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Globalization processes and national identity versus sense of safety of person in the literature perspective

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GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY VERSUS SENSE OF SAFETY OF PERSON IN THE LITERATURE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to examine the role of national identity in the process of shaping individual identity of a person in modern world. Analyzed was the approach to the category of a place and the role of this category for an individual in contemporary Polish literature, taking into account the political situation that has influenced it.

Assumed was that in globalized world, in which people are deprived of roots and sense of safety, they have some difficulties within answering the question of own identity. On the basis of interpretation of attitudes of few characters in the novels, written after 1989 noticed was that identity is a great challenge for people in the new geopolitical situation. The paper also discuss the relation between identity and individual sense of safety and state security, which may influence one another.

Lately the issue of identity became particularly important in the humanistic discourse. It is undertaken in the field of various disciplines – philosophy, sociology, anthropology and literary studies. Historical events of 20th century, political and economic changes, as well as the new character of reality, resulting from globalization processes and spread of technology are the reason of the need to question both individual and collective identity. Central role of these questions in contemporary researches in humanities is highlighted e.g. by Zygmunt Bauman, who said that identity has become a prism, through which we perceive, comprehend and examine the most pressing aspects of contemporary life[1].

Problem arises already at the conceptual level, because due to wide character of the concept itself and discussions concerning it, it turns out to be impossible to formulate comprehensive and unambiguous definition of *identity*. This concept blurs not only because of multiplicity of conceptions and phenomena that relates to it, but also because changeable character of the designatum causes displacements in the semantic area. Intensified interests in the problem of identity is connected to new forms of societies that were formed in the 20th century and in fact it is a specific type of reflection on the character of reality.

Modern, postindustrial and information society changes the identity of person, who is being secondary socialized and lives in conditions, which force to accept various, often

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[1] Z. Bauman, *Zindywidualizowane społeczeństwo*, transl. Olga i Wojciech Kubińscy, Gdańsk 2008, p. 171.

inconsistent with each other, visions of oneself related to performed roles. It results from big scale of stratification of social life, organization of which loses its organicity to segmentation and atomization of the social structure deprived of clear axis integrating these loose segments of its organization[2].

The thing that seem to largely affect the condition of contemporary people and problem of defining own identity is lack of sense of belonging to place. It results from the growth of social mobility, which hinders to become attached to a place and to self-identify on the basis of the sense of belonging. Yi-Fu Tuan made a significant distinction to *place* and *space*, which reflects the attitude of modern people to land, on which they are located and to a manner in which it affects their identity.

Place is understood as particularly close and well-known area, which guarantees sort of sense of stability and allows to self-identify basing on origin. *Space* on the other hand is a much wider concept, which refers to area in which individual moves. It is more extensive and foreign than the place and defines areas of mobility of an individual, who often changes place of residence. This distinction largely reflects, how in modern times identity evolved from the project of stabile and clear self-identification based on origin and belonging to a multi-dimensional, unsteady and perplexing category.

Contemporary conceptions related to the concept of identity very often seem to be based on longing for specific form of identity[3]. Some of them, as for instance Paul Ricoeur's conception included in *Oneself as Another*,

postulate acceptation of one's place in the world, indicated by other subjects, ceaseless contact with others and experiencing difference. Longing in this case seem to relate to lost commonality and the sense of unity. In turn, conceptions formulated within hermeneutics of suspicion directs their longing towards the possibility of self-determination, which is of total character, absolute autonomy of individual. In the first case non-independence of the subject is valorized positively, as a possible source of inspiration, in the latter – quite the opposite.

Contemporary discourse regarding identity does not limit solely to reflection on individual identity. Important element of the stream of researches on modern society and forms of modern statehood is the issue of collective identities. The new type of social organization and globalization processes have influenced largely also the manner, in which nations, ethnical groups or religious groups identify themselves.

In the case of the European countries important is the context of integration and project of union of nations – the European Union. The policy of integration may lead to weakening of national identification, which can be replaced by a project of above-national identity. Such assumptions were expressed e.g. by Jürgen Habermas[4], however from today's perspective we have to consider them wrong. We can notice that the problem with self-identification is often (though it is only one of the ways of dealing with the problem) compensated by the increased interest in the possibility of identification with some collectivity, in particular – with the nation.

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[2] W. Jacher, *Tożsamość i wielokulturowość jako kategorie badań procesów społecznych*, [in:] *Tożsamość polska w odmiennych kontekstach. Tożsamość osób, zbiorowości, instytucji*, ed. L. Dyczewski, D. Wadowski, Lublin 2009, p. 13.

[3] Por. E. Partyga, *Tożsamość dziś: narracyjna? dialogowa? performatywna?*, [w:] *Dramatyczność i dialogowość w kulturze*, red. A. Krajewska, D. Ulicka, P. Dobrowolski, *Poznań* 2010.

[4] J. Habermas, *Obywatelstwo a tożsamość narodowa. Rozważania nad przyszłością Europy,* tłum. B. Markiewicz, Warszawa 1993. Definicja Habermasa jest propozycją sformułowaną w ramach ideologii marksistowskiej i zostaje w niniejszej pracy przywołana przede wszystkim przez wzgląd na swą popularność w ramach dyskutowania zagadnienia tożsamości narodowej na polu teoretycznym w ramach bardziej aktualnych koncepcji związanych z tym zagadnieniem.

According to Zygmunt Bauman the idea of nation is very important for the modern state due to mutual attraction between the nation and the state. State gladly use the authority of nation to more powerfully support the requirement of loyalty, while nations are likely to form into states to use the power of coercion for sake of their unity. Territory and clearly defined supreme power make the state "real": it is a solid and lasting object, existence of which cannot be ignored. None of this can be said about nation, which is solely an imaginative collectivity and exists as long as its members intellectually and emotionally identify with the community[5].

In such an approach the state underlies homogeneity of nation and is a much stronger basis than common territory. Bauman notices that no nation has a monopole for territory, since everywhere live people, who identify with different nations. Because of that neither territory nor language are a sufficient basis for constitution of the nation. Nationalism, which demands absolute loyalty, requires categories that are not knowingly chosen but imposed, which refer to the destination and therefore are indisputable. In the opinion of Bauman the myth of origin is such a category.

The identity discourse important for contemporary social studies is also noticeable in literature. In Poland, where patriotic values differently comprehended and the issue of collective identity have always been present in the literature of nearly all eras, the problem of national identity was one of the main axis of struggles with the identity issue.

The particular political situation of Poland until 1989 made the question of collective identity crucial for Poles within narratives that were built on clear contrasts and apparent opposition, allowing for identification with the collectivity that stands on the right side of the barricade. The basis of national identification

in 20th century were therefore in a sense continuation of the tradition of Romanticism.

Polish modernity, in contrast to the western variants – wasn't founded on the Enlightenment project of rationality, for which individual is the basis, and universal human rights and institutions that guards them are the guarantor of social order. Polish modernity was oriented "romantically" – individual was subjected to national collectivity. Modern emancipation in the case of polish culture is focused on liberation from the domination of other cultures, nations, states, and it is to end with the advent of Polish community as an independent subject of history. It is a fundamental difference in relation to emancipation ideas of western modernity[6].

Revision of previous identity projects in literature was also caused by historical events and change of the regime in the 20th century. According to Przemysław Czapliński the new picture of protagonist that appeared after 1989 is a response to recovery of freedom, which "doesn't resist and hence deprives of support"[7]. Contemporary writers in new regime had to face national myths accumulated in literature, in which Polishness was considered a duty[8].

Literature tries to take a stance on the question of Polishness in the most general understanding of it, on the way it has been functioning in literature and answer the question whether this category can nowadays be a sufficient point of support for self-identification. "1989 forced everyone to individually deal with Polishness"[9], because this category could no longer provide the answer applicable for everyone.

Individualization of deliberations on identity, including collective identity, resulted in

[5] Z. Bauman, *Socjologia*, przeł. J. Łoziński, Poznań 1990, s. 176-177.

[6] I. Stokfiszewski, *Zwrot polityczny*, Warszawa 2009, p. 70.

[7] P. Czapliński, *Ślady przełomu. O prozie polskiej 1976-1996*, Kraków 1997, p. 226.

[8] Zob. J. Jarzębski, *Pożegnanie z emigracją. O powojennej prozie polskiej*, Kraków 1998.

[9] P. Czapliński, op. cit.., p. 230.

multiplicity of different answers to the question „What to do with Polishness?", however we can notice in this literature some universal strategy, i.e. suspension of Polishness and turn towards categories that are more capacious from the point of view of persons, who want to identify themselves basing on their own history. Starting point for questions about individual identity and its place in collectivity is no longer ethnicity but the private sphere of individual, family space and roots. Collective experience is replaced by locality and individual biography, which became precedence over the history in historical narratives[10].

Hence collective identity turns out to be a relevant point on the map of problems undertaken in the newest prose. The shape of this identity that emerges from the literature, and changes of it, according to Czapliński, are connected to anthropology of the late modernism[11] and concept of subject characteristic for this anthropology, which isn't autonomic but entirely depends on social relations made of dense network of relations. Social identity shaped in such a manner is multi-aspectual and heterogeneous and its particular aspects are inconsistent. Hence the self-identification process is a specific battle field, on which these aspects become a weapon in the fight for social position. This happens e.g. in *Żydówek nie obsługujemy* by Mariusz Sieniewicz, when the protagonist is called a Jewish woman and hence he become an incorporation of everything that is constitutive for Polish identity, but ceaselessly denied, a specific abject.

Czapliński argues that postmodern identity is performative and it is created by strangeness. Discussing collective identity, the category of strangeness seem to be particularly important as it is a reference point for this identity.

Freak, who become stranger is excluded as the contrast of the model representative of the community. In the literature, in Czapliński's opinion, these are above all: Jews, women, capitalists and homosexuals.

Collective identity is a very important thread of Polish literature after 1989, because the ways in which it is problematized, reflects methods of dealing with the new situation of Poland in that time. It is a significant aspect of the individual identity, being a challenge for contemporary literature, which tries to express the experience of the late modernity.

Going back to the subject of roots, we have to notice that in Polish literature of 20th century the most disturbing problem with defining own identity is lack of sense of belonging to place. Many protagonist experience this in contemporary literature (e.g. characters from prose written by Wiesław Myśliwski, Olga Tokarczuk, Jerzy Pilch, Joanna Bator, Inga Iwasiów, Stefan Chwin, Janusz Rudnicki, Izabela Filipiak and many others). Such characters seem to be simultaneously deprived of identity and that causes their powerlessness and is the reason for their passive and fearful attitude. Often genealogy is a sort of base of identity or its compensation. In these novels family still is an important value and isn't rejected, because in the face of deprivation of roots related to a place it is the last bastion for the identity threatened with disintegration resulting from lack of stabile foundation. Identity, as the answer to the question "who am I?" inevitably has to refer to the past, and thus to some constant and objective values identified by an individual as undeniable and irremovable.

In the case of "eradication", i.e. deprivation of place understood not only as spatial category but also as a network of social relations and values related to them, self-determination based on referring to origin and affiliation can only be made within referring to origin as irremovable in genealogical, not territorial, sense. The family is, if we trust the words of

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[10] H. Gosk, *Jak opowiada o historii polska proza po 1989 roku*, „Dekada Literacka" 2006, no. 5.

[11] Cf. P. Czapliński, *Polska do wymiany. Późna nowoczesność i nasze wielkie narracje*, Warszawa 2009.

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Hegel, of the character of ethical spirit, which in its directness includes "natural moment, when individual finds their own substantial existence in their natural generality"[12].

Discussing deprivation of place we can use the category of non-places, however not in the sense given to this term by M. Augé, but just as Hanna Gosk interprets it in her works. Non-place, in opposite to places, which got their shape due to settled residents, is connected to moving objects, various types of nomads, including migrants, and the elements of it turn out to be objects of cognition, often requiring directions for use. Displaced space becomes *terra incognita*, deprived of map and a guide containing knowledge of custom, history and the entire symbolic order that is connected with the place settled. Non-places in prose have always two names – old ones and new, given by new settlers and the authority that stands behind them[13].

This category fits to the experience of displaced after the World War II, who appears e.g. in *Piaskowa Góra* written by Joanna Bator. Not only the situation of displacement connects with identifying the new place of resident as the non-place, foreign place, where one cannot roots again. Attitude to place, and the way it influences an individual has a great impact on shaping their identity and their sense of integrity, because of the necessity of feeling safe, important in that process, which turns out to be difficult to achieve within settling in non-places.

Attachment to a place understood as individual space, tamed and managed in accordance with one's will and simultaneously supporting the process of self-determining as a "local", "man from here", is not compliant with the administrative division imposed by the political order. Taming of space is of course a cultural activity, but being attached to place, and sense of belonging is in a certain sense primal and natural, related to occupying a territory. Settling as a natural fact must be subordinated to cultural rules, and in consequence also to political ones. Individual attitude of person to space is not a subject of interests of the authority and is not taken into consideration. The objective of the authority is to create regulations that will allow to control the space, the way people use it and also who uses it. As Z. Bauman notices, modern state, facing the need to unify the space which is now subordinated to its direct administration, decided to unlink categories and spatial distinctions from people's customs, which can't be controlled by the state. The task was to administratively implement state customs in the shape of one and universally applicable reference point for all distinctions and measurements of space in place of inconsistent and locally varied practices[14].

Hence the social space was subordinated to one and only official map, which allow the state for total control over managed territory[15] and resident people. Administrative distinction becomes part of the state's policy, which directly impacts citizens regardless of whether they identify with the nation that lives in certain country or not.

Personal desires and attachment to place are not relevant in the face of post-war settlements associated with geopolitical situations. These remarks are obvious, however they are to highlight the drama of an individual who is forced to leave the place of residence forced by political situation.

Because of the multiculturalism of the world and ceaseless mobility of people, the category of national origin loses its significance for interpersonal relations. E.g. the vast majority of contemporary emigrants in the already mentioned Bator's novel, *Piaskowa góra*,

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[12] G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyklopedia nauk filozoficznych*, transl. Ś.F. Nowicki, Warszawa 1990, p. 515.

[13] H. Gosk, *Nie-mieszkańcy, nie-miejsca. Literackie ślady powojennego osadzania się „gdzieś" ludzi „skądś"*, [in:] *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. H. Gosk, Kraków 2012, p. 194 -195.

[14] Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja. I co z tego dl ludzi wynika*, przeł. E. Klekot, Warszawa 2000, p. 37.

[15] Por. tamże, p. 39.

doesn't undertake any action to maintain the "national spirit" abroad or to integrate representatives of nation in groups, which would aim to preserve their separateness. In contrary – if people aim to preserve separateness, they do it by individuation, differentiation from others basing on features, which they identify as defining them, their individual identity (or even, as Ulrich Beck suggests, "radical nonidentity"[16] in collective, social meaning).

Identity isn't build basing on values represented by the group, dislocated individual doesn't look for confirmation of membership and acceptance. However we have to note that the effort of searching for own identity and separateness results from unifying mechanisms that the societies are subjected to in the globalized world. In what is global all differences blur, lose intensity. All freedoms blur so that there would be only one – the freedom of exchange[17].

Such a situation is a threat to separateness of person, who lives in reality that aims to homogeneity and unification, deprivation of individual treats. Such mechanism are a threat to sense of integrity and force an individual to desperately chase the answer to the question "who am I?" They are also a threat to national identity and the role of nation itself. Along with weakening role of state in the scope of control and influence on citizens' lives, opening of borders and increase of mobility, the role of the idea of nation as separate and consistent group weakens.

Representatives of the Copenhagen School of Security analyzing historical events of the 20th century and political situation of modern world have formulated the theory of security sectors, which was supposed to be the answer to too narrow approach to the problem of security in

the policy of western countries and securitological researches. Barry Buzan propose to distinguish five sectors of security, which, in his opinion, refers to both the sphere of global policy and security management of particular countries. In his theory he poses a thesis that the sector crucial for the world balance (also in economic and military dimension) is social sector, which is based on the identity of group and identification with the group at the level of individual citizens[18].

For international security analysis, the key to society are those ideas and practices, which identify individuals as members of a social group. Society is about identity, the self-conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of community. (…) societal security is about large, self-sustaining identity groups. In contemporary Europe these groups are mainly national. The concept could also be understood as „identity security".

"Any *we* identity can be constructed in many different ways, and often the main issue, whether security conflicts will emerge is whether one or another self-definition wins out in a society."[19]

Within this sector very important is the sense of safety associated with stability of national identity. However in contemporary reality it is no longer possible. Threat to national identity, according to Buzan, has significant impact on the sense of safety of an individual, but what's more important it has consequences to security of the entire state. As basis threats to national identification, which bring negative effects for representatives of nations, but also in political and even military dimension, Buzan indicates inter alia migration processes.

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[16] U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo światowego ryzyka. W poszukiwaniu utraconego bezpieczeństwa*, przeł. B. Baran, Warszawa 2012, p. 314.
[17] J. Baudrillard, *Rozmowy przed końcem*, przeł. R. Lis, Warszawa 2001, s. 20.

[18] Cf. also: M. Cieślarczyk, *Fenomen bezpieczeństwa i zjawisko kryzysów postrzegane w perspektywie kulturowej*, [in:] *Jedność i różnorodność. Kultura vs. kultury*, red. E. Rekłajtis, R. Wiśniewski, J. Zdanowski, Warszawa 2010, p. 83-100.
[19] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security. A New Framework For Analysis*, London 1998, p. 119-120.

Weakening of national identification has its consequences in reducing the sense of safety of entities, and at the same time influences global situation and hence is self-tacking. Modern people migrate in the search for safety, which they were deprived of as a result of globalization processes and their mobility results in reducing the level of security in political dimension. National identity thereby has an immerse influence on security culture of modern states, which is, as stated Juliusz Piwowarski:

"1. Phenomenon of security is for a certain individual or collective entity:

- Desired state without danger or state of satisfying level of control over the threats to the existence of this entity;
- Value that meet our needs of lack (basic needs) and higher needs (needs of development – i.e. metaneeds) with self-realization at the top of the hierarchy of needs;
- Process of development, which is a metaneed and allows for personal and social increase of the potential that rises the autonomic defense of subjects of security;
- Social construct that is a result of social bond, interdependence, and interactions in certain human collectivity, which is one of subjects of security.

2. Security culture of any specified individual or collective entity is a phenomenon that enables to accomplish following objectives:

- Efficient control over possible threats to certain entity, which results in an optimal state of danger to this entity (in certain time and place);
- Restoring security of certain subject when it was lost;
- Optimization of levels of multi-sectorally formed and examined process of development of security subject, which aims to harmonization of sectors in the context of prioritizing goals of the entity;

- Efficient stimulation of consciousness of higher need in both social and individual scale – i.e. the need of self-fulfillment and creation of trichotomous development – a) mental, b) social, and c) material due to supporting beliefs, motivations and attitudes that cause individual and collective actions, which have influence on the increase of the potential of autonomic defense (self-defense) of individual and group subjects of security."[20]

In modern reality national identification no longer seem to be an important element for shaping the identity of a person, who runs from unifying mechanism of globalization. The only value is memory of the past associated to national history, which however has individual dimension as it concerns personal experiences. The character from Pilch's *Spis cudzołożnic* showing the country to a Swede and telling him the history of his nation for the first time feels connected to the nation he describes and feels as if he was telling his own history to his guest. History is important for a modern people only in a "mediated" form – only if it is a background for certain experiences of entity.

Hence the new project of identity associated with dynamic changes of the globalizing world is highly ambivalent. On the one hand persons deprived of the sense of belonging to place and support, sense of stability are reliant on themselves within answering the question of their identity. This is associated also with necessity of being morally responsible for choices made in the process of self-determining, which may have consequences.

On the other hand, the freedom, nowadays people have is a positive value. The possibility of choosing one's own way and deliberating from unifying, claustrophobic mechanisms is undoubtedly valuable. Globalization

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[20] J. Piwowarski, *Fenomen bezpieczeństwa,* Kraków 2014, p. 41-45.

processes in some manner enforced also the policy of identity, i.e. processes based on belief that the inalienable right of all people and every community is possibility to articulate one's own uniqueness and construct own identity[21].

Individual's identity in the uncertain modern reality is highly perplexing issue also for their own. There are no stabile basis for it and consequently there are no simple answers to the question "who am I?", which previously were brought by the sense of settlement and belonging to some collectivity. However it turns out that the category of national identification not only was not rejected as redundant or even unjustified in the face of changes resulting from globalization processes and multicultural character of most of societies, but can also be an attractive attitude for constituting individual identity.

Category of difference turns out to be very useful as a way of defining one's own identity and autonomy. For this category national or ethnical affiliation are very convenient reference point. It is at the same time of universal character, since it can be observed in literary characters, who would yet base their identity on the sense of belonging and in those, who lost this certainty. In *Piaskowa Góra*, we may see how important for the first generation of post-war uprooted was the category of place and origin, which were often a basis for identity. In the face of the experience of resettlement and migration, identity is marked with lack, which manifests by strong sense of uncertainty and danger. Collective identity, including national, in the case of these characters turns out to be important as guarantying stability. Building of one's separateness based on differences perceived in comparison with representatives

of other cultures may lead to aggressive behaviors, attitudes associated with nationalism and xenophobia, but at the same time it is a sort of basis, a project, which can easily be appropriated by individual unsure of their place in the world. It is visible in the attitudes of the characters from the recent novel of Joanna Bator *Ciemno, prawie noc*. National identification related to highlighting treats considered as underlying a nation (an obvious example here is religion) supports building a collectivity, which for a modern people seems to be more and more important. In *Ciemno, prawie noc* members of the groups are Poles and this primal bound allows them to speak of themselves as "us", whereas outside of the community there are always some "them". This connection, regardless of whether we call it national, ethnical, territorial, mental, cultural or any other – is more important than arguments about ideas.

Community and the need to belong, to some extent seem to replace everything that was the basis of identity before the generation of uprooted arose. Even within the modern identity – narrative, based on undermining most of categories, which would define person unambiguously and somewhat arbitrarily, related to openness to otherness and freedom of choice, the need to share believes in community and being accepted by a group seem to be significant. Though this group is no longer family, which would base on kinship and blood ties, or collectivity of ethnical or national character but related to the cult of freedom, freely chosen circle of the closest people – to person in the process of shaping their identity it turns out to be equally important.

In the face of changes of the contemporary reality, which causes the sense of danger to individual, there are two possible strategies, which both are visible in the Bator's novels. First is the attitude of total openness and escape from the rigid and limiting categories that assume person's belonging to collectivity

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[21] Cf. P. Ścigaj, *Potęga osamotnienia? Globalizacja a tożsamość jednostki*, [in:] *Globalizacja – nieznośne podobieństwo? Świat i jego instytucje w procesie uniformizacji,* red. B. Krauz-Mozer i P. Borowiec, Kraków 2008.

or place. Second is the will of rooting and desire for a sense of community with others, based on similarities, which are mostly imagined. In the first case the category of national identity is rejected entirely, in the latter – it is annexed as very important element of building individual identity

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