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Studia i rozprawy

Iwona Kabzińska*

The Word *master/Master* Sounds Strange…

Abstract

The author avoids using the term master/Master, instead referring to the concept of a Teacher when describing the people who played a significant role in her life and who are the main protagonists of this article. These people are the Professors Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa and Witold Dynowski, ethnologists, excellent lecturers and researchers; and also people full of passion, respect for the achievements of other scholars, fascinated with the history of the discipline they represent and the interrelation of "macro" and "micro" history. First and foremost, they are great PEOPLE. Reminiscing about encounters with them, the author presents the model relationship between a teacher and a pupil, close to her, which is not limited to passing knowledge. The relationship is based on kindness, openness to others, and motivating them to overcome their limitations, fears and difficulties. The skills of noticing the potential of others, encouraging them to develop, acceptance, keeping one's spirits up, support and co-existence should also be mentioned.

Another person who also played the role of Teacher, although she has never been designated as such by the author, is her Grandmother Janina Orzechowska. She was the one who shaped the author's attitudes to life, her way of looking at other people, her passions and ways of being. She was the person whose selfless love expressed by her behavior, gestures and looks accompanied the author from an early age.

The motif of the relationship is very explicit in the text. The author emphasizes that relationships are not always joyful and constructive. Sometimes they clip one's wings, they hurt and take away the light. Relationships which are beautiful in the beginning can also change under the influence of an illness, of one person affecting the others. The author describes changes like that via the example of the relationship with someone who appears in the text as the anonymous Teacher. It was a person from whom the author received a bitter lesson in life, far from fairy tales with a happy end.

Keywords: teacher, master, searching, relationship teacher/master – apprentice.

* Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw, Department of Archeology and Ethnology.

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Słowo *mistrz/Mistrz* brzmi obco…

Abstrakt

Autorka unika określenia *mistrz/Mistrz*, posługuje się natomiast terminem *Nauczyciel*, opowiadając o osobach, które odegrały znaczącą rolę w jej życiu, stały się też pierwszoplanowymi bohaterami artykułu. Osobami tymi są: prof. dr hab. Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa i prof. dr hab. Witold Dynowski – etnolodzy, znakomici wykładowcy i badacze, pełni pasji, szacunku dla dorobku innych, zafascynowani dziejami reprezentowanej dyscypliny oraz splotem „wielkiej" i „małej" historii, przede wszystkim jednak wspaniali LUDZIE. Wspominając spotkania z nimi, autorka ukazuje bliską jej (wzorcową) relację między nauczycielem i uczniem, nieograniczającą się do przekazywania wiedzy (informacji). Podstawą tej relacji jest życzliwość, zaufanie, otwarcie na drugiego człowieka, motywowanie go do pokonywania ograniczeń, lęków, trudności, umiejętność dostrzegania potencjału w innych, zachęta do jego rozwijania, akceptacja, dodawanie odwagi, wspieranie, współ-obecność.

Osobą, która odegrała rolę Nauczyciela, choć nigdy wcześniej nie została określona tym mianem przez autorkę, jest jej Babcia, Janina Orzechowska. To Ona kształtowała określone postawy autorki, spojrzenie na drugiego człowieka, zamiłowania, zachowania. Była osobą, której bezinteresowna miłość, wyrażana przez konkretne działania, gesty, spojrzenie, oferowanie innym własnego czasu i uwagi, towarzyszyła autorce od najmłodszych lat.

W tekście bardzo wyraźny jest motyw relacji. Autorka podkreśliła, że nie zawsze są one radosne, budujące. Zdarza się, że podcinają skrzydła, ranią, odbierają światło. Początkowo piękne relacje mogą też zmienić się gwałtownie, np. pod wpływem choroby jednej z osób, oddziałującej na innych. Autorka opisała tego rodzaju zmiany na przykładzie związku z kimś, kto występuje w tekście jako anonimowy Nauczyciel. Od niego odebrała gorzką lekcję życia, daleką od baśni ze szczęśliwym zakończeniem.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel, mistrz, poszukiwanie, relacja nauczyciel/mistrz – uczeń.

In search of…

A Master? For a long time I wondered whom from the people I know I could consider a master. Nobody came to mind. Is it possible that throughout the years I have never met anyone who would become a master for me? Or perhaps a Master (shouldn't we use a capital letter)? Sometimes I would say: "You're a master," if someone impressed me with their knowledge, ability to solve problems, or an original idea, but those were fleeting moments, not carrying any significance, with no influence on my life.

I am looking for clarifications, associations with the word master/Master (I cannot decide whether to use only the small or capital letter). The following come up: admiration, authority, model, respect, trustworthiness, honesty, ideal. I think:

master/Master—someone especially important, unique, significant for one's biography. Someone who can teach one a lot of things. Someone who has influenced the ways others think, who one wishes to follow. A person who impresses with their knowledge, intelligence, broad horizons, perfect understanding of some domain, someone who is able to make others think, and be curious. Naturally, all of this is important, but for me the most important aspect is what kind of a person they are. What is their approach to other people, how do they behave in different situations, what are their intentions, aims, dreams, and what path do they follow in order to achieve something?

I was twelve or thirteen years old when I heard a conversation between my Grandmother and her friend, from which I gathered that in her approach to other people, my Grandmother did not distinguish between professional achievements and so-called private life, with the latter seeming even more important. She would admire someone's gift for acting, but in her eyes its brightness would be clouded by that person's objectionable behavior.

My Grandmother's words would return to me on many occasions, in different situations. I also thought about them—not coincidentally—when I began to think about who I could call a master/Master. I appreciate someone's intellectual value, and knowledge, however—similar to my Grandmother—what is important for me is, first and foremost, doing good, one's attitude to others, honesty, the way a person functions in society.

The word master/Master feels strange, distant. It belongs to a group of terms that are not part of the language I use. They are an "external category." I cannot make it "my own," marvel at it. I cannot "tame" it.

When I thought about it, I was suddenly reminded of a section from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince.* The conversation between the Little Prince and the Fox:

> The Little Prince: What does *tamed* mean?
> The Fox: It is something that's been too often neglected (…) It means, 'to create ties'… (…) For me you're only a little boy just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need for you. And you have no need for me, either. For you I'm only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we'll need each other. You'll be the only boy in the world for me. I'll be the only fox in the world for you… (Saint-Exupéry 2000: 66).

The rest of the Little Prince's story demonstrates that the Fox's words and actions are the same. There are no contradictions. Is this not also what I am looking for in people? I find it difficult to accept people who say one thing, but do something else, and probably think something else entirely, without taking any responsibility for those they have "tamed." They have many faces. Which one is true? Perhaps all of them? Indeed, some say that there are many truths.

I received *The Little Prince* as a present from my Grandmother.[1] I was in primary school. At that time the book was not on the list of required readings. I didn't know about its existence. What struck me most was the conversation—quoted above—between the titular hero and the Fox. I did not yet understand its deeper meaning, however, I think I was sensing it. I felt/suspected that everything that the Fox is talking about is important, that there is wisdom hidden in his words, a clue. The Fox—speaking about friendship, about a true meeting of two beings, forming lasting bonds, a deep relationship—became a Teacher for me. The word "Teacher" is much closer to me than "master/Master," it is more mine, "tamed." And it must be written with a capital letter, when it refers to someone unique, exceptional.

I have in my memory a fragment of Anthony de Mello's short story, from his collection entitled *Awareness* (de Mello 1992: 45):

> There's a story of a disciple who told his guru that he was going to a far place to meditate and hopefully attain enlightenment. So he sent the guru a note every six months to report the progress he was making. (…) The guru tore up the note and threw it in the wastepaper basket. (…) And so it went on for years, until finally no reports came in. After a time the guru became curious and one day there was a traveler going to that far place. The guru said, 'Why don't you find out what happened to that fellow.' Finally, he got a note from his disciple. It said, 'What does it matter?' And when the guru read that, he said, 'He made it! He made it! He finally got it! He got it!' (ibidem)

I am trying to understand the path that the guru had followed, the one that his student had discovered after some time. However, I feel closer to the Teacher with whom you can establish contact directly. What counts most is the possibility of having a conversation, a connection, encouraging me to take action, being present at the same time. Sometimes it is necessary to take notice, to criticize, and it is important not to hurt or humiliate anyone, or clip their wings. What I consider a Teacher-student relationship is based on acceptance, respect, encouragement to search for new spaces, the joy stemming from meeting someone whose knowledge inspires you, who knows how to share it and bestow it, while always remaining a kind, righteous person. What is important is caring for the student's development, his or her future, encouraging independent thinking, asking questions and searching for answers. In this relation there is no space for ruthless judging, a paralyzing fear of failure, taunting, humiliating, a merciless subjugating of the student, lack of acceptance, respect, understanding, or being punished for independent thinking.

[1] Sadly, the 1958 edition of the book is no longer in my possession. I lent it thoughtlessly to someone who never returned it to me, and disappeared together with the precious volume.

Learning from the best: Professor Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa

I close my eyes. I think about my student years, about the lecturers I met in the Department of Ethnography at the University of Warsaw. I see their silhouettes, their faces, their gazes. Two people are especially dear to me. One of them is Professor Anna Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa. In my third year she gave lectures about the ethnography of Poland. I owe her my interest in the history of the discipline, the figures of scholars who shaped this history, crucial turns in the understanding of culture, ways of studying, describing, interpreting it. Her book *Kultura ludowa i jej badacze. Mit i rzezywistość* (Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa 1977) is not a collection of dispassionately presented biographical notes of important ethnographers**,** but it tells a colorful, lively story about the people and the times in which they were active. The author remembers "scholars who were especially influential in the development of postwar Polish ethnography" (ibidem: 13). She also searches for answers to the question: "How much did we gain from (…) the experience of their studies?" (ibidem). What meaning did their works have for ethnographers in the 1970s? And, continuing her reflection, I might add: What meaning do they have today?

The aforementioned book presented "the path of development of Polish ethnography (…)" (ibidem: 11). Among other topics, the author also discussed the specific aspects of the discipline, the problems that were at the center of interest of Polish scholars, connections between ethnographic theory and practice, and the existence of a distinct Polish school of ethnography. When I was reading *Kultura ludowa i jej badacze*, I was constantly discovering issues that were important to me. At times I feel as though I will hear the Professor's voice again, delivering a lecture. My thoughts move to the past, both the past described by her as well as my own —the period when I was studying ethnography.

I remember the respect with which the Professor spoke about the achievements of others. Later I would learn that this approach was not something usual. Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa emphasized the importance of knowing the historical background to understand the present/modernity. She spoke about the influence of history (today we would call it "great" history) on human lives ("micro-histories"). She taught me about the pioneering studies conducted in the 1930s by Józef Obrębski in Polesia and in the Balkans. In later years I would often return to his works when writing about Belarus, ethnic groups, "us" and "them," always remembering the person who for the first time introduced me to Obrębski.[2]

[2] Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa emphasized that "Before the year 1946, Obrębski had already attempted to synthetically present the history and theory of folk culture in the context of the transforming life condition of peasants, as did historians, ethnographers and sociologists of the countryside after the Second World War: B[ogdan] Baranowski, J[ózef] Burszta, K[azimierz] Dobrowolski, A[ndrzej] Woźniak, K[azimiera] Zawistowicz-Adamska and others. (…) [As] one of the first [he] connected the approach of an ethnographer-empiricist, a historian of the past and modern countryside, a sociologist and a theoretician of social structures and transformations in traditional cultures (…)" (Kutrzeba--Pojnarowa 1977: 119–120).

I would listen to the Professor's lectures with interest. She taught us about the richness and diversity of Polish culture, its regional dimensions, about ethnographic studies conducted in Kurpie, Upper and Lower Silesia, in Lesser Poland and Greater Poland, in Kuyavia, Mazovia, Podlasia, and about their significance in comparative studies. The Professor always spoke with great dedication. I believe that she enjoyed teaching. Her lectures were far from being monotonous. She would often deviate from the main subject, or even—as I joked—digress about digressions. The Professor wished to provide us with as much information as possible. She was not only interested in sharing her knowledge, but also in shaping—what is rarely seen today—a respectful approach to the past, a sense of pride about the achievements of past generations. She considered it a responsibility.

The way we talk about the past shapes the listeners' perspective on it. This also refers to the history of the discipline. If we speak with passion, being confident that were are dealing with important matters, if we are able to focus the attention of listeners, then we have a chance to infect them with our passion, and interest them in the past. The Professor was excellent in doing so.[3]

Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa was the promoter of my thesis.[4] I am thankful to her for accepting the topic and idea for my research, as well as for the trust and freedom she gave me. She offered books, but most importantly she talked with me. She knew how to create an excellent atmosphere of cordiality, attention, kindness. We talked about each stage of the research, about gathering material and analyzing it, about the trips to Makówka in which I conducted my research, about what I had seen and whom I had met there. She was interested in the relations between the inhabitants of Makówka and their neighbors living in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. She was curious how the people from "my" village perceived the nearby town, the image of it reflected in their eyes. She was interested in the category of peasant-workers**,** consisting of people, their lives, ways of functioning in a reality divided between the country and the town, the latter being the place of work, shopping, meeting with family and friends, as well as a center of culture.

My thoughts led me back to Makówka. I remembered a particular situation which took place during a conversation with a young man from the village. In the

[3] When I became an academic teacher myself, I realized how difficult it is to interest young people in the history of the discipline. In the years 2000/2001–2010/2011 I worked in the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń**,** where I gave lectures on the ethnology of Europe. I devoted some of the lectures to the past of the sub-discipline. I talked about groundbreaking publications, presenting the biographies of their authors, characterizing decisive moments in the history of studies about Europe and the culture of its inhabitants, the main problems, changes in how Europe was perceived, ways of studying and describing it, types of sources that were used or created. I talked with authentic passion, engagement, but I was aware that the Teachers who shaped my relationship to the past, to history as a science and to the history of ethnography, were much better at it. I clearly saw that some of the listeners did not share my interests.

[4] The monograph is entitled: *Traditional culture and the aspirations of young peasant-workers on the example of the suburban village Makówka*.

room we were sitting in I noticed a few earthenware roosters (standing on a wardrobe), painted in "flashy" colors. Fascinated, I glanced at them several times. My interviewee noticed my glances and said: "It's a souvenir I got from my grandma. I also like them." Before he spoke these words, I thought about having such roosters in my own home. Perhaps I could buy them from him? After the man spoke, I understood that my request/proposition of buying them would be an indiscretion, and could make him feel bad. Fortunately I didn't have a chance to speak. Where did I get the idea that these clay "flashy" birds have no meaning for this young boy? Why did I remind myself of this situation many years later?

I never told the Professor about it. I must have considered it unimportant. But why did this memory come back to me after such a long time? Why did I remember it so vividly? I wonder what would my Promoter have to say about it.

During one of the Professor's seminars I wasn't paying attention to what my colleague was saying about his research. I was reading a book, spread out on my knees (it was probably a book from my beloved series of Latin American literature, or one written by one of the Scandinavian writers popular at that time). Suddenly I heard my name being spoken, followed by a question: "What do you think about it?" I desperately tried to form an answer, and finally, without thinking, I exclaimed: "I agree!" "But what do you agree with? With what you colleague just said, or what the quoted author wrote, or maybe with what other scholars have written on the topic?"—calmly asked professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, smiling cordially. I had to admit that I wasn't listening. I was ashamed. I apologized. I felt really bad for having disappointed her. From then on, I stuck to reading literature only after classes or before them.

After finishing my studies I began work in the Department of Ethnography at the Polish Academy of Science's Institute of Material Culture (today: the Department of Archeology and Ethnology at the Polish Academy of Science). I would often meet with the Professor at the Department. It was a period of intensive work on two-volume study *Etnografia Polski. Przemiany kultury ludowej* (1976–1981), called in short "a synthesis." I was a witness to many conversations about this particular work, as well as some of the articles that ended up as part of it. I learned how important it is to make sure the publication is well-written and well-researched, how to prepare an accurate bibliography and footnotes, how to make sure it is faultless in the smallest detail, and how important an editor's work is. When I began publishing my own academic texts and had my first experiences with editorial work, I realized how much effort is put into preparing a text for publication. I spent many years gaining experience. I was taught by the best. My first Teacher was Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa. Many people had confessed to me what a demanding author and editor she is, and how precious her comments and opinions are. I got to experience this myself, having presented her successively with chapters from my dissertation as well as the entire text.

I was surprised, but also very glad, when the Professor asked me and my husband to prepare the bibliography attached to her article concerning ethnographic studies about Polish folk culture (Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa 1976). On several occasions, I visited the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Pojnar on Szara Street in Warsaw's Powiśle district. It was located on the upper floor of an old tenement house, spacious, filled with books. Some of the books were covered in wrapping paper, many had pages yellowed with old age. Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa had no problem finding her way around the impressive book collection. She could locate a particular publication without much effort, including those mentioned in the "Bibliography," so that I could compare the information I had with their title pages.

I remember the Professor as a very kind person, warm, optimistic, heartfelt, and modest. I knew she was the daughter of Stanisław Kutrzeba, an excellent scholar, professor of the history of systems at the Jagiellonian University and the rector of that University (in the 1930s), but she never called attention to her heritage. However, she was eager to tell stories about the village Trześniów in Podkarpackie Voivodeship from where her husband Marian Pojnar came and where his family still resided. Trześniów became not only an important place for her because of her family connections, but also a place in which she conducted systematic field work. She finally published a monograph about the village (Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa 1988), a result of more than forty years of systematic research, astute observations, and participation in the lives of the residents of Trześniów. It combines the author's professional and personal experiences. The book exemplifies a perspective on the studied reality that is not restricted to a "slide and sage's eye," but is also full of heart. Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa never shied away from the fact that it was a very important place for her, never concealed her emotions. "Trześniów became a haven on earth and a subject of in-depth observations, research and general reflections about the cultural developments of the countryside" (Biernacka 1993: 8). It was clear from the conversations I had with the Professor, as well as from her lectures, that you cannot study any processes, phenomena, changes, without taking into consideration people—not as some abstract, "generalized" people, but real-life, often known personally by the ethnographer. "The field" is not only a "point" on the map, a space, but most importantly a human being, a group of people who create their local communities.[5]

I was forced to watch in pain as an incurable disease deprived the Professor of her psychical fitness. She never gave up. Regardless of the limitations imposed by the illness, she continued to participate in academic life as long as it was possible.

[5] As Maria Biernacka wrote: "an interest in understanding a person and his culture was (…) closer to her psyche, and was a deciding factor in choosing ethnography, focusing on academic and didactic work" (Biernacka 1993: 9–10).

When she passed away (April 29, 1993), I felt as though I had lost someone very close and important, for whom I myself was not a stranger.

During the funeral in Warsaw's Powązki cemetery (May 6, 1993) Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa was remembered for her achievements as a scholar and academic teacher, however, she was celebrated primarily for being an exceptional person. People spoke about "her character radiating on her surroundings, both with her intellect as well as her openness to the world's complicated problems and simple human matters which she was never indifferent to" (Biernacka 1993: 5–6). And that she was "a person with an exceptionally strong personality and powerful character—a noble, sensitive person, always kind to others, and also very modest" (ibidem: 17), ready to help others (ibidem).[6] Her opinions on "social, professional and everyday matters" were always "thoughtful and wise" (ibidem). I did not know the Professor as well as her long-time collaborators and friends did, but I am proud of the fact that I had the chance to be one of her students.

Anytime I am passing Szara Street on the bus, I think about the Professor with appreciation. I remind myself of her apartment packed with books, her warm, friendly smile, our conversations. I remember the atmosphere and joy of these meetings. I smile at these memories.

If not for the Professor… Professor Witold Dynowski

Professor Witold Dynowski is a Teacher I think of very often. As time passes it is becoming clearer to me how important it was to meet him, how much I owe him.

The Professor gave lectures on the ethnography of tribal communities (first and second year of studies), Pan-Slavism (third year); for more senior students he gave a monograph lecture. Similarly to Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, he did not use any notes but spoke from memory, with passion and engagement. He presented countless facts, connected interweaving threads, often departing from the main subject and adding *ad hoc* commentaries. He spoke in perfect Polish, his language was lively, rich and imaginative. He was a person with remarkable personal culture, graceful and courteous.

Similarly to Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, Professor Dynowski had great respect for history. He taught us how to understand the past, made us aware of changes, their causes and consequences. He traveled a lot. He was born in Harbin, and explored Mongolia in his youth. I believe Mongolia was the love of his life. He was fascinated with Mongolian culture, nature, and people. The Professor was the creator and head of an ethnographic expedition to Mongolia that was organized by the Polish Academy of Science (field research was conducted from the middle of the 1960s to 1980). When I was a student I never dreamed of joining the expedition,

[6] Footnote marked with an asterisk.

never thought I would get to discover the reality of the life of Mongolian shepherds as well as city residents, that I would have a chance to experience their everyday life and joyful celebrations. I did not think I would discover the taste of Mongolian cuisine and fall in love with the Mongolian landscape: the endless grasslands,[7] the Gobi desert, the Altai mountain range turning light pink at sunrise, the larch forests turning yellow in autumn, yurts whitening in the sun, the gigantic moon hanging low over the prairie, and the Milky Way spread over the sky—indeed, as my interviewees had told me, in some places resembling cloudy milk foam.

For my first assignment in the Department of Ethnography at the Polish Academy of Science I was asked to work on the survey material gathered by members of the expedition in the years 1971–1974, concerning the adaptation of Mongolian youths to shepherd communities. I was particularly interested in answering questions about how they spent their free time, their games and what has changed in these spheres. Because of the Professor's invitation to join the expedition, I was able to continue and expand this subject matter, and collect materials concerning the ludic behaviors of Mongolian shepherds, their place in Mongolian culture, symbolic meanings, magical and prophetic functions.

I joined the expedition at the end of its existence. Although the end of the expedition did not cancel my own plans, it was nevertheless a surprising and sad experience. In later years I traveled to Mongolia on several occasions, as part of an exchange program between the Polish Academy of Science and the Mongolian Academy of Science, in order to attend congresses and conferences, but I really missed the atmosphere of going on expeditions with my colleagues, conversations with the Professor, his smile, assistance, and his authority which could open a lot of doors.

I am thankful to the Professor for giving me a chance to discover incredible places and people, to conduct fieldwork, both among the Khalkha ethnic group, dominating in Mongolia, and among the Mongolian-speaking minorities: the Olots, the Derbets, the Myangads, the Dzachczins, as well as—among the Kazakhs, who speak a language which belongs to the Turkish language group. I met scholars of Mongolia from different countries and universities. I could also conduct my own research.

I am grateful that the Professor—just like Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa—encouraged me to follow my own ideas about the research. He became my supervisor, and later the promoter of my doctoral dissertation.[8] He always listened attentively when I told him about my research ideas, results from my expeditions, books I had read, and questions I was looking to answer. I knew that he would never mock or make fun of me, but would always treat me seriously and offer his

[7] I was impressed by the skills of Mongolian drivers, effortlessly traversing the vast grasslands, always reaching their intended destination.

[8] Title of the dissertation: *Ludic behaviors of Mongolian shepherds*.

advice. He encouraged me to publish articles, reviews, reports from research expeditions, and to participate in conferences.

When I was offered a change of position in the Institute (from academic-technical to academic-research), I wasn't sure if I should accept it. Self-confidence was never one of my strong suits. I told the Professor about my concerns. He listened carefully and encouraged me to continue my research and academic work. He trusted me, even though he must have wondered—as many other people did (including myself)—if I would be able to reconcile my professional work with the task of raising children.

Together with the other members of the ethnographic expedition to Mongolia, I was invited to attend the Professor's name day party (November, 12). It took place in his apartment, on the ground level of a pre-war tenement building on 74 Hoża Street. The University of Warsaw's Department of Ethnography was located on the floors above it. The name day parties, attended by many members of our community, were always a very elegant affair. When I was leaving, the Professor offered me a bag filled with sweets. It was a present for my daughters, who the Professor referred to as "brats."[9] I felt embarrassed, but I never refused to accept the gift. I didn't want to hurt his feelings. I found out many years later that offering gifts was typical for him. He did it "(…) as though every gift provided him with a chance for establishing a new, or strengthening an old relation. He offered gifts (…) constantly: good advice, a good word, sincere interest, medicine, a prescription pushed into the pocket, a flower, coffee (…)" (Sokolewicz 1987: 16).

The Professor frequently visited the Institute where I was working. He was the head of the expedition, an editor of "Etnografia Polska." I was surprised when he offered me the position of editorial secretary of the journal. He placed his trust in me. He valued my work. I never heard any criticism from him, and when he felt I needed to fix something in an article, he spoke calmly, tactfully. He never imposed his view, was interested in hearing my opinion.

During one of his visits to the Institute, the Professor noticed that I was feeling under the weather. He seemed worried, and asked me if I have the right medicine and whether I should go home. I remember that conversation vividly, the look on the Professor's face—full of care, anxiety. A small detail, but very significant for me, since it demonstrates that he was a person who took notice of the people around him.

One of the Professor's dreams was to write "a synthesis of Mongolian culture," detailing its history as well as the present, and the changes it had been through. His book about modern Mongolia (Dynowski 1963) was devoted only to a short selection of the country's history and culture, and did not portray its richness and beauty. He wanted to expand it. He invited the members of the expedition to collaborate with him. He shared his ideas with professor Ludwik Bazylow. I was a witness to their conversations taking place in the hotel restaurant in Ulaanbaatar.

[9] In the Professor's case, the word "brats" always carried a humorous, warm and kind tone.

I listened to them, impressed by their knowledge, personal culture, the beauty and richness of their language, their ability to engage in an exciting conversation.

The Professor never fulfilled his dream. He died on July 31, 1986. On the day of the funeral I visited the Institute. I was sitting in my room on the third floor, writing something on the typewriter. Suddenly a big black butterfly flew in through the window. Where did it come from—I wondered—this butterfly in the attic, in the center of the city, next to a busy, noisy street filled with cars? He fluttered his wings, circled around my head for a few seconds, and then flew away. I thought it was the Professor's soul coming for a visit to say his final "goodbye."

For the Professor, people were most important in life, whereas in science—the "process of discovery," "the discoverer, not the discovery" (Sokolewicz 1987: 16). Imagination was also essential (ibidem: 17). Perhaps that is why he was so dear to me.

When I was thinking about my Teachers, I recalled a book written by Richard Bach entitled *Seagull* (Bach 2003). Its protagonist is Jonathan Livingstone Seagull —a seagull who above everything wishes to master the art of flying: "Most gulls don't bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight—how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull, though, it was not eating that mattered, but flight. More than anything else, Jonathan Livingston Seagull loved to fly" (Bach 2003: 9). Other seagulls were mad at him for his experiments, his constant training, his dream to fly higher and further, to soar with increasing speed. Nevertheless, he did not give up his dream. After he had achieved a great deal—relentlessly teaching himself, but also experiencing the pain of not being understood and rejected—he met a teacher named Chiang. They understood each other without words. Chiang encouraged Jonathan to continue improving his knowledge about flying, to cross barriers and limitations.

Then came a time when Jonathan decided he wanted to become a teacher himself. He understood that he "was born to be an instructor, and his own way of demonstrating love was to give something of the truth that he had seen to a gull who asked only for a chance to see truth for himself" (ibidem: 31). Sharing knowledge, helping others perfect their flying skills, was a way to express love. He told his students: "and precision flying is a step toward expressing our real nature. Everything that limits us we have to put aside. That's why all this high-speed practice, and low speed, and aerobatics…" (ibidem: 39).

The Teacher-pupil relationship, described so eloquently by Bach, is not only limited to the transfer of knowledge and information. Its essence lies in encouraging others to learn and focusing on their advantages, motivating them to face any limitations and fears, to believe in themselves. The Teacher's attitude to his pupil is founded on acceptance, kindness, friendship, equality. The Teacher does not boast, nor does he emphasize his advantage over the pupil, but always looks for potential in him. He wants to share his experiences, help others to achieve perfection.

Although Jonathan is a character from a book, I consider him as a model of a Teacher, primarily because of his approach to students. I see similarities between him and the Teachers I have written about. What they all share is a certain joy in sharing knowledge, an ability to see potential in others and to encourage them to get better; acceptance, helping to find your own courage, offering assistance and trust.

I received words of encouragement from my Teachers, I felt their acceptance. Sometimes their words of praise would reach me indirectly. I would hear them from someone else who talked about me with one of the Professors. They carried incredible power. I was not confident, I needed assistance, appreciation. The presence of someone whom I trusted, and who in turn trusted me, who was kind and supporting, was very important for me. The people whom I consider my Teachers most certainly saw the many imperfections in my way of thinking and acting, but it did not influence what they thought about me. They let me speak in my own voice, search for my own path. Thanks to them, I was not afraid to make mistakes. They gave me time to learn, to gain experience. They never expected perfection or imitation. The more I think of them, the more grateful and happy I am.

Professor Dynowski is the patron of the Ethnographic Workshop Association (*Stowarzyszenie Pracownia Etnograficzna*). On its website it is written that he was famous "for his belief in young people and their potential (…)."[10] He was also "an excellent organizer who was able to form a great team of collaborators."[11] Thanks to the Professor, who saw this potential in me, I set off into the unknown. I found the courage to conduct fieldwork in Mongolia, to publish my findings and write my doctoral dissertation.

He passed away before my defense. The finished manuscript, accepted by him, lay on my desk for a long time. I did not know what to do. After some time, Professor Sławoj Szynkiewicz—with whom I shared a room in the Department of Ethnography—took over his duties and became my supervisor. He knew my work, and publications, and was part of the ethnographic expedition to Mongolia. We talked about my research on many occasions. He helped me finish my doctoral studies. I felt that Professor Dynowski would be/is satisfied.

Many years later, after the sudden passing of dr. hab. Danuta Tylkowa, I had to replace her as the supervisor of a doctoral thesis. The dissertation of her pupil was already completed. I only had to assist her in the finishing stages—as did Prof. Szynkiewicz in my case: help her prepare the exams, write a synopsis of the dissertation and answers to the reviewers' questions, and then accompany her at the defense. Dr. Tylkowa was a dear friend of mine. She had shown me a lot of kindness and sympathy. Helping her doctoral candidate complete the doctoral procedure sealed our relationship. I saw it also as an opportunity to reciprocate

[10] Witold Dynowski—Ethnographic Workshop Association; http://etnograficzna.pl/pracownia-etnograficzna/witold-dynowski [accessed: 25.01.2016].
[11] Ibidem.

and give thanks for the support dr. Tylkowa offered me at the beginning of my work in the Department of Ethnography, her confidence in me. It would have been difficult for me to succeed without the presence of such kind people as her.

July 31, 2019 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Professor's death. Sometimes I feel as though he had left on a trip. To Harbin or to Mongolia… I imagine him sitting by a stylish desk, in the light of a lamp with green glass shade,[12] and writing his book on Mongolian culture—the "synthesis" he had dreamed of for so many years. When he finishes writing it—I imagine—he will share his joy with me. And I'll hear once more—"Dearest, how are your brats?"

Remembering Professor Dynowski, Professor Zofia Sokolewicz wrote that "(…) we would confess to him all of our troubles and problems. What he asked for in exchange was a smile. A smile was supposed to represent a specific attitude to life, living in harmony with oneself and others, not focusing solely on your professional career and promotions" (Sokolewicz 1987: 16). If I had a chance to talk with him today, I would start by thanking him for his trust. I would also assure him that I am aware of how much I owe to him. How crucial were our conversations, especially the one time when he encouraged me to continue my academic work and fieldwork in Mongolia, to gather material for my doctoral dissertation. But perhaps a simple smile would suffice? He thought so himself…

Loving without words: my grandmother—Janina Orzechowska

It has been many years since I last visited Hoża Street. I have not seen the house in which Professor Dynowski lived and the Department of Ethnology was located. I remember riding the elevator, moving up and down through a shaft surrounded by a grid. Those who used the stairs could see the people in the elevator, who in turn could see those choosing to walk the stairs, up to the higher floors of the solid, pre-war tenement building, or down to the courtyard surrounded by high walls made of red brick, with a gate that would be closed for the night.

When I was a first year student, I visited Hoża 74 almost every day. Later we moved to Nowy Świat, closer to Krakowskie Przedmieście where the main campus buildings are located. My grandparents lived nearby Hoża, on Koszykowa 54. I would often stop by their apartment during lunch breaks. Regardless of the time of day, my Grandmother would always prepare a meal for me, and she would sit next to me by the table and encourage me to talk. Or she would look at me in silence, pleased that we were together, that I was accepted to the university, that I am happy with my studies. For her, the meal, and her company during it, was an expression of love. I understood it only after she had passed away.

[12] This type of lamp was also found in my favorite reading room in the library on Koszykowa Street. I spent a lot of time there, looking for books helpful for my research or preparing for courses, exams, the habilitation colloquium.

I lived in the apartment on Koszykowa for a few days, while I was passing entrance exams for ethnography. I didn't know how the exam had gone. Was I accepted? I asked my Grandmother to come with me to Krakowskie Przedmieście to see if I had passed the exam. See was able to make her way through the crowd gathered around the glass-case where the results were displayed. She found the right list. My name was on it! I remember the cheerful look on my Grandmother's face, her happiness and delight. She came to me and said fondly: "You passed. You're now a student of the University of Warsaw!" As she had been, many years ago, as were once my parents, my father's niece and her husband, and my Grandmother's sister-in-law. Everyone, excluding my mother, had studied pharmacy. My mother was a graduate of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Warsaw. Every one of those family members was a humanist "at heart."

My Grandmother read a lot. She particularly enjoyed books written by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, Melchior Wańkowicz, the poetry and dramas of Fr. Karol Wojtyła, the essays of Józefa Hennelowa and Fr. Mieczysław Maliński what were published in "Tygodnik Powszechny." She gave me a copy of the *New Testament*, although at that time I was not interested in it. She had hoped that I would read it someday. Thanks to her I discovered *The Little Prince.*

She played solitaire, sewed napkins and pillowcases with colored threads, told stories about life in a pre-war town inhabited by Jews and Poles. She was an excellent cook. No one else could bake a Viennese cheesecake as well as she did (I called it "wet cake"), a wonderfully smelling pâté, or *mazurek* for Easter, especially with *kajmak* topping. Her specialties were crunchy apple pies, cabbage with tomatoes, wonderful dumplings stuffed with blueberries topped with sour cream, and the incredible *krupnik* with potatoes cut into slices.[13] It has always remained a "magical soup" for me. I cannot count the times when an "ordinary" *krupnik* has "saved my life" in moments of sadness and despair…

My Grandmother was very hard-working, talented, curious about the world, kind to others, honest, selfless and hospitable. She helped others without thinking about her own needs. She would share food, a good word, her presence; took time to help others, regardless of the many obligations in her professional and family life, or simply housework. She spent the nights reading and never had enough. She listened to the radio, watched television. She liked to talk about books, would comment on articles she read in "Tygodnik Powszechny" and "Życie Warszawy," was interested in politics, liked to tell stories about the interwar years, her childhood and adolescence. Among the taboo subjects were the war and the Warsaw Uprising, during which she had lost her eighteen-year old daughter. My grandfather's twenty-year old nephew also died in the Uprising.

I remember my Grandmother sitting on a beach and reading a book or newspaper, covered with a shawl protecting her from the sun. She couldn't

[13] I also cut potatoes into slices, just like my Grandmother did.

sunbathe. She never swam in the sea. The water was too cold for her, she had a heart condition and problems with circulation. My grandfather, on the other hand, was an excellent swimmer. He also taught me and my sister how to swim.

My Grandmother saved my life twice, asking doctors she knew for help when those I visited didn't know what to do with me. When my daughters were born —her great-granddaughters—she was emotional and very happy. We often spoke on the phone. She wanted to help me, but she was getting weaker. She passed away on November 11, 1978. Almost every day I am reminded of how much she left behind. Not in the material sense (whatever valuable she possessed, she lost during the Warsaw Uprising), but in the spiritual sense. In my memory, I store her words, gestures; I repeat her sayings, superstitions, expressions. Every time she appeared in my dreams I knew something bad was going to happen. She came to warn me. Unfortunately, she had no power over the way things eventually turned out, no control over life or destiny.

The older I get, the more I see our spiritual connection, my Grandmother's influence on many of my actions, way of thinking, although in many ways we still remain very different people. I now realize what an important figure she was, what a significant role she played in my life. Although I learned so much from her, never before have I called her a Teacher. For me she was (and will always remain) above all—my Grandmother: a wise, loving, kind and honest person, open to others, with no trace of selfishness, arrogance, vanity, or hypocrisy.

Definition of master/Master and following my own way

When I started to think about whom I could call a master/Master, my initial thought was to look up the word in the dictionary and follow that definition, however, I decided to follow a different path.

As a matter of fact, in the precise moment when I discovered that I couldn't think of anyone who I would think of as being my master/Master, I should have given up, but "something" told me otherwise: to search, to take a sheet of paper, a pen, a pencil, and to write down any ideas that come to mind. If you cannot say anything about a master/Master, then write about his absence, or about your search for a person who would become a master/Master for you. Follow your thoughts and see where they will lead you. Write!

One sleepless night I took out several sheets of paper and started to write. This is my usual method of working, also in academic work. Writing down ideas, following particular words, sentences, looking for continuation, a hint or signpost. Many deletions, corrections, attempts at finding the best way to express my thoughts. It is easier for me to concentrate if I have a sheet of paper before me —best if it is white and smooth, without lines or squares. At this stage I never use

the computer. I write by hand, I need to have a "traditional sketchbook." I can sit in a comfortable position, change places, and I don't strain my eyes with the light from the monitor.

I began by looking for associations with the word master/Master. I looked for words, images, memories. Instead of the master/Master, I thought about the Teacher. When I had written down the main part of the text, endlessly correcting and rewriting it, I opened the *Polish Dictionary of Foreign Terms* (1980). I wanted to check my intuition. Under the entry "master" I found: "a person who is superior to others in some ability; has proficiency in something, is unrivalled in some domain;" "(…) a person who is seen as an ideal, who is being copied by others; a teacher" (ibidem: 482). The word master/Master still sounded strange to me, "mannered." The word teacher felt much closer, much more mine, even through master/Master and teacher/Teacher can sometimes mean the same thing.

I put aside the *Dictionary*. A while later I picked up Fr. Ryszard Kozłowski's book entitled *Wewnętrzny nauczyciel człowieka. Eseje z teologii egzystencjalnej* (Kozłowski 2008). I wasn't looking for it to write about the master/Master —Teacher. I wanted to verify a quote which I had used in an article concerning intercultural dialogue (I was working on these two articles simultaneously). I opened the book randomly on a page on which the author was writing about a Master and a Teacher in reference to the New Testament. It began with the following words: "The world of the New Testament draws on the idea of Master —Teacher so excellently elaborated in the Hebrew culture (…)" (Kozłowski 2008: 91). A coincidence? I have never believed in coincidences. Just like my Grandmother didn't.

I underlined a paragraph describing the relation between a Teacher and a pupil/ student. Kozłowski writes that this relationship "finds its power and dynamics in a fatherly and brotherly comprehending of another person, thanks to which he can fully develop and live. There is no sense in fearing that you will lose your authority because of some misguided familiarity (…)" (ibidem: 90). "It reveals a certain respect and esteem, in order to shape the entire process of education on its basis" (ibidem). The relationship with my Teachers—Professor Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa and Professor Witold Dynowski—was based on respect and mutual acceptance. My Grandmother was also a Teacher, although I never described her as such. I admired their knowledge, but what was most important for me was their way of being and their approach to other people, including myself.

In Kozłowski's book I also underlined a reference to Aristotle and his dialogue about the teacher: "But who would—asks the bishop of Hippo—send his son to a teacher who would only teach to think like he does, for whom the aim of learning was to memorize the teacher's thoughts? A good teacher is one who, with the help of words, presents a particular domain of knowledge, inspiring students in such a way so they can continue their quest to distinguish truth from falseness" (ibidem:

100). For me also the ideal Teacher is someone who encourages his students to think independently, to search for answers, one who does not force to imitate or thoughtlessly repeat his own words. These are the types of Teachers I have met in my life, for which I am grateful to Destiny[14] (I talked about Destiny, while also believing there is no such thing as a coincidence).

I know that there comes a moment when a Teacher may leave. Sometimes it happens naturally, when the time comes for them to cross "to the other side." Other times a Teacher tells his pupil: You must continue on your own. You're ready for it. Don't be afraid! Search for you own path! But the bond that connects a Teacher and a pupil lasts much longer, even when they are apart. It is strengthened by memory, a sense of gratitude, by reliving each encounter and thinking about what it gave you.

Life is not a fairy tale

Many years ago I met a person I had known for a long time, but never had a chance to really get acquainted with. From our mutual friends I knew that he was successful at work, but I didn't know that he was a "Renaissance man," an expert in literature, film, theater, music, art and history. I discovered it only after we began to talk on a daily basis, sometimes for many hours at a time. I was impressed by his knowledge and ability to show it, his perfect memory. He had a gift for storytelling. We talked about professional and family matters, about every day matters and holidays, about books, films and plays, cuisine, medicine, fashion and museums, about religion and foreign trips, about exploring both the world around us and the world "after the last stop,"[15] about experiencing life.

It didn't take me long to call him a Teacher. I learned from him, catching up with culture, getting to know a new way of looking at the world, its richness, its bright and dark sides (previously unknown to me). He recommended many

[14] I was fortunate to have been taught by excellent teachers of Polish language and literature. In primary school number 4 in Grodzisk Mazowiecki: Professor Irena Świedrzakowa and Helena Stępień, in High School number 19 in Milanówek: Professor Irena Olszewska. They were all very cultural and kind people, demanding towards others as well as themselves. They knew how to encourage one to search and to speak in one's own voice, they taught in such a way that I was impatiently waiting for each lesson of Polish, and I would always read the required books with great interest. I liked to write long essays. They were graded not only on the basis of a pupil's knowledge, linguistic correctness, but also considered for independent thinking, the ability to formulate one's own thoughts and opinions. We were not required to fill out tests or to know the right "template" for answering. In high school I also met an excellent physics teacher, Professor Julia Heybowicz. She interested me in the subject, made me understand it and enjoy learning it. For some time I even thought about studying physics, unfortunately I did not enjoy math. My daughter Olga finished physics (at the University in Warsaw), even though I never told her about my adolescent dreams.

[15] Przemysław Buchard's book under that title (*Za ostatnim przystankiem*) was a frequent subject of our conversations.

excellent books and films, and was curious what I thought about them. I loved listening to his reminiscences, stories about his voyages. He traveled throughout Europe and Northern Africa. He would also listen to my stories about Mongolia. He wanted to visit it. I explained to him that modern Mongolia is very different from the one from the past which I remembered and told him about, but he still wanted to go there. To look at it through his own eyes.

The Teacher rarely followed tourist trails. He avoided them and instead followed birds, stars, people, dreams, the paths that were hidden from others. He reached locations in remote areas, in which a newcomer from far away was an unexpected sight. When he told stories, he was perfect in capturing the atmosphere, in describing people, things, places and nature in captivating ways. He had taken thousands of excellent photographs and made many films, and had recorded performances of countless musicians (bands and soloists). We shared a passion for *fado* and Balkan music.

Regardless of his own struggles in life, he offered his support when I was diagnosed with a serious disease, when I felt helpless, or when those I considered friends had let me down, or when I lost hope and evil seemed invincible. He taught me to accept people the way they are, without judging, escaping, "burning down bridges." He helped me to understand them as well as myself. I also tried to cheer him up when he experienced troubles (some of which seemed impossible to handle).

After some time I started to notice something was changing in the Teacher's behavior. For a long time I couldn't understand what was happening to him. Why were our conversations turning into his monologues, increasingly longer, nervous, tedious, dominated by darkness? Why was there so much chaos, fear, evil in him? I tried to talk to him about what was good, beautiful and joyful, in an attempt to turn his attention away from the things his mind obsessively dwelt upon. His only answer was silence, or a stubborn return to his own story. He was building a wall. At times he reminded me of Kai from Hans Christian Andersen's fairly tale about the Snow Queen**.** A boy who caught in his eye a fragment of a broken mirror created by an evil sorcerer "(…) which made everything great and good appear small and ugly, while all that was wicked and bad became more visible, and every little fault could be plainly seen" (Andersen 2008: 177). The sorcerer's assistants, wanting to play, flew with the mirror high into the sky, but were not able to hold it: "at last it slipped from their hands, fell to the earth, and was broken into millions of pieces. But now the looking-glass caused more unhappiness than ever, for some of the fragments were not so large as a grain of sand, and they flew about the world into every country. When one of these tiny atoms flew into a person's eye, it stuck there unknown to him, and from that moment he saw everything through a distorted medium, or could see only the worst side of what he looked at" (ibidem).

I tried to help the Teacher, save him, but I was not Gerda from Andersen's fairy tale. Although I didn't lack determination, I didn't have the power to help him. It

took me a long time to realize he was sick, to understand the cause for his strange behavior. The illness had changed his way of thinking, talking, reacting to reality.

I also noticed that it was a "contagious disease." It was becoming much harder for me to see the good in the world, I was losing trust in people, constantly feeling sadness, fear, hopelessness, loneliness. I had to "tame" his illness and find a remedy for what it had done in me, on top of other wounds. I had to learn how to live in a world transformed by the experience of a progressing disease which was changing both the people affected by it and those close to them, introducing a new dimension into their relationships, destroying the existing order.

It took me a very long time to understand why the Teacher was changing, and to realize he would never again be the same Teacher. Never again would we have our long, passionate conversations about the world, people, things, cultural events, history and modernity, everyday life both colorful and extraordinary. Then came a day I had to say goodbye to the Teacher. He had moved into the ice palace built by the Snow Queen, from which there was no return. Only Kai from Andersen's fairy tale was able to escape from it.

One of the female protagonists from Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind* says: "Never trust anyone (…) especially the people you admire. Those are the ones who will make you suffer the worst blows" (Zafón 2004: 22). I underlined these words the first time I was reading the book, as if in some way I had foreseen that I will later refer them to my own life experiences. Another fragment also caught my attention: "One of the pitfalls of childhood is that one doesn't have to understand something to feel it. By the time the mind is able to comprehend what has happened, the wounds of the heart are already too deep" (ibidem: 35). I also had a chance to experience the truth hidden in these words.

Life can bring us joyous occasions, but it also bring disappointment, pain, traumatic turns of events. We meet people who help us to spread our wings, and people who teach us harsh life lessons. Sometimes it is difficult to survive them.

There was a moment when I wanted to call the Teacher a Master, but I banished that thought. He was a Teacher for me. That is how I described him, I saw him in that role and I wished it to stay that way. Anyway, is it really that important: Master? Teacher? None of these words, used to organize reality, introduce classification (and labels), is able to express its richness, complexity, its many dimensions. None can truly describe a person in his or her entirety, or perhaps I am unable to do so.

* * *

I read somewhere that a master/Master materializes only when a pupil is ready for it. Am I ready for an encounter with a person I could call a master/Master? Do I want it? What could I learn? Some lessons we learn against ourselves, even if they are indeed essential for us. What if this is another painful lesson from life…

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