted in, among other things, patriotic poems (see, *inter alia*, Ristovski, 2005), but the extensive autobiographical narratives—*Nemirno vreme* among them—were written much later.

Niespokojny czas is not really an autobiography in the strict sense, since it does not try to show the entire life of the author, and only the selected parts—life in his village (*Utracone dzieciństwo*, Ch. *Lost Childhood*), school years in Poland (*Zapiski ze Szczecina*, Ch. *Records from Szczecin*) and then the first year of studies, a travel to Skopje and consequences related to it (*Wracanie do wolnej Macedonii*, Ch. *Returning to Free Macedonia*). In *Nemirno vreme*, there is no introduction from the author. Instead, there is a short preface prepared by Jancze Andonovski, Ristovski’s friend. The memories have been published in Macedonian and English, most likely to broaden the readership with the persons who do not have the command of the Macedonian language—presumably the families of the Macedonians living in Canada or Australia.

During one of our meetings, Hristo meticulously explained:

Now, I will give you this book because it is very important. I have described how I left Greece, I describe how we learned Greek... why we escaped from there.

That is, I describe everything: how old I was, as we learned [...] And now here: Record from Szczecin. That means: Notes from Szczecin, describing it: what it was like in Szczecin. How long we were there, who was there, we were there with the Greeks. That we lived well with them. We were buddies—not as they say! That we had brawls—it's not like this! We were pals!

The cited paragraph shows a clear desire to prevent the dissemination of false images created after many years. Due to the contemporary Macedonian policy in relation to the Macedonian-Greek conflict, aroused around the country's name and national emblems, past events in the life of those remaining in exile are interpreted in a specific way by the refugees themselves. A good example is provided by the past relationship between the Greek and Macedonian children in the orphanages in Poland. Against this background, Ristovski—acting as a participant in these events—feels obliged to pass on the 'truth.'

As in the case of the work discussed above, in *Niespokojny czas*, the pronoun 'we' is intertwined with 'I—and the collective memories are combined with the personal ones. Here also are contained detailed descriptions of individual experiences, supported by photographs and letters—specific souvenirs from Poland performing the documentative and informative function (intended primarily for other Macedonian emigrants). From between the lines, we can read out the experience of the refugee community, opened in the motto from the author:

Wherever we went, we were forced to respect the social norms there.
But, we managed to survive. (Ristovski, 2011, p. 3)

and closed in *Zakończenie (Conclusion)*:

During my entire life someone told me to be: a Greek, a Czech, a Polish, a Yugoslavian, etc. And I became what others want me to be. I respected the laws and norms prevailing at that time in the given societies. Just as I was forced to do so, so were 9,000 Macedonian children expelled from Aegean Macedonia. However, we still remained the Macedonians, no one else. Above all, the most important thing for us was our Macedonian character. Therefore, a philosophical thought has always accompanied me: no nation without a past has a future. (ibid., pp. 30-31)

Both books, *Pożegnanie z ojczyzną* and *Nemirno vreme* are known, which is worth noting, among the Aegean Macedonians scattered across many countries, and their authors have become symbolic landmarks, the guardians of memories and history.

Autobiographies and Narrative Interviews: Final Methodological Reflection

Autobiographies, which I have tried to outline, are certainly an interesting research material, which has already been argued by such classics as Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918). It is worth noting, though, that autobiographies treated not as an independent source, but as complementary one to other interview-related research techniques often pose serious methodological problems. The decision to cooperate with the Interlocutor, who is also an autobiographer, requires research vigilance and must be supported by a high degree of methodological awareness. The fact that such person has written an autobiography strongly affects the course of the conversation. The stories told by interviewees-autobiographers differ significantly from the reflection spun by people 'uncontaminated' with pen-work. The tales growing out of autobiographical 'background' are smoothed, subordinated to the chronology of events, devoid of standstills, moments of being lost in thought and slips, and told 'more nicely.' It also happens that someone who once became an autobiographical writer, remains then only him/her, 'trapped' by his/her own text, and somehow loses the natural ability of narration. This is how it turned out to be in the following cases:

I got everything there in these stories [...]! I will not talk about it. It is there [in the book—A.K.].

Nicole Nacov

And I was included in the last round. So that... in nineteen forty... on the twelfth... anyway here it is written in the book [...]. This means there the grandfather, the whole family, except my sister and brother, who were left in... for such reasons there, in the book it is written [...]. In the neighboring village, two months we were there, and how it was when agitators and so on and so on... here it is in the book everything described as it proceeded [...]. It says everything in the book. Read the book and we'll talk.

Spiro Gagaczowski

*How many years we lived there, Józek? How many? I do not remember...
It is in the book.*

Risa and Józef Wyspiańscy

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF MEMOIRS OF ETHNIC MINORITY MEMBERS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE LEMKO DIARIES)

METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSALS

by Patrycja Trzeszczyńska-Demel

The basis of this article are reflections on the analysis of the Lemko personal document literature, which was the subject of my Ph.D. thesis dedicated to the collective memory of the Lemko community in Poland and Ukraine.¹ Lemko people, displaced from the Low Beskid Mountains in the years 1944-1947 to Soviet Ukraine and to the western and northern regions of Poland, inspire numerous sociologists, ethnologists, and historians.² For years, certain problems in this regard have been thoroughly exploited, especially those concerning the national identity and ethnic renaissance. On the other hand, some issues are omitted and neglected, for instance the issue of memory (used by the Lemkos for the self-affirmation purposes), increased drive for self-discovery and the efforts undertaken by the Lemkos to take a stand towards the commemorating practices made by the Polish and Ukrainian society. Scrutinizing the Lemkos' memory was my primary objective.

¹ In 2013, my book, *Łemkowszczyzna zapamiętana: Opowieści o przeszłości i przestrzeni (Lemkivshchyna Remembered: Stories about the Past and the Space)* (Jagiellonian University Press, series: "Anthropos"), was published. It was based on my Ph.D. dissertation. The following article is an extended version of the discussion on my application of the biographical method, which makes one of the subsections of the book.

² In this text, I write about the Lemkos as members of an ethnic minority. The following methodological suggestions can also be applied to the written memories of other minorities, including the national minorities.

I analyzed Lemko autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, chronicles, and collections of memoirs. The set of texts that I have collected includes 66 publications, published as separate books in Poland and Ukraine, after 1989 and 1991, respectively. These accounts have one or more authors and were published in Polish, Ukrainian or Lemko.

I dealt with the narrative practices applied by the Lemko—their structure, content and ways of using them in group self-presentation strategies. As a self-presentation I understand here the cultural representation of the group and its past, where it is the past whose preservation is a prerequisite for the subsistence of the group.³

For an anthropologist, individual memoirs are a valuable source of ethnographic nature. Treated collectively they represent a multi-voice message of a minority group. Following the assumption of the cultural self-presentation of the minority group, I aimed at investigating the mechanisms of constructing the images of the past—within the so-called memory communities (cf. Nijakowski, 2006, pp. 32-33)—co-ordination of the content of these images and using them for the purposes of the community. My goal was also to answer two questions: 'What do Lemko texts say?' (what the course of their reconstruction of the past is, in what way the authors restore it to themselves and to their readers) and 'How do they say it?', in what way individual and collective self-presentation is conducted in them.



Lemko memoirs are embedded in a number of key topics. The chief motif is the displacement and its consequences: eradication, degradation of the ethnic space and rupture of their ties with their homeland. The authors' goal—which they state *explicite*—is uttering the truth about the fate of the Lemko and so the individual perspective and biography is exceeded by the perspective of the community. These texts are dominated by the desire to perpetuate the past for future generations. In their autobiographical plan, the authors take up a settlement with their own life, serving the understanding of the decisions taken in the past, the entanglement in external circumstances, and the summary of the choices made. Sometimes, they explicitly express the need to fill in the blank spots in the Lemko historiography, to take up disputes with the existing historical narratives

³ See: the understanding of self-presentation in the Lemko literature as recognized by Helena Duć-Fajfer; in her opinion, in this context, self-presentation is a "demonstration of Lemko problems in all their extent, in the tone of emotional saturation, it is coming out of the isolation, confronting the Lemko world with the ideas of the center, an attempt to initiate dialogue."

(mostly elaborated by Polish and Ukrainian researchers), to leave for the future generations the inheritance consisting in materials with historical value, going beyond the family framework, and thus to fulfill the obligation towards their ancestors, and to preserve the continuity of the message, affixing it with didactic values.

Lemko memoirs do not constitute a single set. Within them, there can be distinguished two principal trends that indicate the dominant assumption of the authors: autobiographical works associated with the predominance of topics regarding the personal past (autobiographies, memoirs and collections of loosely-related impressions)⁴ and historiographical/reporting works, among which I enumerate manuscripts of historiographical ambitions (village monographs, self-defense Lemko publications and chronicles).⁵ The analysis of these accounts showed that the authors use in their design different memory ‘ingredients’ (or even reach into separate memories that are consistent only in respect of certain items), operating on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border. What is more, the narrators-eyewitnesses of the described events and their participants use different ‘ingredients’ than the representatives of successive generations undertaking the efforts to save the history of their ancestors. At the level of argumentation presented by the authors, what was interesting for me was how these texts bring back the past, how they perform its reconstruction and axiologization, i.e. how and to whom they speak, what rhetorical means they use for this purpose, what key-words they operate, how they construct the message for the sake of specific memory strategies. I was striving to capture the shape of the self-presentation of both the author and the community of memory (as well as the narrative community), which the author represents and on whose behalf he writes about the Lemko past.

By using a modified version of the biographical method, which I will describe in detail further on, I managed also to identify the authors’ ways of using the works of their predecessors, filling the gaps in the family transfer of knowledge—especially by authors representing the generation of children of the displaced Lemko citizens—through tapping into the scientific and popular texts, oral and written accounts of the members of the community in which the authors are situated and which they represent.

⁴ Cf. autobiographies (e.g. Murianka, 2007; Maślej, 2008; Makuch, 2007), diaries (e.g. Barna, 2004; Fecica, 2004; Olenycz, 1993; Chomiak, 1995), impressions (e.g. Wozniak, 2010; Trojczak, 2009; Kuziak, 1999).

⁵ Cf. village monographs (e.g. Barna, 1996; Starczak-Wawryczyn, 2009), self-defense (e.g. Zwoliński, 1994; Olenycz, 2003; Barna & Gocz, 2005), chronicles (e.g. *Cne mi sia...* 2006; Monczak, Polnyiak, & Juśkiw 2006; Muszynka, 2001; Hałyk, 2009).

Written Lemko memoirs are linked by a strong imperative to immortalize the details of the past world, hence the texts reveal the passion for collecting facts, names, dates, topographical details, everyday objects, equipment found once in Lemko farms, customs and rituals. These anachronistic devices make it possible for the author and the 'ethnic' readers to re-capture the now-defunct past and preserve the memory of it for the sake of the subsequent generations. In addition to this, the authors seek to perpetuate stories about real life in Lemkivshchyna—prior, during and after the displacement, when they got settled on the new lands. Their statements are supported by the reference to the enclosed archival and contemporary photographs, copies of documents, songs, texts etc.

Prior to writing down and publishing them, when it became possible, these accounts functioned in oral circulation. Authors taking up 'working' with the 'matter' of the past made a retrospection of the events that happened even decades before. They also had to deal with the phenomenon of stratification resulting from multiple conversations, discussions with family members and compatriots, readings, traveling to the place of birth. The narrative being the effect of such process and presenting their own lives as well as other people's lives was based on the biography of the authors, their relatives, neighbors from their native village, circle of friends. It was also affected by the distance in time that has elapsed since the occurrence of the events the experiences described; the reflections accumulated through the years and the evaluation of past life; the distortions and gaps resulting from the imperfections of human memory, later experiences, conversations, interference caused by the memories of others—heard or read. Other factors influencing the view of the past and the shape of the text are the present goals and the urge felt by the author—and also by the community represented by him/her—to take a position and formulate a clear identity message, to express the ethnic aspirations, etc. Another important issue is the rhetorical and stylistic editing and sometimes also—though rather rarely in case of Lemko accounts, issued mostly by the authors at their own expense—the external interference (on the part of editors, reviewers).



With all this in mind, and recognizing that the nature of these texts does not reduce their empirical value for the researcher interested in memory and cultural self-presentation, I commenced an analysis of Lemko memoirs using *the biographical method*. This method, sometimes referred to as *the method of biographical documents*, in recent years has been most predominantly applied for the analysis of the material induced by the investigator. However, in my opinion, it can be used equally successfully, after some

modification of assumptions, to study written material, non-induced e.g. in a competition.

A researcher reaching for the published memoirs becomes a recipient equal to any reader of the text, in this case primarily the ethnic-Lemko reader, but also a representative of the majority population, Polish or Ukrainian. The absence of direct presence of the researcher, the lack of pressure, and distance, ensure that the narrator has a much greater freedom in the reconstruction of the past, in mining the most crucial events and attributing importance to them at his/her own pace, away from the recorder being a part of every interview. On the other hand, as emphasized by the advocates of narrative interviews, written narration by definition is devoid of spontaneity, and therefore we are not able to capture the world of meanings of the author, unmediated by external supports of the memory that is susceptible to transformations and moves away from the 'pure' individual past. The selection of the material used by the writers to create a narrative about the past, self-censorship, gaps resulting from the omission of personal details to conceal embarrassing or not-so-glorious moments of their lives or the life of a group reduce the value of such statements, flatten the obtained image, partition it, and form only a variation on what the narrator would tell us during an interview. However, if we are interested in the conscious and intentional self-presentation understood as a strategy of the author and located in the plan of the text and—through him/her—the strategy of the group in which this person is located and on behalf of which he/she speaks, then the written texts are an excellent source for tracking it. When we are after the statement expressed by a given environment about themselves, when we wish to look at the self-analysis of the representatives of some ethnic group or minority, published memoirs reveal the mechanisms of the construction of such statements better than oral narratives, since they are intended to be spotted by someone other than the members of their own environment. An analysis of written, published memoirs enables us to see what the investigated group wants to say to the majority among which it is situated (if the book is published in the language of the majority and there is a chance that its representatives will reach for it), or what it wants to pass on to the posterity, and therefore, what values are fundamental for the authors.

The analysis of biographical material (biographies and autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, letters) has long been in the area of interest of sociologists (Kaźmierska, 2004). Ethnologists discovered its use relatively late (Kabzińska, 2003). It allows one to reconstruct the meanings assigned by people to their past experiences and thus follow the transformation of human memory, group symbols, methods for the construction of social reality, etc.

The precursor of the life study method was Florian Znaniecki, who together with William Thomas used the personal documents of Polish immigrants in the United States to show the process of social change and adaptation to life in exile. In the introduction to the third volume of the classic work, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, the researchers emphasized "the superiority of life-records over every other kind of material" analyzed by the sociologist and its relevance for the general characteristics of the social processes (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 7). The analysis of life-records, popularized by the above-mentioned work, has become one of the main research methods in sociology performed by the 'Chicago School' in the 1930s and 1940s (Kaźmierska, 2004, p. 71). The ideas of Thomas and Znaniecki in the 1930s were continued by Józef Chałasiński. Both before World War II and after it, a number of competitions were organized in Poland for memoirs, addressed to a particular social class or group: peasants, workers, emigrants, doctors, young intellectuals, rural activists, etc. In the years 1945-1975, 1043 competitions for diaries were held (Wojtkowiak, 2003, p. 87). In the 1960s and 1970s, the biographical method, however, lost its popularity. One of the advocates encouraging the use of personal documents in sociology (but only as supplementary material) was Jan Szczepański, who defined this research strategy as follows: "The life study method is such sociological research in which, to solve the problem posed, the researcher collects only materials containing the accounts of people presenting their participation in the events and processes which are the subject of the research, and on the basis of these reports a description of the given processes is elaborated and the explanatory hypotheses are proposed" (Szczepański, 1971, pp. 577-578). The return to the method of personal documents analysis occurred in the 1980s (see, *inter alia*, Rauch, 1986) and can be observed today in many centers, among which excels the Institute of Sociology of the University of Łódź, promoting the life study method founded on the German achievements in sociology, especially those attributable to Fritz Schütze, i.e. the method of conducting and analyzing a narrative interview (Kaźmierska, 2004).

The 'German School' developed in the biographical analysis new methodological reflection on the ground of phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism based on the assumption of the social construction of reality by acting individuals (cf. Apitzsch & Inowlocki, 2000). A significant contribution to the development of this reflection resulted due to the popularization of audio and video recording devices. Today, the 'German School' is dominated by two orientations of biographical research, which draw attention to striving to minimize the impact of the researcher on the creation of autobiographical material, namely the narrative interview

method elaborated by Schütze and objective hermeneutics proposed by Ulrich Oevermann (cf. Kaźmierska, 2004, p. 71; Urbaniak-Zajac & Kos, 2013).

The basic ontological assumptions essential when applying the biographical method are contained in the concept of "humanistic coefficient," derived from Znaniecki (1936), regarding the role of subjective factors, such as attitudes of individuals, their assessments, criteria of evaluation and their equivalence with the objective cultural values. In their practice, researchers should take into account the importance attached to social phenomena by people experiencing these phenomena. It is also associated with the process of biographical acquiring of knowledge about the self, and therefore with the category of identity: "Biographical narrative shows how the continuity of our 'being ourselves' is generated. Biographical constructions are based on the knowledge that an individual has of himself/herself and without any external influence. This knowledge is constantly evolving in different interactive situations. The identity emerges in the process of interaction; an individual, talking about his/her relationships with other people, defines himself/herself. [...] Telling the story of one's own life story is tantamount to creating an interpretation of biographical events. The facts, invoked from memory and recreated, have been interpreted by the narrators, 'subjectively filled with sense' according to the specific structure of meanings. Constructing the autobiography we invoke the images of the past, but also design our future actions. Reading out the applied interpretative schemes reveals the strategies used to build identity and the way in which an individual participates in social life" (Szalachciowa, 2003, pp. 13-14).

Methodological assumptions for the analysis of autobiographical material result directly from the ontological assumptions and relate to the possibility of using it in the study of the meanings that their authors attach to the surrounding reality (including the ethnic reality) of images, autostereotypes and group symbols. Therefore, the allegations formulated towards the method of biographical documents (imputing the lack of representativeness, objectiveness; the extraordinariness of the author in relation to the other members of the community who do not make the literary effort; simplifications, distortion of the depicted reality, fictitiousness of the material, etc. (Szczepański, 1971, pp. 603-605) do not discredit it in terms of the analysis of the written Lemko memoirs as a manifestation of cultural self-presentation. Data obtained using the biographical method serve not only presenting a subjective reality, but also including it in the context of time and interactions. The interest in this mechanism of assigning meanings in the practice of self-presentation and their interpretation approximate the researcher to the methodological approach appropriate

for interpretive interactionism, which explores the meanings assigned to the lived experience by interacting individuals and examines how it is experienced and expressed, interpreted and understood (Denzin, 2001). This also brings the research perspective closer to interactive hermeneutics, in which the researcher focuses on discovering and interpreting meanings that are created and lived by the members of the studied group (cf. Denzin, 1990, pp. 56-57).

According to Szczepański (1971, p. 582), personal documents are particularly important for sociology and a special place is reserved among them for autobiography: "In the broad meaning of the term 'personal document,' we include in this category not only all kinds of autobiographies, diaries and memories, but also letters, literal transcripts of testimonies, interviews and other documents containing a projection of the states of mind of a person (projective documents). However, we can limit this definition and enumerate among personal documents important to sociological research only those written statements that report the participation of the writer in a social situation, that include the personal opinion of the author concerning these situations, a description of the events that took place within it, and a description of the behavior of the author. Only the presence of all these elements in a document makes it valuable for sociological research." It seems that this criterion is fulfilled by Lemko autobiographies and memoirs. And although autobiographies, according to Szczepański, illustrate more fully the entanglement of the individuals in the processes of social life, not in a piecemeal fashion as is the case of memoirs and diaries, I decided to include in the analysis also the latter.⁶ During the analysis of Lemko documentary literature I used the technique of narrative interview analysis, modified for the purpose of the study of written material.

Narrative interview is a combination of different types of biographical research due to the subject highlighted by Ingeborg Helling: biography as *a topic* or as *a means*. In this approach, the interview is analyzed with attention to what people say and how they do it. It is characterized by the principle of openness, assuming refraining from specific research hypotheses and focusing on the process of data collection (the person examined determines the boundaries of the subject of studying) and the principle of communication, according to which the structure of expression of the interviewee should not be disturbed (Prawda, 1989, p. 88). Daniel Bertaux (1990, p. 71) distinguishes other groups of autobiographical utterances. In his view, given their research usefulness, they perform the searching,

⁶ On the subject of genre and terminology distinctions see Ślawiński (2002, pp. 50-51) and Główski (2002, p. 369).

analytical or expressive function. This last one seems to me to be particularly useful in defining the tasks of autobiographical material for the research on the issue of cultural self-presentation. It is associated with the hermeneutic approach, highlighted by Bertaux, towards autobiographical statements, which aims to capture the level of meaning that the narrators want to convey. This orientation Bertaux presents in opposition to the ethno-sociological one, which focuses on references, standards, and processes of social life visible in the autobiographical material (*ibid.*, p. 76).

Kaja Kaźmierska (1997), describing the narrative interview tool, stresses that its essence is to obtain life-stories in the form of a spontaneous, uninterrupted narrative, during which the researcher does not intervene by posing questions. The person interviewed is neither a sociological respondent nor an ethnological informant, but the narrator, who creates his/her story. Depending on the research topic, we get a compact account of the life of the narrator, or only its fragments. However, Iwona Kabzińska, speaking from the position of an ethnologist, draws the attention to the limitations of narrative interview, overlooked by the proponents of this tool. Indeed, for many interviewees, presenting their biography is a serious problem, hence they expect assistance in the form of questions asked by the researcher, which inevitably leads to going beyond the directive of narrative interview and moving towards a free or in-depth interview, as well as steering the conversation and imposing the subject. This may induce the lack of reflection on the interviewee's life, the absence of experiencing the verbalization of one's own memories, not to mention the lack of openness and trust to the researcher who is a stranger, shyness, problems with memory, lack of interest in the history of one's family or social group (Kabzińska, 2003, pp. 44-45). Moreover, it seems that indicating to the interlocutor the plan to conduct an interview violates the requirement of the interview spontaneity, so strongly emphasized by the proponents of this method—the narrator has the time for the initial preparation of the story before it is told. The analysis can also be affected by the interviewee's previous experience in telling stories of his/her life, e.g. to journalists or other researchers, which means practicing some schemes of constructing statements about one's biography and distorted spontaneity of the interview.

The analysis of the communication schemes of a biographical interview is based on distinguishing its narrative, argumentative and descriptive parts. This allows the researcher to highlight two planes in the stories: the narrative (also housing the descriptive part) and the argument, and thus to recognize the past experience from the present attitudes towards

them, and also to trace the ‘biographical work’ of the narrator.⁷ In the narrative part, the interviewee recounts his/her experiences by embedding them in some context. For the researcher, it is important whether the narrative has sufficiently detailed descriptions, describing interactive scenes, citing one’s own statements and those expressed by others, thanks to which the text has a clearly identifiable subject of biography, contains a sequence of events and experiences, and poses a reference to the framework of social processes. Kaźmierska (2004, pp. 79-89) says about these elements, “In the narrative, its author reconstructs the processual course of experiences, and in the argumentative part, he/she makes an attempt, from the present perspective, to try to explain to himself/herself and the listener the motives for the past actions, to present theories about his/her own identity, and to evaluate his/her life.”

Having analyzed the communication schemes, the researcher goes to the structural analysis of the text, which allows for distinguishing the following elements: 1) structure in the background (a story plaited into the mainstream of the narrative, whose purpose is to provide the explanation or clarification); 2) the so-called overrides or gaps in the story; 3) theoretical comments (illustrate the current attitude of the narrator to the past events and also serve formulating assessments and commenting); 4) argumentative comments (at the end of the narrative parts; meant to explain past problems and determine the attitude of the narrator towards them); 5) coda (summary of the reconstruction of experiences, linking them with the present perspective, formal conclusion of the interview) (Kaźmierska 2004, pp. 71-96; Helling, 1985, pp. 105-108).

I am not going to deal with the detailed procedure of the narrative interview analysis here, however, what seems significant to me are the comments on the role of the researcher during the interview, to some extent

⁷ Kaźmierska (2009, pp. 34-35) defines biographical work as “making an effort of interpreting biographical experiences in relation to one’s own identity, images of oneself, behaviors, activities undertaken or not. Working on the biography continues throughout life, however, it becomes more intense when a person is subjected to difficult and unexpected experiences forcing a redefinition of identity, change of the way of life [this involves entering the trajectory within the meaning attributed by F. Schütze—P.T., see below]. One of the circumstances enhancing this work may be the need, appearing at a certain point in the life cycle, to give coherence to the whole biography, where different life experiences are not conducive to its consistency or disrupt it.” Such a need may generate an effort to take up a retrospection and describe one’s experiences in the form of memoirs or a diary, which happens to the Lemko authors in the mature stage of life. Biographical work can have both the individual and collective dimension. It seems that the characteristic feature of the biographical work of the Lemko generation writing memoirs is its collective dimension and that it is subject to collective interpretations that make a return to the past—a common experience of this generation—possible.

similar, as I think, to the role of the reader of Lemko memoirs. Although the impact of the researcher on the narration is minimal, his/her presence shapes the secondary order of the display of experiences, the dimension of generalization, synthesis, evaluation, and forms of self-presentation. In my opinion, Lemko written self-presentative memoirs assume a similar dialogical form, and the potential presence of the reader in the text ultimately affects its shape.

The assumption concerning the homology between the structures of experience and the order of talking about them refers to the model situation of spontaneous narrative, not thought out and not rehearsed, i.e. the narrative interview situation. In the course of such interview, different phases of the biography are recreated in the narrative in the same order in which they took place in the biographical experience. As pointed out by Kaźmierska (2004, p. 78), "the task of the narrative is to provide information about the processual course of experiences in the biography, thanks to which the researcher can analyze the phenomena he/she finds interesting not as a description of static states, but, referring to the concept of 'natural history' [...], through indicating how the phenomenon arose, developed and eventually disappeared." The interview, under this approach, shows the continuity of biographical experience and reconstruction of events. In the written narrative, this mechanism may seem quite different. Having some time to think about the selection of events as well as the possibility of multiple changes and shifts within the framework of the narrative (corrections, editing) cause that the reconstruction of biographical experience is devoid of the element of spontaneity and thus a concern can be raised doubting its usefulness for the biographical analysis. Nevertheless, this does not disqualify, to my mind, the usefulness of autobiographical sources derived from the memory of ethnic minority's self-presentation strategies, and even increases their rank.

What seems to be common in the structure of the interview and the written accounts is embodied by the process structures highlighted by Schütze and the mechanism for determining the communication schemes. Process structures cover the course of biographical experience shown in the interview narration: 1) biographical action schemes (characterized by intentionality of the undertaken projects); 2) trajectories (experience involving the entanglement of individuals in external factors, which are not controlled by them, but which determine their decisions and choices, often associated with trauma and powerlessness towards their position (the experience moves from intentional action in the direction of experiencing); 3) institutional patterns (subjecting the actions of the individuals to institutionally specific patterns, which are accepted and implemented by them); and

4) biographical metamorphoses (sudden positive changes in the lives of individuals, introduced otherwise than through biographical patterns of action, often associated with the reconstruction of their identity). In the analysis proposed by Schütze, there is an important division of the narrative into parts: I—the narrator speaks and the researcher listens actively; II—the narrator clearly finishes an utterance and the investigator asks immanent questions (related to the content of the narrative) and external questions (related to the research problems); and III—theorizing of the narrator's experiences (argumentation is included in this part) (Kaźmierska, 2004, pp. 84-86; Prawda, 1989, pp. 83-87; Riemann & Schütze, 1991, pp. 333-357).

The narratives, which I analyzed do not fit unambiguously within one of the above-distinguished processual structures. Lemko memoirs describe multiple aspects of the narrators' lives, and subjecting them to a review from the perspective of one of the processual structures planes would require focusing on the fate of the individuals', whereas the structures interesting from the point of view of the Lemko cultural self-presentation are precisely those structures that relate to the community and to the collective aspect of portraying the 'ethnic world' by Lemko authors. This also leads to a technical difficulty—Schütze developed his methodology to fit the needs related to analyzing the material collected via the narrative interview technique. The content of the interview is inherently shorter, less structured, chaotic, subject to a greater degree of *ad hoc* mechanisms of selection of material, than it is in the case of 'cold-told' accounts, where the author constantly has the insight into a systematically emerging narrative presentation of the substance (Piotrowski, 2003, p. 173). Hence, the analysis of the whole of the narrative from the perspective of processual structures does not seem purposeful to me (except one of these structures: the trajectory—embracing in the case of Lemko authors the displacement and its consequences and, instead of action, experiencing based on the accruing deficit of control felt by the individuals affected irrespective of their will (Prawda, 1989, p. 85). It seems that a more relevant concept as regards such cases would be the concept of the autobiographical narrative vectors. The set of such vectors consists of several categories of analysis, including, *inter alia*, overrides (associated with the act of pushing traumatic events out of the memory, both in experiencing and in the narrative), rooting in the history (descriptions of individual and collective experiences of the group in relation to the argumentative structures of historical, macro-social, and ideological nature facilitate locating these experiences in a wider context) and embedded in the *milieu* (the primacy of the 'locality,' description of the life environment, the immediate surroundings, and references to the history and theory are only of secondary importance serving the construction of arguments and

comments), which define the different interpretation attitudes of the narrators towards the events described. A manifestation of this is the organization of the sense of experiences, evident in the way of building the structure of the description and commentary on the presented events. The narrative also has a 'supra-local' character, going beyond the individual system of experience and reflecting the arrangement proper for the group experience, which grants the content of the narrative the elements embodying the collective identity (Piotrowski, 2003, pp. 174-175).

At the level of the narrative structure, an interview and a written story are an interpretative event (Filipkowski, 2007, p. 14), in which the narrator makes the selection of the material and takes up an effort to condense the content to the size of a report. He/she also performs the interpretation of the described events and experiences as well as an evaluation of the past decisions and choices. The narrator must take a position resulting from the attitude to his/her own biography assumed at the time of constructing the narrative account.

What autobiographies lack and what characterizes a narrative interview is a dynamic retrospection (Prawda, 1989, p. 84) and the ongoing generation of meanings in an interview situation. In the case of a published report, once the interpretation of the events and experiences of the narrator is completed, it is no longer available to verification, and the biographical work is done. What is more, a researcher dealing with written autobiographies or memoirs has no possibility to record and analyze the nonverbal behavior accompanying the narrative. Such researcher cannot find out what emotions accompanied the retrospection, which would be useful in supplementing the research material, especially in view of the principle of considering the narrative in terms of 'how.'

The thing that can make narrative interview closer to autobiography or memoirs, is the method of analysis used in case of the interviews. It seems to me that some of its elements can be used when working with the Lemko memories. Under this procedure, it is necessary to describe the dependencies and inter-relationships between the processual structures that build up the whole biography, and then to determine which of them are common also among other narratives. The next step is the so-called contrasting comparison of categories generated from the first text with the categories of the remaining accounts, which allows to showcase the theoretical diversity of the examined material. This enables elaboration of a theoretical model, the aim of which is to display the relationship between the biographical and social processes and which is verified by theoretical saturation, and therefore such a situation when consecutive portions of the study material do not bring cases that do not align with the model (Kaźmierska, 2004, pp. 86-89).

One more similarity between the two types of biographical material stems from the opinion expressed by Schütze that subjective meanings the researcher wants to analyze can be expressed only in the language of the narrator, and only when he/she has the opportunity to express his/her thoughts in a context in which he/she understands them. What is more, the narrator must take a stand towards the things he/she states (Helling, 1985, p. 103). This is possible also when writing down memories.

As pointed out by Iwona Kabzińska (2003, pp. 49-50), "biographical materials may be an excellent starting point for research on the attitude of the people and/or groups we are interested in to the space and special places highlighted in it, and on the sense of rootedness and the phenomenon of 'small homelands.' Extremely valuable sources of information in this case are the autobiographical accounts of people who, in different circumstances, have been forced to leave (permanently) the family home, with which they were linked by very strong emotional bonds."

According to Barbara Kubis (2007, p. 57), the biographical method facilitates carrying out "individual analyzes of the culturally imposed patterns of self-identification." Getting to know the fate of individuals, extracted from personal documents, allows one to link the fate of these individuals with the community they belong to (*ibid.*, p. 65). The biographical method ensures the chance to capture, on the one hand, the individual realization of cultural patterns, and on the other hand, the axio-normative system of the community represented by the author. I consider the personal documents literature created by the representatives of the minority community as an excellent source for tracking the ways of constructing a cultural self-presentation, an ethnic image, based on the memory and components for its development.

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"WRITING IS AS MUCH AS PICKING OUT AND PASSING OVER" TRACES OF A DIARY IN RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI'S *LAPIDARIUM*¹

by Wioletta Bogucka

Although the work of Ryszard Kapuściński has been the subject of a number of academic papers, the six volumes of *Lapidarium* remain relatively little-known. Researchers investigating the oeuvre of the Polish reporter and writer often pointed out the "diaristic nature of the cycle" (Horodecka, 2010, p. 312), placed it "somewhere between a journal of the books he read, an essay, a collection of aphorisms, and an intimate diary" (Grochowski, 2000, p. 122), or called it a "rough silva rerum" (Nowacka & Ziątek, 2008, p. 276). Always situated somewhere in-between, *Lapidarium* is a hybrid of literary genres. Nonetheless, so far no analysis has tackled the work in a manner thorough enough to distinguish theoretical bases of the genre's characteristics.

In my article, I try to distinguish the features of *Lapidarium* which constitute the work's diary-like character; I also trace out the process of the subject revealing himself in the six volumes of writings. Special attention is given to the textual dimension of the work, that is, what topics are mentioned by the subject when speaking in the first person, and what when using the plural or addressing himself indirectly. Moreover, I examine the following issues: does Ryszard Kapuściński-a character emerging from *Lapidarium* know how to cope with his own self, his 'I', with the Ryszard Kapuściński existing in real life, beyond art and literature? In addition,

¹ This article is based on an unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Masks and Faces of Ryszard Kapuściński*, written under the direction of Sławomir Buryła, professor of the University of Warmia and Mazury (Olsztyn 2013).

I consider what practical dimension was attributed to the diary notes and to what extent they could be described as having a causative, disciplining function (the concept of a soliloquy seems relevant here). I also discuss the differences between the entries which have and have not been published as books.

❧

Lapidarium is a collection of reflections spanning the years 1972-2006. The first volume came out in 1990, with the subsequent ones following in 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2007. The cycle has its origins in the imposition of the martial law in Poland, or, more precisely, in its consequences: "the editorial staff of the *Kultura* (*Culture*) weekly, for which I had worked, was disbanded, and just like all my friends back then I found myself unemployed. It deeply upset the order of my life. For many years, I had been following the same rhythm: go to gather materials for reportage, come back, write, then go again, come back and write, leave, come back, and so on. Until that moment, when I stopped. I had no obligations, no deadlines to meet, so I went for other, more personal means of expression," explains Kapuściński (2008b, p. 136).

First-person statements, bringing out the conscious voice of Ryszard Kapuściński, usually concern the act of writing. The first instance appears on page 61 of the first volume of *Lapidarium*. Using the metaphor of a ship, the author constructs a vision reflecting the individual's mood: "Whenever I walk around Manhattan, it always seems as if I were aboard a large ship. I have a feeling that everything around me is constantly rocking. The skyscrapers are like gigantic masts, with herds of clouds passing overhead. One can feel the sea. It's somewhere here, beneath me" (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 61).

A sense of uncertainty, conveyed here via the symbolism of the water, a feeling of the lack of solid ground under the feet, a foundation that provides support, becomes twice as telling if we relate it to a theme of obsession, which is clearly evident throughout *Lapidarium*. The obsession concerns a broadly understood loss and waste of time that could have been dedicated to working—or, in other words, to writing:

11 September 2001

Each day is important, each hour. I can feel the time hurrying me up, I feel its pressure. Anxiety in me. Continuous remorse due to lost moments. Aversion to anything that is not writing, not designing a new text, a book. (ibid., p. 163)

8 April 2003

Horrendous! The order of my day resembles an agenda of a major corporation or of the president of a large company rather than the way of spending time by a writer, who needs above all peace and quiet, some hours off from distracting side tasks that make you lose your focus. (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 241)

19 April 2003

As years go by, I glance at my watch ever more often, involuntarily. It always produces astonishment mixed with horror: "It's already nine!" (in the morning). "It's already eight!" (in the evening). I've never happened to say with contentment: "Oh, it's only nine!" or: "Oh, it's only eight!"

My time rushes, doesn't slow down, won't stop even for a moment. (ibid., p. 244)

Psychological criteria of time measurement: I used to count it in years, then in months, today, increasingly more often, in days. I feel a growing dislike of those who steal my time. Even though they often have the best of intentions, I find it hard to accept that someone takes my time from me, time that's essentially irrecoverable. (ibid., p. 245)

The fear of losing time and not using it for creative work has had a significant impact on the author's relations with his surroundings, and prompts the question: 'Why has writing been so important for Kapuściński?' In *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Anthony Giddens (1991, p. 44) discusses the possibility of substituting "anxiety" with a "symptom": "Anxiety is substitutive: the symptom replaces the anxiety, which is 'swallowed up' by the rigid pattern of behaviour that is adopted. The pattern is nonetheless a tensionful one, because an uprush of anxiety occurs when the person is unable to carry out, or is prevented from carrying out, the behaviour in question." Trusting the sociologist's intuitions, it can be concluded that in the case of Kapuściński, the act of writing was the way of coping with anxiety, and even a mere thought of being unable to continue the act induced uncertainty. A majority of the statements in which we hear the direct voice of the author of *The Emperor* are similar: one can sense hesitation, indecisiveness, a permanent lack of stability. It seems to be a consequence of the choice Kapuściński made when he chose to surrender himself to literature and let his existence revolve around it. The price for doing so was loneliness and difficulty in finding his way in life outside of literature. The necessity of writing is the reason why Kapuściński finds himself constantly teetering between the reality and literature, between what becomes synonymous with the lack of control, plunging into chaos,

and a sense of security and ability to maintain order. As Paweł Rodak (2011, p. 53) rightly observes, "The everyday existence of the writer is constituted through writing, and if for any reason writing becomes absent, the foundations of his existence are eroded." The erosion can be easily seen in the fear of the fruitlessly spent, merely *passed* and not *experienced* days, which in the future could lead to an idea for yet another book. The non-writing wasted days made Kapuściński extremely harsh on himself. In one of the entries, he acknowledges that "the price for talent is always some kind of abnormality" (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 207).

Ryszard Kapuściński is a paradox-ridden character. On one hand, he admits that "people are his woods" (*ibid.*, p. 122), he needs their presence and talks in order to create; on the other hand, people are the cause of 'halts' in the creative process. In a note about *The Guardian* London editorial offices, mentioning tons of papers on desks, noise, hundreds of ringing phones, he admits, "I like this world, preoccupied, tense, chatty, slightly dingy and mad, I immediately feel there on my territory at home" (*ibid.*, p. 106). Nevertheless, on the following pages he pictures himself as a man who hates phone calls, wanting to liberate himself from the omnipresent ringing, striving to keep his surroundings in order, from the desk in his study to the streets crossed during numerous travels: "Walking somewhere along the grimy streets and seeing the squalid houses, broken windows, dirty backyards, I immediately want to put everything in order, repair, paint. I feel a sick environment as a disease of my own, there is a physical relationship between myself and my surroundings" (*ibid.*, p. 170). This symbiosis required from Kapuściński to become involved in what was happening around him, to continually make decisions with no guarantee that any activity would make the world closer to what he wished it to be. The writer's inherent contradictions also had a direct bearing on his creative output. Some entries give accounts of the endless journeys (note: not of returns); at times, the reporter wakes up in the middle of the night with an overwhelming urge (bordering on insanity) to set off, treating it as an alternative to writing. Elsewhere, he admits that the constant change of places has an impoverishing effect, that the space he occupies becomes smaller:

Our departures are always marked by a kind of finality, a deep sadness
of a loss.

My homeland is widespread
it consists of addresses in different countries, on different
continents,
it is made up of hundreds of doors I know how to open,
buses whose numbers I remember,

streets, stops, newspaper stands
faces
voices. (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 158)

Toby asks how I feel when I leave. Terrible! I always lose something when I leave, every departure entails irreversibility. (*ibid.*, p. 179)

The passages from *Lapidarium*, exemplifying the first-person statements, reveal to us Ryszard Kapuściński—a writer, a character about whom the author may talk openly and, even more importantly, is able to do it. There is no doubt that for Kapuściński—a writer art is valued above all else, pushing real life aside, to the shadow. Writing provided him with a sense of security, as the world constructed in literature—contrarily to that starting right ‘under the skin’—could be kept under control. In the end, the fear of abandoning or even temporarily giving up literature seems impossible to overcome. This is most likely why Kapuściński openly admits he does not like the sun, preferring autumn and darkness (“Become fond of darkness. [...] darkness can also protect your peace. [In autumn—W.B.] the pace of life slows down, people prefer staying indoors, giving you more time to focus on your work” (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 258).); he sets out time and again, choosing to suffer mentally and physically only to be able to write. This behaviour exhibits symptoms of sanctification of the artist’s work, which was discussed by Daniel Fabre in an interview with Paweł Rodak (2009, pp. 235-236). The act of writing demanding sacrifice and risking one’s own life leads to physical self-destruction, which in turn fits into the sanctification model. Another consequence is focusing to a greater extent on one’s interior, which is expected to provide inspiration causing tension that compels the creative activity.



In the volumes of *Lapidarium* we can find many more indirect statements Kapuściński makes about himself. These include predominantly impersonal utterances, statements formulated in the plural, and quotations from other writers. For the purposes of this article, the author of these utterances is referred to by his initials, RK.

What is interesting about his voice is a poetics of orders, or commandments that RK addresses to Ryszard Kapuściński; a poetics revealing certain duality in the image of the author of *Lapidarium*. Małgorzata Czermińska (2000, p. 291) points out that “the presence of an appeal, apostrophe, or persuasion addressed to one’s self reveals the existence of two ‘images of the author’ in the text.” Whereas the listening ‘I’, i.e. Ryszard Kapuściński, constitutes the diarist’s current perception of himself, the

speaking 'I', i.e. RK, is the ideal projection of himself. The function of these statements consisted in leaving a trace behind by means of provoking certain patterns of behaviour and actions in real life. It was a particular way of influencing the reality, performing a causative, disciplining function; in addition, these practices helped in 'self-organization':

Not to fall into the trap of one's own past. (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 96)

I wish you will always have the ability to wonder. The day you stop wondering—you stop thinking, and above all—feeling. (ibid., p. 96)

It is essential that you retain the ability to experience, that there are things capable of making you marvel at them, causing a shock. It is essential that you are not struck by the heinous illness—indifference. (ibid., p. 200)

Your body talks to you. Listen to what it says. Pay attention. (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 104)

Avoid the rabble, or you'll end up badly, or it'll drag you down, destroy you. Treat these people like plague carriers, steer clear away from them from afar. The rabble is driven by a will to conquer, an envious passion for annihilating everything. The rabble's desire is to wreck your peace, prevent you from working and the humanity—from making progress. The rabble always moves backwards, towards the rear, it's moving—to be moveless. It wants only one thing—to bog you down. You won't be able to resist it because you're too weak. There's only one solution—at all costs steer clear from making the first step towards the bog. The first step is decisive. But how many situations there are when it's difficult to realize that it has been that first, and at the same time final step. (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 55)

Thursday, 30.11.1995

Write down, write down more! (ibid., p. 365)

RK's statements pose an attempt at pinpointing the sense of his own self—RK—a man. Becoming aware of the dichotomy between the speakers in *Lapidarium* is the key to further interpretations. Who, then, is RK—a man? The emerging picture seems to be far more depressing than that created by Ryszard Kapuściński—a writer. First of all, the man is perceived as a problem for himself as well as an individual 'poisoning' the surrounding people with his misery. It is a person deprived of home, possessing only a suitcase, frequenting many places, but without a fixed place of residence. Over time, he begins to regard himself as a separate entity, a past accumulated in itself, a lonely island about which hardly anything can be said

with certainty. The only thing known is that those who can hurt him the most are his closest ones. Relations with the surroundings are also more difficult to maintain. Those who come, who are born, are no longer for us, they prove useless, someone else's life seems too distant to do anything together. RK-a man chooses Proteus as his role model—a shape-shifting deity, accompanying Kapuściński whenever he wants to avoid intrusive questions (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 203).

Utterances made by RK-a man also contain contradictions. At one time staying longer in a place is considered a misfortune, at another it becomes his sole desire: "To live in a country long enough to be able to say: I completely don't know it" (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 453). RK admits he likes autumn, yet he also knows it is the time of depression, slowdown, torpor:

18.11.96

Around November the weather establishes itself, slipping into long autumn stillness. It's grey and humid. A heavy leaden sky hangs low motionless. From time to time, sudden slimy drizzles pass through, like flocks of wet birds. It's cold, though not yet freezing. It's the time of depression, slowed down blood, traffic accidents, illnesses, and of commotion on the cemetery. (*ibid.*, p. 440)

25 November 2003

Start liking darkness. It's the end of November, days are short, the sun rises late and sets early. For this reason, people feel bad, it's a time of the year that makes one prone to becoming stressed, irritated, upset, depressed.

But it is, after all, possible to tame this dark beast, and maybe even grow fond of it. Because darkness can also protect your peace. The pace of life slows down, people prefer staying indoors, giving you more time to focus on your work. (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 258)

What constitutes an indisputable link between Ryszard Kapuściński—a writer and RK-a man are the dreams, which revolve around a stay in the desert, a quiet bay, or a monastic cell—in other words, in places devoid of people, where one does not need to listen to what others have to say (it's particularly interesting if we bear in mind the philosophy of dialogue promoted by the author). Persistently going back in his mind to "place-no-place," as Zygmunt Bauman (1998, p. 72) called the desert, the protagonist of *Lapidarium* reveals his desire to preserve continuity and a sense of stability, to escape distractions. What he found attractive about the open space was a kind of existence 'beyond time,' no need for making decisions, for assuming any responsibility, for passing judgements. It therefore comes as no surprise that the fulfilment of dreams about freedom is achieved through literature. Kapuściński (2007a, p. 206) perceives

books as “a space that in the course of writing we try to fill in with various scenes, images, textures of words, thoughts, moods.” In the world of art, the decision what shall be brought into existence is made exclusively by the author. Moreover, it is a space remaining entirely under his control—no random events can happen, nothing can surprise or hurt him.

Bearing in mind that the selection and layout of the entries in *Lapidarium* was supervised by the author himself, we could wonder: does the reader encounter the genuine Kapuściński there, or merely an image reflecting how he wanted to be perceived? A partial answer can be found in the notes from the reporter’s private archive. Published posthumously, they are centred around two major themes, which are: *the act of writing*, and *the trace of the writing ‘I’* (which makes them similar to the volumes of *Lapidarium* published earlier).

WRITING²

10 April 1998

My aim and comfort in writing. It’s a granite foundation of Your continuing to be. It’s an area where you can be calm, certain—feel that you are needed.

14 May 1999

My mode of living makes it difficult to keep regular entries in “Lapidarium” and to write in general.

Time wasted as a writer:

St Anthony’s Oxford,
Temple University Philadelphia,
DAAD Berlin.
In total: 2 years.

Thursday, 22 July 1999

I’m not writing at all.

I feel emptiness in my head. Actually—it’s different. My head is filled with tenth-rate issues, unimportant trivialities. Any such trifle, not worthy of the least bit of attention—can immediately bother me, occupy my mind, devour my time and emotions, as if it were the best literary idea.

Writing—as the only criterion of the time spent productively.

² The following excerpts (smaller type) have been taken from Kapuściński (2007b, pp. 10-11).

'I'

...that he's worn out, weak, exhausted, that anything can easily possess him, boss around, push away the things that are important, truly worthy of reflection.

I have to defend myself against it.

I get up too late: before eight. That's how I lose the most valuable time I have: before noon.

Not good: looking forward to the upcoming meetings: talks, dinners, receptions. It should be the other way round.

Rejoicing at the prospect of meeting the thieves stealing my time?
V. bad!

May 2000

I'm 68 years old

1. I have the right to have less strength
2. I can write something new, but don't have to
3. The world appreciates me more than I do myself, not only for what I write, but for who I am.

and I don't have to sit exams every three months

Keep checking: is his thought carried, filled with non-creative subjects (issues), does it function inspired from within, stimulated by its own sources and energies.

Do not become distracted by non-creative things.³

Sunday, 20 February 2005

Terrible insomnia since 9 p.m. Angry with myself: these poor people in wheelchairs suffer a hundred times more!

(My image of the world should be more concerned about the ailments of the world, affliction, pain, everyday tortures.)

Monday, 17 December 2001

Good mood.

Firstly—limit external influences.

But secondly—above all DO NOT BECOME HYSTERICAL because of them. Here, the main source of my unhappiness are my delicate nerves, unbridled hypersensitivity.

³ The passage is particularly interesting not only because of the clearly stated aim of the entry, its self-disciplining function, but predominantly due to the author's addressing himself as a distinct person—could that be the germ of egotism? Moreover, it is a mark of Ryszard Kapuściński's belief that the source of talent, of true art lies in the individual—only the individual can be the cause of genuine beauty. In *Lapidarium* the belief is usually expressed through impersonal statements and quotations.

Commandments for myself:

- Write a piece about direct investigation. Then, use it as a point of departure for reflections.
- [...] Write a book that could be brought out by a liberal democratic Russian publisher.
- Continuously relativize, show:
complexity;
multiplicity (in addition: dichotomous multiplicity).

Learn how to:

1. save a file;
2. create a new folder;
3. navigate through files and folders;
4. use the programs: Explorer and Windows.

Have a more work-substantial approach to days, to life.

Choose only the necessary, absolutely indispensable, useful for creative work, exclusively for it.

Now I don't have any more time for parties, anniversaries, wedding receptions, any other group festivities. [...]

Be sure to try to do ANYTHING AT ALL!

Read a few pages.

Reply to 1-2 letters.

Make an entry for the next volume of "Lapidarium."

Break the restrictive rule of selection:

would I award the prize to X (who didn't get it), or rather to Y (who got it)?

I'd give it to neither of them!

22 February 2005

10th gym (first time after so many months.)

12th walk through the central borough.

Then reading:

for The Other,

for the translators.

Phone calls (4).

The will to read, to accept the outside world, to see, etc., is coming back.

Wednesday, 22 January 2003

My organization of the day seems poor. It's already 11, and I—despite

having woken up at six in the morning—haven't made a single step on the path to Herodotus. All the time I've been reading something else (Dąbrowska here, Kleiner there, and Didion on top—there are so many interesting things to learn!), making no progress on the path to Herodotus.

That's bad. I definitely need more self-discipline! Get up and immediately set off to Greece! Do not admit any other issues or subjects. Stay focused!

I refused an interview for "Przegląd." Consent—once the book's finished!

Writing letters with Dorota—7.

A lesson learnt from reading Andrzejewski:

Don't become obsessed with old age once you're old. No whining, no grumbling, no rending of garments. One has to live in harmony with the dynamics of the world. And today this stands for: swank, super.

Kapuściński's notes indicate that he made an attempt at introducing order into his life, making it coherent by recording everyday activities, thus exerting a real influence on life. In addition, we can track here first-person statements that take the form of performatives, of orders directed at himself that have a disciplining function. As a consequence, real life becomes subordinated to literature, which is promoted to the position of a superior value. Anything that is not literature the author regards as a loss, a waste of precious hours. It is worth noting that the creative act has also been emphasized visually.

ORDER OF THE DAY

- 7.—wake up
 - bathroom
 - walk
 - breakfast
- 9-13 WRITING
- 13-15 dinner
- Post office
- Nap
- 15-18 WRITING
- 18-20 reading
- 20-22 music, phone calls, TV.
- 22 sleep

Year 2001. A sketchy balance sheet

TRAVELS 7

Mexico City, March 3-16

Göttingen, March

USA (30.04-6.05)
Paris, May-June
London, June
Gdynia, 18-21 October
Wrocław, November [...]

14 April 2002

I'm stuck. I've come to a halt. Meanwhile I have to:

- write letters
- "Lapidarium V"
- interviews (a selection)
- book about Latin America
- book about Pinsk
- India, Egypt, Sudan, Nepal.

What distinguishes the entries in *Lapidarium* from those published in *Duży Format* (*Big Format*) is the fact that the latter include more instances of Ryszard Kapuściński talking in the first person about his weaknesses, problems (often with his own self), his struggles as a writer.



To trail traces of a diary in *Lapidarium*, I shall begin by drawing attention to a special moment-situation, which served as an impulse inducing the author to start writing intimately about himself (Lejeune, 2009, pp. 187-200).

The first volume opens with a 1972 memory of Mexico, when women and men, heading in the opposite directions, formed two circles. At that time, a significant event occurred in the life of Ryszard Kapuściński: for the first time, he was sent to a posting with his wife and adolescent daughter. The image recollected in the first volume of *Lapidarium* could be therefore understood as a metaphor of complex family relations, especially if one bears in mind that on several occasions Kapuściński mentioned how difficult it was for representatives of various generations to reach agreement. To succeed, an individual has to pretend to be someone he or she actually is not (note the literary way of depicting the issue).

In his entries, the author of *The Emperor* drew a clear dividing line between work, writing and preparations preceding the act (including gathering the materials), and life that goes on beyond literature. Not much time or space is dedicated to the last element, also in *Lapidarium*. However, one cannot claim that intimate details are altogether absent from the cycle. Many scholars believe that the only hint of the author's private life in the discussed volumes are the descriptions of visiting a doctor and diagnosing the illness. It is not true. Upon close reading of the entries, one

discovers in them a layer of privacy. It would seem that acting as if against himself, Kapuściński tries to externalize these issues as well. In all the 6 volumes there are 3 instances when the wife, daughter, and presumably the grandson are mentioned:

22.6

A dream:

I see a flying helicopter transporting a church tower (the helicopter has no horizontal propellers). The stone tower, tall, adorned with friezes—has been placed on the helicopter roof (the tower and the helicopter are one). There is a bright, clear, summer sky. I'm standing with Kuba on the edge of a city. The helicopter is flying at great speed and begins landing without slowing down. It makes a bend—and at this point tilts, rapidly loses its balance, and turns upside down. The tower is torn off and breaks into pieces in the air. The aircraft is also shattered to bits over the ground, the remains of the tower and the machine fall on the city.

(The day before J. told me the details of the IL-62 plane crash near Warsaw.) (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 132)

Palo Alto, California:

Cinema with Zojka and Mariusz. An old building, gilded gypsum cornices, cheap version of the Spanish-Mexican art nouveau (no shortage of that in California). The cinema—is also: a café, a bar, a restaurant. On the patio, someone's giving a guitar gig. The film is called *HARD ROCK LIVE SHOW*. (*ibid.*, p. 65)

15.8.96

A.B. told me a story about Paul, or that the TV screen is the whole world: our neighbours in Warsaw have been visited during vacations by a distant cousin—17-year-old Paul. Since we live next door, regularly drop by, and also share the garden and the veranda, we keep in close touch, on a daily basis. Paul's intrigued me from the start. He's nice, polite, but showing the indifferent politeness of someone belonging to a different world. We've already talked a few times. It's his first time in Europe. He doesn't know exactly where that is. More importantly—he's not interested in knowing. He doesn't want to visit any cities, go sightseeing [...]. As soon as he arrives in a new city, he sits down in a hotel room and switches on the TV. CNN is his channel of choice. (Kapuściński, 2007, pp. 359-360)⁴

⁴ Writing about Ryszard Kapuściński's grandson, Artur Domosławski (2010, pp. 288-289) recalls a similar story: "Once, when Brendan visited Poland, Rysiek tried to become close, to tell something about himself, the family, Poland. But he couldn't get through. The boy acted as if he had never left Canada: he switched the TV to English-speaking channels, and this was the sole thing that interested him."

Each of the above statements was enveloped in a general synthesis, a theory on the society, young generation, or modern world. The brief remarks constituting traces of the private life were shrouded by issues that have no relevance whatsoever to it. The author uses them merely as pretexts to present a pinpoint image of himself, to indicate his existence; it is an attempt to forcibly express that Ryszard Kapuściński's 'I' does not want to or cannot limit himself to being only a writer. It should be emphasized that another common quality shared by all these passages is also the fact that the author of *The Shadow of the Sun* does not reveal himself in them by speaking in the first person. Even the situation involving "Kuba," the writer's wife, is recalled as a part of a dream. One should not consider this behaviour to be devoid of importance, or ignore it, especially bearing in mind the motto of the first volume of *Lapidarium*, which serves also as the title of this text: "Writing is as much as picking out and passing over. Just like in a poem, when writing a diary one can afford a long spell of silence, an interruption in the middle of a word." After all, a diary creates space not only for the well-established, but also for what has been partially omitted, passed over in silence, subjected to selection, in order to extract the sense of the life lived. As the classic reminds us, when it comes to the selection, "the diary takes it to the extreme by laying down the results and building these results into a series" (Lejeune, 2009, p. 179). Recalling the function performed in Kapuściński's entries by individual sentences and orders, pointing out their performative nature, it would be difficult to disagree with this claim. The French scholar also considered the diary to be the art of "repetitions and variations" (ibid., p. 178). Striving to describe the main theme of *Lapidarium*, we refer to literature, to the act of writing, and to Ryszard Kapuściński. The author becomes a subject of self-interest as seen from two perspectives: *as an artist* and *as a man*. This kind of creativity, the casual writing style characteristic of *Lapidarium*, allows him to focus on himself. In an interview with Jarosław Mikołajewski, Kapuściński (2008b, p. 136) recalls the beginnings of his adventure with *Lapidarium*: "I started writing *Lapidarium*, a cycle of short reflections, and at that time I also returned to poetry. It was a colossal leap, not only in the literary, but also the spiritual sense, because the subject of a reporter are other people and the world, and the subject of reflection and poems may be one's own experiences." An attempt at preserving in fragments what he knew about himself, often concealing these truths, employing other people's voices, as well as communicating the same information in a number of ways, is a recurring motif in *Lapidarium*. "Everything revolves around this: **the desire of repetition and the fear of repetition. The rhythm of repetitions.** They enslave the man," says RK in the third volume of *Lapidarium* (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 423; bold added by W.B.).

What is also worth mentioning is the fact that continuity, a feature typical of the diary, is also preserved in the discussed work, although dates are not written down in a systematic manner (which shall be discussed below). The subsequent volumes of *Lapidarium* are numbered, with each encompassing one historical period during which it was written (except the second volume, which includes entries from 1989); all of them share the same graphic design and are linked by themes, the speaker's way of expressing himself over a number of years, and, essentially, by a sense of unity in being distinct. As claims Lejeune (2009, p. 176), "The notebook [...] operates at the level of the fantasy that Paul Ricoeur calls 'narrative identity': it promises some minimal measure of unity."

At this point it is worth reflecting on what Lejeune considers to be the defining quality of the diary: the capturing of time along with the dating system. "Keeping a diary is surfing on time. Time is not an objective, continuous thing that the diarist tries to portray from the outside using tiny discontinuous brushstrokes, as a novelist would. He is himself caught up by the moment, he is sculpting, moving along with it, emphasizing certain lines and directions, transforming this inescapable drift into a dance" (ibid., p. 182), says the author of *On Diary*. Writing in a similar vein, Kapuściński (2007a, p. 262) quotes from Seneca, "Live in time—Independent from time." One could venture a guess that the chaotic dating system stems from the writer's understanding of this category. Writing a diary is "a struggle against time" (Lejeune, 2009, p. 170). The author of *Lapidarium* either does not believe in that statement, or does not know how to put it into practice. Dates, that is links with reality, are not placed in a chronological order and appear occasionally—which is related to the attitude the author of *The Emperor* (a person who cannot escape the fetters of literature, as it provides him a shelter) exhibits toward 'real' life. In *The Shadow of the Sun*, Kapuściński discusses the concept of time as understood by the Europeans and the Africans. For the former, it exists in an objective manner, is independent from the individual, and requires obedience and subordination. The people of the Dark Continent do not share this view. For them, time is "matter that may spring to life, but falls into a state of hibernation, even non-existence, if we do not direct our energy toward it. It is a subservient, passive essence, and, most importantly, one dependent on man" (Kapuściński, 2001, p. 17). Following this approach, it becomes easier to discover hints of a diary in *Lapidarium*, in spite of the peculiar dating system. The motto opening the fourth volume of the cycle is a deliberate quote from William S. Burroughs: "Life stories are not an ordered narrative from birth till death. Rather, they are fragments collected at random" (Kapuściński, 2008a, p. 9). The absence of chronology reflects

the writer's obsession with the passing time. Thus, it is justified to regard the discussed collection as a 'diary' of sorts, written by a man living in liquid times. The notes are indicative of the way in which reality is perceived and described. For the author, it is "a constant sum, made up of an unchanging number of components, particles, elements. A change—involves moving the fragments to different places, arranging them in various configurations" (Kapuściński, 2007a, p. 313). This also explains how *Lapidarium* was born: "First, they write themselves in A4 notebooks, and then I rewrite and rewrite them. Then, I cut them up into fragments, and then glue the fragments together. Next, I read them again and make choices. It is a large-scale selection, because what gets into the book is roughly a quarter of what I've written. The selection process is very continuous" (Kapuściński, 2002a).

In his definition of the diary, Lejeune (2009, p. 179) described it as "a series of dated traces." Later, clearly giving a wink to the reader, he agreed to a minor yet crucial change, saying that "the diary is a narrative of traced dates" (*ibid.*). Considered from this perspective, the *Lapidarium* series becomes ever closer to a diary.

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NARRATIVES ON THE CHOICE OF STUDIES AS CULTURAL STORIES

ON THE EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEWS WITH THE ALUMNI OF THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

by Karolina J. Dudek

In this article, I am going to present some results of the study titled *Management Theory between Science and Practice: The First Professional Experiences of the Graduates of the Warsaw School of Economics*.¹ The text will begin with a discussion of important issues related to the methodology of the research mentioned above, then I will present the preliminary results of the analysis of the empirical material and describe narrative models—patterns of stories about choosing the studies that emerged from the content of the interviews conducted by me.

Research Methodology

In my doctoral dissertation, I tackle the problem of the extent to which the training in the area of management offered by the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH, commonly referred to as *esgieha* due to the pronunciation of the abbreviation) can be put into use in the professional practice of its graduates. The analyzed material consists of narrative biographical

¹ This is a title of a research project carried out in the School of Social Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, and also the subject of my doctoral thesis prepared under the supervision of professor Barbara Czarniawska (University of Gothenburg) and professor Andrzej Rychard (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, the Polish Academy of Sciences).

interviews with the students of the last year of studies at the School and also with its graduates. The interviewees were chosen via the snowballing technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). In the first place, I turned to the people that I know from studies at the School. The business environment is fairly tight and therefore difficult to test. That is why I decided to take advantage of contacts gained in the social space already during my own studies. Before each interview, I explained that I would like the interlocutors to tell me what they did during their studies and what was their career path like after completing the education at SGH until the present moment. The structure of the interviews was organized according to four general questions: 'Why did you choose SGH?' 'What did you do during the studies to learn how to manage and to prepare for professional life?' 'What do you do now?' and 'What elements of the education acquired at the studies are useful to you in management or in business and where do you get the knowledge from now?' The framework of interviews designated by the four questions was supplemented with additional questions. Open-ended questions, when used during the interview, allow for disclosure of unexpected responses, although, as noted by David Silverman (2006, p. 125), even unstructured interviews are a form of social control. My intention, however, was to avoid forcing the interviewees to provide answers characterized by 'suggested' form and content. The collected material was analyzed according to the grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006).

The modest volume of the text presented here allows for the presentation of the methodological assumptions only in the outline, nevertheless I have to make here a significant remark. In the Polish sociological tradition, it has been customary to relate the term 'biographical narrative interview' to the methodology developed by Fritz Schütze in the 1980s (when the most important works of the German researcher were published). As is widely known, Schütze proposed a compact design of a study on life-stories, which consists in "a specific technique of gathering the material, as a result of which we obtain the so-called life narrative and the method of analysis based on coherent theoretical assumptions" (Kaźmierska, 1996, p. 35). On the other hand, researchers whose considerations were the key inspiration for me developed different tools of conducting narrative biographical research (cf. Linde, 1993; 2001; 2009; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Czarniawska, 2004; Bamberg, 2008).

There are some fundamental differences between these approaches (for the purpose of my article, I propose to refer to them as 'the bio-narrativist' approach and 'the narrativist' approach). In both types of studies, the role of the researcher is determined in a different manner, and the ways of analyzing the registered narratives are also different. In 'bio-narrativist'

studies, conducted following the method proposed by Schütze, the aim of the interview is to get the story depicting the whole life, whereas the researchers whose works I refer to focus on examining "small stories" (cf. Bamberg, 2008; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Except for the situation when the overall narrative is forced by the fact of participating in the research, one usually does not present the entire history of life. On the other hand, we create and present "small stories" every day when we are asked: 'How was your day?' 'What happened today at work?' 'What are you doing now?' 'How was your holiday?' In response to these and similar questions we produce stories that are not only the carriers of individual and social meanings, but also, and perhaps primarily, *interpersonal spaces in which meaning is created* (Bamberg, 2008, p. 184). The narrativists focus on studying such stories. The differences between the above-distinguished approaches also reveal at the level of analytical procedures. Bio-narrativists use a relatively codified procedure (Prawda, 1989; Kaźmierska, 1996), while narrativists link their method to the grounded theory (especially in its constructivist variant) and use the concepts of narratology (I mean here the so-called second generation of narratological research (cf. Nash, 1990, p. xiii; Owczarek, 2001, p. 15)).

Small Stories: Why SGH?

I opened each conversation with the question concerning the reason why my interlocutors chose SGH. Some responded to it in a few sentences, while others developed a longer story. Answering this question often involved defining who they are and what their purpose in life is. The justification of the choice of studies is a story repeated many times, we could even say—'rehearsed.' 'Sensitizing' to some schemes of the story probably begins already in the circle of friends in high school, when a choice of what one will do after graduation becomes one of the topics discussed most often. The question of why it is worth studying at *this* university, at *this* faculty, is also repeated in everyday conversations at the beginning of the studies. Talking about why we got *here* is a way to 'break the ice' among the first-year students. In the course of subsequent conversations, often conducted within a peer group, the story is maturing and is subject to social development. Over the years, the frequency with which one goes back to these issues generally declines, although sometimes the story needs to be 'refreshed,' for example for a job interview. That is probably why, despite the elapse of years, my interviewees presented the story 'about the beginning' without much difficulty, and similar themes came up repetitively in their narratives.

Free Nodes and Grouping the Nodes

All interviews were transcribed by me and coded on the ongoing basis. I used primarily the NVIVO program, but I also printed individual interviews or sets of interviews and coded them manually, on paper, to have a better understanding of the emerging categories. I started coding the stories using the free nodes (unordered codes, assigned to separate portions of the gathered material), and then grouped them under more general categories and created node trees. The program used for this purpose allows for a very efficient arrangement of the material, and this process is also a kind of interpretive work. I compared excerpts of interviews coded in the same way and worked on the saturation of the selected categories.

Most of the free nodes, used to code the interviews tackling the reasons for choosing a university, were grouped according to three categories: (i) *environmental factors* (e.g. encouragement from family members; a graduate of the Warsaw School of Economics in the family; "my colleagues also decided to sit up for the exams to this university"); (ii) *ideas about studying at the Warsaw School of Economics* (e.g. prestige; "this school will teach me"; the possibility of shaping the individual learning path; a high level of teaching foreign languages), and finally (iii) *interests and abilities* (e.g. "I wanted to be a businessman"; "I have a scientific mind"). Other nodes were covered by two additional categories that I titled '*plan B*' (consideration of alternative educational pathways, such as economical studies at another university, polytechnic) and *problematic issues* (which will be discussed further on). Applying such devices made it possible to isolate the factors affecting most strongly—as it seems—the decision on the selection of future university. These included, among other things, the following criteria: the prestige of the facility, a wide range of educational opportunities offered by it, and practical orientation of the studies. A significant impact on the undertaken decisions was also exerted by 'counselors'—the interviewees signaled the influence of their peers ("my classmates also chose this school"), encouragement from parents and/or older siblings who also studied at the School. Many interlocutors emphasized the role of personal attributes or lack thereof ('innate' entrepreneurship; "I did not know what I wanted"); and the interest related to the sphere of economics and economy.

The method of analyzing the material, the result of which is 'specific' data in the form of a table of factors, certainly has many advocates and similar results could be fully satisfactory for many researchers. This way, characteristic for the survey method, of describing the decision-making process of young people and explaining what determines the popularity of certain educational institutions, has strongly dominated evaluation

studies or research of the fate of graduates. My doubts regarded the fact whether this is all that can be said on the basis of the interviews. I think that, with high probability, we can assume that a similar set of factors (perhaps with the exception of the option to shape one's course of studying or being interested in economics) could be distinguished by researchers conducting interviews with the alumni of any academic center, occupying, as is the case of SGH, a high position in the rankings of Polish universities. I wondered, however, whether there is something special in the responses of the SGH graduates that cannot be captured by a statistical analysis.

The Choice of the University as a Cultural Story

I decided to treat the induced narratives as cultural stories. The latter, as suggested by for instance David Silverman (2006), are constructed according to certain cultural models—they are the expression of a particular way of understanding the reality, certain ways of categorizing or expressing experience (Wolanik-Boström, 2008, p. 515; see also, Lalak, 2010, p. 155). Thanks to the existence of this type of schemes it is known who is the good and who is the bad character, and the actions and motivations are clear and strictly defined, since they lead to a predictable conclusion.

I used the instructions provided by Silverman (2006, pp. 133-143), who encourages the researchers to look for, in the course of the analysis of the interviews, the answers to both the 'What?' questions, which concern the identity, and the 'How?' questions related to narrative structures. Silverman cites the words of Jody Miller and Barry Glassner who explain the nature and meaning of cultural stories: "Interviewees deploy these narratives to make their actions explainable and understandable to those who otherwise may not understand" (*ibid.*, p. 134). Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 50) also emphasizes that the use of conventional cultural narrative stories is the only way to meaningfully express one's point of view, even if these schemes are used subversively—in order to dismiss or deny them.

I looked again at the gathered answers, but this time I concentrated not on extracting the individual factors in order to identify those which are mentioned most often. Instead, I was pursuing *ways in which they are combined into meaningful wholes*. Simultaneously, I was not interested in whether the presented accounts actually correspond to what guided my interlocutors at the time of choosing the future studies; what was much more important for me was how these issues were outlined during a conversation (cf. Linde, 1993, p. 68).

A look from a new perspective on the analyzed stories revealed several sense-making devices that organize the justification of choice and allowed

for the division of the utterances into four groups. The first of these is made up by stories about the 'early vocation and entrepreneurship'; the second—by narratives presenting the decision to study at the Warsaw School of Economics as a 'rational choice'; the third—by stories of 'searching for one's own way'; while the last is composed of 'problematic' narratives.

The narrative models distinguished in this way are presented in the sections below.

Narrative Models in Stories about Choosing a University

'Cause I've Always Been Entrepreneurial'

The main motive organizing the narratives on 'early vocation and entrepreneurship' is an interest in business and economic issues revealing relatively early in the life of the interviewees: "*My dad bought me some participation units in a fund when I was probably in the second grade of the elementary school... so mega early, [...] but it somehow translated into the fact that I became interested in the stock market [...] already in the elementary school I had some small investments performed on my own,*" said one of the interviewees [i2].² Equally early there also appeared the conviction that SGH will be the right choice of studies. This type of narratives I refer to as narratives about 'early vocation,' rather than narratives about 'emerging interests,' because a strong point in them is a discovery of a 'knack' for entrepreneurship and taking up a decision on realizing the business career, often combined with a dream of opening one's own enterprise or pursuing the managerial path in a large, international organization:

Already in the elementary school I knew that I would go to esgieh, because my teacher of Mathematics she told me about it. In the elementary school I was pretty good at Math and generally I had quite a progressive class. Our Math teacher was very ambitious and reasonable and she—so to speak—directed us. Her son chose a similar path, that is, he graduated from X high school and went on to esgieh. He knew that he would go to esgieh, that he would have good results in Math, and that he had such inclinations to management—so he "went into management." [...] When I was very little, my mother taught me, giving

² I conducted the research from October 2009 to April 2011. It consisted in 33 interviews (lasting one and a half hours each on average) with the last year students and the graduates of the Warsaw School of Economics, whose course of studies was largely associated with management. The transcripts were drawn up taking into account the basic principles of conversational analysis, but the excerpts of the interviews contained in this paper are presented in the form meant to facilitate focusing on the content of storytelling. Each interview is marked by a letter 'i' and the individually assigned number.

me some books to read. As soon as the biography of Lee Iaccoca was published in Poland—you can check on which day and in which year it was—she gave it to me to read and I swallowed it. I liked the idea of being such a grand president and managing everything, and that everything can be done better. A huge part of the biography is about his transition to Chrysler, which was badly managed, and he changed it all. I was very inspired and decided that I want some day to follow this... And besides, I was also interested in cars, so I wanted to get into managing cars and so on. And so I was somehow inspired by it. [i5]

In the above utterance, just as in the previously quoted passage of an interview, there are important figures of significant actors—those who shape the choices: the teacher, the parent, the older friend. In most narratives on ‘vocation,’ there appears a figure like this—the person who awakens some ideas about the world of business and studies at the Warsaw School of Economics. This may be a student or a graduate of SGH or a parent running his/her own business. What is important, is the ‘personal testimony’ submitted by the hero/heroine. It is worth noting that among those presenting the history of their choice of university in a similar fashion, there was only one woman (at the time of conducting the study she was a co-owner of a company).

‘Because I Wanted to Do Something Specific’: A Rational Choice

Many of my interviewees presented the decision about taking the exams to SGH as a ‘rational choice’—it is the second narrative scheme distinguished by me in the course of analysis. It ranks in some sense between the two poles, determined on the one hand by the narratives of ‘vocation’ and, on the other, by the stories of ‘finding one’s own way.’ This is the dominant model of narratives.

The interviewees emphasized the prestige of SGH and the fact that choosing this university—in their opinion—was to ensure a solid professional preparation that later on would facilitate their finding a “good job.” In several speeches, a “good job” was defined as such that guarantees high earnings (financial justification appears only in the narratives of the ‘rational choice’). The interviewees often mentioned that they wanted something “concrete,” “useful,” and in their opinion, SGH ensured a chance to gain practical tools necessary for work. One of them gave me the following explanation:

This was not a great interest in the business since the very dawn of time, but rather a practical look at the scope of knowledge you can acquire at a given university. I considered the studies completely unrelated to business: linguistics, cultural studies and different studies related to the humanities. All of them seemed to be too limited and not giving knowledge about the business or about

the professional work in the future, so for instance linguistics did not give any substance knowledge. Cultural studies gave nothing at all—it was not preparation for the profession, but rather a certain hobby. So I went to esgieha. The flexibility of this university—at least at that time—was widely known, so I decided to opt for this university and not any other economic academy still run in the standard, schematic way. [i23]

This raises the theme of meticulous comparison of various available courses of education and evaluation of the perspectives they entail. Instead of choosing something that could be enjoyable and interesting (cultural studies, which can be regarded as a hobby), the narrator decides to pick up something that is to provide market-attractive education and a solid foundation for the profession. This person compares the offer of various courses in economics and justifies why his/her choice was the most advantageous one. In this way, the narrator showcases his/her decision as sensible and mature, and presents himself/herself as a person that is responsible and thoughtful as regards the future. What is important in this case is the element of agency—considering various options in order to make the best choice and realization of the decision taken. It is worth noting that in the narratives of the ‘rational choice,’ there can be observed the strongest motif of adopting ‘plan B’—namely, taking exams ‘just in case’ to a different university, which is treated as a kind of ‘lifeline.’

The quoted excerpt from the interview is in one respect different from other stories of the ‘rational choice.’ It lacks the element of ‘action’—there are no events. It is rather a reconstruction of the reasoning—an objective comparison of alternative options. In other cases, the explanations were more a storytelling than an argument, but in the example analyzed above, this second element was the dominant one, as shown below in the following citation:

I had no plan B at all. Esgieha—it was my dream [...] practically all through high school I instilled in myself the thought that I would study at esgieha, because graduating from this university guaranteed me, at the time when I was still in high school, let's say, a good, ambitious, quite well-paid job. But, times have changed a little and—as it has turned out recently—the crisis, and some collision with the reality have turned out to be brutal. In high school, I had a feeling that it is the best university in economics and wanted to develop in this direction, so there was no other plan: from the beginning I was focused on esgieh. As were many of my friends. I attended a high school, which [...] in these rankings was one of the highest ranked one in 'my city,' so we also had quite a weird marketing, [...] that everyone should already be focused on some studies and should know their entire career path, for the whole lifetime, if possible. Also, we were forced to think seriously about the future, so this esgieh had been instilled in me earlier. [i20]

The narrator recalled certain states of mind, some ideas: "it was my dream," "instill the thought," "I had a feeling." There are three elements of justification. The initial parts of the narrative are interleaved with the evaluation of the argument (a guarantee of good job) from today's perspective (the crisis). In the final parts, the narrator presents herself as a member of a community of people in the same circumstances, thinking alike ("as were many of my friends," "so we also had quite a weird marketing," "we were forced to think seriously about the future"). The explanation is closed with the words: "this esgieh had been instilled in me earlier." This wording is seemingly contradictory to what the interviewee declared at the beginning: "it was my dream." However, I think that we should not be reading this as the truth disclosing the earlier lie. I would rather see here the evidence of the influence exerted by the school policy—shaping life attitudes of pupils, indicating potential career paths and fostering ambition. What is socially defined as 'decent' and 'appropriate'—getting accepted at a good university, which guarantees employment—is internalized and becomes an individual value and purpose to fulfill. The reference to other people who have taken similar decisions, or in some way approved of them, is a way of symbolic assigning a kind of social support to the decision taken.

'Cause I Didn't Know What I Really Want'

"I think esgieh is a university for people who do not know what they want to do in life, but they are clever enough to be able to get here and there, and there, so just in case they go to esgieha," explained one of my interlocutors [i10]. Some explained their choice first of all by the fact that SGH allowed them to postpone the decision about the major practically until the submission of the M.A. thesis.³ These narratives strongly emphasize the prestige of the university and its flexibility with regard to forging one's own path of studying, but the dominant element here is the figure of 'the lack and uncertainty.' This is the main thread of the narrative 'of finding one's own way.' The interlocutors presented SGH as a reasonable choice for someone who does not have clearly defined plans for their future career, who is still looking for the path of development. However, this search is not

³ While my interlocutors were studying, all students at SGH had individual curriculum. There were no groups that would be assigned a specific schedule of classes. In the Primary Course of Studies, lasting three semesters, each of them had to pass compulsory subjects, but they were able to choose lecturers. As part of the Graduate Course of Studies, each student had the opportunity to compose an individual study path. The declarations concerning the choice of a major (SGH was then a university with no departments) were submitted only with the M.A. thesis. The studies were considered to be completed after passing the defined program minimum.

expressed in terms of individualism; it rather arises from the lack of clear patterns and models of a business career that could be followed:

It was so, that for many years I really wondered what I wanted to do in life and I really did not know and going to esgieha, I still did not know that. What's worse: graduating from esgieha, I still did not know! And it is precisely this kind of uncertainty, and it is that I haven't somehow decided for one particular major—that I definitely want to be a doctor or a journalist or a sportsman—this meant that I was looking for something more universal, which would make it possible for me to go later in different directions, which would give me some basics there, but it would be so flexible that I could later use it in different areas. Well, esgieha was a sort of a natural choice due to the nature of the university. [i9]

This attitude is accompanied by reluctance to follow the trail closely defining the nature of the profession to be performed in the future. For some, the decision to choose a university is associated with the elimination of subsequent possibilities that for certain reasons, in the assessment of the interviewee, did not suit his/her interests or skills. It ought to be noted that the types of studies mentioned as potential educational paths can hardly be included into the spectrum of economic sciences. They definitely make an extensive search area. The interlocutor considered, *inter alia*, law, international relations, journalism, medicine, and therefore quite a diverse range of majors, which have one common feature, though. All of them are considered in Poland as ennobling studies and also requiring a lot of preparation effort from the candidates. These explanations, therefore, contain some hidden message that could be closed in the formula: ‘among the most prestigious studies, I chose SGH’—this message undoubtedly serves as a symbolic appreciation of the decision taken.

Problematic Narratives

The last group covers the ‘problematic’ narratives, certain separate cases, which fit into one of the three main types of narratives, but also contain a ‘mismatched element’ which is not present in the model variants of the stories. The problematic nature of these narratives lies in the fact that “[t]he narrator’s particular story is not identical to—and may even depart radically from—what is ‘storyworthy’ in his or her social context” (Chase, 2005, p. 662). Each autobiographical story is subordinated to certain rules, which will enable it to be understood. Through the operation of these rules the story-teller is able to present himself/herself as a member of a particular community, a representative of a given culture. However, apart from these predictable elements, the stories comprise some motifs that make

them unique, individual, and therefore worth telling (Bruner, 2001, p. 30). Not every act of exceeding this canon sheds the value of 'tellability' onto a story, it needs to be followed, at the same time, by the element of surprise, but one not depriving the story of the matrix thanks to which we will understand its message. In other words—a breach of the convention must also be conventional!

The example quoted below contains a number of elements that can be found in the above-mentioned model narratives: significant actors (parents, who are mobilizing to learn), entrepreneurship, but also the lack of a clear idea of what we can do after the studies at SGH. The way in which the narrator begins her story proves that she is aware of the fact that it is somehow different from the stories of her fellow students:

I think I have a pretty unusual story to tell, because I am from a very small place. My parents were born in Silesia and my whole family comes from Silesia. But, because of some bizarre student fantasy, they decided to take up agriculture and [...] they just finished the school to have a diploma of a manager of pegieer,⁴ as it was still popular in those times. Then, they moved to this microscopic village inhabited by 100 people... After a year, pegieery collapsed, so this was the end of their career in this area. Well, but they found a shop and opened their own business, so I grew up [...] in such post-PGR conditions, and frankly, I think it is a pretty hard environment to enter the adult life, especially a business life. Most of the people that I remember from class, even though these were smart kids, good pupils, but with no prospects, without such faith in oneself... or the parents' faith in the fact that they can go on to college, learn, go to a larger facility... most of these girls now have a child after a child without a husband, or at best some left for Ireland, because it's already been a great opportunity for them. [i16]

This narrative breaks down the conventions that organize the types of stories presented earlier. It is focused around the explanation of how, despite the highly unfavorable life circumstances, the interlocutor succeeded, in her opinion, in achieving a success. She situates her place of birth rather in a particular social space than any geographical one. This place is significant and determines the course of her life. The next part of the story comprises a number of passages about gaining knowledge with real passion, embellished with perseverance and hard work. Although the narration does not entirely fit into 'classic' stories about choosing SGH, it reminds well-known success stories. An example of the manifestation of similar structures is for instance Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, considered by many to be the canonical story of a man who earned his success

⁴ PGR (pronounced in Polish as: 'pegieer'), a State Agricultural Farm, was a form of collective farming similar to the Soviet sovkhоз and the East German Volkseigenes Gut.

himself. Another good exemplification of a “from rags to riches” story is the autobiography of Lee Iaccoci—a corporate self-made man (Grzeszczyk, 2003, pp. 25-34 and 77-87).

An extremely crucial motif in the case of ‘problematic’ narratives is the emergence of specific predispositions:

In addition to this, in high school, I participated in a program of running a company—now I remember. We had a company that produced Christmas cards and also very artistic origami roses, which were sold for Women’s Day. It was a very clever idea, because we sold them at wholesale prices to boys from another class, so everyone could give them to a girl, to the girls from their class, so it was a pretty good business. And it seems to me that I held there a more managerial function. I never had the talent to shape the stuff of paper, so I was rather responsible for bossing around. So that is something in the area of such experiences, scientific and organizational.

And now I also remember... Recently I realized that in fact my first experience in marketing—because now I work in marketing—I already had in the shop in the elementary school. At some point I started to run it with my friends and one of my first moves was that [...] I did a great advertising campaign of a wafer: (draws a bar in the air) super fragile and delicate, and ‘now there is a 10-grosz⁵ discount—only this week!’ And it was fun and it worked, so I had a lot of joy with this shop. [i16]

Similarly as in narratives of ‘vocation,’ also here the ‘knack’ for entrepreneurship is revealed. Realizing the existence of certain predispositions is combined with the action—taking up the first marketing projects. The things that happened in the past are presented as a harbinger of the future career, as entering the way that the narrator is following today. As I mentioned earlier, the story about why someone chose SGH very often involves an explanation of who one is. In this way, coherence is introduced into a biographical narrative: the past is a predictor of the future and they are both linked in the presence.

This case is obviously only one of a few similar accounts. Another interviewee began his unusual story like this: “*This beginning was very funny, because it was like this that in the second grade of high school I completely had no idea what studies look like. I’m even the first person in the family, that graduated from a university*” [i17]. The narrator pointed to the lack of role models, and at the same time strongly emphasized the interest that economic issues (“*I was not thinking so much about management then, generally I was not quite sure what it means*” [i17]). Two interviewees (women) shifted the agency and decisiveness on other actors and presented themselves as individuals

⁵ Grosz, a coin used in Poland as a hundredth part of 1 PLN.

subordinating to the 'external' choices: "*First, it was the choice of my father, and second, it was the choice of most people from my high school,*" "*it was not my decision but somehow somewhere I was directed to the appropriate tracks*" [i28], "*I went to esgich because my friends went there*" [i11]. In two other stories, one more 'strange' theme is manifested—'being a humanist' and 'not coping' with mathematics.

The featured examples visualize the parts that do not fit the model narrative and thus allow to understand what elements should be found in it: the models, in particular, role models, agency of the narrator (he/she makes choices, even if he/she consults others), and—to put it metaphorically—'scientific mind.'

Summary

I presented two stages of conducting an analysis of autobiographical narratives, which—to some extent—may be treated as separate, yet complementary ways of analyzing data. The first stage was associated with free nodes and grouping the nodes. As a result, I could outline the structure of the factors influencing the choices made, just as it is done in survey-based studies. In such research, however, assumptions are made about the shape of the factors structure and in the course of the study only their influence is checked, which is expressed as a percentage. I, on the other hand, distinguished various categories of the analyzed material.

The second stage involved the analysis of the narratives recognized as cultural stories. To sum up: the narrative of the 'early vocation' includes such items as—relatively quickly developed—interest in the business, stock exchange or finances; they are accompanied by dreams about starting one's own business; there are significant actors, shaping the ideas of the narrators about the world of business and studies at SGH. The extremely important aspects here are the patterns of thinking instilled by the members of the immediate family. Narratives of the 'rational choice' accentuate the prestige of SGH, the opportunity to gain practical tools and good preparation for the working life. The theme around which the narratives of 'looking for one's own way' are constructed is the lack of a strict, explicit vision of the future. It is a search for something that corresponds to the predispositions, and in which 'one can find his/her place.' This freedom to choose was linked by the interviewees with the lack of targeting interests or skills, which limited their room for educational maneuvering. Choosing SGH was supposed to act like a temporary 'safety brake,' enabling the interlocutors to try their hand at operating within various domains. In all types of stories, there appear themes related to taking exams to a 'plan-B university.'

The Polish Law on Higher Education, revised two years ago, (2005; amendment—2011) requires universities to monitor the professional path of their graduates in order to “customize the fields of study and training programs to the needs of the labor market” (Article 13a). Most universities have implemented research programs concerning their graduates. All studies that I know of used for this purpose a quantitative research tool. The results of analyzes are presented there in the form of tables and graphs. In contrast to this, narrative biographical research facilitates conducting an in-depth analysis of the motivation and cultural patterns emerging in the course of storytelling, which I try to portray in my research work.

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