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Two Dimensions of History: An Opening Sketch¹

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“National traditions [...] eternal, handed down from one generation to the next, sometimes prophetic in nature; they are, in large part, a freer and truer expression of national sentiments than attained facts and written history.”

Cezary Biernacki, *Encyklopedia Olgerbranda* (1867)²

“Tradition is the illusion of permanence”

From Woody Allen’s film, *Deconstructing Harry* (1997)

Opening

Looking back at the two-decade history of the Polish Second Republic (1919–1939), we are able to describe an era of great hope and transformation. Looking back at the last quarter-century of post-communist transformation (1989 – present) – that is, at the history of the Third Republic – we are choked by the proximity of events, by a surplus of emotion, and by partisan political conflict. In effect, we are not describing a transformative epoch;

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1 The article was also published as a chapter of the book Robert Traba, *The Past in the Present. The Construction of Polish History* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015).

2 From Janusz Tazbir, “Tradycja i rwanie ciągłości,” in *Przyszłość tradycji*, ed. Sław Krzemień-Ojak (Białystok: Libra, 2008), 22.

rather, we are entangling history with politics. This is, on the one hand, the inevitable consequence of the unity of space and time, in which the author/historian is – whether he likes it or not – an actor in the theater of public events. On the other hand, it is the result of a continuing insensitivity among Poles to the modernization of the historian's craft; if embraced, such modernization would allow us to build a new research instrumentarium, by which we could, in turn, gain some distance from still “hot” events. Or is it simply a fact that the historian's research instrumentarium is doomed to fail when describing recent phenomena, in which “history” is not so much an academic discipline as it is one of the main actors (subjects) in current political disputes?

I do not intend to provide simple answers to such questions, in part because I do not have simple answers. In any case, now that the boom in the so-called “new politics of the past” [*polityka historyczna*] in Poland from the years 2004-2007 has passed, it is worth returning to the topic in order to prevent us from once again falling into the trap where politics appropriates history. Aside from that threat, one of the clear merits of the “new politics of the past” is the fact that – in the public debate – the question of what place history “should and should not take” in the social discourse has been given increased weight. Until recently, the subject was either treated marginally, or was politely avoided as something not quite worthy of serious discussion, and this is because Poles, general speaking, oppose using history for political purposes in light of our experiences with how the communists manipulated it for decades. Paweł Śpiewak summarized the debate over history in the first decade of the Third Republic by writing that – against the background of the “dispute over Poland” – issues of identity (with history as the foundation) were so prominent that it was not so much intense as it was “obsessive.”³

Several issues – the conflict over former President Lech Wałęsa's biography (not just its political aspects); ongoing disputes about the foundation myth of the Third Republic; the continuing “historical initiation” of the Fourth Republic (today, through the back door); and finally, the return to irrationality in the debate “with” and “about” the Germans and the Russians – indicate that we are still at the center of not so much a dispute among historians, but an ideological struggle that reflects a question that Polish historian Jerzy Jedlicki once posed: what kind of civilization do Poles need? Narrowing down Professor Jedlicki's question, I would ask today: what history, and what memory, do Poles need?

3 Mainly, the debate revolved around the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and nationalism: Paweł Śpiewak, “Wyjaśnienie zamiast wstępu,” in *Spór o Polskę 1989–99*, ed. Paweł Śpiewak (Warszawa: PWN, 2000), 15.

Sociologist Marek Czyżewski, in an analysis from the year 2006 (that is, at the height of the dispute over the “politics of the past,” or – to use another term – the “politics of memory”), distinguished two axes in that public debate: eccentricism versus ethnocentrism, and social criticism versus moralism.⁴ While eccentricism (understood as programmatic avoidance of prejudice against others) and social criticism (understood as behavior explaining problems by objective circumstances) are – according to Czyżewski – characteristic of the discourse carried out in the “historiography of the Third Republic,” ethnocentrism and moralism are at the core of the historical message of those demanding the establishment of a Fourth Republic. Czyżewski defined ethnocentrism not as national chauvinism, but as a “return to respect for so-called common sense” – that is, for the principle that each ethnic group is ostensibly guided by the requirements of group loyalty and, hence, a “measure of understanding” for one’s own transgressions and a “measure of incrimination” for the transgressions of others. Moralism is the application of the same model on an internal foundation, signifying – as it does – a division between a “history of shame” (e.g. communist rule in Poland) and a “heroic history of glory” (heroic feats).

I would argue that the categories employed in the “discourses of the Third and Fourth Republics” are relevant in relation to wider ideological divisions in Poland at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is justified to conclude that the dynamics and philosophy of the dispute have led to a hardening of argumentative strategies. Instead of polyphony in the public sphere, and instead of methodological-conceptual diversity in the academic sphere, an attempt at political exclusion and self-ennoblement has been put on stage, all of which has been fostered by – to employ a concept used by the American sociologist Anselm L. Strauss – a shortage of “arenas” for dispute – that is, for example, of those public media that would make possible a direct, matter-of-fact confrontation among adversaries. Today, that role is still being played by the Catholic weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny* and, to a lesser extent, by *Przegląd Polityczny*. To a certain degree, it has also been played by publications put out by one of the main players in the “discourse of the Fourth Republic,” namely the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [The Institute of National Remembrance, IPN], from which the above-cited Czyżewski article comes. The use of antagonistic discourses [“The Third Republic *versus* the Fourth Republic”] is deceptive when defining historiographical debate. While I – as a participant

4 Marek Czyżewski, “Debata na temat Jedwabnego oraz spór o ‘politykę historyczną’ z punktu widzenia analizy dyskursu publicznego,” in *Pamięć i polityka historyczna. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów*, ed. Sławomir M. Nowinowski, Jan Pomorski and Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 135-139.

in these debates in the public sphere – would without hesitation categorize myself as a representative of the “discourse of the Third Republic,” I would argue that Poles – in the academic sphere – need to carry out an extensive search for new, more accurate categories to define various trends in Polish historiography.

Dimension One: History as *Politikum*, or On the Need to Choose

1. “Construction” and Choice

The two epigraphs with which I began this work are divided vertically by 130 years and horizontally by transatlantic space. But it seems to me that even today, despite the passage of time and the great distance involved, they make up the qualitative framework, indeed the axiological framework, of the Polish (not only) public debate about tradition, memory and history. I consider both, for different reasons, to be broad indicators of this debate.

Biernacki’s definition of national traditions, typical of the era in which the ideology of nation-states was being created, tries to convince us – using other words – of the existence of the “soul of a nation,” of the perpetuity of tradition, which is “a more free and true expression of national sentiments than attained facts and written history.” In effect, this is a call for the creation of a national myth, and for that myth to be passed on from one generation to the next. By chance, Biernacki reveals for us the two dimensions of the “real” function of historical fact identified over the last hundred years by those working in cultural sociology, and a bit later by those in modern historiography: as a specific event, and as an idea or image, which – because it gives meaning to our thoughts and attitudes – becomes itself a real, social fact. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki defined and developed this duality of fact into a humanistic indicator.⁵ In the 1970s, French historian Pierre Nora introduced into the study of history the concept of “history of the second degree,” or that which happens in our minds and defines our individual and collective identity. The dominance of historical myth in the public space is characteristic of each national ideology.

Harry Block, the main character of Woody Allen’s *Deconstructing Harry*, is a neurotic writer from Manhattan with a complex psychology and a Jewish family background. He rejects tradition entirely. In an argument with his half-sister, an orthodox, fanatical Jewess with a weakness for the perverse, he declares that “tradition is an illusion.” In the individual dimension, in an

5 Florian Znaniecki, *Współczesne narody* (Warszawa: PWN, 1990); Florian Znaniecki, *Nauki o kulturze*, trans. Jerzy Szacki, with introduction Jan Szczepański (Warszawa: PWN, 1992).

attempt to build a distinct identity, many people try to free themselves from the family ballast; some actually manage to make such a break. But in the collective dimension, the mechanism for an abrupt “break with tradition” is an illusion, and when it does happen, it is with the help of authoritarian (totalitarian) state structures.

Anthony Giddens, a towering figure in modern sociology, formulated concisely the quintessence of what occupies the space marked out by these two epigraphs:

Most nations refer to historical myths, and those myths are based neither on the past, nor on a reconstruction of that past. The creation of nations is the extraction of those values which may be useful now. [...] The past can be constructed from various points of view. Nations usually shape their sense of identity by focusing on certain issues and ignoring others.⁶

I make only brief mention of this passage because, in a previous book, I wrote extensively on the theory of the construction of collective memory,⁷ and with this in mind, I would like to highlight my basic thesis, which is that identity, memory, tradition, and finally the study of history itself (more on this a bit later), are – in fact – constructions. Let me add that my approach has nothing to do with yielding to outdated fashions in the Western social sciences and humanities; rather, it is about inspecting – in the processes by which nations are created – both the traditionally load-bearing elements of tradition and language, and the roles played by choice and randomness in the formation of nations, in the perception of the nation as an imagined community, which was created both through a conscious selection of shared symbols and characters, and through a consensus among the elites who selected them.

In the last few years, disputes in Poland over history's place in the public sphere have apparently calmed; it is sometimes said that we have ended our fascination with the “new politics of the past” only to fall into a vacuum, in which the “discourse of the Fourth Republic” drifts along the margins. But this is only apparently true. I believe that we find ourselves in a dangerous stage of transition, in which ideological-national interpretations of history, politically promoted at the beginning of the twenty-first century, are strengthening and spreading. Basil Kerski reflected accurately on this phenomenon in his recent book *Homer na Placu Poczdamskim* (2008, Homer at Potsdamer Platz).

6 “Historia i jej rekonstrukcje,” [Teresa Stylińska talks with Anthony Giddens] *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 46 (2006). Supplement: “Historia w Tygodniku,” ed. Wojciech Pięciak,

7 Robert Traba, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu* (Warszawa: ISP PAN, 2006).

His views are particularly interesting in that, in light of his own biography, they are rooted with varying degrees in four cultures (Polish, German, Iraqi and Jewish). The selection and construction of his own self-identity is an inherent part of his life-experience and personality.

Self-critical debates on the subject of identity have in fact not yet ended, though I have the impression today that many people, feeling a certain level of fatigue and exhaustion, yearn for a clear vision of history, for positive myths. Critics of self-critical patriotism and intercultural dialogue are currently experiencing their heyday. One could clearly feel this climate in the campaign leading up to the most recent parliamentary and presidential elections [2005], in which a central role was played by the issue of corruption and socio-political issues, but also in which competing visions of history and different concepts of the Polish nation and its relationship to neighboring countries became important elements in the political struggle.[...] Today's critics of the culture of self-critical patriotism are connected by an old-fashioned view of international politics as a Darwinian struggle of nations; it is a perspective that excludes the existence of pluralistic societies.

It is alarming that critics of self-critical patriotism are found not only among former communist activists or extreme nationalists, but also among young, liberal-conservative intellectuals.[...] Only answers to critical questions about the history of Poland can form the basis for a new national strategy - a strategy with chances of success.⁸

"Confrontational-national" views are promoted and reinforced above all by decision-makers (not all of whom are historians) at the IPN and by its politics-oriented educational strategy. Another large Polish institution of public education, the Museum of Polish History (which concentrates its activities more on public history events like exhibitions than on a deepened sense of the historical record) accepts this state of affairs by avoiding controversial debates that could foster new perspectives.

The IPN's activity is a history in itself. In 1999, the act to establish the institute came into force. Various hopes were tied to the institute at its creation. It was built on the basis of the decades-old Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu [Main Commission for the Research into Crimes Against the Polish Nation], which investigated and prosecuted crimes

8 From Basil Kerski, "Samokrytyczny patriotyzm i kultura dialogu," in Basil Kerski, *Homerna placu Poczdamskim. Szkice polsko-niemieckie* (Lublin: UMCS, 2008), 260–262.

from the Second World War (until 1990, it was called the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich, or the Main Commission for Research into Hitlerite Crimes). The IPN inherited the Commission's archives, its excellent library, and several of its prosecutors. In the 1990s, the Main Commission took up the investigation and prosecution of Stalinist crimes. The eventual transfer of such responsibilities to the IPN was natural.

The IPN was originally intended to solve problems related to the archives of intelligence services of the communist Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (People's Republic of Poland, PRL) by taking their contents out of the hands of free Poland's intelligence agencies, and thus eliminating the temptation to use the document "folders" (in Polish: *teczki*) as a tool in wider political games. Much more than that, politicians were not to have access to these records. The archives were supposed to be the subject of research for historians, the goal being to gain knowledge about the PRL, about the mechanisms used to govern communist Poland, and about the Polish people's struggle for freedom and their repression. It was about gaining an understanding of the past in all its various dimensions. For this purpose, the Biuro Edukacji Publicznej [Public Education Office] was established within the IPN, where dozens of historians with outstanding capabilities found employment; recruitment focused mainly on graduates from distinguished Polish universities.

The act establishing the IPN was to bring redress to victims of the communist system and to people who had struggled against it in the name of liberty and an independent Poland. The category of "aggrieved" was thus introduced – that is, a person who had been the subject of surveillance and repression. For several years, the IPN issued certificates to those aggrieved, which gave them the privilege to access records collected against them and to obtain copies. The act was also to serve to stigmatize the Urząd Bezpieczeństwa [Office of Public Security, UB], which had been responsible for repression directed against Polish citizens, along with its successor, the Służba Bezpieczeństwa [Security Service, SB]. The key institution within the IPN was its president, whose method of appointment and powers were set in such a way that he would not be susceptible to pressure from politicians, including heads of government; he would also not be subject to pressure from the intelligence services, including those established after 1989. Appointment to the position of president was a complicated procedure, giving him a powerful position within state organs. The 11-member IPN Council was intended to be a pluralistic body; nine of its members were appointed by the Sejm (Polish parliament) from among candidates submitted by the various political parties. The Krajowa Rada Sądownictwa [National Council of the Judiciary of Poland] appointed two members, who were to be approved by the Sejm.

At least this was the theory. After a short period when an open formula was being shaped under the presidency of Leon Kieres (2000–2005), actual practice succumbed to the pressures of politicians and historians with clear national-conservative views:

Prosecutors, firmly convinced of their own exceptionalism and fenced off by their official duties, avoided contact with historians, who in turn were struck by the prosecutors' stiffness and weak knowledge of the past.⁹

The archive (which contains documents that would stretch to around 90 kilometers) has a closed structure guided by bewildering procedures. These procedures have led to massive slowdowns in responding to requests for access to files. The IPN was formed around three separate organizational structures, which are united only by the person of the President: The Chief Commission, the archive, and the Public Education Office. Contacts between them are formalistic and rather weak.¹⁰

According to Andrzej Friszke (who was a member of the IPN Council for six years), after Janusz Kurtyka took office as President and Jan Żaryn took over the Public Education Office in 2005 and early 2006, there followed an era of politicization and "political exclusion." The prelude came in 2004, when journalist Bronisław Wildstein published the names of UB and SB "secret collaborators" (the so-called "Wildstein list").¹¹ In this new era, the meaning and content of the terms "nation" and "community of memory" were off-limits to public debate, as if they represented inviolable values, as if to challenge them would be dangerous. Under the very name (and along with that name, the practices) of the IPN, tasks related to the "national politics of memory" were – unfortunately – merged with the mission of independent academic research. In the public mind, there could be only one message flowing from the institute's name: *m e m o r y a n d h i s t o r y a s a s c i e n c e a r e o n e*. The problem is that nothing could be further from the truth, and nothing could be more misleading. What the IPN's message presents, in fact, is the danger that Polish history will be grossly over-simplified.

9 Andrzej Friszke, "Jak hartował się radykalizm Kurtyki," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 7, 2009, 18

10 This section on the IPN is based primarily on Jan Żaryn, "Przykrywanie prawdy kłamstwem," *Rzeczpospolita*, April 29, 2009; Andrzej Friszke, "Kto kogo wyklucza?," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 4, 2009; *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, 1 (2005); see also statements by Friszke in "IPN robi z historii tabloid," *Polska the Times*, April 6, 2009, and "Jak hartował się radykalizm Kurtyki," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 7, 2009; for the official IPN response to Friszke's accusations, see "Komunikaty, Odpowiedzi na zarzuty prof. Andrzeja Friszkego," Andrzej Arseniak, IPN press spokesman (April 9, 2009), on the official IPN web site.

11 Friszke "Jak hartował się radykalizm Kurtyki."

Due to political pressure applied by the governing national-populist coalition of 2005-2007 led by *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS, or “Law and Justice,” under Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński), moral-political criteria of purity were introduced into IPN activities:

The so-called ideology of “moral intensification” corresponded well with the change of personnel. The President [Lech Kaczyński] was a supporter of broad lustration and de-communization. Close ties [between the IPN and] the new parliamentary coalition developed quickly, as illustrated by changes made to the act by which the IPN had been created. The Institute took over the functions of lustration, which then dominated its activities. The status of “aggrieved” was deleted, which inevitably shifted the emphasis from relief for victims toward an interest in [investigating] the intelligence agents.¹²

A new and central actor on the stage in the dispute over the politics of memory (or, using the German term, *Erinnerungspolitik*) was born in late 2008, namely the Museum of the Second World War, which is to open its doors in 2014. And soon, a Polish-German history textbook will be completed, a project coordinated by the Joint Polish-German Textbook Commission (JP-GTC; Polsko-Niemiecka Komisja Podręcznikowa, or Deutsch-polnische Schulbuchkommission).

2. “Construction” in a Museum

The line of confrontation today crosses through the vision of the Museum of the Second World War and the selection of central, common political holidays that would represent – in the collective memory of Poles – the end of “real socialism” and the beginning of the post-1989 democratic development. Politicians are present in debates about history in a new way, which is significant. Bogdan Zdrojewski, the Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage (2007-2014), summarized his attitude toward the “politics of memory” as follows:

¹² Ibid. An editorial note in the periodical *Glaukopis* illustrates the kind of language used by some IPN historians: “We live in an age in which moral relativism is attacking various spheres of our life. The historical sciences have not remained free of this scourge. [...] Few people realize that authors of such publications, eggheads [wykształciuchy] shaped in the stifling atmosphere of the PRL kolkhoz, pathetic plagiarists and proponents of deconstructivist theory. [...] However, their rotting stench poisons the minds of people everywhere where attempts to purify the Academy of the ghosts of the past have failed...”

For twenty years we have witnessed a dispute which has weakened authority and distorted the image of Polish history in our eyes and in the eyes of the world. Who is satisfied by this dispute over the politics of the past or, if you will, the politics of memory? [...] What is dominant here is the instrumental treatment of history, the propensity to appropriate the right to dates, events or characters ... One thing that strikes me is a lack of humility among politicians issuing unequivocal moral judgments, who elevate some to the altar, and sentence others to damnation. For values and symbols to function, neither our anointment nor regulation of rights is needed. [...] Our mission is to protect and cherish the national memory and symbols associated with it, and to learn how to tell the history of Poland in a language that is modern and attractive. Let us finally be understood by Europe and the world!¹³

To be sure, Zdrojewski's statement includes a central (governmental) determination to create a politics of memory, but the fact is that it also includes a spirit of openness and a rejection of the instrumentalisation of history by current politics. Though it employs such terms as "national pride" and "national policy," which continue the language of the "new politics of the past" (at least on the surface), and though it lacks sufficient emphasis on polyphony in the mainstream narrative and support for minority discourses, the statement has neither the tone of exclusion, nor of programmatic indoctrination from above.

By contrast, the "politics of memory" from the years 2005-2007 was burdened by one-sidedness.¹⁴ At its heart was the belief that pluralism in the memory narrative is a threat not only to the state, but also to the Polish nation, understood in exclusive terms (as a kind of hypostasis),¹⁵ all of which is only one step short of defining "other views" as a "threat to the

13 Bogdan Zdrojewski, "Dajmy Polakom być dumnymi ze swojej historii," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 14, 2008.

14 Kazimierz M. Ujazdowski argues against this interpretation in "Polityka pamięci ma sens," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 2, 2008. In his matter-of-fact defense of the "new politics of the past" strategy from the years 2005-2007, Ujazdowski – a former minister of culture – ignores one important aspect: the atmosphere of pressure and command associated with the implementation of a single model of "remembering history" to the exclusion of any other; Paweł Machcewicz, "Dwa mity twórców polityki historycznej w IV RP," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 29, 2008.

15 See Adam Komorowski, "Trumny w zaprzęgu," *Nowe Książki* 12 (2008): 31–32. This is a review of a book by Lech Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademiczne i Profesjonalne, 2008).

raison d'État," a "betrayal of national interests," a "danger of loss of national identity."

Echoes of such views can be found in statements made by certain journalists and historians in reaction to the initial concept of the Museum of the Second World War.¹⁶ The authors of this concept, Paweł Machcewicz and Piotr Majewski, decided to move away from the traditional, national narrative, a fact that caused alarm among those who feared that the museum could threaten a value that remains untouchable for a large part of Polish society, a value that places the experience of the Polish nation at the epicenter of thinking about Europe, indeed the world. But the facts are quite the opposite: Machcewicz and Majewski have not negated this value at all; indeed, they have tried to emphasize the Polish contribution to the history of the Second World War. It is just that they want to do this through comparative discourse; their intent is to present the history of Poland in the context of parallel events in Europe and the broader world. Even more surprising than the above reactions have been allegations appearing in some media about the purported anti-Polish nature, and poorly conceived universality, of the project. But the fact is that a comparative approach will allow the museum to present "Polish suffering and martyrdom" without relativizing them. Machcewicz and Majewski express their intentions in a rational way:

We will not convince tourists from London, or from Vienna, to accept our argument – something about which [Polish journalist] Piotr Semka is so concerned – by creating another exposition exclusively on the martyrdom of the Polish nation or to the glory of Polish arms. Students from Germany, Holland and France will come to see the museum in Gdańsk, and they will take something permanent from the experience, only when Polish issues are united for them with European issues, known by them through their school, cinema, and television.¹⁷

16 See, for example, Piotr Semka, "Dziwaczny pomysł na muzeum II wojny światowej," *Rzeczpospolita*, October 28, 2008; "Polska wyjątkowość [Cezary Gmyz talks with Jan Żaryn]," *Rzeczpospolita*, November 4, 2008; Cezary Gmyz, Piotr Semka, "Przypomnijmy światu polską historię," *Rzeczpospolita*, November 3, 2008.

17 Piotr Majewski, Paweł Machcewicz, fragments of the "Zarys koncepcji programowej muzeum II wojny światowej," ["Outline of the program concept of the Museum of the Second World War"], *Rzeczpospolita*, October 31, 2008. For a full record of the first discussion regarding the museum, see "Wojna i jej muzeum," *Przegląd Polityczny* 91–92 (2008): 46–65. For voices supporting Machcewicz and Majewski's ideas, see expansive articles in *Gazeta Wyborcza* by, among others, Anna Wolff-Powęska, Jerzy Kochanowski, Grzegorz Motyka and Dariusz Libionka.

None of my comments so far means that the Museum's concept should not be criticized. Indeed, it must be criticized, because it should fulfill not only its primary mission, which is to build a framework for a modern museum exhibition; it should also serve as a vehicle for alternative methods of conducting public dialogue about history. From my personal experience with the project, it seems that the museum's initial program-concept points too weakly to a concrete narrator and does not adequately define its audience groups. The presentation of the history of World War II in the European context does not have to mean seeking a universal, default narrator. The facility was established in Gdańsk, in Poland, and its visitors will be predominantly Poles. Both the authors of the concept and their critics have repeatedly referred to a foreign audience, but the profile of this audience is unclear, since tourists from London, Berlin and Lwów have different perspectives and expectations that cannot be reconciled in one museum. Tourists visit museums in foreign countries to become acquainted with the local view of history, even if the topic is a global phenomenon. For this reason, the museum should show the war from the Polish perspective, though without pathos, without trying to consolidate national or patriotic thinking by highlighting Polish martyrdom. A museum aimed at Polish society has a greater chance of offering an understandable narrative about World War II, and would be more legible than an exhibition that tries to send a universal message with as many topics covered as possible.

Since a museum narrative must focus on essential topics, the guiding notion here could be "Polish fortunes," and the greatest challenge involves how to build a meta-narrative directed at a Polish audience that is, at the same time, affective for "other" audiences as well. From the program it is clear that the authors have seriously considered this question. However, they have not yet found a clear answer.

The history of World War II should also be presented more from the perspective of individual experiences. This is no great discovery; such perspectives are used effectively in major museums and historical exhibitions around the world without losing the wider context. At this point, there is no reference in the museum's design plans to provide a guide-book or catalogue – highlighting, for example, "witnesses to history" – that would lead visitors through the exposition. Eyewitness narratives to history help the visitor identify with the fate of various groups. The fate of an individual Pole can be understood even by the foreign visitor, and can bring him/her closer to the wartime Polish experience. In this way, it can be shown how human stories are entangled, in the larger dimension of the tragedy, with a diversity of fates. Stories of heroic individuals can, in a natural way, be about someone from Danzig, but also someone from Silesia, who as a *volksdeutscher* fought in the Wehrmacht and

later on the Polish side at Monte Cassino. Of course, the fate of Polish Jews must be included. As the tragedy of a large part of pre-war Polish society, their fate should be part of the narrative of the war as well. The presence of Jewish issues in other museums - at Auschwitz, at Yad Vashem, or in the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw - does not mean that the Museum of the Second World War cannot embed this topic into a comprehensive picture of the tragedy of war.¹⁸ These are all open questions. The way Paweł Machcewicz and Piotr Majewski are leading the discussion indicates that we are dealing with a new quality of historical debate. I would like to see this become a permanent standard in the shaping of policy towards history.

This brief discussion about the Museum of the Second World War signals a clearly broader, permanent part of the debate on the politics of memory, one that is represented by the question: what function should it play in the wider European discourse?¹⁹ The dilemma, simply put, boils down to two alternatives: to glorify history, or to present it critically. Surprisingly, the topicality of this dilemma reminds me of the correspondence between two prominent Polish writers, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Konstanty A. Jeleński, from the year 1957. Iwaszkiewicz criticized an article that Czesław Miłosz had published in *Preuves*, viewing it as an attack on Polish literature. In response, Jeleński wrote:

Milosz's article, in my opinion, gives foreigners the key to understanding Polish literature. [...] Oddly, people (writers) who write "negatively" about their own nation bring the greatest prestige not only to their own literature, but to their own people. Who in the West today would know about the vitality of Romanian literature - if not for Cioran and Ionesco bad-mouthing their countrymen?

Does it seem to you that, as "ambassadors of France," it is Sartre, Mauriac and Genet - or Romains, Duhamel and Guéhenno - who contribute most to the prestige of France?²⁰

To this day, I remember the sugar-coated, fabricated achievements of the PRL, and of Poland in general, that accompanied my schooling in the 1970s.

18 In part, these considerations are based on discussions that took place in a doctoral seminar at the Center for Historical Research (CBH PAN) in Berlin, 15 December 2008.

19 Three publications, among others, put out by the Fundacja Stefana Batorego are devoted to this topic: *Pamięć i polityka zagraniczna* (2000), *Jaka Polska? Czyja Polska? Diagnozy i dyskusje* (2006) and *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy* (2008).

20 "Nie gardź nami, emigracjo. Listy Iwaszkiewicza i Jeleńskiego," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 10-11, 2009.

“We were a power, we were great, we were heroic, we were victims and romantic warriors at the same time.” As a youngster, I swallowed it all whole, not knowing how many of the “greats” had been removed, for political reasons, from the gallery of “national saints.” Later I distanced myself from this propaganda to the point where I completely rejected the Sienkiewiczian model of the heroic Pole. But strangely, many of Poland’s greatest “opponents of communism” speak today in the same appropriating, monophonic language. Déjà vu? No, not really. Despite everything, we now live in a democratic system that protects against monopolization of thought, though the mechanism and basic idea remain much the same, a fact which has been expounded upon – in the context of the Polish “politics of memory” – by the Warsaw historian Maciej Janowski.²¹ Drago Jančar, the Slovenian prose writer and playwright, dubbed this phenomenon “the philosophy of the province,” and described it based on the example of today’s Slovenia:

For the philosophy of the province, what is especially characteristic is the fact that its world is the only world, and that world alone is interesting. Once this condition is met, a wide range of possible conspiracy theories, connections, and examples of perfidious defamation and slander develop. Above all, no one represents a sufficiently large value, and his works are not worth much, because one need not call anything by name. The deeper the province, the less valuable is anything created locally, in the eyes of its people; the more people are petty, the more serious are the conflicts and quarrels.²²

3. “Construction” in School

The Polish-German history textbook project, which was started in May 2008, is another test of how the “politics of memory” is created. From the very beginning, the bilateral nature of the project imposed a new form of cooperation on the parties involved. At the same time, the fact that the project was initiated by the Polish and German governments has raised concerns about the borders of independence between scholarship and politics. The JP-GTC is expecting support from both governments and does not foresee political pressure coming from them. But if such pressures were to appear, the project would make no sense. The structure of the project calls for the formation of

21 Maciej Janowski, “Polityka historyczna: Między edukacją historyczną a propagandą,” *Pamięć i polityka historyczna*, 229–245.

22 Drago Jančar, “Filozofia prowincji,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 3–4, 2009.

a Governing Board: on the Polish side, there are representatives of the Ministries of Education, Culture and Foreign Affairs; on the German side, representatives of the Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder), the Brandenburg Minister of Education, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Polish and German JP-GTC chairmen are also members of the board. At this point in time, there is a thick line separating politics from specific projects. The Governing Board defines the space in which a project operates, secures financial resources, and supports the introduction of the textbook into schools. Other works are managed by the Council of Experts, which determines the substantive criteria. Its members are scholars and educators appointed by the JP-GTC. The Council decides what issues should be addressed in the textbook, and selects the authors.

As the project is implemented, I do not fear arguments over the interpretation of any historical event. A much greater problem will come as a result of differing educational traditions. But this is precisely where the project presents great opportunity. From confrontation (taken constructively) will emerge not some sort of artificial, politically correct “common denominator” of historical processes, but a true common narrative. Certainly, the definition of controversial events will not be easy. But I can imagine that modern teaching techniques offer creative possibilities for the description of historical phenomena that cannot be found even in the best journalism and most popular history books. The dichotomy in our historical experiences is an excellent point to exploit. Poles and Germans have variously defined events, two different lived experiences, and – through that didactic element that inspires questions – we can show “both sides.” We can say: “They understand it that way, and we understand it this way.” Is it always the case that only one side is right?

When we talk about our own history, Henryk Sienkiewicz’s “Kali formula” often appears: “If Kali steal a cow, it is good; if someone steal cow from Kali, it is wrong.” In another context: “We conquered, we were larger and stronger, and that is good. When we were attacked, we of course defended ourselves, and the conquerors were bad.” But the point here is that we have a chance to widen our perspective. The German cultural sociologist Wolf Lepenies, one of the finest representatives of European sociology of culture, discussed this issue in an address praising the French-German textbook. Interpreting the value of the Franco-German work, he stated that the real challenge – not only for Poland and Germany, but also for Europe – is the Polish-German textbook, precisely because once Germany receives Poland and its historical experience, it will receive much of the rest of Eastern Europe as well; today, the Eastern European historical experiences are practically absent in the German

discourse. We have a chance to put into general circulation an exceptionally interesting narrative on such topics as asymmetrical processes of nation development and the Second World War. The Polish experience has taken place on the periphery; we are not the center. But we bring to the table an entirely different perspective on history. The German and Soviet occupations – to take just two examples – function often beyond the imagination of our western neighbors. With this in mind, the role of the textbook gains greater universal potential, as a general European experience.

If one compares the task that authors of the French-German textbook faced with the task facing authors of the Polish-German textbook, then one could say that we have bad luck; from the very start, each project had a different potential, a fact that stems from the very nature of the roles played by France and Germany in European history. Both countries were (and are) major centers of European politics. German and French historians are aware that this fact raises difficulties, and – with varying degrees of success – they have avoided telling the story from the perspective of Germany or France. The “plus and minus” that I see confronting Polish and German authors stems from the fact that, through most of history, German and Polish roles have been asymmetrical: the center – Germany; and the periphery – Poland. This reality applies especially to the nineteenth century, when the Polish state did not exist at all, and Germany was rising to the rank of great power. That having been said, we define the term “periphery” neutrally; it does not have to be the case that the center and periphery are “something better or worse.” Indeed, a new catalogue of questions must be created, the result of which will be the kind of textbook that reflects certain wider phenomena and processes, not just the politics of those at the center of power.²³

4. The “Construction” of Cultural Memory and Individual Identity

I would like to return to the initial metaphor regarding the construction of memory, to the argument that the community of a modern nation is a *c o n s t r u c t i o n*. Although such a term sounds technical in everyday use, the idea is that national elites create certain signs, symbols and annual rituals (anniversaries), which they then seek to introduce into general circulation, and around which they try to build a sense of communal cohesion. With this in mind, we can say that anniversaries are “invented,” though at the same time it is important that the people feel an emotional connection with such dates

23 See “Dwie tradycje, jeden podręcznik, z Robertem Trabą, przewodniczącym Wspólnej Polsko-Niemieckiej Komisji Podręcznikowej rozmawia Bogdan Borucki,” in *Mówią Wieki*, 10/08 (586): 41.

that are fixed, over time, through systematic celebration. I know of no country that has not tried to mobilize its society around anniversaries – that is, with a positive message, a values system, of which the anniversary is a fragment. It is a natural form of communication within the community, which needs an indicative sign for one to be able to say, “I am a Pole, because . . .” (here, you can insert the symbolic dates and events that allow us to understand one another, and to border ourselves off from the external “other”). The anniversary is part of the “foundational myth” for any society that wants to establish a sense of itself as community.

Take, for example, the monument and how it functions: it is built to commemorate someone or something, to initiate something around itself, and then to ritualize a symbolic anniversary that is important for the nation. But a monument lives only so long as political manifestations are ritualized around it, as long as it communicates an idea. Sometimes – and this is apparent in our immediate surroundings – a monument “dies,” becoming little more than a dead element on the landscape, to which collective emotions are no longer tied.

It is quite natural that certain anniversaries are created based on current day needs. When collective memory is “written,” it is the reflection not of any record of events from the past but of a particular set of political and social circumstances. From the great reservoir of events, such as battles, those that are, at any particular moment, most communicative to the public are a matter of selection. Parenthetically, I might add that, in Poland today, anniversaries are not mass events. As national holidays, they are widely viewed simply as days off work; social participation in their observance is moderate, with the reason for this relative apathy perhaps being their schematic form. To what extent does that form correspond to people’s real expectations? Is it possible that the Polish people’s moderate social commitment to national anniversaries reflects their attitude toward state holidays in general, and/or to the fact that these holidays are celebrated largely from the top down?

Controversy over the “selection of an anniversary” is inevitable, given that anniversaries are often, if not always, forged in the context of political dispute; decisions come down to choosing one interpretation of history over another. Such a process happens in a variety of dimensions. In the case of the French Revolution, it took the form of a collision of two world views. In Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was a long and intense debate about the appropriate national holiday before the date was finally set at 3 October – that is, the date the former East Germany was attached to the Federal Republic; the holiday was given the name “Tag der Deutschen Einheit” (Day of German Unity). Earlier, two dates had been in the running: 3 October and 9 November.

The latter date, as it turned out, is connected to too many anniversaries and contains enormous potential for controversy: it was on 9 November that the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, but other important events are also associated with 9 November, including a pogrom in the Third Reich (in 1938, so-called Kristallnacht); Hitler's failed coup (1923); and the outbreak of the leftist revolution and the announcement of the first German Republic (1918). The historic significance of "9 November" was thus huge. At the time, as an observer of the German process, I thought it would be interesting if Germany would chose just such a date as its most important, but in the end the Germans set the holiday at 3 October, which carries a positive message: "Germans are once again united." Debate concluded with a top-down decision which, although criticized, has become widely accepted; today, no one boycotts 3 October as a national holiday in Germany.

This holiday contains within itself a certain strategy to build German identity, and in its shared celebration, Germans are supposed to gain a sense of universality and have an emotional relationship towards the event. After all, emotion is a condition on which the living anniversary depends, so that it is not reduced to a mere military parade decreed from above, but rather remains something in which society/the nation wants to participate. Bastille Day (14 July) in France does not end with the parade on the Champs-Élysées; festivities take place in every town, even the smallest ones, where people enjoy themselves. Of course, the starting point is the parade, but what follows amounts to a folk festival. Thus, identification with the holiday is increased. Marek Beylin, like British historian Eric Hobsbawm, recognizes two models – the German and French – as the best in constructing "national unity," though my impression is that both models are outdated and diverge from the reality of the twenty-first century.²⁴

After World War I, the "founding myth" of the new Poland was the victorious war against the Bolsheviks in 1920; it united the nation, previously broken into three partitions for over 100 years. But after the fall of communism in 1989 we also had great dates to choose from, which we probably continue to have: 31 August 1980 and 4 June 1989. These are, in my opinion, two key dates. The question remains, which one of them to choose. The fact that we have not already made this choice represents a loss for all Poles, and now the issue has become part of a debate that is no longer so much political as it is a matter of stubborn, inter-party rivalry. No one has a vision of how to build that "something" for the community of Polish citizens (including those Poles too young to have experienced the breakthrough events of 1989), that "something" that would provide a positive message for the future. We do not really

24 Marek Beylin, "Polski świr większościowy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 21-22, 2009.

argue whether or not 4 June 1989 (the date on which elections took place paving the way for the creation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's non-communist government), or the August Agreements of 31 August 1980 (between workers in Gdańsk and the PRL leadership), or the Round Table Talks (between the communists and Lech Wałęsa's Solidarity, which led to the 4 June elections), are foundational civic dates for the Polish nation, and there is no dispute over the strategy for building such an anniversary. The dramatic question is: do we really want to celebrate the rebirth of a sovereign Poland after 1989? The alternative is to completely reject these anniversaries and build a negative message about the Third Republic (which is largely what advocates of a Fourth Republic do). It is sad that, after the fall of communism in Poland, there has not been the political will - or perhaps the political imagination - to build not only a new, free market society, but also a foundation myth that establishes a new social identity in the wake of the great transformations of 1989. No political force has made the effort, and that is too bad, because the emotional connection with the breakthrough events of 1989 has loosened, and its universal dimension has been lost. Today, one must begin the construction of a "living date" anniversary practically from scratch. Perhaps only the grandchildren of this peaceful revolution will make such a "communal" choice.

Post-communist Poland's main holidays fall on 11 November (marking Poland's regained independence in 1918) and on 3 May (May 3rd Constitution Day), but at the beginning of the interwar Second Republic, "11 November" did not exist as a holiday. It was celebrated for the first time in 1937, and its existence was not an easy one. After the First World War, various political groups, with differing ideologies, were involved in building the new Poland: There were the generally leftist followers of Józef Piłsudski; the conservative-Catholic National Democrats (known in Poland as the "*endecja*" and led by Piłsudski's rival, Roman Dmowski); the radical left (soldiers and workers soviets), which had "its" holiday; and the Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-L), which had "its" holiday, namely 7 November, when in 1918 the government of Ignacy Daszyński was created in Lublin. Each political party was looking for "its" own holiday, and each of them expected that "its" symbolic date would become a universal celebration. The dispute continued until 1937.²⁵

Regarding identity construction on the individual level, I present in subsequent chapters one sketch on Marcel Reich-Ranicki and one on Peter/Piotr Lachmann. Here, I will mention a third name that is perhaps the most

25 See "Rocznice nasze i wasze" [Patrycja Bukalska talks with Robert Traba], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, May 31, 2009. Special supplement "Polska rocznicowa," ed. Wojciech Pięciak and Patrycja Bukalska.

spectacular, namely Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the chief ideologue of nineteenth-century racism and anti-Semitism. Born in England, raised partly in France and educated by a Prussian tutor, he could have become – according to the Dutch writer and lecturer, Ian Buruma – the perfect cosmopolitan, but he despised France, Great Britain and the United States because citizenship there was a question of rights, not blood. He married the daughter of Richard Wagner and “became not only German, but also a herald of the lofty virtues of the German nation.”²⁶ It is difficult to find a more perverse – and, at the same time, convincing – example of the construction of individual identity. In schools, and as part of the broader public education, it might be worth referring to – instead of complicated theories – precisely such examples to explain the intricate processes of identity and memory construction.

Dimension Two: History as Method, or On the Need for Imagination and Interdisciplinarity

1. Historiography

The “discourse on the historiography of the Third and Fourth Republics” called forth by Marek Czyżewski is, in my opinion, a metaphorical misappropriation that is attractive, but superficial. It blurs the real transformations taking place in modern Polish historiography,²⁷ and condemns historiography to a role that is secondary to politics, one in which history becomes an object in the game of politics – that is, in a dimension where politics determines history. A more natural process, on the other hand, is one in which historians from each generation research, describe and interpret history in their own way (of course, this applies not just to historians, but also to scholars in the humanities and social sciences in general). Given the way Polish historiography has developed over the last two decades, it is difficult – if not impossible – to place many distinguished Polish historians (who have been, at the same time, active participants in public debates about the past) into either one of the two camps: Wiktoria Śliwowska,²⁸ Henryk Samsonowicz,²⁹ Krzysztof

26 Ian Buruma, “Kosmopolici,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 20–21, 2008.

27 Czyżewski, “Debata na temat Jedwabnego,” 135–136.

28 See the recent publication written in cooperation with Renè Śliwowski, *Rosja – nasza miłość* (Warszawa: Iskry, 2008), which won the “KLIO” prize.

29 Henryk Samsonowicz, *O “historii prawdziwej.” Mity, legendy i podania jako źródło historyczne* (Gdańsk: Novus Orbis, 1997); see also Andrzej Sowa, *Henryk Samsonowicz – świadek epoki. Wywiad rzeka* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2009).

Pomian,³⁰ Jerzy Jedlicki,³¹ Janusz Tazbir,³² Jerzy Borejsza,³³ Jerzy Holzer,³⁴ Roman Wapiński, Karol Modzelewski³⁵ and Tomasz Szarota,³⁶ along with (from the younger generation) Marcin Kula and Anna Wolff-Powęska.³⁷ It is difficult to apply the proposed dichotomy to such middle-generation researchers as Andrzej Chwalba,³⁸ Włodzimierz Borodziej, Rafał Stobiecki, Dariusz Stola, Paweł Machcewicz, Grzegorz Motyka, Jan M. Piskorski,³⁹ Dariusz Libionka and Rafał Wnuk. It is true that, in the public debate, more or less all of them have criticized the “new politics of the past,” but their research horizons and imaginations reach well beyond the scope of the “Third Republic discourse;” they have been shaped not so much by that discourse as by their various areas of research, by their mentors (who sometimes have completely different frames of reference than their students), and by their differing methodologies.

I think a more appropriate way to describe the lines of dispute in today’s historiography would be to use the terms “national homogeneity” and

30 Krzysztof Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci* (Lublin: UMCS, 2006).

31 Jerzy Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniały. Lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności* (Warszawa: Sic!, 2000).

32 See Janusz Tazbir, *Polska na zakrętach dziejów* (Warszawa: Sic!, 1997) and, by the same author, *W pogoni za Europą* (Warszawa: Sic!, 1998).

33 From all his works, I mention just one: Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Śmieszne sto milionów Słowian...*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Nerito, Instytut Historii PAN, 2006).

34 For one of the most interesting historical essays of recent years, see Jerzy Holzer, *Polska i Europa. “W Polsce czyli nigdzie?”* (Warszawa: Wydawca Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2008); see also Holzer’s *Europejska tragedia XX wieku. II wojna światowa* (Warszawa: Wydawca Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2005) and his study *Europa wojen 1914–1945* (Warszawa: Świat książki, 2008).

35 Karol Modzelewski, *Barbarzyńska Europa* (Warszawa: Iskry, 2004).

36 See Tomasz Szarota, *Karuzela na placu Krasińskich* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2007). Against the backdrop of research on the Second World War, this study is exceptional: Szarota, *U progu Zagłady. Zajścia antyżydowskie i pogromy w okupowanej Europie* (Warszawa: Sic!, 2000).

37 For example, Anna Wolff-Powęska, *Oswojona rewolucja: Europa Środkowo – Wschodnia w procesie demokracji* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1998), and another by the same author, *A bliźniego swego: Kościoły w Niemczech wobec “problemu żydowskiego”* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2003).

38 Andrzej Chwalba, *III Rzeczpospolita – raport specjalny* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie Miejsce, 2005).

39 Jan M. Piskorski, *Polacy i Niemcy. Czy przeszłość musi być przeszkodą* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004), 32

“heroization of history” versus “re-negotiation” and “broadened perspectives.” I will leave it to historians of historiography to decide how much these terms represent continuation, or how much they represent something new, in the long tradition of Polish debates over history (personally, I see both continuity and discontinuity). In any case, at the heart of debate today is a confrontation between those who support traditional methods and categories of research and those who support newly defined methods and categories (and new ways of applying them in research). It is about the re-negotiation and introduction of new meanings for such concepts as “nation,” “identity,” “cultural gender,” “cultural memory,” etc. Broadening the research perspective means the enrichment of the historian’s instrumentarium in the extended search for trans-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary contexts. We see these new trends represented far too seldom in Polish historical discussions, in both public and classroom settings. They are, however, becoming more pronounced in the academic community, though it would be a mistake to thoughtlessly place them into the category of postmodern historiography. I would argue that, at the level where historical research is being conducted in Poland today, there is no well-developed “postmodern historiography,” let alone one that is “dogmatic,”⁴⁰ unless we regard such works as postmodern: Jacek Banaszkiwicz’s studies demythologizing the origins of the Polish state,⁴¹ or works from the field of methodology of history developed mainly in Poznań, Łódź and Lublin by such historians as Jan Pomorski, Ewa Domańska and Wojciech Wrzosek. Somehow, I doubt that any of these scholars would view themselves as being in the mainstream of “dogmatic postmodernism.”

At the center of research trends in Poland today, there remains a solid, workshop-oriented, traditional, and positivist historiography (mainly event history), which defends itself by the integrity of its analysis and its diversified source base; the latter virtue allows the research instrumentarium to modernize and to avoid the trap of narrating only “how it was in fact.” The work of “IPN historians,” promoted so widely by the media, fits nicely into this traditional vein, broadly defined. In the opinion of many of its representatives, “access to the files” designates the only correct way to learn about the past. The mindless promotion of the “folder/*teczka*” fetish leads to a simplified claim that only “secret” sources, not accessible to ordinary mortals, mark off the paradigm of “objective truth.” The difference between serious study of event history and the falsely conceived mission to find “objective truth” was presented in an

40 Ibid., 139.

41 See, among others, Jacek Banaszkiwicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu* (Warszawa: PWN, 1986) and, by the same author, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne Mistrza Wincentego Kadłubka* (Wrocław: Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 2002), second edition.

insightful article by a doyen of Polish historiography, Wiktoria Śliwowska, who reminds us of the rudiments of the historian's research instrumentarium, and highlights - against that background - the tendencies set forth (fortunately not always realized!) by the standards of the IPN:

The historian must strive not only to reconstruct a given reality, but also to understand the background of events, the circumstances in which people acted. It is easy to condemn, but difficult to understand a complicated past. [... Meanwhile, in the IPN] thick volumes are being produced, into which are being thrown, with no real consideration, further evidence incriminating various persons now deceased (and therefore not able to defend themselves), and elderly people still alive – known and unknown. The impression is created that the entire PRL – not only in the early Stalinist years, but throughout the entire period – was a UB kingdom, which no one was able to resist.⁴²

Jerzy Jedlicki and two younger researchers, Magdalena Micińska and Maciej Janowski, recently set a standard for historical research in a three-volume publication entitled *Dzieje inteligencji polskiej do roku 1918* (History of the Polish Intelligentsia to 1918). Historiographically, it is located precisely at the intersection of disputes between various research models. Its narrative axis is established in the title's "intelligentsia," a term which needed to be defined in order to achieve the work's clear and consistent narrative. Based on the analysis of the virtues and dangers of modern methodological tendencies, Jedlicki, Micińska and Janowski made a clear choice, which was to establish a coherent narrative axis that does not lose the individuality of each volume's author. Jedlicki gave expression to the meaning of this choice:

We must reconcile ourselves with the ambiguity that comes with this collective of names and work with it, maybe even discern its benefits, since a blur of semantic distinctions reflects the chronologically indistinct nature of actual divisions, hierarchies and roles. A living society [...] is not made up, after all, of separate compartments, to which we attach plates with the names of species. Such is the fate of the social historian that he is condemned to using concepts that are not air-tight. [...] Nonetheless, we were concerned that giving in too readily to suggestions of methodologists-narrativists would devalue what are, after all, massive achievements in solidifying the field of social history. [...] In the debate between social

42 Wiktoria Śliwowska, "Dr Jekyll i Mr IPN. Historia i teczki," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 13-14, 2009.

history and the history of “discourses,” we thus took a compromise position or – if one prefers – an eclectic one, recognizing the advantages, but also disadvantages, of each research strategy rigorously treated.⁴³

The quintessence of this statement can be reduced to what is not so much yet another dimension as it is a postulate in the debate over the shape of modern Polish historiography: Beyond the dispute between traditionalism and modernity, there exists (and has always existed) an indisputable need (or lack thereof) for research imagination. Without it, the practice of our academic discipline becomes just “chronicle writing,” which – admittedly – is not always without valuable.

The central motif around which the entire range of methodological disputes revolves is a chain of variations, derivative concepts-categories regarding “nation”: The “Polish nation,” “nationalism,” “national conflict,” “national identity.” The centrality of this issue in the Polish academic and public discourse has been thoroughly analyzed by Tomasz Kizwalter in his study *O nowoczesności narodu. Przypadek Polski* [*The Modern Nation: The Case of Poland*], published in Warsaw in 1999. Often, in the heat of debate over the “meaning” of nation, we forget to actually define what national history really is. Marcin Kula pointed to this problem recently in a lecture entitled “Historia narodowa w ponadnarodowej perspektywie” [“National History in a Transnational Perspective”].⁴⁴ Twentieth-century transformations, which were mainly the result of massive migration processes and decolonization, meant that the traditional understanding of national history became blurred, or even misleading. Millions of residents of the former colonies became French and British, and it is difficult to require of them that they identify with *The Song of Roland* or the “victorious” conquests of the colonial era. The new dimension (or non-dimensionality) of nations in the twentieth century tells us that, though national history cannot be ignored, it must be told differently. Kula proposes:

The approach I advocate does not mean the depreciation or invalidation of anything. On the contrary, sometimes it is precisely a wider background that allows for a better view of particular phenomena. In any case, the proposed approach does not prevent anyone from worshipping

43 Jerzy Jedlicki, Foreword to Maciej Janowski, „Narodziny inteligencji 1750–1831,” vol.1, in *Dzieje inteligencji polskiej do roku 1918* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2008), 9–10.34

44 A paper delivered at a session of the Wspólna Polsko-Niemiecka Komisja Podręcznikowa Historyków i Geografów entitled “Historia i sąsiedztwo. Historia ponadnarodowa jako wyzwanie dla badań historycznych i dydaktyki historii” (Łódź, June 4–6, 2009).

any heroes he wants. Certainly no one and nothing will prevent viewers from bowing their heads in tribute to heroes as they exit the future Museum of the Second World War, and as a result of their tour through the museum - judging from the project design - they will better understand this fragment of history than would be the case if the museum were only a memorial to national glory.⁴⁵

Kula describes four conditions by which we can avoid the “weaknesses that may result from sinking up to our ears in national history.” They form the basis for the development of transnational history. I would summarize Kula’s thoughts, whose goal is to widen the field of both research and narrative, this way: 1. deepened perspective (i. e. “avoid the danger of the backwoods”); 2. comparative analysis; 3. the dominance of the investigation of phenomena over research of the individual facts of national history; and 4. trans-border analysis, or placing things into the perspective of the broader civilizational expanse. Kula illustrates each of these conditions for transnational history using central events in Polish history, which is a more malleable and eloquent way of justifying the need for a “transnational turn” than using hermetic references to methodology.

Kula cites three examples to illustrate deepened perspective: Poland’s regained independence in 1918, the Soviet massacre of Polish officers (and others) in the Katyn Forest in 1940, and the collapse of communism throughout Europe in 1989. We have commonly described and commented on all three of these events to emphasize their Polish uniqueness against the backdrop of the fates of other European nations. But Kula, without neglecting their national significance, proposes revealing deeper layers of these same events:

The Katyn massacre is most often considered a Stalinist crime against the Poles. There is no doubt that it was a crime against Poles. And one can even add that Stalin was probably particularly allergic to the Poles. “In the same breath,” we must note, however, that Stalin treated more than one nation criminally. And that, even in that tragic forest where the NKWD executions took place, remains of people of various nationalities are buried. [...]

The collapse of communism is presented as having been achieved by the Poles. Often, even the theme returns that the Berlin Wall fell to pieces in Gdańsk, etc. In fact, this is only part of the truth. The crisis was one that

45 *Ibid.*, 35

affected the entire “world communist system.” Communism was not only broken by, and perhaps not so much by, an explosion of human anger, as it was destroyed in a system-wide implosion. In Poland, in 1989, there was no longer any exploding mass of people. Other than in Romania and with the ill-fated coup in Moscow, the communists were hardly able to put up a serious defense. This does not mean that we have to diminish the importance of the attitudes and actions of people – but the issues were simply more complicated. The words “We battle for freedom with crosses and strikes” were an understandable expression of Polish dreams. But they cannot substitute for historical analysis, including transnational.⁴⁶

Another example that applies to the description of national history in the context of universal processes and phenomena:

Mass expulsions can, of course, be viewed as part of the national history of the peoples they have affected. However, they can also be viewed as a much broader phenomenon, known in many eras, and – unfortunately – typical of the twentieth century. The displacement of entire peoples in the Soviet Union can be explained within the framework of Stalin’s crimes and paranoia. The expulsion of Germans from the Western and Northern Territories can and should be linked to the war launched by Hitler. [...] But the fact remains that it is impossible to speak of the twentieth century without considering the phenomenon of mass expulsion. Consideration of this issue would, in turn, be incomplete without taking into account earlier great waves of migration – including those that were spontaneous – of the nineteenth century. Migration is, after all, a classic theme, in which case it is impossible to separate national history from transnational history. They are part of the fabric of the history of the emigrant country, part of the history of the immigrant country, and part of universal history.⁴⁷

Drawing on the principle of transnational history, scholars are able to not only give expression to a wealth of specific experiences, but also highlight their importance against a properly expanded background. At the same time, one need not build a monument to national glory. Indirectly, the value of expanding the national perspective in the form of synthesis at the civilizational

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

level was presented, several years ago, by Jan Kieniewicz in his book *Wprowadzeniu do historii cywilizacji Wschodu i Zachodu* (2003). One can, in this new way, analyze the most difficult phenomena, such as the Holocaust, revolutionary expansionism, war crimes, etc.

For several years in the Polish-German context, Klaus Zernack⁴⁸ has successfully implemented a kind of transnational history, as have a generation of his successors, including Michael Müller,⁴⁹ Andreas Lawaty, Martin Schulze-Wessel and Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg. The cultivation of *Beziehungsgeschichte* – “history of mutual interactions” – has become a kind of standard in the study of the history of national relations.⁵⁰ But despite its attractive methodologies and the interesting topics its proponents confront, *Beziehungsgeschichte* is not yet one of the central topics of debate in the context of Polish history. I am under the impression that – from the considerable number of foreign publications on Poland – books that fit into the traditional canon of national memorials, that re-create the heroic fates of Poles, are gaining the interest of the media, not just academic circles. It seems to be a fact that Poles do not want to hear critical voices, and when those voices are published – as in the case of Jan Tomasz Gross (*Neighbors*, 2001; *Fear*, 2006) – critics often turn them into examples of “tendentious, anti-Polish” historiography. Norman Davies has become the most popular historian of Polish history not because of his still inspiring *God's Playground* or his story of Wrocław (*Microcosmos*) along with many others, but because of his vividly written monograph on the Warsaw Uprising, which *nolens volens* responded to a certain kind of social demand in Poland. Recently, Timothy Snyder has managed to break “beyond divisions” into the wider public based on his work on Henryk Józewski, which was awarded the Pro Historia

48 See, among other works, Klaus Zernack, *Niemcy-Polska: z dziejów trudnego dialogu historyograficznego*, ed. Henryk Olszewski, trans. Łukasz Musiał (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006), from the series “Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka,” ed. Hubert Orłowski, Christoph Kleßmann.

49 So far, only Müller’s innovative sketch analyzing the Polish partitions has appeared in Polish. For this, see Michael G. Müller, *Rozbiory Polski. Historia Polski i Europy XVIII wieku* (Poznań: PTPN, 2005).

50 See Michael G. Müller, “Dzieje Polski w najnowszej historiografii niemieckiej,” in “*O nas bez nas.*” *Historia Polski w historiografiach obcojęzycznych*, ed. Witold Molik and Henryk Żaliński, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007), 79-100. This volume includes some highly interesting and instructive texts on Polish history as viewed from the perspective of non-Polish historiography. For the French perspective, see Daniel Beauvois, “Dzieje Polski w badaniach historyków francuskich XIX wieku,” 49-68. For the American perspective, see John John J. Kulczycki, “Dzieje Polski w amerykańskiej historiografii Europy. Królestwo Nigdzie,” 19-47.

Polonorum prize (the first ever awarded) for best foreign-language book of the previous five years at the International Congress of Polish History.⁵¹ Daniel Beauvois⁵² has secured a permanent place for himself in Polish historiography, but middle-generation historians are still not visible enough, such as Delphine Bechtel from the Sorbonne IV in Paris,⁵³ who deals with Jewish and Central and Eastern Europe issues, and Catherine Gusev. It is regrettable that the work of young and middle-generation German historians, who often have a Polish-German cultural background, still arouses little interest in Poland, such as the above-mentioned Andreas Lawaty,⁵⁴ Markus Krzoska,⁵⁵ and Robert Żurek of the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Centrum Badań Historycznych - Polska Akademia Nauk, hereafter referred to as CBH PAN) in Berlin; Peter Oliver Loew, a researcher of the cultural history of Gdańsk at the Deutsches Polen Institut in Darmstadt;⁵⁶ Katrin Steffen, an expert on issues of Polish Jews from the Nord-Ost Institute; and John Böhler of the Deutsches Historisches

51 Timothy Snyder, *Tajna wojna. Henryk Józewski i polsko-sowiecka rozgrywka o Ukrainę*, trans. Kazimierz Pietrzyk (Kraków: Znak, 2008); See also another work, which produced a somewhat smaller echo, but which is of great significance: Timothy Snyder, *Rekonstrukcja narodów. Polska, Ukraina, Litwa, Białoruś 1569-1999*, trans. Magda Pietrzak-Merta (Sejny: Wydawnictwo: Fundacja Pogranicze, 2007).

52 Mainly based on his *magnum opus*: Daniel Beauvois, *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793-1914* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005), second edition 2011.

53 See Delphine Bechtel, "Żydzi w miastach pogranicza: stereotypy określające ich złożoną tożsamość w latach 1897-1939," in *Stereotypy i pamięć*, vol. I, *Akulturacja/asymilacja na pograniczach kulturowych Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. Robert Traba (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny, 2009), 100-115. Fortunately, a young generation is coming along, which – in inspiring ways – is helping to transform the Polish-French scholarly landscape, which includes Odile Bour, Damien Thiriet and Emmanuel Droit.

54 His foundational study on the history of Prussia and Polish-German relations has still not appeared in Polish: Andreas Lawaty, *Das Ende Preußens in polnischer Sicht. Zur Kontinuität negativer Wirkungen der preußischen Geschichte auf die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1986).

55 Markus Krzoska, *Für ein Polen an Oder und Ostsee. Zygmunt Wojciechowski (1900-1955) als Historiker und Publizist* (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2003).

56 Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig und seine Vergangenheit, 1793-1997. Die Geschichtskultur einer Stadt zwischen Deutschland und Polen* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2003). Only a selection of his essays has appeared in Polish on this subject: Peter Olive Loew, *Gdańsk. Między mitami* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2007).

Institut [German Historical Institute, DHI] in Warsaw.⁵⁷ Their works touch upon problems at the center of the history of Poland and Polish-German relations, representing not so much the so-called German point of view as a generally expanded research perspective.

A valuable contribution to reflections on the nation has been made by Polish Germanists, an inspiring example of which is the collection of articles edited by Izabela Surynt and Marek Zybura: *Opowiedziany naród. Literatura polska i niemiecka wobec nacjonalizmów XIX wieku* (Wrocław: 2006),⁵⁸ along with studies and theses by Leszek Żyliński, Wojciech Kunicki and Joanna Jabłkowska. With international and Polish-German inspiration, multidisciplinary projects by art historians have appeared, focused around such scholars as Jerzy Tomaszewski and Adam Labuda, Jacek Purchla and the Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury (International Cultural Center) in Kraków that he directs,⁵⁹ and Małgorzata Omilanowska, the longtime director of the Instytut Sztuki PAN (Institute of Art).

Non-historians have also described the dangers presented by the national paradigm, including Maria Janion and Hubert Orłowski. Orłowski has expanded this topic through national stereotypes,⁶⁰ and he recently formulated his main theses based on the example of the German *Sonderweg* – the German “special path.”⁶¹ In the concluding section of his introduction to the topic,

57 Jochen Böhrer, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg. Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2006). The highly valuable, but unfortunately niche series “Klio w Niemczech” (also “Klio in Polen”) is the creation of the DHI; its first editor was Robert Traba, who was followed by Jerzy Kochanowski and Igor Kąkolewski.

58 From a literary and transdisciplinary (post-colonial) perspective, see Krzysztof Zajac, *Nieobecna kultura. Przypadek Inflant Polskich* (Kraków: Universitas, 2008).

59 The list of publications, often initiated through international conferences, that are multi- and trans-disciplinary in nature, is long. Here are three examples that mark out three ways of building dialog in various disciplines: *Naród – styl – modernizm*, ed. Jacek Purchla, Wolf Tagethoff, (Kraków-Monachium: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury - Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, 2006); the innovative Polish-English monograph by Monika A. Murzyn, *Kazimierz. Środkowoeuropejskie doświadczenie rewitalizacji/The Central European Experience of Urban Regeneration* (Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2006); and *Dziedzictwo kresów-nasze wspólne dziedzictwo?*, ed. Jacek Purchla (Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2006).

60 Hubert Orłowski, *Polnische Wirtschaft. Nowoczesny niemiecki dyskurs o Polsce*, trans. Izabela and Sven Sellmer (Olsztyn: Wspólnota Kulturowa Borussia, 1998).

61 Hubert Orłowski, “Spory o *Sonderweg*, o niemiecką ‘drogę odrębną,’” in *Sonderweg. Spory o „niemiecką drogę odrębną,”* selected, developed and introduced by Hubert Orłowski (Poznań: Poznańska, Biblioteka Niemiecka, 2008), 7-50.

Orłowski – a literary scholar by training who is based in Poznań – carried the paradigm by which German national identity was constructed, namely through references to its exceptionality, over to broader universal considerations, and to Polish history. Indirectly, therefore, he has emphasized the need for comparative studies as a condition for the kind of transnational historiography that Marcin Kula talks about. At the same time, Polish historiography has not shied away from discussion of “the peculiarity of our history.” Andrzej Wierzbicki pointed out the presence – in nineteenth-century disputes between the Warsaw and Kraków schools – of the notion of “Polish distinctiveness,” and found them in the thinking of “Polish advocates of historical materialism.”⁶² This thesis is confirmed by Anna Sosnowska’s findings presented in her source-based study *Zrozumieć zacofanie*,⁶³ and – “under the skin,” according to Orłowski – by *Maciej Górny’s* latest monograph on Polish, Czech and German histories and their interpretation in East German historiography.⁶⁴ Orłowski sees the broadest historical “Sonderweg paradigm” regarding Central Europe in the works of Krzysztof Brzechczyn.⁶⁵

Orłowski finds references to Poland’s peculiar development not only in traditional historiography, but also in constructivist historical-literary reflections. The traditional formulas *Polonia semper fidelis* and *ante murale* are joined by the icon of the “religion of patriotism” – that is, Poland as the “Christ of nations” – corroboration for which can be found in the words of Maria Janion:

A sort of messianic-patriotic heresy spreads, which treats the fatherland as an absolute. [Czesław] Miłosz, protesting against it, made himself vulnerable to those who found it quite natural that Poland was in the position of being a martyr at God’s will. Krasiński, after all, believed that nations are derived from the will of God - the Polish nation in particular was especially chosen.⁶⁶

62 See Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Wschód–Zachód w koncepcjach dziejów Polski. Z dziejów polskiej myśli historycznej w dobie porzobiorowej* (Warszawa: PIW, 1984), 293 ff.

63 See Anna Sosnowska, *Zrozumieć zacofanie. Spory historyków o Europę Wschodnią (1947–1994)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2004).

64 See Maciej Górny, *Przede wszystkim ma być naród. Marksistowskie historiografie w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007).

65 See Krzysztof Brzechczyn, *Odrębność historyczna Europy Środkowej. Studium metodologiczne* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, 1998); Orłowski, “Spory o Sonderweg.”

66 For my anti-national heresy, see “Rozmowa z Marią Janion,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 27–28, 2006.

Searching for Polish roots in the *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*, Janion constructs – according to *Orłowski* – a theorem about the Poles as being “foreign unto themselves.”⁶⁷ If one sets aside hagiographic aspects of Polish history as a tangle of heroic deeds and sufferings, then probably the most-often encountered determinant of “*polskość*”⁶⁸ is the symbolic sense of belonging to a Polish community of romantic provenance.⁶⁹

In her most recent work, Janion went much further in the deconstruction of the romantic myth of Polish culture.⁷⁰ Into the classic triad of Polish patriotism (the romantic hero, independence conspiracy, death on the field of honor) she inscribed Jewish experiences: the Jewish hero, the Jewish conspiracy, the Holocaust. Based on a detailed literary inquiry, she convincingly showed how inextricably intertwined the Jewish presence was in the mainstream of Polish national history, breaking the paradigm of national homogeneity.⁷¹ In her research Professor Janion has realized the postulate put forward in the work of Maria Czapska in 1957, who wrote in the Parisian *Kultura* (a prominent Polish-émigré literary-political magazine) that, in the wake of the Holocaust, a bond was established between Poland and the Jewish people “that is not within our power to break.” From an entirely different perspective, analyzing monographs on cities and towns in Podlasie and Mazovia, I pointed to a false national paradigm and how deeply rooted it is in our culture. Despite the fact that, in each of these towns, Jews made up – until the Holocaust – 40-80% of the population, the Jewish presence was presented under the banner of “the role of national minorities.” Instead of the history of a city, what was created was a fragment of Polish national history within the city.⁷²

67 See Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006).

68 Translator’s note: *Polskość* is a loaded term in the Polish language, one that is difficult to translate smoothly into English. It refers to all that which is Polish, that which distinguishes Poles and Polish culture from other peoples and cultures. It is most often translated as “Polishness,” but given the complexity of the term, we will use throughout this book the original “*polskość*.”

69 Orłowski, “Spory o *Sonderweg*,” 42.

70 Maria Janion, *Hero, Conspiracy, and Death: The Jewish Lectures*, trans. Alex Shannon (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014); see also Jerzy Jedlicki, “Bezradność. Polacy wobec Żydów,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 27-28, 2009.

71 See Kazimiera Szczuka, “Żydzi Marii Janion,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 13-14, 2009.

72 Robert Traba, “Ciągłość i historia przerywana: miasto w długim trwaniu,” ed. Krzysztof Markowski, *O nowy model historycznych badań regionalnych* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2007); French version: “Continuité et histoire interrompue: la ville

2. Imagination and Interdisciplinarity

Polish historiography is not threatened by crisis, contrary to what some may complain today.⁷³ In fact, Polish “historical studies are alive” and well.⁷⁴ There is, however, a need for genuine debate that does not revolve around *teczki* in the IPN archives, “lustration,” or short-term and politically inspired discussions designed to establish the “only real” truth about, for example, the PRL. The key to opening a new quality of debate may be this postulate: We must look at “our own past” through the prism of transnational histories (in the spirit of re-negotiation). I see another key in the promotion of debate about diversity in methodological strategies (in the spirit of an expanded perspective). Such a debate has been taking place for many years, though in the background, and the results have never been fully realized. None of this means that I want to create out of interdisciplinarity a canon of modern historical research; I am an advocate of a polyphonic narrative about the past, whose overriding feature is not some hermetic method, but rather imagination, close in spirit to the message put forth by Jerzy Jedlicki.

Historical imagination is distinct from fantasy, and it is something different than intuition. It is distinct from fantasy in that – because it is rooted in the scenario of real events – it recognizes alternative histories and is accompanied by an awareness of multidisciplinary. As opposed to intuition, imagination is not something that one has (or does not have), but it is something that one can learn. Thus, awareness of its presence is not a dead postulate. The starting point of “teaching (and learning) imagination” is to draw attention to narrative polyphony and to a diversified body of sources and methods of analyzing them. Mastering the skill of exploiting these potentials can also influence the style of the narrative, determining how truly communicative it is.

We live in a fusion world, in which everything is mixed up with everything else. The building of boundaries and deepening of one’s own research instrumentarium is indeed desirable. But I would like to see interdisciplinarity in Polish historiography take its rightful place, that it not be pushed into the role of contrived postulate that has to be, at best, tolerated. Paradoxically, in this state of affairs, a great (potential) flywheel modernizing not only the study of history, but also humanistic studies more broadly, is – among

dans la ‘longue durée dans l’historiographie polonaise, considérations méthodologiques,” in *Multiculturalité Urbaine en Europe Centrale. Villes moyennes et bourgades en Europe Centrale*, ed. Delphine Bechtel (Paris: Xavier Galmische, 2008), 19–32. See also Traba, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu*, 109–122.

73 See Jacek Żakowski’s diagnosis, “Bajarze piszą nam historię,” *Polityka* 15 (2009).

74 Śliwowska, “Dr Jekyll i Mr IPN. Historia i teczki,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 13–14, 2009.

other things – three major projects-book series, whose output has already amounted to 110 (!) volumes, with more just waiting to be printed. *Spiriti movens* and *spiriti rector* of these inter- and transdisciplinary projects are three scholars with recognized international achievements as researchers and authors: Marcin Kula, a historian with a sociology background, and his series “W krainie PRL” [“In the Land of the PRL”]; Hubert Orłowski in literature, but with a background in cultural history and historical semantics, and his series “Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka” (the German Library of Poznań); and Andrzej Mencwel in cultural studies, who has a literature background, but is also defined as a historian, and the series “Communicare.”

DIGRESSION. The claim that concepts at the heart of memory (and remembrance) analysis move about in the space of inter- and multi-disciplinary research is not merely a needless obscuration of the image in the name of theoretical contemplation. A common experience in recent years has been the abuse of “interdisciplinarity” in a way that both simplifies and formalizes it. In some environments, it is expedient to refer to new trends in scholarship. Indeed, it is too often the case that interdisciplinarity ends at some point in an eclectic introduction, after which the main narrative is confined to monodisciplinary lecturing. One of the first comparative discussions in Poland of different ways to pursue historical analysis – published in 1996 as part of a series I edited (“Klio w Niemczech”) – passed with little interest, and little response.⁷⁵ In 2007, over the course of an online discussion – which was conducted on a forum of the Międzywydziałowe Indywidualne Studia Humanistyczne (Inter-faculty Individual Studies in the Humanities, MISH), and which addressed the distinction between inter- and trans-disciplinarity in the context of Michał P. Markowski and Ryszard Nycz’s *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy* (Universitas, 2012)⁷⁶ – the wave of attitudes toward the issue shifted from surprise and rejection to understanding and acceptance.⁷⁷ Subtle distinctions between multi-, trans- and interdisciplinarity

75 *Historia społeczna, historia codzienności, mikrohistoria*, trans. Andrzej Kopacki, ed. Winfried Schulze, et al., (Warszawa: Volumen-Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny, 1996), 67 (in the series “Klio w Niemczech,” Robert Traba, ed.).

76 The book came out as part of a multi-volume series entitled “Horyzonty Nowoczesności;” also important in the historical debate are Paul Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie*, trans. Janusz Margański (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), and an interesting volume of studies from Polish cultural anthropology circles, *Dylematy wielokulturowości*, ed. Wojciech Kalaga, (Kraków: Universitas, 2004).

77 Nycz uses the term “interdisciplinary research,” accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.mishogolnopolski.fora.pl/hyde-park,15/transdyscyplinowosc-a-interdyscyplinarnosc,58.html>

could represent the first step in the search for answers to the question: what is interdisciplinary research supposed to be in practice? In my view, this question remains essential, though it is one that is too seldom discussed. Parenthetically, I would like to point out that – on the Polish version of the most popular and rapidly changing (though not always fully reliable) internet encyclopedia “Wikipedia” – there is no entry for “interdisciplinarity,” or even “multi-disciplinarity” or “trans-disciplinarity!” In the humanities as cultivated in Poland, it is probably literary scholars and young researchers who most intensively address this topic, as evidenced, for example, by Anna Burzyńska and Michał Markowski’s *Teorie literatury XX wieku* (Kraków: 2007) – a specialist’s work that is simultaneously open to other disciplines. The Humanities Forum [Forum Humanistyczne], which brings together young scholars from various disciplines of contemporary humanities (cultural anthropology, culture studies, philosophy, literature studies, history, archeology and sociology) under the “Colloquia Humaniorum,” has already released two successful works corresponding to the requirements of “humanistic imagination” and interdisciplinarity.⁷⁸

Simply put, and without going into all the intricacies of contemporary methodological debate,⁷⁹ interdisciplinarity is based on an interactive meeting of various methodological concepts and research techniques to be used to expand the new and complex catalogue of research questions, to reach for a diversified range of sources and/or (in this context) to build an innovative narrative quality. Multidisciplinary research is based on an awareness that various disciplines coexist without entering into interaction between them. Trans-disciplinarity is the most prevalent. It takes studies of a particular phenomenon, which use different methodological perspectives and exist side by side, and transforms them into a dialogue, by which those perspectives supplement and borrow from one another, and through which the mono-disciplinary narrative is expanded.

A young sociologist and cultural studies expert from Łódź, Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, accurately addressed, in a particular context, the issue of the unreflective use of interdisciplinarity:

78 *Granice dyscyplinarne w humanistyce*, ed. Jacek Kowalewski, Wojciech Piasek, Marta Śliwa (Olsztyn: Colloquia Humaniorum, 2006); *Zaangażowanie czy izolacja? Współczesne strategie społecznej egzystencji humanistów*, ed. Jacek Kowalczewski and Wojciech Piasek (Olsztyn: Colloquia Humaniorum, 2007).

79 An intensive European discussion on this subject has been going on at least since the 1990s. As one example, see the overview: *Transdisziplinarität. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven*, ed. Frank Brand, Franz Schaller, Harald Völker (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2004).

In the literature (not only Polish) one sees a tendency to talk about inter-disciplinarity in places where you can listen to one another, but where it is difficult to establish dialogue.⁸⁰

It is worth noting that, in Poland, both the practice of inter- and transdisciplinarity and debate on this subject have been going on for many years. Their predecessors were recruited for a long time not from the circle of historians, but from sociologists of culture, led by Antonina Kłoskowska and Jerzy Szacki, and from the editors and authors of *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*. They were accompanied by the Warsaw school of the history of ideas.

POST-DIGRESSION. The three series mentioned above – *Wkrainie PRL* (with its subtitle: *People, Issues, Problems. PRL Reality Read from Files, Documents, Records and Various Studies*); the “Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka”; and “Communicare” – provide excellent foreground for discussion of this topic. This is what Paweł Machcewicz said during discussions at Warsaw’s Dom Spotkań z Historią [History Meeting House] about the series *Wkrainie PRL*:

There is no other series in which so many books would appear and which, at the same time, would retain its identity. I think an alternative paradigm to view the PRL has been successfully created.⁸¹

But in my opinion, “Wkrainie PRL” succeeded in creating something even greater: a multi-perspective narrative about history in general based on the PRL example. The series – whose editorial committee includes Włodzimierz Borodziej, Paweł Machcewicz, Andrzej Paczkowski, Tomasz Szarota and Wojciech Wrzesiński – was shaped by Marcin Kula who, from the beginning of his academic career, has been rooted in issues at the intersection of various disciplines and various national histories, through family (he is the son of a Polish historian associated with the French Annales School and of sociologist Nina Assorodobraj-Kula), and through his research interests (previously, his focus was the history of Brazil). But I locate the essence of innovation and the success of “Wkrainie PRL” elsewhere, in the first epigraph to the collection of essays and sketches with the emphatic title *O co chodzi w historii?* (2008),

80 The quote is taken from a paper “Wątpliwości wokół teorii pamięci kulturowej,” delivered at a conference entitled “Kulturoznawstwo a wiedza historyczna” in Wrocław, May 22–23, 2009, which appears in *Kultura Współczesna*. The Conference, organized by the cultural studies expert from Wrocław Stefan Bednark, represented a significant attempt to show the place and role of history in cultural studies, which until then was derived from linguistics and literature studies.

81 “Wkrainie PRL,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 6, 2008.

where Kula confessed his creed (and more) with the words of Albert Einstein: imagination is more important than knowledge!

Most of the publications in this series are devoted to the history of everyday life, a sub-discipline of historical research that became popular in Europe back in the late 1960s through French and Italian historiography. But research results produced by authors in the “W krainie PRL” series do not just fall within the category of “history of everyday life;” they also develop and expand upon that category in innovative ways.⁸² I locate a second research current at the intersection of the history of ideas and mentalities, five examples of which are works by Marcin Zaremba, Anna Sosnowska, Maciej Górny, Anna Wawrzyniak and Zofia Wóycicka.⁸³ A third current examines political rituals – that is, a part of the political culture that is, in itself, understood as a research category.⁸⁴ The fourth current includes the classic study of political history, though one that tackles unconventional subjects and questions.⁸⁵ Somewhere “in between” we find works on the history of culture,⁸⁶ and finally

82 See Jolanta Muszyńska, Aneta Osiak and Dorota Wojtera, *Obraz codzienności w prasie stanu wojennego, Gdańsk, Kraków, Warszawa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006); Błażej Brzostek, *Za progiem. Codziennosc w przestrzeni publicznej Warszawy lat 1955–1970* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); Bartłomiej Gapiński, *Sacrum i codzienność. Prośby o modlitwę nadsyłane do Kalwarii Zembrzydowskiej w latach 1965–1979* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2008); Jakub Ferenc, *Sport w służbie polityki. Wyścig Pokoju 1948–1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2008).

83 Rafał Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna ... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); Maciej Górny, *Przed wszystkim ma być naród*; Joanna Wawrzyniak, *Bohaterowie, męczennicy, ofiary. ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej 1949–1969* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2009); Zofia Wóycicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych z Zagłady 1944–1950* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2009).

84 Piotr Oseka, *Rytuały stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i uroczystości rocznicowe w Polsce 1944–1956* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); *Odmiany i oblicza komunizmu. Węgry, Polacy i inni*, ed. Maciej Koźmiński, (Warszawa: ISP PAN i Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006).

85 Bartosz Cichoński, Krzysztof Józwiak, *Najważniejsze są kadry. Centralna Szkoła Partyjna PPR/PZPR* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006); Marek Wierzbicki, *Związek Młodzieży Polskiej i jego członkowie w latach 1948–1957* (Warszawa: ISP PAN and Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006); Krzysztof Dąbek, *PZPR – retrospektywny portret własny* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006).

86 See Marek Cieśliński, *Piękniej niż w życiu. Polska Kronika Filmowa 1944–1994* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006); Monika Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje! Polska komedia filmowa lat 1945–1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); Anna Pelka, *Teksas-land. Moda młodzieżowa w PRL* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007); Arkadiusz Gajewski, *Polski film sensacyjno-kryminalny (1960–1980)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2008).

something completely groundbreaking in Polish academia, namely studies in the field of *l'histoire croix*.⁸⁷

The “Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka” series is a projection of the strength of Hubert Orłowski’s instrumentarium. The significance of this series rests not so much in the fact that, within just a few years, it managed to publish 30 volumes on various phenomena related to German culture widely defined, but rather in the fact that these are works that, in the mainstream of thought on European culture, would not last long on the Polish publishing market. Seven of these volumes were developed by Orłowski, but above all he was the one who created the wider structure of the entire series, giving it a consistent but highly diverse and interdisciplinary character. One could say that the works published in “Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka” are – on the whole – a product of the humanistic imagination of its creator. The interdisciplinary nature of the project itself was realized – to take just a few examples – in studies by Norbert Elias⁸⁸ and Reinhart Koselleck,⁸⁹ and in the travels in “time and space” of Karl Schlögel.⁹⁰

“Communicare” has its origins in the anthropological interests of Andrzej Mencwel, the longtime director of the Instytut Kultury Polskiej at the University Warsaw.⁹¹ This series – like the others – includes publications that are on the borders between disciplines, with an accent on history, such as those by Jacques LeGoff, Aleksander Gieysztor, Jan Assmann and Marcin

87 See Małgorzat Mazurek, *Socjalistyczny zakład pracy. Porównanie fabrycznej codzienności w PRL i NRD u progu lat sześćdziesiątych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2005); *Socjalizm w życiu powszednim. Dyktatura a społeczeństwo w PRL i NRD*, ed. Sandrine Kott, Marcin Kula, Thomas Lindenberger (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006).

88 Norbert Elias, *Studies on the Germans: Power Struggles & Development of Habitus in the 19th & 20th centuries* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1996).

89 Reinhart Koselleck, *Semantyka historyczna*, ed. Henryk Orłowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2001).

90 Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit: Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003).

91 See Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Anna Wierzbicka, *Słowa klucze. Różne języki – różne kultury* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007); Grzegorz Godlewski, *Słowo – pismo – sztuka słowa. Perspektywy antropologiczne* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008); Christian Vandendorpe, *Du papyrus à l'hypertexte. Essai sur les mutations du texte et de la lecture* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999).

Filipowicz.⁹² The crowning achievement of the series so far, however, is a volume of studies by Mencwel himself that illustrate the author's 20-year-long path through "anthropological imagination."⁹³ It is, in the words of Karol Modzelewski, a "profession of faith and of a particular kind of program."⁹⁴ With reference to historians, Modzelewski develops Mencwel's postulate as follows:

We historians are very often not able to recognize what, in our present day, is a trace of the past, its duration, its heritage. And even if we are able to recognize it, we cannot interpret how it works in contemporary culture. For that you need an anthropologist, a sociologist, a cultural studies expert, a literary scholar, so that we are able to learn more about the hot issues on the map of our times, so that we are able to move into that present. We must get out of our ruts in order, together, to pose the most important questions and search for answers, in a common effort, though with each of us in our respective competencies.⁹⁵

This puts into question my belief in the need for interdisciplinarity. Whether my belief is justified or not is a question I will be able to answer more fully once I gain some distance from the completed "Polish-German Realms of Memory" [Polsko-niemieckie miejsca pamięci/Deutsch-polnische Erinnerungsorte] project at CBH PAN in Berlin, about which I have more to say below. For now, regarding Mencwel's message on interdisciplinarity, I have one comment, which continues the thinking of Krzysztof Pomian: I fear the domination of culturalism. Mencwel rejects this allegation:

I am on the side of integral humanities, but not on the side of the "integration of the humanities." It is impossible to integrate the various fields of scholarship, if one begins from the point of divisions, because these

92 Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Aleksander Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, updated and expanded edition (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006); Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Marcin Filipowicz, *Urodzić naród. Z problematyki czeskiej i słowackiej literatury kobiecej II połowy XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009).

93 Andrzej Mencel, *Wyobraźnia antropologiczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006).

94 Karol Modzelewski, "Wokół książki Andrzeja Mencwela, *Wyobraźnia antropologiczna*," *Przegląd filozoficzno-literacki* 4 (21) (2008): 26.

95 *Ibid.*, 30–31.

divisions have taken on real form - indeed institutionally - and can no longer be transgressed, then all so-called connections will be little more than rigid prostheses, rejected at the first step, because one cannot walk on them. Instead, one must cultivate the humanities in particular areas, overstepping their boundaries with the idea that it has only one object in common [...], man and his world. In other words, from this perspective, divisions among fields and academic specializations are derivative, secondary and ancillary to the fundamental obligation of all humanities, which is man in culture and culture in man.⁹⁶

The assortment of topics in the series “Communicare” seems, in any case, to confirm the dominance of culturalistic topics, which Pomian perceives generally as the leading tendency of Mencwel’s program:

The study of culture cannot be separated from the study of nature, especially the “second nature” that culture becomes for those who inherit it as something obvious, of which they are not even aware. [...] Culture is - in this case, to a large extent - the word and writing, wherein their material dimension is treated as secondary, to the extent that it is not avoided altogether. I am under the impression that your [Mencwel’s] understanding of culture is not so much communicative [...] as it is semiotic. Each of these concepts leads to another research questionnaire, and draws attention to other matters. For you [Mencwel], at the center of things are signs and meaning.

This conclusion reminds me of German historian Reinhart Koselleck’s doubts regarding history of the second degree (that is, the one dealing, among other things, with memory). Koselleck - to put it simply - feared the domination of “memory” (as well as the culturalist approach), which could lead to a situation where there is no way to distinguish between the Second and Third German Reichs. Mencwel’s imagination, which was so creatively developed, for example, in *Etos Lewicy*,⁹⁷ or in the metaphorically entitled study *Przedwiośnie czy potop*,⁹⁸ allows us to hold the conviction that the series “Communicare” maintains the multidisciplinary balance of its publications.

96 Mencwel, “Odpowiedź,” *Przegląd filozoficzno-literacki* 4 (21) (2008): 52.

97 Andrzej Mencwel, *Etos lewicy. Esej o narodzinach kulturalizmu polskiego* (Warszawa: PIW, 1990).

98 Andrzej Mencwel, *Przedwiośnie czy potop. Studium postaw polskich w XX wieku* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1997).

At the end of the 1970s, the Warsaw historian Tadeusz Łepkowski wrote, almost prophetically:

Generally, historians are aware of the fact that judgments they make are not perfect. They are limited by the horizon of a particular history, of a usually narrow experience gained over a very short period of time. I suppose that, among other reasons, this is precisely why history carried out as a team has a great future. It gathers together the experience and knowledge of many individuals. Obviously this is not the mere sum of parts, but something far greater and qualitatively different than history as individually thought out.⁹⁹

That “something far greater and qualitatively different” can be interdisciplinarity, practiced in research teams. One of the forerunners of interdisciplinarity is research carried out in the United States since the 1970s on the Holocaust, which in Poland today continues and is being successfully developed, for example, at Barbara Engelking’s Center for Holocaust Research [Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów].

Since 2006, the “Polish-German Realms of Memory” project at CBH PAN in Berlin has become a sort of laboratory in this field.¹⁰⁰ Its aim is – on the basis of a redefined *lieux de mémoire* – to write a collective synthesis of Polish-German relations, not of the history of events themselves, but of the mutual perception of events, characters, and geographical topoi, all of which serve as artifacts, living symbols that make up the functional memory of Poles and Germans. The vast majority of the project’s authors are historians, who are supported by a group of historians of literature and literary scholars (mainly Germanists), along with a sociologist, a cultural theorist and a political scientist. Perhaps from the perspective of, for example, a sociologist, one could get the impression that this is only a multi-disciplinary project, one that does not build interactive methodological tension, but rather just borrows relevant terminology from other disciplines. But I would disagree. From the perspective of the historian’s research instrumentarium, the “Polish-German Realms of Memory” project is interdisciplinary in two ways. First, it provides an escape

99 Tadeusz Łepkowski, *Przeszłość miniona i teraźniejsza* (Warszawa: PIW, 1980), 16.

100 For more on this subject, see Kornelia Kończal, “Bliskie spotkania z historią drugiego stulecia,” in *Pamięć zbiorowa jako czynnik integracji i źródło konfliktów*, ed. Andrzej Szociński (Warszawa: Scholar, 2009), 207–226; Robert Traba, “Historia wzajemnych oddziaływań (*Beziehungsgeschichte*) i konstrukcja ‘miejsc żywej pamięci’ (*lieux de mémoire*)? Przypadek Polski i Niemiec,” in *Pamięć polska, pamięć niemiecka*, ed. Zdzisław Noga and Martin Schulze Wessel (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2009), 62–77.

from the blind alley of positivist narration that Peter Burke described several years ago.¹⁰¹ Second, any kind of single-directional interdisciplinarity (based on the principle that only history enriches) prevents a proper formulation of research problems. At the heart of the project are descriptions and analysis of those moments when the process of creating realms of memory is initiated; of the mechanisms by which they are rooted in society; of the dynamics by which they are eventually pushed to the level of archiving memory; of their “revival” in the public sphere (cultural memory); and of their diverse functions depending on the contexts of class, religion, region or gender. Fields of research so defined force authors to depart from the framework of their own scholarly discipline, to learn new mechanisms of communication, which – taken together – additionally enhance a universalized body of sources: from various types of mass media and the internet, through literature, iconography, and architecture, to classic archival sources.

However, in this case, too, there is a danger of escaping into one’s own discipline, or into excessive historicization, especially given that trans-disciplinary dialogue itself is so seldom practiced in Poland. Parallel categories often operate to describe the same or similar phenomena. One work put out by CBH PAN in Berlin, *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci* [A *Lexicon of Cultural Memory*], defines – from perspectives of different disciplines – the phenomenon of mnemonics widely conceived, and is designed to help us escape from the trap of being self-contained in one’s own discipline.

One of the most successful individual examples of interdisciplinary research is the work of Hubert Orłowski. Personally, as a historian, I discovered – for my own use – Orłowski’s broad talents as an interdisciplinary scholar in the context of two fundamental syntheses of German historiography: Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* and Thomas Nipperdey’s *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1918*. Orłowski – a literary scholar – wrote an analytical study that merged both works, like no other historian of Poland, into a broad discourse around the famous “Bielefeld school” and its *Sozialgeschichte*. Indirectly, he created an interesting critique of the positivist historiography dominant in Polish scholarship. Orłowski seems to say: Facts, history as events, can provide important material, but they cannot be the finale of a modern academic work. Only when the author places those facts and events into the broad context of social and cultural processes, using his own chosen methodological approach, can he/she create an original, innovative scholarly work. This does not negate event history; rather, it calls for its modernization in the spirit of *Sozialgeschichte*, of Koselleck’s historical semantics, and takes

101 Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (London: Polity Press, 2005); see also Traba, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu*, 23 ff. 50

advantage of the innovative nature of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of cultural/social capital, his "field concept," and his notion of symbolic violence.

If I had to describe the intellectual reservoir from which Orłowski continues to draw new and inspirational ideas, I would mention several names: Pierre Bourdieu (sociologist), Reinhart Koselleck (historian), Max Weber (sociologist, political philosopher), Norbert Elias (cultural sociologist, historian), Walter Benjamin (writer, philosopher), Florian Znaniecki (cultural sociologist), Gottfried Benn (writer, philosopher), M. Rainer Lepsius (sociologist of politics), Wolf Lepenies (cultural sociologist), Klaus Zernack (historian and creator of *Beziehungsgeschichte*), Jürgen Kocka (historian in the Bielefeld school), Anthony Mączak (historian), and Michał Głowiński (literary scholar). One could add more names to this list, but I will venture to argue that, in terms of his "intellectual horizon," the above list aptly defines the expanse of Orłowski's preferences, indeed his academic fascinations; he is a literary scholar who – by reaching beyond the framework of his own discipline – promotes and implements the concept of interdisciplinarity.

At the same time, Orłowski shapes his multi-disciplinary instrumentarium with the research operationalization of such categories as stereotype/stereotyping, modernization, and *Bildungsbürgertum*, which have become central categories in describing cultural and social phenomena, in Germany and beyond. Using them (and surrounding them with new sub-categories and his own vocabulary-keywords), he has explored and described the phenomenon of German totalitarianism in Wilhelminian society, the reality of the Weimar Republic, and German-Polish relations.

In this context, by way of a practical exemplification of the wealth of Orłowski's research instrumentarium and its application in the analysis of concrete historical processes, I will mention five works that are each different and yet – each in its own way – interdisciplinary: His *magnum opus*, namely *Polnische Wirtschaft. Nowoczesny niemiecki dyskurs o Polsce* (1998); *Die Lesbarkeit von Stereotypen. Der deutsche Polendiskurs im Blick historischer Stereotypenforschung und historischer Semantik* (2004 and 2005); *Dzieje kultury niemieckiej* (2006, with Czesław Karolak and Wojciech Kunicki); and two smaller works, *Warmia z oddali. Odpominania* (2000) and *Rzecz o dobrach symbolicznych. Gietrzwałd 1877* (2005). These five publications indicate not only the breadth of topics Orłowski takes on, but also the range of his literary forms and intellectual reflections: An analytical study of *polnische Wirtschaft*, that meta-stereotype of "long duration"; syntheses authored by him (*Dzieje kultury niemieckiej*) and edited by him (*Polacy-Niemcy*); a personal, autobiographical sketch integrated into a great narrative about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and a micro-historical study of the Marian apparition at Gietrzwałd in 1877 that has more to say about the "Warmian Lourdes" than most historical-theological studies.

Closing

Minister Zdrojewski's hesitation over a suitable term to describe the social function of history ("politics of the past" versus "politics of memory") was justified. The semantic potential of both terms is variously and ambiguously defined. The young Polish sociologist Lech Nijakowski has examined these terms in depth, and he convincingly advocates for the use of the term "politics of memory" rather than "politics of the past." He distinguishes three possible definitions of "politics of memory," to draw the following conclusion:

The full definition would read as follows: politics of memory consists of all intentional actions of politicians and officials, having formal legitimacy, whose aim is the perpetuation, removal, or redefinition of specific content of social memory.¹⁰²

But there is no consensus in this regard within the academic community. Bartosz Korzeniowski, for example, argues against Nijakowski's position.¹⁰³ German historian Hans Henning Hahn, in an article published in Polish, sees some differences between the two terms, but he concludes that, methodologically, every so-called "politics of the past" is actually "politics of memory" (*Erinnerungspolitik*).¹⁰⁴ Regardless of which term one accepts, the very fact that Nijakowski has marked out – for the first time with extensive definition – the field of academic discourse deserves our attention. Personally, I prefer to use a term other than the "politics of the past": the "politics of memory" or "*polityka wobec historii*" (politics toward history; politics in the face of history), given the amorphous nature of the colloquial understanding of the term "memory." Why do I prefer one of these other terms? First – at least in the case of "politics of memory" – because in its substantive sense, it embeds memory/history into the process of its social function. This wording makes it clear that politics is trying to construct cultural memory and to shape a model for the political perception of a nation's past. Second, because the "politics of the past" reminds me of interference by governments in academic autonomy, which is characteristic of authoritarian and totalitarian

¹⁰² Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci*, 44.

¹⁰³ See Bartosz Korzeniowski, "Wprowadzenie. Polityka historyczna – propozycje definicji i spory wokół jej zakresu w polskim i niemieckim dyskursie naukowym," in *Narodowe i europejskie aspekty polityki historycznej* ed. Korzeniowski (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2008), 7-28.

¹⁰⁴ Hans Henning Hahn, "Pamięć zbiorowa – przedmiot polityki historycznej," 39.

governments. The “politics of the past” is also limited almost automatically to the “state,” understood as the representative of the political constellation currently in power. In a democratic country, we have at least four public actors who potentially participate in the process of negotiating the vision of history in society: government (political representation); local/regional authorities as representatives of regional historical contexts (depending on the degree of their autonomy); independent media; and civil society organized in different types of associations and organizations, including those that are religious.

An indirect but positive result of the dispute about the “new politics of the past” from 2004–2007 are valuable publications that have generally deepened our thinking on the social functions of history, which – for Poznań philosopher Bartosz Korzeniewski – have become a central topic of research.¹⁰⁵ They also play a role in Ewa Domańska’s reflections on methodology and contemporary historiography.¹⁰⁶ The first individual attempt to outline the research field of collective memory was *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu*.¹⁰⁷ Publications put out by the Instytut Zachodni and the IPN are a collection of studies which – despite their eclectic nature – can be considered a first attempt at a synthetic approach to the subject.¹⁰⁸ The Polish-German historiographical dialogue has also proven to be inspiring.¹⁰⁹ Sociological studies in Poland have been crowned by a multi-volume series “Współczesne Społeczeństwo Polskie wobec Przeszłości,” edited by Andrzej Szpociński.¹¹⁰ New energy

105 Bartosz Korzeniewski, *Polityczne rytuały pokuty w perspektywie zagadnienia autonomii jednostki* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006), along with many related articles.

106 Ewa Domańska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksja o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006).

107 Traba, *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu*.

108 *Narodowe i europejskie aspekty polityki historycznej*; ed. Bartosz Korzeniewski, *Przemiany pamięci społecznej a teoria kultury*, ed. Bartosz Korzeniewski (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2007).

109 See *Erinnerungsorte, Mythen und Stereotypem i Europa/ Miejsca pamięci, mity i stereotypy w Europie*, ed. Heidi Hein-Kircher, Jarosław Suchopeł, Hans Henning Hahn (Wrocław: ATUT, 2008); the entire series of publications is the initiative of Basil Kerski, under the patronage of *Dialog. Magazyn polsko-niemiecki*; an interesting summary of the debate about the politics of memory in Eastern Europe can be found in a special issue of the Berlin monthly edited by Manfred Sapper, *Osteuropa*, (2008, 6/Juni).

110 Barbara Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ISP PAN, 2006). Despite this study’s innovation, and the recognition it received, the one thing that is worrying is the lack of dialog with historical studies focused on memory issues.

continues to be provided by the essays and journalistic writing of Marcin Kula¹¹¹ and Andrzej Mencwel.¹¹² Such periodicals as *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, *Kultura Współczesna*, *Znak* (Kraków), *Przegląd Polityczny* (Gdańsk) and *Borussia* (Olsztyn) systematically enrich the debate.

With the wealth of topics contained in those publications in mind, all of which deserve more consideration than can be given here, I would like to mention a single – but essential – issue raised by Hahn: the cross-border “politics of memory.”

Under the pretext [Hahn writes] that a uniting Europe needs a common history and, with that, a collective memory, what is actually involved here is the authoritarian interpretation of not just the history of Europe, but also the history of regions and the individual nations of Europe.¹¹³

I share Hahn’s concerns. Hegemonic memory discourses built upon power advantages of “one’s own country over others” create the danger that memory will be appropriated by the most powerful. And yet it is difficult to claim that, in a “Europe without borders,” democratic, self-identified communities will function only within a confined space; such a thing is all the more difficult to expect given that – even within internal structures – collective memory is in a constant state of flux and social re-negotiation. We must therefore strive to develop a new, secure set of rules for the political game, which I would call – reflecting Hahn’s views – a code of conduct for the politics of memory, whose basic point would be autonomy for individual communities of memory that need to be respected in relation to their own memories/experiences, and to the memories/experiences of “others.”¹¹⁴

I deliberately finished this “opening sketch” with a “closing” rather than an “end” or a “conclusion.” Public debate in Poland about the “two dimensions” of history is by no means concluded. In fact, it is in a phase of increasingly intensive development, and it is to this fact, first of all, that the motif of “closing”

111 See Marcin Kula’s *Komunizm po komunizmie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2006), along with the work cited above, *O co chodzi w historii?*. See also *Wybór tradycji* (Warszawa: DiG, 2003); *Religiopodobny komunizm* (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, 2004); *Między przeszłością a przyszłością* (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2004).

112 Andrzej Mencwel, *Rodzina Europa po raz pierwszy. Dialogi o polskiej formie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2009).

113 Hahn, “Pamięć zbiorowa,” 33.

114 See *ibid.*, 41–42; in this context, see also the “Appel de Blois” (2008) of the international guild of historians.

refers. Second, it refers directly to the deeper meaning of the reflections I have presented in the above “sketch” and, perhaps even more importantly, to the arguments with which I began my volume *Kraina tysiąca granic* (2003). In subsequent sections of this book, I will make no further attempt to synthesize the subjects at hand. What I want to do is recollect my experiences from recent years (at some points I reach further back), putting them into as coherent a narrative as possible, in order to define my own place in the landscape of the Polish debate about history.