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## Linguistic (?) Image of the Past (?), i.e. What is Hidden Behind Historical Narrative...

*Językowy (?) obraz przeszłości (?), czyli o tym,  
co się kryje za narracją historyczną...*

### ABSTRACT

The article addresses problems concerning consequences of the so-called „language turn” for the reflections on broadly understood historical narrative. In general remarks I indicate reasons for changes that have taken place (and are still ongoing) in the area of historiography/historical writing, mainly those related to the inclusion of the non-classical approach – based on different principles than the classical/traditional ones – to the language of historical narrative/historical writing/historiography, and the related consequences for the historians’ research practice. I also point out one of the (possible) ways which serves to explain the changes that took place in the field of historiography in the last decades, being in fact the consequence of discussions/reflections on the foundations of (scholarly) cognition that is/can be a reference to a certain rivalry between an objectivist and constructivist model of cognition. Simplifying the problem quite considerably, I argue that one of the most important, and – subsequently – also meaningful, elements of dispute

PUBLICATION INFO			
			e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060
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SOURCE OF FUNDING: Statutory Research of the Institute of History of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin			
SUBMITTED: 2020.11.04	ACCEPTED: 2021.01.28	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2021.06.30	
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: <a href="https://journals.umcs.pl/rh">https://journals.umcs.pl/rh</a>		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE E-mail: <a href="mailto:reshistorica@umcs.pl">reshistorica@umcs.pl</a>	

between the objectivist model of cognition and the constructivist model of cognition was the discussion/reflection on the role of language in cognition (including the learning of the past). I assume that the possible answers – should the title of the article be recognised as a question – are dependent on a complex notion of culture and language, and the interest of historians in the narrative's language shifted scholars' interest from „reconstruction of the past” to the linguistic (language understood broadly there as a cultural code) images of history. Researchers' interests in the „images of the past”/”linguistic images of the past” allowed not only to notice and reflect on the limitations of historical knowledge (also in order to identify and marginalise them) or to rationalise the adopted (consciously or not) assumptions/prejudices, but simultaneously opened historical field towards new research areas, thus broadening the cognitive horizon of historiography.

**Key words:** past, image of the past, language, historical narrative, language turn

#### STRESZCZENIE

W artykule poruszam problemy związane z konsekwencjami tzw. zwrotu językowego dla refleksji nad szeroko rozumianą narracją historyczną. W uwagach o charakterze ogólnym wskazuję przyczyny zmian, jakie się dokonały (i wciąż dokonują) na gruncie historiografii/pisarstwa historycznego, przede wszystkim tych związanych z uwzględnieniem nieklasycznego podejścia – opartego na odmiennych do klasycznych/tradycyjnych założeniach – do języka opowieści historycznej/pisarstwa historycznego/historiografii oraz związanych z tym skutków dla praktyki badawczej historyków. Wskazuję przy tym, że jedną z (możliwych) dróg służących wyjaśnieniu zmian, jakie dokonały się na gruncie historiografii w ostatnich dekadach, będących w gruncie rzeczy rezultatem dyskusji/refleksji nad fundamentami poznania (naukowego), jest/może być odniesienie do swistej rywalizacji między obiektywistycznym i konstruktywistycznym modelem poznania. Mocno upraszczając problem, argumentuję, że jednym z istotniejszych, a w efekcie także znaczących elementów sporu między obiektywistycznym modelem poznania i konstruktywistycznym modelem poznania, była dyskusja/refleksja nad rolą języka w poznaniu (w tym w poznawaniu przeszłości). Zakładam, że możliwe odpowiedzi – jeśli uznać, że tytuł artykułu jest pytaniem – są uzależnione od złożonej koncepcji kultury oraz języka, a zainteresowanie historyków językiem narracji przesunęło zainteresowania badaczy z „rekonstrukcji przeszłości” na rzecz językowych (język szeroko rozumiany jako kod kultury) obrazów dziejów. Zainteresowanie badaczy „obrazami przeszłości”/”językowymi obrazami przeszłości” nie tylko pozwoliło dostrzec i poddać refleksji ograniczenia wiedzy historycznej (także w celu ich identyfikacji i marginalizacji) czy zracjonalizować przyjmowane (świadomie lub nie) założenia/przesady, ale jednocześnie otworzyło naukę historyczną w kierunku nowych obszarów badawczych, poszerzając tym samym horyzont poznawczy historiografii.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przeszłość, obraz przeszłości, język, narracja historyczna, zwrot językowy

The answer to a question – even though the title of the article is by no means a question – what is hidden behind historical narrative<sup>1</sup> can refer,

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<sup>1</sup> On disputes regarding historical narrative see i.e. J. Pomorski, *Historyk i metodologia*, Lublin 1991.

on the one hand, to the findings of history scholars or theoreticians of historical research and, on the other hand, to the common-sense associations, including these which in the context of reflecting on historical knowledge appear – especially from historians' perspective – as non-obvious. In the latter case, a reader – ignoring the very contents/format of the narrative – could assume without detriment to theoretical (and practical reflection on the final effect of historians' work) that these are, first and foremost, various types of values/emotions, prejudices, complexes (shame, pride, desires, etc.). This non-obviousness becomes even more visible if one looks at answers formed by the two most influential courses present in the academic reflection on the images from the past. Therefore, we should have a closer look – while greatly simplifying the problem – at the most typical/showcase versions functioning within these frameworks.

Modernist/classical<sup>2</sup> historiography – in one of the acceptable/possible answers – states/would state that a world is concealed behind the narrative, which in fact no longer exists, but a historian (in the narrative) is able to reflect/mirror/uncover this world if he only follows the rules and principles as ascribed to his working method, and the narrative itself is his representation/presentation. Without going deeper into details, it can be accepted that arguments in favor of this solution are hidden mainly in the assumed concept of the source (as a fragment/reflection of the past reality), a specific type of the world's and man's vision (world/past is in order and it is historian's task to reach this order), and the acknowledged theory of language (as a neutral medium describing/reporting – and not co-creating – the phenomena, facts, events). The answer of the representatives of the post-modernist/non-classical historiographic practice would be or at least could be radically different/varied. In one of the possible versions it could suggest that what is hidden behind the narrative is the very historian/culture/society and his/her world of values/beliefs/superstitions. In this case, the validation could come together with the notion of a source, the light of which „reflects“ only the cognitive horizon of the author, the belief that the rules steering a historian's research procedure are of a local/temporary nature and depend on belonging to a specific community (paradigm), and the language (finally) is not only neutral towards the world, which it describes, but even more: co-creates this world. I will omit at this point the reflection on the possible concepts regarding the source and historian's working method (and rules present in it), and I will focus on the problem of the language of the historical narrative. However, I will begin with remarks of a more general nature, which are first and foremost related to the issue of reasons for the changes that took

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<sup>2</sup> I am aware of the locality and temporality of the terms „classical“/ „non-classical“...

place (and which continue to do so) in terms of historiography/historical writing, particularly those associated with the inclusion of non-classical approach – based on suppositions which are different from classical/traditional – regarding the language of historical narration/historical writing/historiography, and consequences for the historians' research practice related to them.

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One of the (possible) paths to explain changes that took place in historiography in the last decades (from the 1960s) – including those associated with relationship between the past/reality and the language which served to represent it, being essentially a result of discussion/reflection on the foundation of the (scholarly) cognition, is/can be a reference to a distinctive rivalry between the objectivist [hereinafter: OMP] and the constructivist model of cognition [hereinafter: KMP]<sup>3</sup>. Without going deeper into details, it is worth pointing out the characteristic attributes of both frameworks. In short: OMP assumes that the reality is something external and independent from cognition, and trueness or falsehood (of convictions, knowledge) depends on the world of nature; facts and regularities are uncovered (they exist realistically); knowledge is a result of the relationship between a subject and an object, and its form is determined by the world; conceptual apparatus gives an adequate image (description) of the work (regardless of culture). In turn, the KMP rejects/modifies these presuppositions/theses. Therefore, questions on what is cognition, knowledge, and truth are different. Thus, in the current perspective based on KMP it is stated that: the reality is constructed as part of culture (of social practices), truth and falsehood depend on the context in which they occur; facts and regularities are socially produced (constructed), knowledge develops as a result of human interactions, and trueness is determined by social groups; conceptual apparatus structures (and not describes) the existing social experience<sup>4</sup>.

As a result we see that constructivism undermined and even rejected – in its extreme version – presupposition accepted by the objectivists, in the light of which historiography has (some realistic/factual) reference to the past. From the KMP perspective it turns out to be a construct only, an interpretation of proofs/testimonials: the past is not inaccessible and

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<sup>3</sup> See i.e. A. Zybertowicz, *Przemoc i poznanie*, Toruń 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, s. 58–63. Additionally: OMP states that social circumstances do not influence the process of gaining knowledge; on the other hand, KMP accepts that gaining knowledge is dependent on social circumstances [authority, power] – *ibidem*.

by no means can it be confirmed<sup>5</sup>. History/the past as an object of cognition is possible only due to a broadly understood cultural experience (local and temporary in nature). Therefore, the means/tools of culture not only allow us to perceive (this way or another) the past, but also to create its representations/presentations/images. In this context, a historian – an OMP supporter – believes that the world/the past is in order and the order can be found/uncovered through his/her observations. In contrast, the KMP „believer“ assumes that this order is imposed on the world/the past in the processes of cognition/presentation/representation.

By significantly simplifying the problem – although in this slightly superficial characteristics, which contains only the most fundamental assumptions of the cognitive frameworks competing with one another, it is strongly emphasised/accentuated – it is possible to indicate that one of the more important, and consequently also more significant elements of dispute between OMP and KMP was a discussion/reflection on the role of language in cognition (including the study of the past). It seems that the most broadly described phenomenon was in this context the so-called *linguistic turn*, within which (generally speaking) the attitude towards the language as the non-natural „medium“ of cognitive processes was dominant. In its perspective, language appears as a tool imposing a specific order in the image of reality/history, as a tool of „violence“ taking part in persuading a specific image of the world (including the past) at the level of „the world and man image“. Therefore, language is presented not as an instrument used to „describe“ the events (facts, processes, history), but also as a tool co-creating these events, and its specific „poetics“ has a certain general view on the world/past and society ascribed to it. One of the turning points for changing the modernist paradigm/s to those inspired by post-modernist concepts of philosophy (of history) became not so much/not only the very interest in language, but consequences resulting from it, and these reached probably further than the precursors of this phenomenon had anticipated or expected. And even though the sources of this phenomenon should be searched for much earlier, due to the requirements of this article, I will refer here to a thesis on a language determination of the images of reality, which appeared in the inter-war period due to i.e. Benjamin L. Whorf<sup>6</sup>. This work – without going into details – quite strongly undermined the present (and dominant in the academia) conviction that language engenders a neutral tool of cognition

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<sup>5</sup> A. Tucker, *Our Knowledge of the Past. A Philosophy of Historiography*, Cambridge–New York 2004, s. 256.

<sup>6</sup> The so-called Sapira-Whorfa concept – see i.a.: A. Radomski, *Kultura–Prawda–Poznanie*, Lublin 1994, s. 23.

(or it can be accepted as such). At the same time – i.e. thanks to L. Wittgenstein – language becomes to be perceived as a tool for constructing (bringing to life) and not describing the facts. Scholars proved from different perspectives that language not only plays an active role in studying and creating the reality, but they also popularised a thesis that people's views of the world were to a large extent determined by specified usage of language<sup>7</sup>. Without carrying out the entire reconstruction of views justifying the above-mentioned approach – and also taking into consideration the fact that from my perspective it is particularly important that apart from linguists or philosophers of language an analogous notion of language was also adapted by i.e. anthropologist, sociologists, and finally historian for their disciplines' benefits – I will refer here to only a few illustrations of the notion of language formulated in this way.

Thus, for instance, B. Malinowski stated that „the basic function of language is not to express thought or duplicating intellectual processes, but rather to play an active, pragmatic role within the human behaviors”<sup>8</sup>. Effectively, language emerges as one of the fundamental forces of culture as it turn out to be „a component of every human activities undertaken collectively”<sup>9</sup>. And this means that „[...] words in their original meaning and basic sense do, act, produce, and achieve. Therefore, in order to understand the meaning we have to study rather the dynamics of words and not their purely intellectual function”<sup>10</sup>.

Similar solutions – and not only consequences – can be found in M. Marody, for whom language is an essential tool for intentional creation of reality, i.e. procedures on the images of (social) reality, first and foremost undertaken in order to change behaviours of individuals or entire social groups<sup>11</sup>. Describing the role of language in cognitive processes, the scholar drew attention to i.a. its role as a building material, from which the desired images of reality are constructed. She argued that language is not only their component, but also a tool for shaping (social) reality or its individual fragments. Having accepted that language

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<sup>7</sup> As a result, language expression and interest in an active role of language turned out to be a strong argument for (cognitive) relativism.

<sup>8</sup> „zasadniczą funkcją języka nie jest wyrażanie myśli lub powielanie procesów intelektualnych, ale raczej odgrywanie aktywnej, pragmatycznej roli w zakresie ludzkich zachowań”.

<sup>9</sup> B. Malinowski, *Ogrody koralowe i ich magia*, w: *Dziela*, t. 5, Warszawa 1987, s. 35.

<sup>10</sup> „[...] słowa w ich pierwotnym i zasadniczym sensie robią, działają, wytwarzają i osiągnają. Dlatego też, aby zrozumieć znaczenie musimy raczej zbadać dynamikę słów, a nie ich czysto intelektualną funkcję”. *Ibidem*, s. 100; cf. M. Woźniak, *Doświadczenie historii. Kulturowy i społeczny wymiar mitu rewolucji*, Lublin 2003, s. 156–157.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. Marody, *Technologie intelektu*, Warszawa 1987, s. 254.

manipulations as their direct goal, they accept the re-definition of a concept or re-definition of reality, and the language is used for describing the reality influences its perception, and assuming that human actions are directed through values, and concepts/language are consistently linked with evaluating or denoting the values, it can be accepted that changes at the level of language – and not necessarily at the level of reality – are responsible for invoking specific behaviours<sup>12</sup>.

In turn, J. Bartmiński correctly notices that a man acquires an idea about the world through language, which creates certain and dependent on him ways of thinking about it „from the needed and important, to non-rational and superstitious”<sup>13</sup>. Thus, he stated that members of a community unwittingly accept a language image of the world while acquiring the language: if one „wants to convey something, to talk about something, he has to use the words and sentence structures of a language, which contain the already pre-defined order and evaluation of the world”<sup>14</sup>. In this approach, language can be treated as an instrument establishing order and imposing structure on human experiencing and thinking. I also assume that questions on the role of language in constructing the images of the past is inseparable from – if not identical with – the issue of the presence of the world’s vision and man-researcher, and its impact on the past’s images.

However, regardless of these types of findings, an exceptionally important question is not only the role of the world of values which constitute knowledge and researcher’s (historian’s) activity, but also language’s participation in this enterprise, through which he becomes a recipient of knowledge accumulated by predecessors and treated like (objective) products of culture. Slightly simplifying the issue for the purpose of this fragment, it is worth emphasizing that language is/can be perceived as an element limiting the cognition (sociology of knowledge); as a medium for the means of expression – categorization and experience – typical of a given culture (Sapir-Whorf); or, finally, as a cognitive tool which places in order all the contents of cognition<sup>15</sup>. As a result of these presuppositions, it is possible to argue that language organizes empirical data and experiences, and in this way participants of a given culture are subjected to socialization by key concepts present in it. Consequently, the limits of

<sup>12</sup> Por. *Ibidem*, s. 251; cf. M. Woźniak, *op. cit.*, s. 157–160.

<sup>13</sup> „od potrzebnych i ważnych, aż po przesądne i zabobonne”.

<sup>14</sup> „chce coś przekazać, o czymś mówić musi posługiwać się słowami i strukturami zdaniowymi języka, które zawierają już wcześniej określony porządek oraz ocenę świata”. J. Bartmiński, *Punkt widzenia, perspektywa, językowy obraz świata*, w: *Językowy obraz świata*, red. J. Bartmiński, Lublin 1990, s. 110–111; more in: M. Woźniak, *op. cit.*, s. 157–160.

<sup>15</sup> K. Stemplewska-Żakowicz, *Osobiste doświadczenie a przekaz społeczny*, Wrocław 1996, s. 14–15, 18.

language can simultaneously be perceived as the limits of culture – if culture does have limits (and it does...a man cannot be/remain cultural in every situation...).

Possible strategies/concepts of language mentioned above were adapted also by historians for the purpose of their discipline. H. Ritter unambiguously suggested that history/historical imagination – which, according to him, derives from the suggestion of H. White in *Historical imagination...* – is a consequence of „language determinism, to which historians are addicted”<sup>16</sup>. K. Jenkins heads in a similar direction when he states that we can exist in culture only within the boundaries of its code and through this code: to live in culture „is to be literally placed within the *imaginaries* which produce what passes for reality in a way that living in the language is simply like living in the reality”<sup>17</sup>. However, Jenkins stipulates that the past becomes an *imaginary* due to imposing on it „meanings and interpretations, values and goals”<sup>18</sup>, which we associate with it, and it is not imagined in a sense of „as if it did not take place”<sup>19</sup>. The only „semantic power”<sup>20</sup> of the past understood this way is the present or rather „today’s generation of interpreters”<sup>21</sup>. And these ‘meanings and interpretations, values and goals’ can only be expressed through language understood as a specific code of culture<sup>22</sup>.

J. Pomorski goes even further<sup>23</sup> and while analyzing the foundations of constructivist perspective he argues that the result of the thesis stating that the historical narrative „does not reflect a thing, to which it refers, but evokes in the mind the imaginations of these things”<sup>24</sup> is a suggestion

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<sup>16</sup> „determinizmu językowego od którego historycy są uzależnieni”. H. Ritter, *Dictionary of Concepts in History*, London 1986, s. 221.

<sup>17</sup> „to dosłownie być ustanowionym w ramach *imaginariów*, które wytwarzają to, co uchodzi za rzeczywistość tak, że zamieszkiwanie w języku po prostu jest zamieszkiwaniem w rzeczywistości”.

<sup>18</sup> „znaczeń i interpretacji, wartości oraz celów”.

<sup>19</sup> „jakoby się nie zdarzyła”.

<sup>20</sup> „władzą semantyczną”.

<sup>21</sup> „dzisiejsze pokolenie interpretatorów”. K. Jenkins, *Życie w czasie, lecz poza historią; życie w moralności lecz poza etyką*, w: *Pamięć, etyka i historia. Anglo-amerykańska teoria historiografii lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, red. E. Domańska, Poznań 2002, s. 254.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 237.

<sup>23</sup> See i.e.: J. Pomorski, *Czy scjentyzm w historiografii końca XX wieku jest całkiem passe?*, „Historyka” 2000, 30; idem, *Punktu widzenia we współczesnej historiografii*, w: *Punkt widzenia w języku i kulturze*, red. J. Bartmiński, Lublin 2004.

<sup>24</sup> „nie odzwierciedla rzeczy do której się odnosi, lecz wywołuje w umyśle wyobrażenia tych rzeczy”. Simultaneously indicating research direction, i.e. a set of images which are associated with a specific narrative (J. Pomorski, *Czy*, s. 23).



that the thought on the past basically comes down to studies on language. In this context, a historian turns out to be a researcher of the source's language and a methodologist that „tries to uncover and codify the rules governing the translation of the language of the source's account into the language of historical narrative, while a historian of historiography describes the changes of the language of historical narrative”<sup>25</sup>. Later – while attempting to rationalize the narrativists' thesis on the language being entrenched in culture – he adds that „deep linguistic structures, a priori towards cognition, determine [...] what image of the world is created in our thinking and what we pass on to others in communication process”<sup>26</sup>. As a result, we may conclude that this entrenchment decides on „how we view the world, how we structure, categorise, and metaphorise it”<sup>27</sup>. And even though not all the (human) means of experiencing the world are of a language nature, as noted by i.a. A. Bronk, eventually all of them „must be grasped, and thus tamed by a man”<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, belonging to a particular language means that at the same time one is locked within a specific „image of the world”<sup>29</sup>. In this perspective, language turns out to be a factor which determines cognition, and its framework – (cultural) image of the world/the past, as well as an apparatus for „imposing” meanings and interpretations; a tool of persuasion of values and projecting attitudes.

The perspective presented above, emphasising the active role of language in formulating (language/cultural) representations of the past also suggest that the terminology used by historians refers to various analogies – birth, development, roots, sources, origins, maturity, fall, disintegration – are not only the elements of language, but also of thinking and cognition. It should be emphasised here that indicating the role and functions

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<sup>25</sup> „próbuję odkryć i skodyfikować reguły rządzące translacją języka przekazu źródłowego na język narracji historycznej, zaś historyk historiografii opisuje przemiany języka narracji historycznej”.

<sup>26</sup> „aprioryczne względem poznania, głębokie struktury lingwistyczne przesądza- ją o tym [...] jaki obraz świata powstaje w naszym myśleniu i jaki przekazujemy innym w procesie komunikowania”.

<sup>27</sup> „jak postrzegamy świat, jak go strukturalizujemy, kategoryzujemy i metaforyzujemy”. J. Pomorski, *Czy*, s. 23–24.

<sup>28</sup> „muszą zostać ujęte językowo i w ten sposób oswojone przez człowieka”.

<sup>29</sup> A. Bronk, *Rozumienie, dzieje, język*, Lublin, 1982, s. 430–432. Bronk refers here to the thesis by F. Nietzsche, in which he stated that the actual „God's creation act was based on creating grammar which imposed on a man a specific way of viewing the word, which one could not transcend” (A. Bronk, *op. cit.*, s. 590). Therefore, a question appears whether a man can transcend (culturally) acquired language experience; more in: M. Woźniak, *Doświadczenie*, s. 152–158.

of language it is difficult to avoid the issue of its metaphoricity, and as a consequence, the one of its attributes which – as noted by J. Pomorski – makes it an element of the most fundamental structuralization of various means of experiencing the world, used to tame it, at the same time constituting a foundation for perceiving and specifying the images of the past, simultaneously influencing the (historical) vision of the past reality postulated by a given narrative.

As a result, this perspective suggests that language not so much describes facts/events, but rather constitutes them/brings them to life (a stronger version) or structures them (a weaker version). It is due to language – designed not to report facts and events as stems from the concept presented above – that we receive an interpretation of the world (the past/its images) in the historical narrative together with meanings and values present in it. Ultimately, they turn out to be not so much the components of the past, but rather the research culture. The language – which is particularly visible i.a. in the case of specific type of language usage, which was/is i.e. the newspeak – becomes a tool that allows to culturally (linguistically) create the determined images of the past and treat them as a realistic/actual past (historical reality). Language – particularly the one defined by the adjective „scientific” – turns out to be an exceptionally effective tool of naturalization (objectification) of concepts, as well as the images of reality/the past which are based on them<sup>30</sup>. As a result, it is thanks to language that the world/the past presented in historical narrative not only appears as its reflection, but at the same time it is the language (culture) that sets boundaries of its possible images/visions.

An attempt to answer the question which is present in the title at least indirectly would have to include – taking into account the arguments presented above – the consequences hidden behind this kind of concept of language (and culture). One of the possible choices would be that which would notice the world of values (assumptions/prejudices) of research culture, indicating that the image of history (historical narrative) includes – i.a. as a result of language – the code of culture, its grammar, rules that guide it (together with those which are responsible for scientific practice). And consequently, also the means of experiencing the world and the possible procedures of their verbalization, in line with the members of a given community (cultural/language) together with the strategies for

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<sup>30</sup> More in: M. Woźniak, *How is a historical story about the revolution [or the past] possible?*, w: *Intersitio. East European Review of Historical Anthropology, Rethinking History Center*, t. 1, nr 1, Chisinau 2007, s. 66–70; idem, *Rewolucja – między obrazem, teorią a rzeczywistością*, w: *Rewolucja a zmiana społeczna*, red. K. Brzechczyn, Poznań 2007, s. 382–383; idem, *Doświadczenie*, s. 162–168.

taming the world, which are typical of it (i.a. poetics or more broadly rules of a story). This answer – and, in fact, possible answers – would have to simultaneously take into account presuppositions referring to some form of solution regarding the relationship between the world/reality/past and the language which is used to describe it, or to speak more generally: would have to refer to the question on whether „the culture speaks the language or the language speaks through the culture?“.

However, regardless of the possible answers – dependent on the complex notion of culture and language – it is worth to emphasise at the end that researches' interest (including historians) in language, as a consequence of i.a. „language turn“, shifted researchers' interests from „the reconstruction of the past“ to the language images of the past (language understood broadly as a culture code). As was aptly put by J. Pomorski who was mentioned earlier: the centre of gravity was shifted from reflection on the past to research on language which we use to communicate this past. As a result, if „the past, as such, does not exist“ then the language should become the „hard world“ – studied with the help of i.a. linguistics and literary studies. For some historians, in particular the theoreticians of historical research, it is not the past (history) which became the actual subject of research, but the language which expressed it (the past/history). It was from them that arrived – the question is how deeply similar research directives infiltrated to the practitioners' working methods (at the same time not prejudging their substantive suitability/wrongness) – the resolution and research postulates aimed at searching for what is hidden behind historical narrative and language, by means of which the „possibilities of the past“ are verbalised, most of all those aimed at the direction of guiding rules (language, culture, cultural games), as it is thanks to them that such and no other (representative) images of the past are formed. And it is obvious, and to some extent even justified, that just as the postulates of shifting researchers' interests from broadly understood „past“ towards the „images of the past“, the (language) shift understood in this way – from „the images of the past“ to „the language images of the past“ – triggered opposition and concern – at least from the perspective of legitimacy and contents of historical knowledge – of the representatives of the classical idea of historical research. And yet, researchers' interest in „the images of the past“/„language images of the past“ not only allowed to notice and reflect on the limitations of historical knowledge (also in order to identify and marginalise them), or rationalise he accepted (consciously or not) presuppositions/superstitions, but it simultaneously opened historical knowledge towards new areas of research, thus broadening the very cognitive horizon of historiography.

(translated by Anna Miączewska)

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