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Temporal Layers in the Attic. The Anthropological Essay about Domestic 'Other' Spaces, Things and Family Memories

ABSTRACT

This paper is an anthropological essay about domestic space, things as the 'kaleidoscope' of the family past, but also an attempt to describe chosen aspects of the memory mechanism. Particularly, its base was the author's question about ways of perceiving attics in old family houses by people involved in there, and about their view of the past in this context. Inspired by the ethnographic fieldwork done in Gaśawa (a village in Żnin County and Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship in north-central Poland) over the period 2013–2014, she decided to focus on the interpretative background of that research, and present a set of metaphors serving as guidance for the interpretation and some theoretical remarks. This can be necessary to make some universal meta-descriptions of the attic (as the 'other' place) and its practical and symbolical meaning, as well as to interpret any kind of narration (e.g. people's stories) about those extraordinary places and things inside. To demonstrate this, the author created an idea of 'the attic of memory', by making use of spatial metaphors (in particular Reinhart Kosseleck's conception of 'layers of time') and drawing inspiration from many different terms and categories offered by contemporary anthropology of memory and history. Specific attention, moreover, was paid to the objects in question (junks, revealed heirlooms and mementos) as so-called 'biographical things'.

KEYWORDS

memory studies, anthropology of space and place, family, home, attic, heirlooms, mementos, junks, family stories

Is it possible to describe ethnographically ‘the quiddity of history’ that was implanted in ambiguous, heterotopic sphere as the upper part of home? How to ‘discover’ the local and family past that is getting stuck in those derelict domestic spaces as attics, lofts or abandoned garrets?¹ Admittedly, some segments of space on the whole, so-called particular places staying under the auspices of *genius loci* or referring to Aristotle’s concept of *topos idios*, accumulate some excess of signification inside.² Wherefore, the reality we perceive becomes ‘denser’ and is suffused with the meaningfulness.³ The author’s proposal would be also to look at the home attic from a metaphorical perspective and try to consider this place as a universal symbolic representation of the family past. So now, it is time to imagine if there was a particular archaeological site full of things which – generating family stories or, contrarily, being a complete mystery – fall together into a layout of memories and memory gaps.

In principle, one of the main aims of this text is to show spatial metaphors as a way of description of those functionally and semantically distinct spaces, as well as to show opportunities to analyze any people’s narrations about them. For the author, some inspiration for this reflection was an ethnographic research and data collected in Gąsawa, a bygone small town, current village in the historical province of Greater Poland. However, this paper makes no claim to complete interpretation of these sources – it is rather a set of preliminary questions and theoretical remarks. It is worth emphasizing that, already when the questionnaire had been formulating, the idea of ‘home attic’ seemed to be not only a subject of the fieldwork in a literal sense to the author, but, first of all, it was some kind of key to start and develop a conversation in the field. Anyhow, this concept also served as the background of thought on the association between history and memory. On account of that, these two categories may be understood – as historians and theoreticians Jacques Le Goff and Krzysztof Pomian argue – basically like interfusing spheres, inside of which the past is ceaselessly manifesting.⁴ That is, in a sense, a problem in philosophy. Consequently, a fieldworker is incapable of writing up that excerpt from reality literally and, at last, he or she has to relate observations and express reflections in the almost poetic manner.

¹ This question applies in general to the oldest buildings, which were designed in such a way that there are attics or any material and symbolic remnants of places like these. It actually was an important way of choosing informants in Gąsawa and, furthermore, let exclude e.g. residents of modern blocks.

² Y.-F. Tuan, “Space and place: humanistic perspective”, *Philosophy in Geography*, 1979, Vol. 20, eds. S. Gale, G. Olsson, pp. 408–412.

³ S. Czarnowski, *Podział przestrzeni i jej rozgraniczanie w religii i magii*, Warszawa 1939, p. 10; S. Symotiuk, *Filozofia i genius loci*, Warszawa 1992, p. 70.

⁴ J. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. S. Rendall, E. Claman, New York 1992, p. 95; K. Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, pp. 140–144.

Handful of metaphors

The process of space perception is connected with an interaction with things and pictures as signs, that always refer to any time sequence.⁵ In general, every act of our being in the material world is interrelated with a temporal dimension.⁶ We are immersed in the 'deep time' or the *longue durée*, as Fernand Braudel would have it.⁷ For that reason, according to one of the most important 20th-century historians Reinhart Koselleck, using spatial metaphors is the proper way of thinking about time.⁸ He suggests a particular concept of *Zeitschichten* ('layers of time') drawn from the area of natural science (above all else, geology) in order to apply that on the ground of humanistic studies. The fact of adopting this term connected with the 'estimable' discipline, which was the eighteenth-century natural history, considerably makes anthropological view of temporal phenomena widen.⁹ It gives us, indeed, an attractive perspective on the past-present relation. Moreover, it creates by extension a new level of understanding for everything that belonged to domain of the history and – simultaneously – that is also an active part of the present.¹⁰ In other words, the past becomes recognizable there only as residues still dwelling in the form of cross-stratified marks or traces (or, if we want to stay among the metaphors, as Koselleck's temporal layers, planes of the *palimpsest* or else 'memory nodes' by Zdzisław Najder, historian of literature).¹¹ By all means, it is possible to say about the past figuratively both in common (just like in narrations of 'the Great History' – as it is known in the pre-postmodern nomenclature – abounding in event symbols and national emblems) and local dimension, including the context of private, family space indeed.

This metaphorical perspective that was elaborated above, takes into consideration the presence of certain 'excess' or some intensified quality implanted in various representations of the past. Every spatial experience, as the Polish cultural researcher Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska insists, is the 'contemporary past' at once, due to the fact that it activates many different levels of time at the

⁵ K. Barndt, "Layers of Time. Industrial Ruins and Exhibitionary Temporalities", *Publications of The Modern Language Association of America*, 2010, Vol. 125, No. 1, pp. 1–3.

⁶ Y.-F. Tuan, op. cit., p. 393.

⁷ K. Barndt, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸ R. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, Mit einem Beitrag von Hans-Georg Gadamer, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2000/2003, pp. 19–26; J.-W. Müller, "On Conceptual History", [in:] *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. D. M. McMahon, S. Moyn, Oxford 2014, pp. 74–77.

⁹ R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time (1979)*, trans. K. Tribe, New York 2004. p. 94.

¹⁰ J. Le Goff, op. cit., pp. 9–11.

¹¹ Z. Najder, *Węzły pamięci niepodległej Polski*, Kraków–Warszawa 2014, p. 7.

same moment.¹² This particular 'stratification' emerging from the space and its material contents, might be conceptualized by people in various ways and, afterward, expressed as multilayer storytelling (oral historical records, stories about the local and family histories or many other displays of collective and individual memories). In this context, 'layers' can appear as a polyphonic composition which consists of by-gone events representations and images of ancestors, as if the attic was 'the magic case' full of time-traveling postcards.¹³ Obviously, thinking of social reality as a construction 'built' through the language is essential to understand this association; then, structure of language as well as symbolic structure of materiality that is given our perception, seem to be quite similar due to resembling to some kind of 'layout.'¹⁴

There is no denying that Koselleck's 'layers of time' connote the literary concept of *the palimpsest*. Substantially, both mentioned metaphors can be successfully applied in order to express relation between certain historical sources (document or telling story) and the yesterdays. After the postmodern turn in the culture theory (including historiography, particularly study of the metahistory with its leading theoreticians Frank Ankersmith and Hayden White), it is presupposed that we have to perceive all of those narrations as if they would be finished interpretations of the remote reality.¹⁵ That is why we can read historical research papers (obviously, having regard to limits of that interpretation) as a type of literary texts.¹⁶ Nonetheless, beside historians who study written sources, also fieldworkers dealing chiefly with people stories can describe some cultural phenomena in a figurative way. Every ethnographic description, according to the one of founding members of postmodern anthropology Clifford Geertz, is rather a storytelling created jointly by researcher and informants.¹⁷ In fact, a strategy of using metaphor seems to be a significant way of description in the contemporary cultural studies. It gives an exceptional chance to 'read' empirical

¹² M. Saryusz-Wolska, *Spotkania czasu z miejscem. Studia o pamięci i miastach*, Warszawa 2011, p. 38.

¹³ P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey, D. Pellauer, Chicago 2004, p. 159.

¹⁴ A good example could be stories about place, space and local identity in comparison to the idea of urban space as material manifestations of the city's history.

¹⁵ F. Ankersmith, "Historiography and Postmodernism", *History and Theory*, 1989, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 143; idem, "Truth in Literature and History", [online] http://www.culturalhistorica.es/ankersmit/truth_in_literature_and_history.pdf [accessed: 28.10.2015]; H. White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory", *History and Theory*, 1984, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 2.

¹⁶ U. Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation: World, History, Texts*, Cambridge 1990, p. 143.

¹⁷ C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture. Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, New York 1973, p. 16; K. Kaniowska, "Antropologia i problem pamięci", *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty*, 2002, No. 3–4, pp. 61–64.

data, but also to organize piecemeal or seemingly chaotic information collected during the fieldwork.

Finally, it sometimes happens that a certain spatial metaphor might be reflected as a 'tool' in the process of constructing an author's summative narration too. This point is especially relevant for studying the problem of space and memory. The present text, due to showing its multi-dimensional contexture (as the appearance of signification layers in the domestic loft and layout of memories in head of storyteller), seems to be a quaint example of this idea.

About a space. *Coincidentia oppositorum*

According to an informant [67-year-old man], "there, above, there is something different". Obviously, an act of perceiving some segments of space as 'different' is essence from a concept of the world's understanding in the lore.¹⁸ As per Stefan Czarnowski's findings, or Mircea Eliade's considerations of the nature of religion, the home – like a microcosm – is divided into main parts where sacred things appear: a center (the fire) and outlying areas, e.g. attics with the roof ventilation (as well as cellars, pantries, lockers, but also doors with thresholds, windows and various other openings).¹⁹ However, stories heard from people in Gąsawa frequently correspond to ethnographic descriptions of the domestic space by Zbigniew and Danuta Benedyktowicz.²⁰

In the upstairs, there is a loft, part of empty space, such a mysterious loft. There is an empty place, there, behind the mangle. [...] In this attic is something so spooky, so I always go to upstairs with my dog, never by myself. [52-year-old woman]

To put it another way, the boundary between *orbis interior* and *orbis exterior* runs at that place, thereby being in the attic is connected with a sense of insecurity:

I mean it is rather different. Starting to move inside its [attic's] borders, I always say: uh, be careful. It is my first thought: go carefully. Nothing else. Only the one thought, when I come there: go carefully, be careful you don't fall down. [...] Let's tread more carefully, more carefully than down here on earth. [67-year-old man]

The *up* and *down* dichotomy carries next binary oppositions, such as *living* and *dead*, *active* and *passive*, *dynamic* and *static*, etc.²¹ And in fact, some storytellers

¹⁸ J. S. Bystroń, "Tajemnice dróg i granic", [in:] idem, *Tematy, które mi odradzano. Pisma etnograficzne rozproszone*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 223–229.

¹⁹ S. Czarnowski, op. cit., p. 9; M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W. R. Trask, Harvest/HBJ Publishers 1957, pp. 172–179.

²⁰ D. Z. Benedyktowicz, *Dom w tradycji ludowej*, Wrocław 1992, p. 36.

²¹ G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, New York 1994, p. 18; P. Korosec-Sefraty, "The Home from Attic to Cellar", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 1984, No. 4, p. 308.

mentioned their current or bygone home attics, as if these places were out of ordinary spheres; namely spheres, where householders are forced to feel like guests who accidentally found themselves in.

Nevertheless, it is particularly needed to understand other forms of expression of this dissonance too. For instance, it can emerge also as the memory/oblivion duality.²² "I remember – as 65-year old female informant said – in days of yore, it was giving me a delectation to spend time in the attic; there it was almost quiet, with reduced sound of home living..." For some people the act of being in this place means some isolation or occasion to forget about every-day reality. It is almost mysterious experience that Gaston Bachelard said in the text about the 'oneiric' home, where the attic – as a component of the home-archetype – is a mystical, abandoned sphere full of banished and more or less forsaken objects.²³

However, the 'alternative' space of attic and all its material filling can not only appear to be forgotten and to cause a feeling of forgetfulness. If we look at them from the other side, it will be revealed that 'the oblivion' (as some kind of ambience) is contemporaneous and inter-current with a sense of connection with the past. As a matter of fact, some people told stories about objects such as: the box with old photographs and the grandfather's diary, the chest with documents and letters written by dead relatives, travel mementos left by an aunt or even an old German bayonet found sticking between a wooden bar and roof tiles. All of the mentioned artifacts obtained some common dimension and capability: they could 'recover' old days and pictures of ancestors and other people connected with the home's history. In addition, because of coming from ambivalent spaces where the time lapse had been 'paused' at some point, those objects become more meaningful and their signification were markedly changed or intensified.

To understand this phenomenon, we should refer the idea by the Russian semiotician Vladimir Toporow. He noticed that the space and things can repossess their properties each other on different planes of semantics connotation.²⁴ Worth mentioning might be also the fact that this remarkable interdependence is the main product of the 'rebuilding process' in the structure of *signum* facility, as semioticians have pointed out. During that course, some objects that had a certain practical meaning formerly, start to perform a symbolic function in the next periods of their 'life' – in this case by releasing a sense of the otherness, as comes from the past.²⁵ And beyond this, just following the act of discovery, they might be renovated, exhibited and reach the 'heirloom' status, or else (particularly when the informant is not getting involved in his/her family's past affairs) be

²² P. Ricoeur, op. cit., p. 502.

²³ G. Bachelard, op. cit., pp. 3–37.

²⁴ V. Toporow, *Przestrzeń i rzecz*, tłum. B. Żyłko, Kraków 2003, p. 12.

²⁵ A. Bajburin, "Semiotyczne aspekty funkcjonowania rzeczy", *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty*, 1998, t. 52, nr 3–4, pp. 109–117; P. Bogatyriew, *Semiotyka kultury ludowej*, tłum. M. R. Maynowa, Warszawa 1979, p. 357.

destroyed and even thrown away into the rubbish. Then, accordingly to the theory of space and things semiotic interplay, some objects receive the living room space quality as the next interpretative layer, but others – get some properties of the garbage dump space.

About a thing. *This teacup reminds me of my mum*

In view of their ability to connote the past, there is a special class of objects defined as ‘time vehicles’ by anthropologists, e.g. Janet Hoskins and, in Polish cultural studies, Agata Stanis.²⁶ More interestingly, those things might be described in two different biographical contexts, as Hoskins says in her telling article titled ‘Agency, Biography and Objects’. The first is the question of informants’ biographies with reference to objects (that are so-called ‘biographical things’), while the next – objects’ living cycles (as ‘biographies of things’ on their own).²⁷ Because the present text basically treats of the memory problem, we will deal with the first category above all.²⁸

Objects coming from the home attic were frequently defined as ‘family relics’ or even ‘holy things’ by informants from Gaśawa. As their statements point out, some kind of ambivalent or even sacral elements were nested in this matter. In a certain sense, it gives the author of this article an opportunity to discuss the meaning of attic heirlooms in the aspect of ancestor worship or feeling closeness with the forbears. Most of narratives about those seemingly ordinary ‘junks’ concerned indeed the act of reconnection with a certain person (or building generation ties again, along with creation memories, on the basis of objects) in parallel.

It seems to be the most significant contact points, where a transcendental nature of the attic and sacral sphere of family memory overlap each other. Interestingly, often enough some useless, abandoned things filling most of these places, can become meaningful heirlooms in a consequence of arousing association with ancestors of their actual ‘discoverer’. We need to bear in mind that a memento as a repository of memories fulfills an important function in the process of reminding the past, especially if the human memory is rather insufficient. Therefore some images of the past can disappear or dissolve themselves so much, that people have to look for them in the materiality or engraft extracts of memories

²⁶ A. Stanis, “Pamięć i przedmioty biograficzne w kontekście tworzenia domu rodzinnego”, [in:] *Rodzina – Tożsamość – Pamięć*, red. M. Kujawska, I. Skórzyńska, G. Teusz, Poznań 2009, pp. 243–261.

²⁷ J. Hoskins, “Agency, Biography and Objects”, [in:] *Handbook of Material Culture*, eds. C. Tilley and others, London 2008, pp. 78, 81.

²⁸ Although the cross-compliance of those two anthropological visions of the materiality is the result of human and objects entanglement, the author had decided to leave aside this question. This is, in general, a sophisticated issue that needs to be studied separately.

in shapes, colours and other attributes of things. It can be defined as memory materialization process, the progress of which is essential for the development of 'genealogical myths' and tales about the family origination. For that reason, an every act of building on this special kind of collective memory is based upon certain objects located in the home, as Maurice Halbwach pointed out.²⁹ However, in this context both things that informants were talking about during this fieldwork, such as a teacup, a figurine or pendant, or even an old diary from the attic, and – on the other hand – artifacts referring to national/ethnic 'beginning of time' (e.g. royal insignia and different objects sacred by people's memory), amulets after forefathers, the *malangan* described by Bronisław Malinowski (as a container for ancestral life force in Melanesia) or even Native American totems, have an exactly the same role to play as a "visualized memory which is publicity transacted."³⁰ The identity of things is powered by memories of certain individuals. "Whenever I look at this – as 52-years-old woman said – it is beginning to resemble my aunt". According to Susanne Küchler and Janet Hoskins, we have to interpret that kind of phenomenon as *the extraordinary theatre of memory* and it does not matter if this has a public or private, intimate dimension.³¹

Meanwhile, as we know, a significance of the 'biographical objects' coming from the attic, is certainly intensified and strengthened. In this case we are confronted with a symbolism of the source or the beginning and the nidus as an allegory of past generations. Wherefore an every family home, as Bachelard put it, seems to be some kind of sanctuary or sacred shelter – a place where the self-confirmation process performs.³²

About a memory. The 'treasure' of private histories

As can be seen, not only material remains of the family past which are existing in the form of 'temporal layers' in the lofts, attics or any distinct parts of the home space, but also symbolic traces of the history might bring to mind the work of memory. In a consequence of 'reading' and internalizing materiality by household members, in their heads – as if the real space – some memories are piling up. What is more, almost all anthropological concepts aimed at describing the memory are extremely tightly connected with the idea of space and its contents.

The main function of human memory is, apparently, to mediate between our current experience and the overpast. As Pierre Nora argues, the memory – being

²⁹ M. Halbwach, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago and London 1992, pp. 38, 60–61, 65–66. It is worth pointing out that Halbwach quoted Émile Durkheim's significant words: "Things are the soul of the family; it cannot get rid of them without destroying itself".

³⁰ J. Hoskins, op. cit., p. 77.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 78.

³² G. Bachelard, op. cit., p. 10.

a fundamental opposition to history – “take roots in the concrete, in space, gestures, images and objects.”³³ Namely – and we should accent this fact once again – it is only a next level of the unique space and times connection. His influential concept of ‘sites of memory’³⁴ (*lieux de mémoire*) was created in order to unveil or discover the essence of this complementarity and authenticate the bonds between both mentioned categories. This peculiar union – as Nora notices – became stronger in view of some crisis, that had been an effect of the global memory imperative and an overpowering desire to save or recover bygone things.³⁵ On another note, this exceptional longing for the past emerges today as retro fashions, historical reconstructions and many different strategies of appreciating the past, including the ways of space and things description with clearly positive-meaning words such as: ‘oldstanding’, ‘ancient’, ‘antique’, ‘longtime’, ect. (definitely more often than terms: ‘antediluvian’ or ‘primeval’).³⁶ But, for the rest, the ‘good old days’ syndrome as a universal human condition is nothing new nowadays.

What is rather intriguing in Nora’s proposition, the spontaneous memory just supposedly disappeared and moved over for various institutionalized forms of keeping memory alive.³⁷ Meanwhile, it seems, the memory is still ‘working’ in the unconstrained way or, in a manner of speaking, independently from our intentional agency. It can manifest in the public sphere, on the one hand, as destroyed monuments, old cemeteries or ruins, and in the local, domestic context – by taking shape of things hidden in the attics or old chests and trunks, and even ostensible junks³⁸ which are able to activate the remembrance process or generate some meaningful narration as *semiophores* – on the other.³⁹

What turned out to be particularly important during most interviews with inhabitants of Gaşawa, the term ‘attic’ may be, above all, a keyword helpful to generate narrations about ‘the source’ or ‘the mythical beginning’ of certain

³³ P. Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire”, *Representations*, 1986, No. 26, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory*, p. 9.

³⁴ J. Szpociński, “Miejsca pamięci”, *Teksty Drugie*, 2008, nr 4, pp. 18–19. Pierre Nora’s concept was applied to Memory Studies in Polish sociology by Jerzy Szpociński (among others), who confronted this idea with Jean Baudrillard’s theory of ‘stupefying’ excess of artifacts, as well as simultaneous process of materiality destruction and production of its imitations (lat. *simulacra*). According to Szpociński, the act of resistance from Baudrillard’s ‘desert of the real’ has an effect in various practics of making space ‘historical’ and capabled to activate the sense of the past. In this meaning every material manifestation of some ‘then’ and ‘there’ (old streets, walls, inscriptions, ect.) take shape of peculiar *emissary from the past* to create a memory of everyones who had lived in *this place* and *used to touch the same door-handle*.

³⁵ P. Nora, op. cit., pp. 7–8.

³⁶ J. Le Goff, op. cit., pp. 9–11.

³⁷ P. Nora, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁸ *Ergo*, not only in the form of the most valuable mementos and heirlooms.

³⁹ K. Pomian, op. cit., pp. 115–130.

families and houses (in the meaning of buildings as witnesses of the family history). Therefore it is essential to present collected stories in those two dimensions. Against this background, an idea of *Generationenorte* (as one of four fundamental types of space and memory connections) proposed by German researcher Aleida Assmann, seems to be particularly useful.⁴⁰ Her conception relates to so-called 'family places' that are formed as a result of alternating generations and keeping memory from parents to offspring. It is very accurate to describe in this way some distinct parts of the home space such as attics or lofts, which are able to accumulate – because of an isolation or not being involved in everyday life of householders – elements interrelated almost exclusively with the past: both things-mementos and some intangibles or the stuff of memory as family tales.

Summary

The meaning of heritage that is still 'growing' in the upper part of the home (and, to a certain extent, in the heads of householders) is a manifestation of symbolic power of that sphere. Put another way, each real yesterdays material relic and every tale about that, as well as every narration about any non-existing or actual habitable attic – all of those elements refer to transgressive and sacred character of the space. Plaited in the 'multivocal' story, they connote paradoxically some 'absence' and some 'excess' together. That cohesion, in a sense, was expressed in the harmonized voice of people from Gąsawa and 'voice of things'; all of those narrations echoed as the *polyglossia* of the attic using multiple languages together. In the light of that consideration (mainly in the context of people tales and materiality entanglement), the family home, as a symbol and an archetype, seems to be ascended to some higher level of sense, a hidden depth of meaning. As Roland Barthes would say: it is the mythical creation's level that is still feeding itself with the absence or the lack and – principally – the understatement.⁴¹

To observe this phenomenon, ethnographic fieldworkers ought to recognize some alternative places; space of *otherness*, in the meaning of *heterotopias* and ownerless areas, including this unusual part of domestic space which in the previous, 19th and early 20th century studies of folklore, was presented frequently as the mysterious and sacral 'residence' of dead souls. In view of this, a territory that the author is still telling about, is indeed a symbolic border between the home (as familiarized segment of space) and the nether world.⁴² Today, however,

⁴⁰ S. Dyroff, "Zeit und Raum in den Gedächtnistheorien von Aleida und Jan Assmann", [in:] Beiträge des Symposiums 'Literatur und Erinnerung' im Rahmen der 2. Kieler Tage in Poznań, Februar 2006, [online] http://www.polgeron.edu.pl/php/texte/2006_dyroff.pdf [accessed: 20.10.2015].

⁴¹ R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers, New York 1991, p. 84.

⁴² P. Korosec-Sefraty, op. cit., p. 303; A. Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, Foundations of Cultural Geography Series 1969, p. 49.

the attic is not just a sphere of transgression in the context of traditional peoples beliefs, because reality of provincial and family life – as we know – is changed so much. Precisely for this reason the author of this article had been forced to look for another, alternative pathway of interpretation, accentuated with an issue of the family identity and a problem of perceiving the past.

The space and things described as the window (or kaleidoscope) of the history, contain individuals and family representations, which are building up unceasingly.⁴³ We are all aware of the fact that those elements, essentially, are not able to supply true images of the history (because it is impossible from an epistemological point of view) or even cannot give their receivers as many information as, for instance, written sources like documents. Instead, they can make every private vision of the past multishaped and more complicated, still floating and changeable as a story passed on generation after generation.⁴⁴ The main reason of that is the phenomenon of the human memory (however it is oral or written, as well as common or individual, as Kristen Hastrup emphasizes), which is modifying all the time in the process of reminding the past.⁴⁵

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