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How Should One Write about Masters?

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to answer the question: how should one write about masters? It is a question about the narrative strategies of authors writing about masters. The presented analysis is based on five examples: (1) John A. Hall's *Ernest Gellner: An Intellectual Biography*, (2) Anita Burdman Feferman and Solomon Feferman's *Alfred Tarski: Life and Logic*, (3) Edmund Leach's *Lévi-Strauss*, (4) Andrzej Walicki's *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii* [*Ideas and People. An Attempt at an Autobiography*], and (5) *Dialogues* by Roman Jakobson and Krystyna Pomorska. Each text presents different rhetorical devices, authorial relations to the master, and academic aims. The paper concludes with a critical comparison of the five examples (with the addition of some other minor cases also discussed in the paper).

Keywords: Master, mastery, student, master-disciple relation, Andrzej de Lazari, Ernest Gellner, Alfred Tarski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Andrzej Walicki, Roman Jakobson, rhetoric, narration.

Jak pisać o mistrzach?

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie, jak pisać o mistrzach? Innymi słowy, postawione pytanie dotyczy strategii narracyjnych stosowanych przez autorów piszących o mistrzach. Główna część tekstu oparta jest na pięciu przykładach: (1) John A. Hall Ernest *Gellner. An Intellectual Biography* (2011), (2) Anita Burdman Feferman, Solomon Feferman *Alfred Tarski. Życie i logika* (2009), (3) Edmund Leach *Lévi-Strauss* (1998), (4) Andrzej Walicki *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii* (2010) oraz (5) *Dialogues* Romana Jakobsona i Krystyny Pomorskiej. Każdy tekst przedstawia inne

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zestawy narzędzi i technik retorycznych, relacji autora wobec mistrza oraz cel akademicki. Porównanie tych pięciu przykładów (i mniej rozbudowanych przypadków prezentowanych w artykule) stanowi konkluzję artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe: Mistrz, mistrzostwo, uczeń, relacja mistrz – uczeń, Andrzej de Lazari, Ernest Gellner, Alfred Tarski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Andrzej Walicki, Roman Jakobson, retoryka, narracja.

A somewhat personal introduction

In the introduction *Wprowadzenie liryczne* to his book, my master wrote about his own masters. It begins with the following: "Everyone of us feels the need to have an authority figure, but not all of us are given the chance to meet a true Master" (Lazari 2000: 5). Mastery is connected with the authority a student searches for, the master becomes a role model and an anchor in the tumultuous professional life. The singular suggests that there can only be one Master. However, the following words seem to counter this simplification, and they lead us—indeed these are the words of a Russianist—to "a lived life." Andrzej de Lazari continues: "I had three Masters. The first—an Englishman named Bibs Ekkel—was, to be honest, an Anti-Master (like the Antichrist [indeed the book I am quoting is dedicated to the works of Dostoyevsky – A.F.K.]). Not only did he regularly get my decadent soul drunk, he also taught me how to play the balalaika" (ibidem). Although this anti-master is obviously a provocation, it is one that is reflected in the literature about mastery (Wejland 2019). De Lazari then moves on to the next figure: "If I had not met the right Master—Andrzej Walicki—I would probably still be playing the balalaika (as I had done in the past) in 'Borscht and Tears' located on Beauchamp Place in London" (ibidem). This example does not yet complete the master-disciple relationship.

> When the right Master had left for Australia (and later the United States), I asked Ryszard Łużny if he would become my stepfather, considering the fact that my spiritual father had left me. His answer was: "Dear stepson!..." Ryszard Łużny became my third Master, since as Dostoyevsky's Inquisitor states: "I tell you that man has no more tormenting care than to find someone to whom he can hand over as quickly as possible that gift of freedom with which the miserable creature is born" (ibidem).

Dostoyevsky's original provocation is discernible in de Lazari's words, since it is not about looking for someone to bow to, but about learning, inspiring each other, about sharing fascinations and different types of relations. Here, mastery is understood as being not only and not exclusively a scientific, academic category, and the master does not have to be an authority figure. If I were to ask

metaphorically—does not having a Master result in some deficit in existence, or an incomplete being? This is not what I want to say. The issue is always individual. But one thing is certain: if a person has a Master, then his existence is more complete. Even if the Master is an Anti-Master who intoxicates our soul and body, fills it up with sounds—to fall for a moment into stereotypical thinking—of the nostalgic Russian landscape, as happens with the sound of the balalaika. However, those who know what happened to de Lazari after he returned from London, especially the story about the balalaika, will know that this example of anti-mastery finally led to the birth of a truly educational project—a balalaika orchestra, and the forging of new friendships. A student had turned into a Master, inviting new disciples into his world.

Although I could write about my personal experiences and my own three masters, I am interested in larger structures, not in personal accounts. The number three could suggest some symbolic structures, but let us leave this aside and instead focus on narrative structures. There are more than three of them.

Choice

I shall analyze and interpret five texts about masters, and additionally point to several other contextual references, which out of necessity will be summarized only briefly. All of these texts, including Andrzej de Lazari's introduction, do not cover every existing possibility, but rather show the possible strategies of writing about masters. Thus, they will allow us to answer the question from the title: how should one write about masters?

I have chosen four publications which deal with masters in different ways: (1) John A. Gall's *Ernest Gellner. An Intellectual Biography* (2011), (2) Anita Burdman Feferman and Solomon Feferman's *Alfred Tarski. Życie i logika* (2009), (3) Edmund Leach's *Lévi-Strauss* (1998), (4) Andrzej Walicki's *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii* (2010), and Roman Jakobson and Krystyna Pomorska's *Dialogues* (1983). The choice of these materials is naturally predicated upon the economy of writing (and therefore reading of) academic articles and the required length of the text. Therefore, it does not exhaust the possible strategies. Nonetheless, the choice is deliberate, as I have decided to discuss works that best illustrate various writing strategies.[1] A common feature of these examples is the fact that they constitute

[1] However, I must explain one significant omission, especially since it represents a rather large number of narratives about masters. If I were to develop this model of writing, it would be called—according to the format adopted in this article—"Maria Renata Mayenowa" (see: Chodźko, Feliksiak, Olesiewicz 2006). These are books which are written by different authors, have heterogenic construction (or—in the context of literary studies it would be more precise to say—like a *silva rerum*), with a clear master-disciple foundation. The analytical and interpretative problem with this book, however, lies in its character: the multitude, diverse polyphony *etc*. There is no single writing strategy, but an entire assortment which together form a totality in the reader's reception. Perhaps it would be necessary to

a fairly homogenous group of authors: (1) who lived in the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century (Tarski 1901–1983; Lévi-Strauss 1908–2009; Ernest Gellner 1925–1995; Andrzej Walicki 1930–; only Roman Jakobson slightly stretches the rule, since he was born in 1896 and died in 1982); (2) who had experienced a shorter or longer period of emigration; (3) who have been widely recognized for their work in their respective academic disciplines and in other fields; (4) who have had great influence on the development of these academic fields; (5) whose professional and personal experience can be considered as paradigmatic for 20th century intellectuals. All of these biographical elements allow us to show a common trait in their intellectual biographies, similar conditions for development, concurrent disciplines, while also to clearly present the differences between them. The entire narrative will be therefore based on a duality between that which is common and similar (both on the auto/biographical and narrative level) and that which is different (also on both levels). However, it is not the biographical particularities which serve a critical role in my analysis, but what was written about them as masters.

Ernest Gellner: looking for a pattern of thought (cultural context)

John A. Hall's book about Ernest Gellner, the author of the important study *Nations and Nationalism* (1991), is not an example of a hagiography, as Hall himself states in the introduction (Hall 2011: xi). However, it is based on personal experience. In the early 1970s the author had attended Gellner's lectures at the London School of Economics, and later himself taught courses that were complimentary to those lectures, and finally—after the fall of communism—worked at the Central European University in Prague, to which where Gellner moved at the end of his life. Particularly in reference to that last period, Hall writes that he found Gellner "to be an exceptionally attractive human being: witty, extremely kind, modest, and blessed with a genius for creating something of a tribe around himself, cemented by an endless stream of postcards—sent, one felt, to counteract a sense of loneliness" (ibidem).

Contrary to many other narratives about mastery, Hall's book is not a hagiography for several reasons. Firstly, as Hall declared himself, Gellner would certainly hate such a publication. It seems that admiration towards a person does not have to mean resignation from criticism. Since the time of the publication of his famous work *Words and Things. A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study in Ideology* in 1959, this has become a hallmark of Gellner's thinking. Because the

change the optic on how to write about masters from writing strategies to reading strategies. It his however a different task which directs our attention e.g. to sociology of literature (Janusz Lalewicz) and the Polish school of literary communication (Michał Głowiński, Janusz Stawiński), or research on reader response (Stanley Fish; see: Kola 2013).

master had required critical thinking and thus ended up protecting his student from falling into such traps, Hall's book is not written from the perspective of uncritical admiration. Secondly, Hall acknowledges that "due perhaps to his influence I share some of his dislikes, but I do not accept all of his positive arguments or normative stances" (ibidem). Indeed, if we can talk about the importance of affinities and intellectual fascinations, which are also clearly recognizable in Hall's own academic work and the topics he studies (e.g. nations, nationalism and civic society[2]), then at the same time the book does not thoughtlessly agree with everything Gellner said, as there is space—indeed, created by Gellner himself—for intellectual disagreement, expressing personal opinion, and difference. As Hall's entire book proves, this is a result of Gellner's lived experience and historical background, and the culture he grew up in and remained attached to for his entire life, as well as the different ideals he shared, including political ones.

Hall writes that "I am no self-appointed guardian of his life and thought, and so I take care to point out where his theories and arguments are, in my judgement, problematic or wrong. I seek to explain the pattern of his thought, to place it within the context already noted," that is, Central European culture, particularly the culture of the Jewish intellectual, the experience of emigration, intellectual formation in Great Britain *etc*. (ibidem). A reference to Ruth Benedict's canonical study *Patterns of Culture* is understandable and quite obvious, however, the change from Benedict's plural *patterns* to Gellner's singular *pattern* is significant. Above all, Gellner's intellectual biography is a historical and cultural study, which—based on research in archives and in literature—proposes a reconstruction of the context in which a given person had lived. In a similar vein to various historical, sociological or cultural studies, it is an attempt to characterize why a person held particular opinions or attitudes, created certain theories or methodologies, acted in the way he or she did.

The book *Wittgenstein's Vienna,* written by Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin in 1973, remains a model of this kind of intellectual biography (Janik, Toulmin 1996). In order to determine why Ludwig Wittgenstein was who he was, why he thought the way he did, and where his ideas came from, the authors point to Vienna at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the city of Sigmund Freud, Victor Adler, Arnold Schönberg, Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka. Similarly, in Hall's book Prague becomes a formative city for the British intellectual. Naturally, it is not a belief in some *genius loci,* but a statement about culture, social and political transformations *etc.* which have shaped both intellectuals—Wittgenstein and Gellner. A comparison of both books exceeds the scope of this article. It is however interesting to list some common elements: (1) Vienna and Prague, Central Europe as a common cultural space and origin (2) two brilliant 20th century thinkers, who had both

[2] For more information see Hall's website: https://www.mcgill.ca/sociology/faculty/hall [accessed: 30.09.2018].

revolutionized their disciplines, (3) and had left a mark not only on academy as such, but also on the (4) biographies of many other people, including the authors Toulmin and Hall. Furthermore, (5) both books were written by Western intellectuals and intended for Western readers and (6) both are an attempt to explain the intellectual phenomenon of Wittgenstein and Gellner, respectively (7). In both cases it is crucial to understand the culture and the social and political context of the place of origin. We can thus clearly see a corresponding strategy invented and popularized by Janik and Toulmin's book. However, what is often lost in its reception is the personal, master-disciple relationship. Even if the authors conjure such readings away or point to counterarguments, as does Hall, it is nonetheless inevitable for either biographical or historical reasons. Only a particular type of intellectual formation which respects critical thinking—also aimed at the master himself—as a primary rule of scholarship can makes this element less significant. However, this type of writing strategy can be interpreted in a different way. It seems that the adoption of a critical stance towards the master is the best and most comprehensive fulfilment of his mission, the end result of intellectual shaping or the student's academic program. Additionally, we can see that the master-disciple relationship does not have to remain at a school level or be a type of leadership, but it is also possible to develop in a more casual form. It is therefore not a craft guild model**,** but a modern realization of academic intellectual work. It is perfectly captured by the writing strategy adopted in both biographical works.

Alfred Tarski: the extravagance of a genius and the generational exchange (individual features)

Anita Burdman Feferman and Solomon Feferman's book *Alfred Tarski: Life and Logic* (2004) is a perfect example of how a student writes about a master. Jan Woleński characterizes Solomon Feferman as one of Tarski's most brilliant students (in the 1950s he was his doctoral candidate at the University of California, Berkeley; Woleński 2009: 9), who also has considerable editorial merits in the field of logic (e.g. editing the selected works of Kurt Gödel, together with Jean van Heijenoort). Anita Burdman Feferman has written on the history of science, particularly logic (including a biography of Heijenoort), and knew Tarski for more than thirty years (Burdman Feferman, Feferman 2004: 1). It is worth noting —which is quite surprising considering the stature of Tarski—that their book is his first complete biography, combined with a consideration of his academic accomplishments (ibidem). Woleński points out that it is not without significance that a book like this was not written in Poland.

Similar to the studies written by Janik and Toulmin or Hall, this biography proposes a look into the complicated life of its intellectual hero, who is also a master for its authors, and focuses on characterizing Tarski's socio-political and

cultural background. As the authors emphasize many times, just like Wittgenstein and Gellner, Tarski was an assimilated Jew who grew into his culture (in this case —Polish culture). At the same time, however, as a result of the doings of Great History, Tarski was forced to live in a completely different Anglo-Saxon culture, and because of it—corresponding to the center-periphery logic (Arbiszewski, Kola, Kowalewski 2016)—had played an important role in the development of science. The book focuses on both his professional and personal biography, but also includes interludes that are more academic or popularizing in nature, which explain the most important accomplishments of logic, e.g. the paradox of Banach-Tarski or the issue of truth.

However, there is one thing that is special about this biography. The authors do not hide their fascination with Tarski's genius, describing his extravagance with eloquence and often relying on stereotypical portrayals, which is best exemplified by the title of one of the chapters: *With a Polish panache!* What is striking for a reader interested in the genre of masters' biographies is the authors' inclination to sensationalism. We are provided not only with descriptions of Tarski's personal matters, but also very intimate episodes (stories about his affairs with female students and doctoral candidates, directly calling him a womanizer), which includes a description of Tarski taking amphetamine to stimulate his intellectual powers during long working nights *etc.* The authors always invoke Tarski's genius to explain his various eccentric behaviors. This writing strategy does not belong to the model of a hagiography of a master, since it presents the Polish-American logician above all as a human, with all of his weaknesses, afflictions, and most importantly —as a genius. It is difficult not to notice that this can be seen primarily as a clever marketing strategy aimed at the reader. Indeed, Anita Burden Feferman's previous book, *Politics, Logic and Love: The Life of Jean van Heijenoort* (1993; another edition, under a much more absorbing title: *From Trotsky to Gödel: The Life of Jean van Heijenoort,* 2000), is constructed in a similar way. It discusses the amazing life of van Heijenoort, who as a young man worked as Trotsky's secretary in Mexico, was involved in an affair with Frida Kalho, and later became a professor of logic and—as was already mentioned—together with Solomon Faferman edited the selected works of Gödel, then was shot by his fourth wife in Mexico, the same country in which he had spent his youth. The selection of episodes from van Heijenoort's life is intentional, as it shows Anita Burdman Feferman's writing strategy adopted with success also in Tarski's biography.

It cannot be denied that a narrative constructed this way is indeed extremely appealing to readers, as it draws them in, not unlike a good crime novel does, while still maintaining its explanatory value. Similarly to Janik, Toulmin and Hall, the book guides us through the cultural and socio-political context of Tarski's starting position, not concentrating as much on these aspects in relation to the receiving culture. All of these works are based on an assumption that the earliest years —socialization, acculturation—have a lasting influence on the life, personality,

opinions and writings of the protagonist. However, the addition of episodes describing Tarski's scandals and extravagances transforms the protagonist into a sort of literary superhero or cinematic hero, more than presenting him as a typical academic master. The flowing narrative perfectly captures this model of an anti-mastery master who—identically as in the case of Andrzej de Lazari's first master—did not confine this relationship in a traditional model. What is also interesting is the fact that in both cases the source of the stories about the master are his students, who not only enjoyed successful careers, but also became masters for others. The Fefermans are aware of this intergenerational transfer of knowledge and abilities, but also attitudes towards science and life. They admit that: "those who studied with Tarski became part of a school of thought with a tradition of rigor and a set of values that they transmitted to their own students" (2004: 25). And this is clearly evident in their book, since—despite what was already said—it cannot be viewed only as a cheap tabloid sensation. It maintains the rigor of academic writing and tries to understand the phenomenon of a genius. "Even to be known as a student of a student of a student—to be able to trace one's lineage as a descendent—of Alfred Tarski has its cachet" (ibidem). The academic generational exchange is as evident as in other cases, especially when we consider the fact that Tarski himself was born in a large intellectual family of the Lvov-Warsaw school—it turns out that some of the academic and interpersonal aspects of master-disciple relations are indeed firmly established. The book about Tarski the master is a story about this particular tradition.

Lévi-Strauss: a critique of the master (the auto-creation of "a student")

Edmund Leach's book *Lévi-Strauss,* edited by Frank Kermode, was published in 1970 in the *Modern Master* series (or, as it was translated into Polish: *Masters of Modernity*). Previous entries in the series were dedicated to the lives of Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, Herbert Marcuse and Che Guevara. As we can see, the choice of Modern Masters is significant, as it presents a wide spectrum of possibilities as to what it means to be a master in the Western world after the revolution of the year 1969. In addition to left-wing intellectuals, the series intentionally includes also two heroes of the decolonizing world, Fanon and Che Guevara. The addition of a volume dedicated to Lévi-Strauss was an excellent decision on the part of the editors, since he can be perceived as a bridge between Europe and the rest of the world.[3]

[3] A comparison between the original series and the first masters of the Polish edition is significant: Karl R. Popper, Noam Chomsky, and later books about Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hannah Arendt and Carl Gustav Jung (Laidlaw 1998: 12).

The enjoyment of exploring the book on your own is ruined by an introduction written by James Laidlaw, who exposes the meaning and the provocative character of Leach's study. He fittingly calls attention to the mysterious tone of Leach's writing, and what is even more important—he emphasizes that it is precisely the book's language and the narrative that should be taken into consideration: "It is striking that even as he is advertising the importance of his subject matter, Leach mixes his superlatives and honorifics with equivocation and qualification, and by a slight parody of high seriousness he adds a touch of mockery" (Laidlaw 1996: 7). And he is correct, since he also points to the fact that Leach is not presenting Lévi--Strauss as a true master, but as someone "equal" to him (ibidem).

Let us examine Leach's style of writing and check if Laidlaw's suggestions are accurate. "From the very start he [Lévi-Strauss – A.F.K.] has been a straight scholar-intellectual" (Leach 1996: 16), which means that he represents the model of a desk study anthropology, more along the lines of James Frazer than the field practice that was conducted by Bronisław Malinowski. Naturally, it undermines Lévi--Strauss's achievements in empirical research, which Leach does not hide away from (and to which we shall return). In a characteristically ironic tone he adds: "Apart from some engaging photographs of naked Amazonian ladies tucked in at the end of *Tristes Tropiques,* he has refrained from popularizing gimmicks of the kind which led Malinowski to entitle one of his Triobriand monographs *The Sexual Life of Savages*" (ibidem). It is not particularly difficult to notice that despite expressing a certain poignancy towards Malinowski, the *de facto* subject of attack is Lévi-Strauss and the weakness of his field research. Leach admits to it in the next paragraph: "By Malinowski standards Lévi-Strauss's field research is of only moderate quality" (ibidem). Subsequent comparison with the Polish-born British ethnographer definitely falls against the French anthropologist. It becomes even more evident because the logic and structure of the criticism—especially that concerning mastery—seems to dictate that it will be followed a presentation of arguments. The next sentence seems to suggest it. Leach states: "The outstanding characteristic of his writing, whether in French or in English" (ibidem), making the reader think it will be a positive presentation, or point to his advantages or a reason for considering Lévi-Strauss as a master. However, Leach ends the sentence with a different conclusion: "is that it is difficult to understand" (ibidem). The reader does not learn anything positive about the protagonist, and the critique is aimed both at Lévi-Strauss himself as well as his entire oeuvre. Furthermore, if a positive argument does indeed appear in reference to Frazer (and rhetorically, but not substantively, to Lévi-Strauss himself), for example about his style of writing, the erudite character of his work, its fundamental significance for the development of the discipline, then in the case of Lévi-Strauss it becomes obscured by the label of being "difficult to understand" (which is an argument often raised against both structuralism and post-structuralism; and by Anglo-Saxon intellectuals against both the French and the German academic tradition).

Leach continues his critique, rhetorically dismissing any potential allegations raised against him by referring to "some" unspecified "readers," without providing any footnote or bibliographical source: "Some readers even suspect that they are being treated to a confidence trick" (ibidem). And finally, he points out that "[…] despite his immense prestige, the critics among his professional colleagues still greatly outnumber the disciples" (ibidem). The last quote seems like an introduction into the master-disciple relationship. However, as we already know from Laidlaw's introduction, Leach does not see himself in this role.

The next pages of the book can be analyzed in a similar way, although these elements appear much less frequently. Indeed, they do not provide us with any new insight. What is then the purpose of Leach's book, if it is critical towards the French anthropologist, and what is more—its critical potential is not limited strictly to the scientific discussion, but is more of a fault-finding, ironic, parodist, quizzical, mocking essay? Let us first consider what Leach has to say about this himself:

> I myself was once a pupil of Malinowski and I am, at heart, still a 'functionalist' even though I recognize the limitations of Malinowski's own brand of theory. Although I have occasionally used the 'structuralist' methods of Lévi-Strauss to illuminate particular features of particular cultural systems the gap between my general position and that of Lévi-Strauss is very wide (ibidem: 17).

Putting "structuralist" methods in quotation marks, when talking about Lévi-Strauss's theoretical propositions leaves no doubt as to the direction of Leach's critique. As he continues:

> The difference of viewpoint is bound to show through in the pages which follow. My main task is to give an account of Lévi-Strauss's methods and opinions rather than to offer private comments, but I cannot pretend to be a disinterested observer (ibidem).

When he is using quotation marks in reference to the French anthropologist's "structuralist" method, Leach is suggesting that it is an inadequate characterization for Lévi-Strauss. On the one hand he proposes that a reader should not consider Lévi-Strauss's writing as representing structuralism in anthropology, which is naturally—or historically speaking—a rather serious accusation, and an even bigger rhetorical abuse. On the other hand, he seems to be casually stating that his understanding of structuralism (without quotation marks) is true and appropriate. In this sense, when Leach attests to only presenting Lévi-Strauss's opinions, at the same time he does so in a way that leaves no doubt for the reader that it is precisely his contribution to the development of structuralist research in anthropology (although he perversely calls himself a functionalist) which is more important and is the real subject of the book; but also that his perspective on structural anthropology is legitimate, and the reader must accept this part of his study and consider this understanding of structuralism legitimate.

Firstly, the aim and sense of the mastery argument about Lévi-Strauss is not —and here lies the paradox and perversity of the book—the French anthropologist himself (even though the book could be viewed as a sort of critical introduction to his thought), but—Edmund Leach and his version of structuralism. Leach is supposed to be the Modern Master, not Lévi-Strauss. Therefore, if anyone wants to find themselves in a master-disciple relationship, it is the book's readers in relation to Leach and not—what was the intention behind both the book and the entire publishing series—Lévi-Strauss.

Secondly, the aim of the book is to present (proper) structuralism as such, and not Lévi-Strauss. Indeed, if there is something that Leach cares about, it is to characterize the uses and advantages of this method in a coherent way, or, contrary to the French tradition of hermetic writing, to position structuralism as a logical method of inquiry in accordance with Anglo-Saxon analytical standards: precise, using specific language, categories, and consistent research procedures that can be applied in different contexts, realizing clearly defined objectives, and also—a range of subjects and problems that can be solved by structuralism.

The Modern Masters series is supposed to lend credence to the argument, supply it with a historical and paradigmatic basis. Considering Lévi-Strauss's position as a public intellectual, we can consider this strategy—for a lack of a better word—as a "marketing" or "advertising" argument. Lévi-Strauss's strong position in the academic community as well as his popularity among the wider public was a great way for Leach to present his own ideas to readers from outside the academic circle. It was a successful method of self-promotion. In a way, Lévi--Strauss turned out to be quite useful for the British anthropologist. The fact of positioning himself as someone who is at least equal to the author of *Tristes Tropiques* is very significant (and it is not so much about taking away merit from Leach, as it is about showing his positioning in the scientific field).

Mastery in the traditional sense is disappearing, becoming one more label which serves individual interests, but also—from a more general perspective—to promote certain ideas (which will consequentially help in building your own position). If we were to search for an idea on how to engage in academic self-promotion, then—to use the brilliant title of Małgorzata Juda-Mieloch's book (2008)—a smart way is to stand on the shoulders of giants. The authority figure,[4] even when subjected to the type of critical revision pursued in Leach's book, proves to be more successful—at least rhetorically—than any other. This is true both in the case of a young researcher who is only starting his career and may be looking for some kind of institutional (because what is authority, if not an institution?) support, and a renowned scholar. The stake may differ, as may the reason behind it, but the writing strategy remains analogous.

[4] For more on this subject see: Janusz Goćkowski, *Autorytety świata uczonych* (1984).

Andrzej Walicki: self-creation of the master (a master's autobiography)

The example of Andrzej Walicki's *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii* was chosen as a slight provocation. On the one hand, it would be hard to think of autobiographies as something special in the academic world, also in the case of masters, as they are often not only a biographical document, but also a sort of popularizing introduction into science and research. It is especially important in the case of hard sciences characterized by a high degree of specialization. On the other hand, Walicki appeared as a master in the narrative of Andrzej de Lazari, who applied the term to the Polish historian and expert on Russia. And he did so from a position analogous to the perspectives adopted by Leach in his book on Lévi-Strauss, Hall on Gellner and the Fafermans on Tarski, that is, an experienced researcher with an established position, a master for others. Andrzej de Lazari enters into this master-disciple discourse, although from an anecdotal point of view. Finally, a third crucial context for Walicki's book are other publications which adopt a similar approach, and were widely discussed: Michał Głowiński's daringly personal *Kręgi obcości. Opowieść autobiograficzna* (2011), in which the crucial element in the public reception was the author's coming out as a homosexual man (although the book offers insight into other matters; see: Ubertowska 2011), or a similarly important political autobiography of Karol Modzelewski entitled *Zajedźmy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca* (2013).

In the case of Walicki's book, even the title bears significance: *Ideas and People* (let us ignore the subtitle—*An Attempt at An Autobiography*—since the book is a finished work, not an attempt). Contrary to his academic publications on the history of ideas—written by one of the most brilliant and popular Polish 20th century intellectuals, representing the Warsaw school of the history of ideas (Sitek 2000)—the autobiography presents a history of people as well as a personal history. Walicki mostly writes about himself, his intellectual development, against the backdrop of Great History as well as his own life journeys. Additionally, he offers descriptions of meetings with various people, both in his personal and professional life, pointing to the influence these outside inspirations had on his own research. Naturally, it is an important publication, a personal document which allows the reader to get to know Walicki's life in great detail (the book is over five hundred pages long).

The author writes about the origin of the book in the *Introductory remarks.* It was originally intended as a strictly scientific autobiography written for the yearly "Nauka Polska. Jej Potrzeby, Organizacja i Rozwój," however, in the process of writing and collecting materials, including personal journals written throughout the years, it steadily grew until it transformed into a book publication (Walicki 2010: 11). He acknowledges that if he had not written it, then perhaps "Polish biographical studies would not suffer greatly, however, it would be, I think,

a detriment for a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of Polish history in the last century" (ibidem). The rhetorical act of diminishing the significance of the book and self-abasement are both part of the tradition of writing these kinds of texts, however—as I believe—it does not correspond either to the author's intention, or the end result. From the point of view of this declaration it is nonetheless important to situate Walicki's history as truly representing a "model" of the history of a particular intellectual generation, including the experience of fascist and communist totalitarianisms that have affected Poland, as well as the experience of emigration (it seems to be a common element of all of the masters' biographies discussed here, so perhaps we can state that it is generally a common motif of 20th century intellectual life).

As he notices: "I think so not because I attach too much importance to the events that took place in my life, but mainly because for all my adult years I tried to give my life a clear meaning, I was able to define this sense, I built it on the experiences of a significant part of my generation, but often in a separate way, which deviates from the patterns considered typical and the most socially acceptable" (ibidem: 12). It is a powerful declaration of both possessing agency over the course of one's own life, as well as a declaration of independence and uniqueness. This type of narrative is not a simple model of auto/biographical writing, but is a clear self-determination in a position superior to others. It is Walicki himself who defines his position as a master, but not by referring to others—although he does so in the text, referring to a few important people in his life e.g. Isaiah Berlin, Czesław Miłosz, or some of his students—but by positioning himself in reference to the world. In Walicki's text the position of "I" is strong, which in itself may not be particularly surprising in an autobiography, but is indeed different when compared to similar publications, e.g. Michał Głowiński's autobiography. The book written by the Warsaw literary scholar most certainly represents a different type of narrative in which the facts are much less important than in Walicki's writing. The autobiographical story is less detailed, but it is a starting point for an exhaustive reflection on both personal life as well as cultural, social and political history. What is important from this perspective are not historical events as such, but what a person feels about them and their influence on his life. For Walicki important historical, social or political events are often a pretext for explaining his interest in specific scientific problems or ideas. For Głowiński, on the other hand, the context of personal life is important. In his narrative Walicki presents his academic career, and the path that had led him to the intellectual pantheon, in a different way than he did in his strictly academic publications. Głowiński takes the readers on a visit to hell—a hell of exclusion, rejection, persecution, being forced to hide your identity—Polish-Jewish and homosexual alike. Aleksandra Ubertowska is correct when she writes that Głowiński's previous autobiographical publications, *Czarny sezon* and *Magdalenka z razowego chleba,* were an attempt to therapeutically re-write the experiences of

the war and Holocaust, but in this case the analogous process refers to personal identity.

Walicki's autobiography is a narrative about mastery. The author declares himself a master. Naturally, it presents an image of its times and of the generation of postwar, émigré intellectuals, but above all it is an attempt to shape a narrative about one's own life, to determine its canonical (hagiographic?) version. It is therefore a powerful gesture of self-determination through the narrative sense-making Walicki wrote about in the introduction.

Roman Jakobson: auto/creation in dialogue (partnership in mastery)

It is necessary to consider the book *Dialogues* (1982)—which consists of conversations between Roman Jakobson and Krystyna Pomorska—in a different way from the previous examples. This form of a dialogue-interview is significant and popular in the "conversation with a master" formula. It is not writing about a master, but presenting the master, providing him with a voice (Dąbrowska 2016). In the case of Jakobson and Pomorska the dialogical form has complex reasoning and justification.

Firstly, what is especially interesting is the relationship between Jakobson and Pomorska, as she is not only and exclusively his interlocutor, a partner in conversation who allows the words of the master to be heard, or a journalist who is a medium used to express the ideas of the master.[5] Pomorska, a specialist in structuralism and semiotics, engages in a real dialogue with Jakobson, expands and explains different issues of strictly scientific character. Her questions are always on point, based on a profound knowledge of Jakobson's concepts, and refer to specific texts. In that sense, her conversations with Jakobson are a systematic presentation of his ideas—on the one hand introduced thematically and organized according to specific problems (which are divided into fifteen parts), and on the other hand arranged chronologically (at least as far as it is allowed by its organization around key problems). If the book were nothing more than that—it would be difficult to consider it as an example of writing about mastery. However, it is not limited only to one aspect.

Secondly, we must not forget that Pomorska and Jakobson were married for twenty years. The intellectual relationship is therefore strongly interwoven with a personal, or even intimate one. It is important to note that from the point of view of intellectual rigor, the presentation of Jakobson's conceptions is not obscured by their personal emotional commitment, largely thanks to Pomorska's academic competences and her insightful academic inquisitiveness. However, it is difficult to

[5] This form is also adopted e.g. in the conversations between Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon (1994).

find elements in *Dialogues*—as we discussed in reference to Leach's book about Lévi-Strauss—which could be viewed as critical. Pomorska does not go that far in her presentation of Jakobson's thought, in part because of the questions that she chose to ask, and their content. The reason for this is—although it should be considered as merely an assumption—not only and not so much their personal relationship, but rather the scientific system they are both part of.

Indeed, the category of "partnership" (here: intellectual) is key to understanding the character of the dialogues between Jakobson and Pomorska. If we can naturally consider Pomorska as Jakobson's student at the starting point —even if only for biographical reasons, the three decades that separate their dates of birth (Pomorska was born in 1928 and died in 1986), and most of all Jakobson's precedence in the co/creation of formalism, structuralism and semiotics—then at the moment in which the interviews were taking place, we can most definitely talk about partnership. It is visible in the manner in which she conducted the interview (the already mentioned intricate questions, the competences of the interviewer *etc.*), but also in the way she leads the conversation. What is important here is Pomorska's control over the course and direction of the interview. The author additionally proves to be a competent "journalist," who knows perfectly when the conversations needs to become more dynamic, and when to let Jakobson speak; how to recognize facts that are essential for the whole narrative; how to explain the complexities of some of the linguist's conceptions; but also how to end up with a result that will be interesting from the biographical perspective, which is very important in almost every conversation about life, not only professional life. In that sense a balance is kept between science, career, honoring his achievements and the story of his life.

We must remember that even the choice of the form of a dialogue serves an important function: it allows Pomorska (who at that time was a professor of linguistics and Russian literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) to be present in this academic space and in relation with Jakobson. The dialogue is a form of promotion not only for Jakobson or structuralism (especially since the beginning of the 1980s was a period when the tradition of post-structuralism was already well-established), but also for Pomorska. Indeed, it is the master and partner who transforms into a promoter, sharing knowledge not only with his interlocutor (who does not need it), but with the readers. However, it is not solely about knowledge, but also about how it is disseminated, and also, additionally, about auto/promotion. The master-disciple relationship turns into a partnership, and thus the transfer of knowledge from master to disciple no longer goes one-way, but becomes a dialogue—which is naturally a reference to Plato, but also, in the context of Russian tradition, to Mikhail Bakhtin. The nature of the dialogue assumes a symmetry in the relationship, in which elements of mastery are reduced for the sake of equality between partners. This state is naturally only an ideal condition. As readers we are well aware that Jakobson is the real protagonist. However, this

effort to disturb—if only to a certain degree—the standardized vision of a master-disciple relationship is an interesting method of constructing a narrative that is dedicated to the master. This ambivalence is an exceptional characteristic of *Dialogues.*

The dialogical and ambivalent nature of the dialogue is also represented visually, which was absent in the previous examples (perhaps with the exception of Walicki's autobiography in which photographs complete the character of the narration). The book's cover is a photograph showing Jakobson and Pomorska sitting together. However, while she is looking straight into the camera, we only see Jakobson's profile, as he is looking at Pomorska. This way the master-disciple relationship is challenged also on the visual level. She is not looking at her intellectual master, but it is Jakobson who is looking at her. An obvious explanation is their personal relationship, however—especially when we compare it with the photographs included in Walicki's book (all of them depicting the author)—its symbolical meaning in their intellectual relationship becomes evident.

To conclude, we can state that in some sense *Dialogues* is a combination of different possible strategies of "writing about a master." The book combines auto/biographical threads (as did Walicki and the Fefermans) with intellectual (as did Leach and the Fefermans) and cultural contexts (as did Hall). The dialogical nature is based on the relation between a master and a disciple, which before our eyes transforms into a partnership, both in the intellectual, as well as personal, intimate, marital dimension. The book is a presentation of carefully chosen opinions (as is Hall's, and partially the Fefermans' book) and an introduction into structuralist thinking (as is Leach's), but it does also engage in more casual, anecdotal forms (although not to the same degree as did Tarski's biographers). It also includes a significant element of auto-creation, which is very important in the academic world, and was also present in Walicki's and Leach's narration. In this case, however, it is both Jakobson and Pomorska who engage in the act of auto-creation.

Conclusion

The opening quotes from Andrzej de Lazari's short introduction are not a personal history. But neither is it only a well-told story with considerable anecdotal potential that is supposed to enrich and make the reading more pleasurable. It can be said that the quote presents different strategies of mastery as well as possible variations of the master-disciple relationship. "Ekkel" is naturally an anti-master (see: Wejland 2019), who may well lead his disciple to perdition. At the same time it is a great guidebook on early-adult life, which never ends with complete adulthood. "Walicki" depicts a professional relationship in which a master's development and his own career is as much important (more important?) as taking care of the

disciple. At the same time, it delineates the horizon of academic dreams and accomplishments, although it does not provide enough by itself to make them easier to accomplish. "Łużny," on the other hand, symbolizes relations in a patchwork family, a family that is stitched together but is not short of love. This relationship can also teach a person true adulthood and independence. And we must not forget the fourth master, who appears in Andrzej de Lazari's texts and is taken out of Fyodor Dostoevsky's literature. The situation with the Grand Inquisitor presents mastery *à rebours*—a pathological state of entanglement, in which real scholarship is replaced by tributes and subservience. Here freedom turns out to be apparent, and self-limitation does not allow either for the unfettered happiness of "Ekkiel," or the professionalism of Walicki," and most certainly not for "Łużny's" liberating power of mastery that leads to adulthood and independence.

The narratives about mastery that were described in this article can similarly be defined in this manner: "Ernest Gellner," "Alfred Tarski," "Claude Lévi-Strauss," "Andrzej Walicki" (by the same referent, as a person, but on the narrative level different from Andrzej de Lazari or Andrzej Walicki himself) and "Roman Jakobson." "Ernest Gellner" is of course as much a description of a person as it is a description of a culture or experienced history. This experience defines his mastery, and by following the narrative proposed by Hall, readers are invited to participate in it (even if only intellectually or imaginatively). "Alfred Tarski" is a figure of a total genius who also represents the cultural history of intellectuals in the 20th century, but most importantly a dominating personality depicted in the form of an intriguing narrative, interesting to read not only because of the charm of the protagonist, but also for its own sake. It is about reading and marketing attractiveness. The perspective of luring the readers is an important factor characterizing the Fefermans' narrative. "Claude Lévi-Strauss" is a master—by definition, simply because he is included in the *Modern Master* series—but in Leach's reading he becomes a figure which triggers critical thought and a presentation of the British author's own opinions and own version of structuralism. From the beginning, Leach's narration is thus oriented at confrontation and comparison which is supposed to promote the author of the narrative about mastery. "Claude Lévi-Strauss" is therefore a reversed narrative, a contradiction to what this type of story could (should?) look like, how it should be constructed. "Andrzej Walicki" is an interesting case, not only because it is an autobiography, but primarily because, in addition to presenting a report about his life and career—in the context of the titular ideas and people—it clearly tries to turn a story about oneself into a narrative about mastery. And finally, "Roman Jakobson" introduces the form of dialogue into a story about mastery. It does so not because of tradition (indeed the genre of dialogue originates in Ancient Greece), and most certainly not to puzzle the readers (who are used to reading structuralist texts written in precise academic forms). Its aim is above all to redefine the master-disciple relationship and transform it into a partnership. The ambivalence of the situation partially

comes from the fact that Jakobson's mastery seems indisputable (both for his interlocutor, and in part for the readers). Perhaps it is best realized precisely in the form of a dialogue which opens us to a relation based on partnership. The function of autocreation—represented by Leach in "Claude Lévi-Strauss," and by Walicki himself in "Andrzej Walicki"—is extended into both elements that form the encounter: Jakobson and Pomorska.

* * *

To summarize, we can point to four different issues. Firstly, that there is no single type of mastery—which in itself may seem like quite a banal statement, however, it becomes more tangible when presented through different examples of narratives about mastery—and that there is no single model of mastery that could be designed and applied to social reality. Every attempt at categorizing mastery or the master-disciple relationship can only be historically contingent. Any other uses of the same categories—a craft guild, a guru and others (Kola 2019)—carry only metaphorical, not practical sense. The changing historical context always transforms them into a different kind of "institution" (in the sense of the term proposed by Mary Douglas, 2011).

Secondly, these stories have shown us one more regularity. It seems that within socio-cultural frames (and the discussed examples were connected by many elements: gender, being an intellectual and academic, Central-European roots, emigration, significant impact on the humanities and social science, 20th century *etc.*) relations with the master are shaped in different ways. In the end they are —which again may sound quite obvious in the context of the entire issue of the journal—strongly influenced by the master's individual features, as well as the disciple's. In this sense the relationship, although it is often described using identical categories or keywords (master, craftsman, authority *etc.*), is always highly individualized and different. The difference lies not only in the changing context, but also in the personal character. Each attempt at categorizing results only in the creation of ideal types. The meaning of a relationship with a master is forged in individual relations.

Thirdly, the crucial role of narratives about masters and mastery cannot be ignored. Indeed, it was one of the aims of this article. The choice of examples was intended to show that our knowledge about masters comes not only from the masters themselves (or relationships with them), but also from the narratives we tell about them. This narrative dimension seems obvious in our times—affected by both postmodernism and the interpretative turn—but here we see precisely the forms it can take. It may serve different purposes, both for the master who is being described as well as for the author. The narrative is a vehicle which allows the reader to engage with "the master" who is presented indirectly in the text, while also remaining a creation of that master (and author). Different narrative strategies

are organized according to specific—not always announced—objectives and can take on different stylistic forms. The text is an attempt at a preliminary conceptualization and categorization. As far as the relation with the master is personal and escapes various ways of categorizing or grouping, the narratives and writing styles—as are any discursive statements—are influenced by the author, and possess elements that are common, which connect and continuously return. They can, therefore, be organized and divided into categories.

And finally, even though each author chooses a particular style of writing, a specific narrative structure, genre references, style and rhetorical devices; and the choice of a model is determined e.g. by the intended purpose; each of the stories about mastery goes beyond the initial decisions about the direction in which the story unfolds. Furthermore, there are also elements which connect different narratives about mastery. It is partially a result of the biographical particularities of the protagonists (there were many common elements), the selection of figures and texts that were limited to the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, the place of origin of both the master and, to a lesser degree, the authors. This coherence is a result of the choice of masters and texts—a specific historical and socio-political context. A change, e.g. a broadening of the geographical horizon or the introduction of a *longue durée* perspective, would certainly transform the narrative configuration.

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