

Review of the doctoral thesis by Maria Waclawik titled: "Memories of World War II and ethnic identity as reflected in the autobiographical narratives of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians" prepared at the Jagiellonian University under the supervision of Professor Maria Flis and subsidiary advisor Professor Kirsten E. McAllister.

The reviewed thesis is very innovative and unique in Polish social sciences. It offers a sound contribution to the memory studies and social theory of identity. The evidence collected by the author is very important especially because the witnesses of the WWII are passing away and, besides, in the case of the two groups under study we speak of testimonies of minorities discriminated against which makes their voices often muted and their memories erased from the official collective memory of the country. This is a very important issue for example in contemporary decolonial studies and in the research on memory described as mnemonic violence or mnemonic wars. It indicates that the importance of the reviewed thesis goes well beyond its actual research field and it can be of interest for scholars working in other fields too.

The thesis consists of an Introduction, eight chapters and Conclusions. The structure of the thesis is logical and secures a flawless presentation of author's argument. It starts with theoretical considerations regarding the relation between memory and identity presented in Chapter 1 and historical presentation of the situation of the two studied groups (Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians).

The Introduction starts with a telling motto taken from Stephen Hawking: "The past, like the future, is indefinite and exists only as a spectrum of possibilities." This reveals the general approach of the thesis which is, simultaneously, a dominant position in contemporary Memory Studies, namely that, to quote Jonathan Friedman "the past is always practiced in the present, not because the past imposes itself, but because subjects in the present fashion the past in the practice of their social identity...The past that affects the present is a past constructed and/or reproduced in the present" (Friedman 1994: 141). The thesis is a fascinating inquiry into the process of constructing the past so that it may fit present identities and thus to make a certain possibility an intersubjective reality, valid until further notice.

The author presents in the Introduction her intellectual path and on this occasion reveals competences and skills she learned which made her particularly predestined to deal with the subject matter of her thesis. In addition to the presentation of author's inspiration, the Introduction contains a precise and concise description of the main objective of the thesis,

which is, in author's own words, "to determine, on the basis of autobiographical narratives, the links between the memory of wartime experiences of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians and their ethnic identity. The comparative analysis of the narratives attempts to present the ways of remembering the Second World War, the similarities and differences in the content as well as the form of presenting Japanese American and Japanese Canadian biographical experiences, factors that influenced those similarities and differences, and the impact on their ethnic identity."

The author convincingly argues that her thesis focuses on some timely and pertinent theoretical problems of the relation between social/collective memory and identity. It is an important and valuable aspect of the theoretical construction of the thesis that the author presents the future as the main stake of the processes of collective remembrance, that is that the vision of the future largely organizes the present frameworks of the memory of the past events. Equally important and valuable is that the author does not focus solely on traumatic memories (which would be understandable in the case of both groups under study) but shows how the memories of the members of these groups reflect their agency and ability to overcome the painful past.

I have been deeply impressed by the author's theoretical considerations presented in Chapter 1. It shows great erudition and orientation in the burgeoning field of intellectual production called Memory Studies. I particularly appreciate that the author presents memory as "future oriented." This approach helps to connect memory with identity because the main existential preoccupations regarding identity are those related to its continuous future existence.

The relation between memory and identity is widely discussed in this chapter as well I feel myself flattered that the author found some of my conceptions in this field useful and inspiring for her own work.

Also the section on ethnicity in this chapter is very valuable with author's reasonably constructivist approach inspired by Barth. It is important that the author presents identity as a dynamic, changing configuration of elements defined in various ways, therefore as something alive and taking different forms in different social contexts. I am only slightly surprised that the author did not make reference to T. H. Eriksen and his concept of ethnicity as reaction to colonialism or to Rogers Brubaker and his concept of "ethnicity without groups." Both concepts would fit very well the author's perspective.

The first chapter ends up with a useful presentation of the scholarly literature on the two communities under study: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians. It is only a pity that I

could not find a reference to the research conducted by Dorothy Swaine Thomas, the results of which were published in two volumes: *The Spoilage* (1946, with Richard Nishimoto) and *Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement: The Salvage* (1952, with the assistance of Charles Kikuchi and James Sakoda). I am not arguing that these research could bring any new light to the author's thesis, but it would be interesting to include these books in the list of references as a recognition of the work of D. Swaine Thomas, whose co-authorship of the famous "Thomas theorem" is too often forgotten.

The next two chapters focus on the description of the fate of the Japanese communities in Canada and the USA. These chapters are very useful because aptly outline the broader political context of the analyzed processes and provide important sociological characteristics of both groups. It needs to be stressed that both chapters are based on a rich evidence collected by the author during research visits in the Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Center in Canada and the Japanese American National Museum in the USA.

In Chapter 4 the author presents the methodology of her research. This chapter indicates author's full control on the methodological strategies and techniques she used in her research and also a deep awareness of the theoretical foundations of (any) methodology. The author draws upon Fritz Schütze's interactionist theory of biographical structures, grounded theory and even linguistic approaches to narratives. This rich theoretical background helps the author to justify the method of narrative interview she has chosen as the main method of her research. The chosen method has been located within broader approach which has great interdisciplinary potential and includes sociology in its interpretive version, theory of culture, social/cultural anthropology, and even narrative psychology which contribute to the overarching perspective of memory studies.

What is a bit unclear and underdeveloped in the thesis is the way the author employs the concept of autoethnography. Maybe I am simplifying but it seems to me that this concept means something more complicated than an ability to sympathetic, humble understanding of our speaking partners (p. 19) or facilitation of their memories through the situation of the interview (p. 113). There are several problems involved here, such as for example merging of cognitive horizons of different worlds which haunted Evans-Pritchard as the problem of double alienation and made his interpreters think of how much constructed was his picture of the Nuer. Or the problem of ethnographic self-construction of an anthropologist which James Clifford attributed to Malinowski. Or the problem of the past events in the life of ethnographer and how they open us up to some kinds of experience (and close in other cases), as it was in the approaches by, for

example, Renato Rosaldo or Michael Herzfeld. I have the feeling that the author's idea was to show the proximity of her approach to that last version of the problem but by and large this issue remains insufficiently elaborated and the fundamental problem of autoethnography, the relation between collection and construction of the evidence, is not taken into account. Therefore, I would like to ask the author to make more her concept of autoethnography more precise and elaborated in her reply to this review.

In addition, the methodological chapter contains a concise but erudite history of the biographical method which shows author's good knowledge of the field and methodological self-consciousness.

The author carefully describes the procedure of sampling which was properly selected as for this type of research. 30 long interviews constitute a sufficient research material which has subsequently been carefully analyzed with the help of Schütze's five step model of interpretation. The methodological chapter ends up with a short section about the limitation of the study, which, however, gives an impression of being unfinished and insufficiently focused on the author's own research, and an interesting reflection of the ethical problems the author has encountered.

The presentation of research findings starts in Chapter 5 with a comparison of the two researched groups. It is important and valuable that the author rejects as simplification the thesis about single memory of the past characterizing Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans respectively. In general, the comparison of these two set of interviews and the search of differences and similarities between them, is supported by deep theoretical reflection and leads to important conclusions. Another important issue discussed very well in this chapter is silence as a key feature of the wartime memories. This discussion includes an important distinction between silence of memory which was discussed and reflected upon by the speaking partners, and silences of their own memories as part of repression or conscious omission of the past. The very clearly presented conclusions of this chapter form one of the most important findings of the research regarding the issue of memory.

In Chapter 6 the author attempts to connect the problem of wartime memories with the issue of identity-building process. It is precisely the processual aspect of identity building that author employs in her analysis. once again referring to my work. I agree with the author that in my own work I was mostly interested in the top-down process of identity construction and her attempt to present the opposite direction is very valuable. In general, this chapter shows vividly

how the traumatic wartime experience can nevertheless be integrated into the collective memories and identities of the two studied groups in spite of the processes of silencing described earlier.

The issue of identity is subsequently illustrated by the rich material from the interviews resented in Chapter 7 and in Chapter 8 the author returns to more theoretical analysis. With the help of the Van Dijck's concept of mediated memories the author analyses which memories become part of the life stories of the speaking partners and how much conscious was the process of their selection. In this chapter we may also find interesting remarks about the role of photography in storing or evoking memories. Eventually, this chapter offers an interesting presentation of the challenges the members of the studied communities faced in presentation of their recollections in the form of communicative memory and their solution – personal cultural memory.

In conclusion I would like to say that this is an excellent doctoral thesis, the author conducted serious and methodologically correct research and obtained interesting results interpreted with deep knowledge of theoretical framework of memory studies and theory of identity. The thesis has very good structure and is very well written, with only minor problems like for example the repetition of the fragment of text on p. 239.

In my opinion the submitted thesis fully meets the requirements of the Act on academic degrees and academic title (art. 13.1) because it is an original solution of the scholarly problem and indicates that the candidate has general theoretical knowledge in her scientific discipline and that she is able to independently conduct scholarly work. I would also recommend the thesis to be published.



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