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Introduction... or Why *the Master*... is in Defiance

The Master... is in defiance.

It does not mean we are defying a master, nor is it about *the anti-master*, although both issues will also be raised in the following pages. *The Master*... is in defiance, the authors of the presented articles argue, because the categories of “master” and “mastery”—which the culture of late modernity is not particularly interested in, and which are also excluded both in the axiological mode and in ethically-marked discourses—have become only and exclusively a relic of the past, for which there is no place in our times characterized by hyper-individualism, the cult of youth, and the radical acceleration of technology. But perhaps this is a positive social phenomenon? Perhaps there is no sense in returning to that which is anachronistic and unnecessary—especially in the pages of a journal dedicated to educational sciences—or, on the contrary: perhaps these categories require re-activation, re-actualization, a renewal or a new reframing that would correspond with the parameters of contemporary culture and the needs of contemporary people?¹ These questions, doubts, critiques, but also potential new prospects, hopes, and possibilities are raised by the authors published in the eighth issue of “Educational Sciences. Interdisciplinary Studies” (“NOWIS”).

The articles collected in this volume approach the categories of “master” and “mastery” in different ways. The extended title—*The Master and Mastery in Culture, Society, Art and Education*—points to the tropes investigated by the authors, although the Reader will quickly realize that they do not follow popular thought patterns. The texts propose a coherent narrative about masters and mastery, and

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¹ Postulated for example by Lech Witkowski (2001).

therefore they can be read in the suggested order. However, this does not preclude a selective reading, profiled individually, since the articles were not fitted to a preconceived conceptual frame. It is important to emphasize that—in accordance with the profile of “NOWIS”—its interdisciplinary character is a crucial and clear advantage of this issue of the journal. However, while the term itself is sometimes overused in its common sense, as a result of its use both in scientific as well as popular discourse, in the case of this issue it is a good indicator of both the content and the disciplinary background of the authors (articles, problems, methodologies, narratives).

The main part of the volume, the section “Studies and Dissertations,” consists of ten articles. The volume begins with a bloc of texts which point to the theoretical, philosophical and historical aspects of mastery, as well as to the narrative strategies adopted when writing about masters. In the opening essay entitled *O potrzebie mistrza w świecie nauki. Refleksja nad zmieniającą się relacją uczeń–mistrz* [On the Need of a Master in the World of Science: A Reflection on the Master–Student Relationship] Tomasz Leszniewski reconstructs the master–disciple relationship in the academic field, using Richard Sennett’s and Mary Douglas’s concepts. Wojciech Piasek (*Relacja mistrz–uczeń w nauce współczesnej — kontekst kulturowy* [The Master–Disciple Relationship in Contemporary Science—Cultural Context]), adopting the framework introduced by the Poznan school of cultural studies, which distinguishes between an Objective Cognitive Model and a Constructivist Cognitive Model, points to specific, contextual conditions that motivate the functioning of master–disciple relationships.

In her article *The Master as a Historical, Cultural and Pedagogical Category: An Introduction*, Anna Maria Kola introduces historical images of mastery (craft guilds, academy, Buddhism, gurus) and reflects on their uses today, especially in alternative education (alchemy, e-learning, emotional mastery, tutoring). Although the models of mastery have different traditions and origins, they point to an emerging, multi-faceted image of the master which often consists of these elements. The article concludes with a presentation of different categories of mastery, which is a good illustration of the complexity of the problems examined in the volume.

Adam F. Kola in his article entitled *How Should One Write about Masters?* presents several possible (sometimes perversely characterized) strategies for writing about masters, based on selected examples of auto/biographies of Ernst Gellner, Alfred Tarski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Andrzej Walicki and Roman Jakobson. While the common feature of a 20th century intellectual is rather obvious, the various narrative contexts discussed in the text illustrate how both the master and mastery are indeed literary constructions.

Next, in her article *Mistrz “jakikolwiek.” “Nie chcę być opiekunem naukowym!”... [Master “whatever”: “I do not want to be a scientific supervisor!”...]* Ryszarda Cierzniewska introduces the category of “mastery” into the contemporary and local Polish context. What is additionally significant is that the text provides a bridge

between the first, historical-theoretical bloc, and the second, which explores a more personal, individual perspective. Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka's article entitled *The School of Thought: Relational Processes of Lasting Existence and Transformation*, although written in a different manner, can serve a similar role. It discusses the role of the categories of "transformation" and "lasting existence" in the shaping and existence of a school of thought, in which the master-disciple relationship may be fulfilled and realized. Additionally, Marynowicz-Hetka's article provides a theoretical introduction to the second bloc of texts.

This section consists of four articles. In *Looking for Self at the Intersection of "Master/master" Discourses*, Marcin Kafar, adopting an auto/biographical perspective, analyzes the category of subjectivity and a "master's universe," situating his writing within the field of educational sciences understood as a project of integrated humanities. Andrzej Wejland in the article *The Anti-Masters* similarly does not shy away from an auto/biographical point of view, but defiantly focuses the master-disciple relationship on the category of "the anti-master." It allows the author to present an intriguing analysis of the local situation in mastery-oriented academic research communities. The personal tone is also evident in Iwona Kabzińska's text *The Word master/Master Sounds Strange*. She places particular teachers at the heart of her story—however, contrary to what the Reader may expect, Kabzińska does not limit herself only and exclusively to her academic masters. Both Wejland's and Kabzińska's articles enable us to expand the dictionary of mastery—as it was imagined on the map of mastery categories in Anna Maria Kola's *The Master as a Historical...*—with categories connected with the main theme of the presented volume. Finally, Izabela Kamińska-Jatczak's article *Helena Radlińska w latach 1939–1945 — historia zrekonstruowana ze wspomnień* [*Helena Radlińska in the Years 1939–1945—a History Reconstructed from Memories*] describes the life of Helena Radlińska in the time of the Second World War, and is based on the recollections of one of the most famous social pedagogues in Poland—a scholar who was an authority figure and a master for many generations of pedagogues, teachers and social workers.

The second part of the volume is entitled "Research Reports" and consists of two articles. Magdalena Koperkiewicz's text *Z Mistrzami podróż przez życie* [*A Journey through Life with Masters*] follows the tradition of autoethnographic narration, where the crucial role is played by the author's master—Edward Stachura. On the other hand, Monika Modrzejewska-Świgulska presents in her research report „*I nie powiem, żeby to były jakieś takie spotkania z mistrzami*”... [“*And I will not say that these were any such meetings with masters*”...] fragments of research materials from her study conducted among Polish female directors working in film, theater and television. Both texts remain “unobvious” in their conclusions, as well as in the specific questions they raise, especially since the authors present the perspective of disciples who are (not) looking for their male or female masters.

The third section entitled “Encounters / Discussions / Polemics” presents a special bloc of texts that are linked to a pair of distinguished scholars: Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, as well as a few other articles on separate topics. The aforementioned bloc, entitled *Legacy of Masters: Honoring the Retirement of Professors Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner*, consists of a short introduction written by Marcin Kafar, which situates it in broader socio-institutional contexts, and two articles written by the scholars themselves, in which they present their perspective as creators and promoters of autoethnography. An addition to these texts is a fragment of a discussion between Ellis’s and Bochner’s students and collaborators (Marcin Kafar, Csaba Osvath, Erin Scheffels, Lisa P. Spinazola and Lisa M. Tillmann), in which they talk about their life and work, as well as a couple of poetic texts written by Lisa M. Tillmann, devoted to the two brilliant professors. The section was inspired by a seminar entitled *A Meaningful Academic Life: Indefinite, Amusing, Unsettling*, which took place on January 25, 2019 at the University of South Florida in Tampa, USA. The complex, polyphonic narration presents the master–disciple relationship as something more than a simple narrative reconstruction, but indeed a living proof of a continuing intergenerational exchange of ideas. Its stylistic eclecticism certainly presents an interesting example of the narrative possibilities that can result from a bold engagement with the humanities.

Additionally, the Reader will find three other articles in this section. The first, written by Marcin Kafar *W dialogu z mistrzami albo jak rodzi się szkoła myślenia... [In Dialogue with Masters, or How a School of Thought is Born...]*, examines the idea of encounters and discussions that happen at the intersection of the spheres of scholars’ lived experiences and the textual form in which they are presented. It is once again a statement that has an auto/biographical character, in which the opposition between “hot” and “cold” texts serves as a conceptual framework used to depict the mechanism by which, in the process of editorial work, a relationship is forged between the editor of an anthology and the authors who contribute texts to it (the examined case being Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka’s *The School of Thought...*).

Composed in a slightly different tone, as it relates to face-to-face meetings, is Anna Maria Kola’s account entitled *Nasi Mistrzowie... [Dialogues with “Our Masters”...]*. It describes meetings that took place at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun between 2008 and 2011, in which the author participated, together with professors of the local faculty of pedagogy. From the perspective adopted in the text a distinct categorization of mastery comes to the fore—one that was generated as a result of these conversations—together with such corresponding features as: trust, attention, people, work, ambition, honesty, culture (also personal) and knowledge (or lack thereof).

Whereas Kola’s article refers to meetings in Torun, Izabela Kamińska-Jatczak in turn presents an extensive report from the symposium entitled *Myśląc o transformacjach... [Thinking about Transformations...]* which took place in Lodz on May 23, 2019. The guest of honor was Jean-Marie Barbier, a distinguished French scholar, and the second lecture was given by Lech Witkowski. The article is not

simply a report from the event, but a detailed reconstruction of Barbier's opinions, as well as those of other participants, and can, therefore, be perceived as a critical introduction into Barbier's concept of analyzing activity (see Barbier 2016).

The fourth and last section is entitled "Updates" and consists of two texts. Barbara Bibik and Adam Kola continue the female thread connected with the category of "mastery," sticking to the academic field. The article is an excerpt from a forthcoming publication—co-edited by Aleksandra Derra, Anna Maria Kola and Wojciech Piasek—dedicated to women from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, including the classical philologist Zofia Abramowiczówna (Derra, Kola, Piasek 2019). The second article written by Artur Duda is a report from a meeting between the theater director Krystian Lupa and the theatrical community in Shanghai, as well as a conference organized by the Theater Academy in Shanghai dedicated to Polish theater (or, more precisely, to the work of Lupa and Jerzy Grotowski). The text situates this multicultural, global encounter within the categorical frame of mastery.

It should also be mentioned that some of the texts in this volume appear in Polish, and some in English. This allows Polish humanities research to exist within wider, international exchange and interaction. Reading in two languages can also be an interesting experience for the Reader, as it requires switching between two different linguistic codes. It is therefore a type of intellectual exercise, which can also—according to the categories of Russian formalism—end up resisting the Reader. In that sense it most certainly demands attention.

Finally, it is worth briefly outlining the several-year path that led us to the creation of this issue. It was partially described and reconstructed on the pages of "NOWIS" (see Kafar, Kola 2016), where we also promised a follow-up on the subject of mastery (and where the Reader may also find additional interpretational tropes). However, it is necessary to add that the inspiration for the idea came from two events that were organized in Torun by the Humanities Forum community: the seminar *Mistrzowie — Preliminaria [Masters—Preliminaries]* in December 2015, and the seminar *Od Mistrzów do mistrzostwa [From Masters to Mastery]* in 2016 (but also—earlier meetings organized by Anna Maria Kola in Torun; see Kafar, 2019: footnote 8). We spent the following years developing the topic, transforming the initial concept as well as inviting different authors to collaborate. What is also evident is that this issue is the product of the work of two academic communities—from Lodz and from Torun—although a much farther-reaching horizon can be seen in the background, stretching over the ocean. The presented volume is the final effect of these experiences. We would like to offer our gratitude to a number of people who contributed, in different ways and at different stages, to the creation of this issue, even if their articles—a result of intellectual struggles—never materialized in the end. These are (in alphabetical order): Krzysztof Abriszewski, Wojciech J. Burszta, Anna Dwojnych, Łukasz Gemziak, Rafał Kleśta-Nawrocki, Jacek Kowalewski, Jacek Piekarski, Michał Rydlewski, Artur Trapszyc, Danuta Urbaniak-Zajęc. We invite you to read the texts of the other authors presented on the following pages.

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