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## Migration as a Source of Suffering in the Context of the Biographical Experience of the Process of Transformation in Poland. Case Study of Weronika's Life History

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**Abstract** The article focuses on the case study of the life history of Weronika, a person biographically experiencing the consequences of the transformation process in Poland. On the one hand, the text concentrates on showing the change in the status of the narrator's family from a privileged position in the socialist period to the experience of unemployment and poverty after 1989. On the other hand, the text analyzes the necessity of the narrator's mother's emigration to Italy in the mid-1990s. Thus, the article focuses on the narrator's experience in the context of being a migrant woman's child. This experience is related to the time of socialization and education, which was difficult for the narrator, and the consequence of which is shown in the text in connection to the narrator's persistence in trajectory. The text also presents the perspective of transnational motherhood within the framework of Polish women's migrations after 1989. Also, an important perspective adapted in the article is the experience of migration by the narrator, who at the time of the interview has also been living in Italy for 10 years. Permanent emigration of the narrator is associated in her life history with high biographical costs. The article is, therefore, an attempt to present migration as a source of suffering in relation to the context of being a migrant's child and being a migrant oneself. The analysis of Weronika's case is also an attempt to show the relationship between the individual experience of the narrator and the mechanisms of collective influence. Thus, the text treats the analyzed life history as one of the biographical accounts reflecting the biographical and social processes assigned to a specific time frame. In this perspective, the text aims to reconstruct the complexity of these processes and to interpret the experienced social reality in an individual biography.

**Keywords** Case Study; Biographical Analysis; Transformation Process in Poland; Migration; Experience of Suffering

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This text focuses on an analysis of the autobiographical-narrative life history<sup>1</sup> of Weronika, who is biographically entangled in the experience of the transformation process in Poland. The aim of the article is, primarily, to show the influence of collective transformation mechanisms on the change in the status of the narrator's family after 1989. This interview will be analyzed through the prism of the difficulties experienced by Weronika's parents during the transformation process, which lay mainly in the deterioration of their social status. In the new logic of power, the political (belonging to the party) legitimacy of the privileged Weronika's family, which was important during the communist era, stops playing the role assigned to it and, as a result, stops securing the lives of its members. In this situation, the interviewee's parents are faced with a deepening problem of unemployment, resulting from their lack of adaptation to the new rules of the labor market. An obstacle to finding employment is not only the lack of education<sup>2</sup> and competences, but, above all, the immersion of the narrator's parents in following the "old" rules. It is expressed in their efforts to use patterns of action which were developed during the socialist times (e.g., "systemic arrangement" understood as benefiting from unofficial connections), which were inadequate in the new social transformation reality.

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<sup>2</sup> In the interview, the narrator explains that her parents did not graduate from secondary school and did not take the Polish school-leaving exam (*matura*).

On the other hand, in this article, I try to show how the change in the status of her family during the transformation is connected with the necessity of emigration of one of her parents. In the analyzed interview, we are dealing with the context of transnational motherhood (Urbańska 2008; 2015), and thus the story of a child of a migrant woman. The influence of this experience on Weronika's biography and her family history is the second important axis of this text.

An additional aim of the article is also to analyze the way Weronika tells the story of the time of transformation. The narrator does not attempt to capture her own individual story in a wider perspective, focusing mainly on a nostalgic description of her family's situation before 1989. There is not any macro social commentary on the subject of social change, nor any attempt to inscribe individual good memories in a broader narration about the period of the People's Republic of Poland and the time of transformation present at the level of public discourse. The lack of such references in the history of Weronika is analytically interesting. Therefore, in this text, I try to show how the interviewee talks about the transformation process in Poland, how she reconstructs it in her life history.

Thirdly, the article also focuses on the experience of being a migrant inscribed in the adult biography of Weronika. The narrator has lived in Italy for ten years<sup>3</sup> with her husband and two daughters. As I will show in the text, the case of Weronika thus presents a combination of two threads: the experience of

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of recording the interview, in 2015.

migration and persistence in trajectory. Both of these important analytical aspects are explained in a more detailed way in the second subchapter of the article. In this part of the text, it can be briefly point out that, for the narrator, migration is a source of suffering. In addition, in the case of Weronika, the suffering is of double character. First, it is caused by the emigration of her mother to Italy in the 1990s, then it is connected with the decision of the interviewee to live in exile herself.

In this optic, the article also aims to include the migration of Weronika's mother and then the migration of the narrator as consequences of the transformation, and to perceive them as such. I also show both experiences of migration in the dimension of the biographical costs incurred, and not within the framework of the story of success. The text is, therefore, an attempt to derive a reflection on the migration of women based on the analysis of the experience of this phenomenon from the perspective of a migrant's child and from the position of being a migrant. At the same time, both contexts present in the history of Weronika's life are linked to the above-mentioned aspect of the narrator being in trajectory (Riemann and Schütze 1991; 2012; Schütze 2012; Waniek 2016).

The research decision to study Weronika's biography can be justified by the multitude of socio-historical phenomena mentioned above, which affect the history of Weronika's life. As Nevâl Gültekin, Lena Inowlocki, and Helma Lutz (2012:660) point out in their text on the analysis of a biographical interview with Hülya, a Turkish worker in Germany, the proper basis for the theoretical generalization of an in-

dividual case is based on the understanding of the case within its social and historical context. In this way, while interpreting the biographical story chosen in this text for analysis, it must be considered as one of the biographical relations reflecting certain biographical and social processes, not forgetting the social, political, and historical context in which this account takes place.

Moreover, as Roswitha Breckner (2007:115) stresses: "Qualitative biographical approaches share with qualitative research that they are case-oriented. The emergence, constitution, and construction principles of social phenomena are analyzed by empirically and theoretically focusing on single cases." The perspective of research which undertakes case studies is aimed at reading the complexity of social processes, from which individual patterns of action and interpretations of experienced social reality emerge (Breckner 2007:115). It is about extracting from the analyzed material the ways of reacting to the problems, which are subject to scrutiny, in individual life contexts. By entering into an in-depth case study, it is possible to interpret patterns of conduct and reconstruct their legitimacy in a specific social field.

From this perspective, the analysis of Weronika's story should be treated as an attempt to interpret this biography in its historical and social dimension. In other words, the case study in this article is based on a conclusion immersed in the biographical analysis. This research approach aims primarily at capturing the relationship between the individual biographical experience and the mechanisms of collective influence and the reconstruction of macro

social processes in the story of individual life (Schütze 2008; 2014; Kaźmierska and Schütze 2013).

## The Theoretical-Methodological Framework of the Case Study

### Characteristics of the Selected Methodology

The interview analyzed in the article was conducted in accordance with the assumptions of the biographical method as understood by Fritz Schütze, who turned towards the conclusion represented by the Chicago School when working out the concept of the autobiographical-narrative interview and the methodology of its analysis. In this approach, he highlighted the importance of undertaking studies of individual cases and their interpretation in the context of biographical and historical processes (Prawda 1989:83). As Alicja Rokuszewska-Pawełek (2002:15) notes, the process-oriented approach presented by the Chicago School emphasized the experience of people participating in the processes and their interpretations of social reality. Thus, in the assumptions of the researchers of this approach, "the category of experience meant taking into account the identity (biographical) side of social phenomena" (Rokuszewska-Pawełek 2002:15).

Referring to the analysis of the biographical story of Weronika presented in the article, according to Fritz Schütze and Kaja Kaźmierska (2013:131), it is worth pointing out that:

The main advantage of an autobiographical-narrative interview is, in accordance with theoretical and methodological assumptions, the possibility for the

narrator to recreate in his/her story the significant biographical processes that shaped his/her life in subsequent phases of biography, experienced situations, and the social framework in which his/her biographical processes took place. A significant source of cognition here is the correspondence between the sequential structure of organization of the improvised biographical story and the biographical accumulation of experiences and experiences in the context of the biographical-historical constellation of events.

In this view, the relation between individual biography and collective processes and mechanisms of joint influence is therefore crucial for a deeper analysis of the case. Moreover, assuming that this relationship is a tension between the standardization of lifetime (through the institutionalization of life course) and the subject's aspirations to develop and manage his/her own life independently (i.e., the tension between socialization processes, on the one hand, and individualization processes, on the other hand), the analysis of a single case also allows us to show the correlation between the control of life course and submission to the compulsions of the external world (Rokuszewska-Pawełek 2006:41).

In the understanding adapted for this text, it is important to point out the meaning of life history told by the interlocutor. As Fritz Schütze claims (2008:164):

We can say that the autobiographical narrator or "autobiographer" is retrospectively shaping her or his own biographical identity, but the task of the meaningful ordering of pieces of biography originally evolves from life historical experiences. She or he is

the biography incumbent or the carrier of the history (or story) of her or his own life, and by telling it, or at least episodes of it, she or he is bestowing it with an elementary and systematic layer of meaningful order—offering a partial integration of chunks of meanings originally stemming from the formerly actually ongoing involvements within the concatenation of life-historical events themselves. The meaningful order of one's own life history has at its center the unfolding of one's own biographical identity in relationship to the overall "gestalt" of concatenated and coexisting life historical processes.

In this understanding, the narrator in the process of telling the life history gives meaning to the facts of his/her life. The life history can be recognized as "a narrative *gestalt* that must be envisioned as an ordered sequence of personal experiences and that orderliness implies the inner identity development of the biography incumbent. The most important ordering principles of life history are biographical process structures" (Schütze 2008:168). Among these structures,<sup>4</sup> apart from biographical action schemes, institutional expectation patterns, and creative metamorphoses of biographical identity, Schütze also distinguished trajectories of suffering, which he analyzed in-depth together with Gerhard Riemann.

The reflections of the two German scholars treat trajectories of suffering as a process of biographical ex-

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the limited volume of the article, I only list here the biographical process structures distinguished by Fritz Schütze. At the same time, due to the problematic nature of my deliberations, I turn to the explanation and analysis of one of them—the trajectory of suffering, in reference to the life history of Weronika.

perience which, although resulting from a growing disorder, is internally ordered in its course (Riemann and Schütze 1991; 2012; Schütze 2012; Waniek 2016). This process consists of the following sequences (Riemann and Schütze 1991:449-352): "(1) build-up of trajectory potential; (2) crossing the border from an intentional to a conditional state of mind; (3) precarious new balance of everyday life; (4) breakdown of self-orientation; (5) attempts at theoretically coming to terms with the trajectory; (6) practical working upon or escaping from the trajectory." The concept of the trajectory of suffering is a very important analytical figure. As I will show in the next part of this text in the biography of Weronika, the experience of suffering is a key component of her biographical memory and identity.

Also, apart from the trajectory of suffering, the second important analytical category, to which I refer in the case study of Weronika's life history, is the concept of biographical work. After Fritz Schütze (2008:160), I understand it as:

Recollection, reflection about alternative interpretations of one's life course tendencies, self critical attempts of understanding one's own misconceptions of oneself and self-chosen or self-erected impediments, a circumspect assessment of impediments superimposed by others and by structural conditions, imagining future courses of life that support the overall "gestalt" of the unfolding biographical identity as essentially one's own, deciding on the next concrete steps of that unfolding and permanently evaluating the outcomes in terms of the overall distinguished gestalt worked out by recollection, analysis, and imagination.



Schütze refers here to the reflections of Anselm Strauss, assuming that biographical work is done through reflection on alternative interpretations of the course of one's own life. Schütze (2008:160) emphasizes that: "Biographical work is basically an inner activity of the mind and emotional psyche, and this inner activity is essentially constituted by a conversation with significant others and oneself." This type of biographical self-reflection in situations of biographical crisis can become an action scheme based on the purpose of emotional and cognitive arrangement of one's life course.

Bearing in mind this perspective of understanding the concept of biographical work, in the analysis below, I try to explain the reasons for Weronika's inability to undertake it. At the same time, I try not to go beyond the sociological analysis of this biography to avoid subjectivist conclusions about the psychological condition of the narrator. In a situation of researching the life history of people living in a trajectory, it is easy to fall into the trap of assessing the psyche of narrators, which is undesirable for scientific reflection, and which should remain the domain of psychologists and doctors, not social researchers.

### **Transformation in Poland—Understanding Transformation as a Process**

The aim of this article is not to thoroughly review the approaches and trends in transformational studies, but it is worth outlining the main research attitudes that problematize this phenomenon. In this way, it will be easier to export the scientific point of view presented in the article.

First of all, it is worth noting that many researchers of transformation, by exploring its social and political dimension, perceive it mainly from the macro social perspective (Rychard 1993; 1996; Domański 1996; 2000; 2002; Mach 1998; 2003; 2005; Giza-Poleszczuk, Marody, and Rychard 2000; Tarkowska 2000; Gardawski 2001; Krzemiński and Śpiewak 2001; Palska 2002; Domański, Rychard, and Śpiewak 2005; Giza-Poleszczuk 2005; Jarosz 2005; 2007; Krzemiński 2011). An important aspect of reflection on transformation is also the presentation of the cultural experience of its participants. In this perspective, one can mention Mirosława Marody's (2010) research on the analysis of individuals' behaviors in the new social reality. Also, the studies by Jadwiga Koralewicz and Marek Ziółkowski (2000), which touch upon the conclusions on the changes in the mentality of Poles after 1989, come to mind. Hanna Świda-Zięba (1997) also undertakes a cognitively valuable reflection on the cultural and mental heritage of socialism. The above-mentioned, often very extensive analyses of the time of transformation in Poland focus mainly on its experience in the collective dimension.

While searching for transformation analyses within the framework of biographical research methodology, one should mention Adam Mrozowicki's (2011)<sup>5</sup> publication devoted to the presentation of this process in the individual experience of workers (employees of the largest industrial plants in Silesia).<sup>6</sup> The biographical perspective is also present in the

<sup>5</sup> The collection of 174 biographical interviews with workers collected by Adam Mrozowicki in the years 2001-2004 was archived as part of the IFiS PAN Quality Data Archive. Site address of the Archive: [http://www.adj.ifispan.pl/o\\_archiwum](http://www.adj.ifispan.pl/o_archiwum).

<sup>6</sup> An interesting publication on this subject is: Mrozowicki Adam (2010).

transformation studies conducted by Joanna Wawrzyniak.<sup>7</sup>

An interesting research proposal is also the texts devoted to the study of the transformation process within the framework of the methodology of discourse analysis. A publication worth mentioning is, among others, a collective work entitled *Discourse and Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Aleksandra Galasińska and Michał Krzyżanowski (2009). It is a collection of texts undertaking the reconstruction of discourses related to transformation in the Polish context and to the experience of this process in other former socialist republics. An important element of these articles is the thread of the relationship between control and power in public and semi-public discourse on post-communist times.<sup>8</sup>

After a short presentation of selected approaches in social sciences concerning the analysis of transformation time in Poland, it should be stressed that the research study of a single case, undertaken in this article, fits into the scope of biographical research. Thus, as a researcher, I seek in it the types of connections between biographical processes and

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<sup>7</sup> The scholar conducted two research projects in line with the outlined perspective. The first one was entitled: "Privatization of Biographical Experience. Long-Term Effects of Ownership Transformations in Industrial Plants in the Perspective of Individual Fate" (NCN, no. N116 639740), implemented in 2011-2012. The second one, entitled "From a Socialist Factory to an International Corporation. Archival Collection of Narrative Biographical Interviews with Industrial Workers" (NPRH, no. 11H 12 0215 81), done in the years 2013-2017.

<sup>8</sup> The publication presents an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe. The texts explore the process of discursive construction of social change after 1989 in Poland, Lithuania, Eastern Germany, Romania, Russia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and other former Yugoslav republics.

collective social processes from the perspective of the bottom-up—subjective perception of ordinary people involved in the socio-historical process of transformation. Thusly, I try to reconstruct the process of socialization and the educational career of Weronika in relation to the period of the People's Republic of Poland and the changes after 1989. I am also interested in the history of the narrator's family and the consequences of the time of transformation for her parents' lives. In the text, I try to capture, analyze, and understand the dynamics of the transformation process from the perspective of an individual biography.

### **Migration Phenomenon—The Perspective of Women's Migrations**

The study of the history of Weronika's life is also part of the research on the subject of migration. On the one hand, this biography is marked by the context of being a migrant woman's child. This is related to the migration of Weronika's mother to Italy in the 1990s. On the other hand, the narrator at the time of the interview has also been permanently living in Italy for ten years, and is therefore involved in the biographical experience of being a migrant herself. These aspects make the analysis of the case of Weronika part of not only the perspective of migration studies, but also, and above all, of the interest in women's migration which has been growing since the 1970s.

Krystyna Slany (2008a:9) states that: "migrations... temporarily or permanently destroy the canonical world of social order for women and construct it anew." Migration in this sense is defined as a so-

cial change manifesting itself, inter alia, "in the assuming of and bearing the economic responsibility for the fate of the family by women," as well as "familization, but also defamilization" of family ties (Slany 2008a:10). These aspects are related, among others, to the phenomena of transnational motherhood and euro-orphanhood. Transnational motherhood "refers to a situation in which a mother temporarily or permanently resides in another country, but despite the territorial separation, becomes involved in the care and upbringing of the child; she is present *here* and *there*" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997 as cited in Urbańska 2015:12). Additionally, the perspective of motherhood at a distance concerns individuals functioning within the framework of "social expectations, cultural values, and social interaction patterns shaped by more than one social, economic, and political system" (Glick-Schiller 2003:189 as cited in Urbańska 2008:82).

The second phenomenon mentioned above, euro-orphanhood, derives from the discourse on motherhood "at a distance," and is created mainly by the media. This discourse seeks the negative connotations of maternal absence, emphasizing the blame for the child's upbringing problems on the part of the emigrating mother. It also highlights the shift of the educational role in the traditional approach assigned to mothers and to other family members, as well as aid institutions. It focuses on emphasizing the destructive dimension of migration of women, who, in a way, leave their children behind. As Sylwia Urbańska (2015:300) points out, "migration of a parent thus becomes an act of abandonment," while all other social phenomena affecting the fate

of a child cared for at a distance (e.g., poverty, unemployment of the other parent, alcoholism, violence) are not included in the diagnosis of the fate of migrant women's children.

In the analysis of Weronika's case, I present the perspective of transnational motherhood with reference to her mother's emigration since the 1990s. Thus, I focus on the dimension of Weronika's fate in the context of her adolescence inscribed in the motif of maternal "absence" (Urbańska 2008; 2015). On the one hand, I am trying to show the migration of Weronika's mother as a consequence of the transformation. On the other hand, I try to reconstruct the influence of the phenomenon of transnational motherhood on the biography of the narrator.

The experience of living in exile in Italy shared by Weronika and her mother is presented with reference to Krystyna Slany's (2008b) research on Polish migrants in the United States and Italy.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the dimension of biographical costs deserves special attention, which I try to reconstruct when analyzing the life history of Weronika. At the same time, the context of being a migrant manifested in the biographical experience of the narrator's mother is an intermediate story; therefore, it is impossible to fully interpret her feelings about the phenome-

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<sup>9</sup> This research was part of a wider project entitled *FeMiPol: Integration of Female Immigrants in Labour Market and Society: Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations*. It was a STREP Project of the 6th Framework Program of the European Commission Scientific Support to Policies SSP4—Contract No. 022666. It was conducted in years 2006-2008 by the Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University (Cracow, Poland), University of Florence (Italy), Intercollege Cyprus, Institute of Social Research at J. W. Goethe University (Frankfurt am Main, Germany), Center for Research on Women's Issues (Athens, Greece). Project summary and research report are available at: <http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/>.



non of migration. Nevertheless, the analyzed narrative allows us to place the fate of Weronika's mother in the perspective of the analysis of the migration stream of (Polish) women after 1989 (e.g., Zamojski 2005; Slany 2008b; Urbańska 2015).

In this part of the text, it is also worth noting that the biographical method enables capturing the dimensions and levels of migration processes. Following Roswitha Breckner (2007), one can also point to the importance of biographical research in the analysis of complex migration experience. The author mentions four perspectives of the "image" of migration in the biographical story: "(1) migration as experience of suffering, especially as loss of orientation and existential security (e.g., Maurenbrecher 1985); (2) migration as experience of transition between traditionality and modernity (e.g., Schiffauer 1991); (3) migration as experience of intercultural learning (e.g., Apitzsch 1990 and Lutz 1991); (4) migration as experience of transcending (national) borders—that is, of transnationality (e.g., Kreuzer, Roth 2006)" (Breckner 2007:119). The analysis of the history of Weronika in this text is an attempt to present migration as "an experience of suffering." Migration in this sense is "an event that brings loss, fear, and horror in the face of traumatic migratory experiences" (Slany 2008a:10).

At the end of this outlined theoretical and methodological perspective, it is important to stress that the analysis made in the text touches upon three dimensions emphasized in the studies of the phenomenon of migration, which are: (1) the individual dimension manifesting itself in "linking the sub-

jective experience of migration with the axio-normative sphere"; (2) the microstructural dimension understood in relation to the network of relations created in the country of origin and the country of inflow; (3) the macrostructural dimension presenting global processes and social phenomena connected with them that affect the experience of migration (Slany 2008a:11-12).

## **Between the Seduction by the Past and the Consequences of the Time of Transformation**

### **Methodological Note**

The analysis of Weronika's life history should begin with a short ethnographic commentary on the situation of the interview. I met the narrator, who permanently lives in Italy, during her visit to Poland in 2015. We both participated in international research workshops, during which Weronika had an opportunity to listen to a presentation devoted to the project: "Biographical Experience of the Transformation Process in Poland. Sociological Comparison Based on Biographical Analysis," (supervised by Professor Kaja Kaźmierska, University of Lodz), in which I was working. On the last day of the workshops, Weronika asked our team if she could take part in our research and tell her life story. This is not a typical situation encountered by biographical researchers. The way of recruiting interviewees is fundamentally different and rarely do the narrators know exactly the aims of the research. In addition, at that time, Weronika was finishing her doctoral thesis at one of the Polish universities and was scientifically connected with the field of social sciences. This as-

pect could have influenced her preparation for the interview, focusing her story on specific topics.

Despite the fears that such a situation may hamper the spontaneity of the narrator's story, desired in a narrative interview which is supposed to be improvised, we decided to record the story of Weronika. In this way, I managed to conduct the interview, which is in the focus of this text.

Very soon the doubts I had about the interview with Weronika turned out to be unnecessary. The narrator treated our meeting rather as an opportunity to share her story. Thus, the subject matter of the indicated research project, although undoubtedly resounding in the interview, was not the main axis of the narrator's account, which she clung to as she was familiar with the assumptions of our research.

As a researcher, I did not feel that Weronika had prepared for the interview, that she had been wondering what to say, and had planned in some way how to present her biography. In the interview, we find many moments in which the interviewee talks about her feelings by presenting subsequent detailed fragments of biographical events (Rokuszevska-Pawełek 2006:19; Schütze 2008; 2014). The motif linking the successive phases of Weronika's experience is a structure of trajectory which involves the narrator in undertaking a reflection on herself in relation to her life difficulties. Thus, in the analysis below, I try to show the reasons why Weronika is unable to work through her biographical experience of crisis. I also observe here the connection with the events that marked the narrator's biographical identity during her education and early adulthood.

### **Old Patterns of Action and the New Logic of Power**

Weronika was born in the early 1980s in one of the largest cities in Central and Eastern Poland. Until the beginning of the 1990s, she was brought up in a privileged family. Her grandmother on her father's side was a high-profile party activist, which at that time enabled her to provide her relatives with economic and social capital. Using this resource, Weronika's father and mother worked in a large state-owned company operating a chain of stores throughout Poland. In addition, thanks to the kindness of one of the friends of the aforementioned grandmother—aunt Ida, the narrator's parents had the possibility to live (with this aunt) in her spacious three-room apartment. This provided Weronika and her sister with the comfort of growing up in very good economic conditions, and the work of her parents meant that the family had no shortage of material goods.

The interviewee often emphasized in her interview that an end to this "good life" situation came in the year 1989. At that time, the narrator's parents, due to the free market competition for the state enterprise in which they were employed, lost the possibility to continue working in its structures. They also encountered great difficulties in finding a new job and experienced the inadequacy of the patterns of conduct adapted during the communist period to the new post-communist social reality.

Anita Miszalska (1996:8), referring to the optics of the first half of the 1990s, comments that it was characterized by:

First of all, internal polymorphism, resulting from the co-existence of elements of the old and new order, that is, continuation and change, in the collective life, in its institutional and conscious dimension. Both in the economy, the political sphere of life and in the system of values, in the attitudes and habits of people, in the public custom, et cetera, on the one hand, there are phenomena genetically related to the over forty-year history of real socialism, on the other hand, we observe a slow formation of institutions, patterns of action, and interests related to the rules of the market economy, to the ethos of a democratic society.

In this perspective, the experience of Weronika's parents can be considered on two levels. Firstly, from a broader perspective, as a result of a change in social relations after 1989. In other words, as a consequence of a shift towards the elimination of the deficit economy and the development of political and economic freedoms. Secondly, it points to the "genetic" rooting of the mental resources of Weronika's family in the rules of the socialist system. Miszańska (1995) sees the difficulties in the implications of the new "transformational mentality" as micro-obstacles or micro-blockades of transformation. Bogdan Mach (1998:37) points out that "such reasoning assumes that there is a negative relationship between mental resources derived from state socialism and socio-economic achievements in the new system, and the development of attitudes expressing support for the political principles of the new system." I will now quote a longer passage from Weronika's narrative about the situation of her family after 1989.

**Narrator:** A tragedy at our home, because I see it in terms of tragedy in general, well, our whole world had

collapsed. In 1989, when the Communist regime collapsed and [the name of the place where parents were employed] no longer existed. So my father lost his job and my mother lost her job. And there was a very big problem with working anywhere for my parents.

**I:** Yhmm.

**N:** Because my grandmother no longer, I mean, she was still alive, but she didn't have those rights to protect them anymore. Because, I think, she had a lot to say here...that she was protecting her children...And I think it was a big problem for the whole family. Because they, all the brothers, including my father, could not find themselves in this new reality, they were not prepared for it. Because there was always this grandmother who helped them in case they needed. And then it turned out that the grandmother no longer had any power, of course, proverbially speaking, and so she cannot help them. And so, came a search for a job for my parents...It was also very, very painful for me because there was a lot of talking about it in my family. Because my father couldn't find a job anywhere, my mother even more so. Especially since the past haunted them, so, you know that at the beginning everyone separated themselves from it as much as they could. And here many things couldn't be hidden, like the fact that my dad couldn't manage in the army, so my grandmother got him some papers [which let him leave the army due to an untrue psychological opinion, written on the request of his mother]. And that's what's haunting him. Despite the fact that he was not mentally ill, but in order to get him out of there, one had to have such a bypass. And today it resonates, that my father couldn't get a job. Besides, he didn't finish school, he didn't have a high school diploma, my mother didn't graduate from high school either, because she was eighteen years old [when she

got married and started a family]. And she didn't have the Matura exam. And I think it had a great influence on our family, because my parents, especially my mother, did everything to make sure we had the Matura exam. And that's how the problem with work arose, my father didn't have a job. And I remember how he looked for a job. And the discussions were quite heated at home: "So, I should have experience, I am supposed to be young," because he was already in his forties, "So, I'm supposed to have experience, speak five languages" [he was saying]. And, for him, it was such a terrible shock...So he didn't find this job. And they had to make a decision, so my mother said that she would go abroad [to work there].

The quoted fragment can be referred to the assumptions which Mach (1998:25) makes about family categories or family resources in the context of researching the transformation process. The author emphasizes that: "In the period of departure from the system of state socialism, the influence of family resources shaped in the outgoing system on current achievements and attitudes becomes particularly clear" (Mach 1998:25). This concerns economic, organizational, cultural, and psychological (in other words, mental) resources. Considering Weronika's family experience in such a way, in the passage of her biography quoted above, we are dealing with a story about the elimination of the significance of family resources in the period of leaving the system of state socialism.

The feelings of loss of stability and helplessness resulting from the initiation of transformation processes are transformed into the experience of real consequences of functioning in the new logic of

power. In the case of Weronika's family, they are connected with the degradation of their social status. The loss of their long-lasting privileged social position is linked to the growing problem of unemployment among the narrator's parents. It also manifests itself as a disturbance in the transfer of mental resources, immersed in the ideas of the past social formation. In the case of Weronika's life history, it is clear that the (political) party's support for her grandmother, which was important until 1989, allowed her to "play out" the associated benefits in accordance with the rules of reality in the People's Republic of Poland. The time of transformation, on the other hand, is a "meta-game whose subject are the rules of the transformation game" (Giza-Poleszczuk, Marody, and Rychard 2000). In the new reality, the narrator's grandmother's connections not only lose their meaning, but also cease to function within the whole family. Other members of the family, like the parents of the interviewee, lose their familiar access to social and economic resources.

The consequences of the time of transformation in Weronika's biographical experience are the lowering of the social status of her family and the aspect of unemployment faced by the narrator's parents (especially her father). That being said, the transfer of transformation capital, which is a barrier to the functioning of Weronika's parents on the labor market, translates into the necessity of labor migration of her mother. I will develop this topic in a moment.

First of all, it should be noted that Weronika's mother, who, in the narrator's story, seems to be more responsible and resourceful than her father, after unsuccessful attempts to find a job in Poland, initially

went to former socialist countries where she was involved in petty trade on street markets. Then, while maintaining this livelihood, she and her husband were engaged in itinerant trade, but in small towns and villages in Poland. This was an attempt to break the deadlock in their experience of impoverishment and unemployment, but at the biographical cost of the lack of time for the family's everyday life.

As a result, when her parents were absent, aunt Ida took care of Weronika and her older sister. In this situation, she played the role of a foster grandmother, being not only the guardian of the girls, but also a significant other during their socialization. Katarzyna Waniek (2016:121) notes that in such a situation, grandmothers play the role of significant others, not only taking over part of the burden of busy parents, but also "reducing tensions between two almost mutually exclusive orders—modernity and postmodernity." For Weronika, aunt Ida played a similar role. The narrator repeatedly invokes her in the interview, emphasizing how many of the features that define her identity today she owes not to her parents, but her aunt. She also attributes to this aunt her safe and idyllic childhood, which ended with the advent of the new logic of power connected with the ideas of capitalism (Czyżewski 2009a; Waniek 2016).<sup>10</sup>

In this part of the text, I would like to show how Weronika relates the period before 1989 as her good

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<sup>10</sup> Marek Czyżewski (2009:91), whose deliberations Katarzyna Waniek (2016) refers to, writes about the special role that "economizing" rhetoric plays in the new reality (here the author puts emphasis especially on the second decade after the fall of the People's Republic of Poland), which translates into a sense of the need to be creative, efficient, and consequently entrepreneurial.

memories. Below I quote an analytically important fragment of her narrative.

**N:** I had Mars, Snickers bars, Donald bubble gum, tons of them in my house. I remember that there was a big container in the corner room and Mars bars were lying there. And nobody ever explained to me that the children on the street didn't have that. And here funny situations emerge, because my husband, he was also born in the early 80s, a completely different case, a completely different story, that his father would go to Hungary and bring chocolate-like products, and until now he tells me: "And here the lady had Mars bars, Snickers, Donalds," because it was all over at my place. I still remember the price tags with the sign [name of the company in which Weronika's parents worked].

**I:** Yhmm.

**N:** And he just didn't have it, so such a comparison till today, when we talk about those years, he says: "But, what do you know about communism, my dear, you didn't have to stand in queues." For example, I remember perfume at home. For me, that was really commonplace. Ehm and like ehm...I remember that my mother used to wear one kind of perfume. Such a specific smell, and I ask mom, what was the smell. And she tells me Poison by Dior, yes. And I walked around the perfumeries I was looking for it and it's not the same smell I remember anymore. It was such a huge purple bottle with such press, such... swish! Not like today, but such, such pressed. And I remember this and I try to recreate it in my memory, I remember that smell, but it's not what I'm looking for in perfumeries anymore. Ehm and life was good, I'll tell you honestly, life was good, although I didn't understand this world...For example,



a lady from the countryside came to us once a week and brought us meat. And there was also a lot of this meat in our house because you know that barter trade was going on, and today I know that. I didn't know before and I didn't understand why she was coming to our house...Ehm and these were the most beautiful times/ well, of course, I didn't tell anyone at school, because I didn't know about it. I thought it was normal, that these Snickers, Mars bars/ That it is ok and so every child has it. Besides, my parents never gave me these things for school, I had it at home, but outside it was as if I was protected. And I didn't realize that, and I lived that way, yes, I lived. I went to school. I didn't like going to kindergarten, I always preferred to stay with this aunt, with this aunt Ida. And I really remember those times as fantastic ones.

Weronika's biographical memory of her childhood is full of symbolic references characteristic of people manifesting nostalgia and longing for the past. That is why the narrator focuses mainly on evoking further snapshots of memories in which she seeks familiar images, smells, but also feelings she would like to return to. She is also strongly emotionally connected with the places of this memory. In another fragment of the interview, she devotes a lot of time to describing her attachment to the city she grew up in, to its streets, buildings, history. At the same time, what can be seen in the above-quoted passage of her biography, despite the presentation of her safe and the truly beautiful experience of those times, in the narration, there is no wider perspective. By telling about that period from the biographical perspective of "now," Weronika does not refer her history to the specific-

ity of the social change that took place in Poland. I do not mean here the need for her to build a commentary in the shape of a scientific reflection, but rather the lack of any attempt to relate her story on a wider scale to, for example, the issue of her family being privileged.

The lack of macro social commentary also resounds in a comparative perspective, on which the narrator puts the filter of her experience. The only point of reference for explaining the difference between her everyday world and other people's experiences is the reference to her husband and his different memories of that period. Here the interviewee agrees that she did not experience many hardships of the reality of the People's Republic of Poland. However, this reflection remains here only on the level of quoting the different optics in which her husband and his family functioned. The narrator turns this important thread more into an anecdote and shortens it considerably, without taking up the perspective of her husband. The lack of such a deeper reference means that this fragment, showing a certain uniqueness of her biographical experience within the framework of the People's Republic of Poland, is treated very superficially. Thus, Weronika does not problematize her life history before the change in the context of the biographical experience of the time of transformation. It is only in the moment of the aforementioned experience of the 1990s that the narrator, although she does not say much about the social change, points to its consequences for her family.

In both quoted passages of the narration, the main axis is the distinction between the pre- and post-

1989 period, without a broader reflection of the narrator. This division is determined by historical and social contexts. The first one is the duration of the communist era, which was dominated by disciplinary power. The second is a period of dynamic transformations initiated after the collapse of the People's Republic of Poland and connected with the implementation of the free market economy and neoliberal ideology. In addition, Czyżewski (2009a:88) referring to the reflections of Michel Foucault<sup>11</sup> comments that neoliberalism:

Aims to create a society that is neither fully disciplinary (enforcing regulatory submission and motivating the zeal of workers, officials, soldiers, students, and other groups of subordinates of various institutions) nor normalizing (based on a strict distinction between what is normal and what is abnormal), but it is a new type of society which leaves a large margin of freedom to individuals, respecting the principle of tolerance of various types of minorities, does not want to influence the participants in the game, but only its rules, and intervenes not through internal subordination of individuals to the institutional plan, but taking into account their own social environment.

In this perspective, it can be said that Weronika's parents, when confronted with a new type of economy, are experiencing the beginnings of "governmentality flourishing under neoliberal forms of ruling" (Czyżewski 2009a:90). The counter-proposal of a new social reality for the already recognized

principles of functioning within the framework of state socialism is to deprive the state of the power and control of the market and to turn towards the subjectivization of the market as a "principle organizing and regulating the state" (Czyżewski 2009a:90). In such social conditions, as can be seen from the example of the history of Weronika's family, the narrator's grandmother's valuable anchorage in the state apparatus of power, which generates a field for managing family resources, does not bring the desired results.

Due to the inability to act without a lack of connections and education, Weronika's parents face the consequences of transformation. The methodology selected in the text gives the possibility of insight into the processuality of an individual's experience. Therefore, in the analysis of Weronika's case, one can see the relation between the experience of transformation time in the history of her parents. What is important, however, the example of this biography shows that it is the narrator born in the 1980s who experiences (which I am trying to show in further analysis) a much fuller repertoire of difficulties related to her biography being embedded within this new (neoliberal) logic of power.

This is evident in the adult life of Weronika when the narrator is entangled in the inability to take up a permanent job at the universities of Italy. This is due, first of all, to her problems in implementing the biographical scheme of action associated with emigration. Here, as I will show later in the text, the experience of Weronika related to her mother's emigration to Italy in the 1990s plays an important role. The second reason is that the narrator has to

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<sup>11</sup> Czyżewski (2009) refers here to the text by Foucault, *Die Geburt der Biopolitik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

face the context of being a migrant (also in Italy). In addition, Weronika, still strongly located in the symbolic universe<sup>12</sup> of the People's Republic of Poland, encounters difficulties in constructing her biographical identity from the perspective of a new "governmentality" perspective, whose rhetoric in the field of economy is represented by elements of the neoliberal "newspeak" (Czyżewski 2009a:93; Waniek 2016:119, 123, 140).

Summarizing this part of the analysis, which is an attempt to combine the biographical experience of the time of transformation in the history of Weronika's life with the collective mechanisms of influence inscribed in the process of transformation which took place in Poland after 1989, one can notice that this time caesura plays an important role in the biographical story discussed here. Referring to the still available symbolic cultural products reminding Weronika of her "good childhood" as she says herself, the narrator comments: "It is fantastic for me that I will sit down...I will turn on a cartoon, a film... and I am in my past." A moment later, referring to the situation in Poland after 1989, she states: "[But, now] I'm not coping, nobody taught us, my parents couldn't cope with this different reality and I can't cope." Despite the good memories of the first years of her childhood, the narrator, in the final phase of her spontaneous improvised narrative, says: "So, this is my story...but this past...of my parents, my grandparents, I think it has a big influence on who I am today and why I am coping or not."

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<sup>12</sup> According to Berger and Luckmann (1966:88-90), symbolic universe shapes the elementary premises of attitude towards the world and provides integrated meaning for individuals and collectivities. It also frames the dependencies between person's collective life and individual biography.

## Migration as a Source of Suffering

### *Part I: The Context of Being a Migrant Woman's Child as a Biographical Cost of Transformation Time*

As I tried to show in the previous subchapter of this text, the costs of transformation that Weronika talks about in relation to the history of her family after 1989 concern: the change of her social status, unemployment, and also what will be the subject of this part of the article—the necessity of migration of the narrator's mother. Due to the limited account of the subject of Weronika's mother's feelings about migration, and the more elaborate thread of the experience of a migrant woman's child present in the analyzed biography, the text focuses on the development of the second aspect.

According to Sylwia Urbańska (2015:26), transnational motherhood in the context of the migration experience of Polish women is part of the history of the period between 1989 and 2004. The author emphasizes that:

These migrants' biographical trajectories are shaped by social change in Central and Eastern Europe and emerge from the socio-economic context of Polish transformation, which consists of: disparate experiences of different social groups, new phenomena such as mass unemployment, inflation and related inability to pay off loans and debts, rapid impoverishment of many social groups, pauperization of peripheries, difficulty in finding one's place in the new market reality. [Urbańska 2015:26]

The biographical experience of the migration of Weronika's mother is inscribed in the socio-historical context of the migration of women from Poland between 1989 and 2004. Additionally, Krystyna Slany (2008b:330) notes that at that time "women constituted over 70% of Polish emigrants staying in Italy." The author, making a comparative analysis of the research on Polish migrant women in Italy and the USA, emphasizes that in the first socio-cultural context, Polish migrant women are often assigned to the possibility of working in three spheres: care for the elderly, childcare, or sex work (Slany 2008b:334-335).

From Weronika's biography we learn that her mother has been working in Italy for 20 years as a cleaner and caregiver. She, therefore, belongs to migrant women "who do hard work for the benefit of women from the host country in the name of a *kind of reciprocity*—I give you remuneration for your work and you give me your services" (Slany 2008b:334-335). As I stress in the next subchapter of the article, Weronika tries to fight against such attribution of migrant women to physical jobs. She tries to break the status, which, in her opinion, is assigned to Polish migrants, of the women who are necessary to satisfy the needs of the host country.

Returning to the history of Weronika's mother's emigration, she decided to go to Italy in the mid-1990s, first for short stays of up to three months. With time, due to the unchanging unemployment situation of the narrator's father, the stays in Italy become longer and longer. This combination of events strongly influences the biographical experience of transformation in the history of Weronika's life. On the

one hand, the narrator comments and remembers that her "mom was not there," which contributed to her experience of suffering. On the other hand, the methods of taking care of daughters living in Poland, in the case of Weronika's mother's conduct, were in line with the old patterns of action already mentioned in the text. Their use in the process of remote care of Weronika and her sister deepened the trajectory experience of the narrator. What I mean here are such kind of arrangements connected with using unofficial ways of "getting things done." This does not necessarily mean that in the new logic people were not using such ways to deal with their issues. It must be emphasized, however, that Weronika's mother did not follow the patterns connected with new logic, but she was trying to organize her activities in the way which had brought her profits in the socialist system.

Discussing the context of being a migrant woman's child during the transformation, I will look at the fragment of the interview linking Weronika's childhood and early adulthood experience. Analyzing the narrator's biography we can see that in this phase of her life history we are dealing with a "cumulative disorder of biographical trajectory" (Riemann and Schütze 1991:349). Thus, the main rhetorical figure in the biographical memory of Weronika of that time is suffering. I quote here a passage from the interview:

I started primary school as a very good student...Later, I was doing worse and worse, because my mother was not there for me, and I am such a sensitive and gentle child. And I was attached to my mother. I'm saying I was because we have drifted apart. But, yes,

I was here and she wasn't there for me. And I had trouble coping with it, so somewhere there was this need for motherly love. And, well, it had to be vented somewhere. My father didn't make sure that Weronika, for example, read something or did something. My father was, well, he was/ although he is such a big fan of history and I think that what is happening to me today is also thanks to him. But, then he couldn't do it with those children...I am grateful to him because I came from school and I always had a warm dinner on the table. And I appreciate it very much and I am very grateful to him for that. But, for example, all the trips around [the name of the city in Poland where she was born and lived until she emigrated], or the cemetery [the name of the cemetery], I went to collect chestnuts at the cemetery [the name of the cemetery] before it was fenced off and you could still go inside. Dad showed me a lot of things in [name of the town], he taught me this place. That's why I have such a great love for this city today. I say that nowhere is there such a good place to live as in [the name of the city]. But, hmm this primary school, I was later falling behind, I had only D marks from top to bottom. But, my mom said that we had to have high school diplomas. And I don't know how it happened, but she came to some/ I don't know if it was through her friends that it turned out that there was a teacher in high school, of course, I'm saying it with great/ for me it wasn't a teacher/ to whom my mother paid money. I mean, maybe not real money, but she gave her gifts like gold rings so that my sister would first get accepted to that high school, then she would stay in that high school and graduate. And the same situation occurred in my case, when I was in high school/ later when they moved me to [the name of the street] to the primary school, it wasn't high, it was

just/ well, people went there. I don't want to say now that it was an area, but [the name of the part of the city] here was an area that didn't fit my vision of the world. Because in my family it was always said that studying, was always such a strong topic, that my father didn't have the Matura exam and, "Look how he ended." My mother didn't have the Matura exam, and she was wandering around the world. And it turned out here that I didn't like this world, this [name of the street], I didn't feel it. Girls in primary school would cut themselves, yes, on their hands, I didn't fit in at all. I, I'm saying, this is not my world, these are not my circles. And I never had any friends in this matter, I didn't feel good. And then, of course, I followed in the footsteps of my sister, because I wanted to go to art school. I was even quite gifted, but my mother said that she had no connection there and no. And that I would not go to art school, because I was told so, because I always had problems with my back. I am now after surgery, I mean ten, almost twelve years ago I was operated on and I have implants in my back. Now it turns out that I have problems with my eyesight. And it was because I was born prematurely. But, then nobody thought about the rehabilitation of the newborn, everyone only prayed that the child would survive...Later it turned out that my mother pushed me into the same high school as my sister, because, well, for her, she wanted me to have the Matura because she hadn't succeeded and she was afraid that we might also fail. She didn't trust us at some point. And, today, I'm not judging her harshly for that. I am grateful to her, but...she locked me up like this, I mean, maybe she didn't lock the doors for me, because I later opened up these doors myself and on my own account, but she didn't give me such a benefit of trust.



The quoted fragment shows, first of all, the embedding of Weronika's mother in the rules and patterns of action attributed to state socialism. She acts by subordinating her concern for the education of her daughters (which is important in the new logic of power) to the action pattern of "getting things done." It means that the action pattern she uses is the form of an unofficial arrangement which she considered as the only option of providing the social benefits for her children. However, such an emphasis on support has a highly destructive effect on the development of Weronika's identity. The traumatic situation for the narrator, deepened by the years spent in high school under the "eye" of a school teacher, results in her failure to pass the Matura exam. She still—at the time of the interview—connects the reasons for this event with the activities of the pedagogue who "took care" of her education. The motif of the necessity of retaking the Matura exam and the physical absence of the narrator's mother at that difficult time impacted her persistence in the trajectory. In the course of this process structure, Weronika's "organization of everyday life" and her "orientation towards herself" collapsed (Schütze 2012:429).

At the beginning of the above-quoted fragment of the narration, Weronika notes that she was a good student and that it was the absence of her mother that was the first reason for her situation at school to deteriorate. Unfortunately, the mismatched methods chosen by Weronika's mother (such an important figure in the biographical experience of the teenage girl) to support her education directly resulted in the inhibition of the development of her positive biographical identity. Losing her aunt Ida, who died at that time, and her mother who was

far away, Weronika becomes more and more lonely, unable to count on her father's or older sister's support.

In the quoted passage, the narrator also refers to her illness. At this point, it should be explained that Weronika was born as a premature baby with osteopenia. The failure of taking immediate action against this disease while Weronika was physically growing resulted in the necessity of conducting several surgeries on her back to prevent the loss of her ability to walk. What is important, based on the knowledge of the whole interview with Weronika, it can be concluded that the thus far stages of the disease have been normalized by the narrator. For this reason, this aspect of her biographical experience is not marked by trajectory potential.

Returning to Weronika's educational experience, its processuality can be indicated by a short interpretation of her mother's intention to "take care" of her children's education. The interviewee's mother, who, in her biography, pays the price associated with the difficulties of taking up employment in Poland, strived at all costs to protect her daughters from such experience. In her understanding, the stake in the "transformation game" was education, which she and her husband did not have. Thus, the relationship between actions resulting from the recognition of the principles of the new neoliberal logic and, at the same time, the lack of reflection on the change in patterns of action, can be outlined as an interesting phenomenon. In this way, the behavior of the narrator's mother derives from the rules characteristic for the previous system. In this constellation of events, Weronika bears

the biographical costs of her mother's behavior. It should be pointed out that the mother's actions are also the consequence of her emigration, and it can be assumed that they result from the fact of doing "distant care." This can be understood as a situation in which the obtained economic benefits compensate for the separation. At the same time, Weronika's mother's behavior and her migration to Italy in the 1990s are the consequences of her mismatch with the new logic of power.

In order to describe the narrator's story until her emigration to Italy (in 2005), I will clarify a few important issues. It was not until the time of her undergraduate studies, which she successfully pursued having passed the school-leaving exam, that the narrator was able to make attempts to free herself from the trajectory. The narrator was a very good student and, as she emphasizes, "finally felt that she was doing well." Unfortunately, the practical "gaining control over trajectory and/or trying to break free from its ties" (Schütze 2012:430), which was possible at that time, was disrupted by her decision to migrate to Italy. In this view, Weronika not only fails to work through her sense of low self-esteem and the difficult past, but also falls into a new dimension of trajectory experience. In the new situation, it is caused by the suffering connected with everyday life abroad.

### *Part II: The Context of Being a Migrant in Relation to Biographical Tensions and Costs*

The experience of migration to Italy is another very difficult stage in the narrator's biography. The moment and the way Weronika decided to leave the

country deserve analytical attention. Despite her plans to continue her Master's studies in Poland, the interviewee agrees to her husband's proposal to go to Italy for a few months. She was convinced to choose this location by the possibility of spending time with her mother, perhaps making up for the years of separation and, what is important, by the assumption that they are leaving Poland temporarily and not permanently. In this optics, Weronika was convinced that she would only temporarily postpone her scientific plans and would soon return to Poland.

Weronika's husband, however, as she emphasizes in the interview, "from the very beginning he planned to stay in Italy for longer." In addition, unlike Weronika, he fit very well into the Italian culture and labor market. The versatility of his profession—working in the IT industry—enabled him not only to quickly find a well-paid job, but also to develop professionally. In the interview, Weronika comments that the experience of her husband's emigration is positive, without any difficult situations or suffering.

Investigating the context of Weronika's decision to emigrate, it can be pointed out that she was motivated by her significant others (husband, mother), who introduced Italy to her as a place of living a better life. At the time of her departure, she believed that she could return to her childhood sense of security, the "good past," as she puts it. In addition, this apparent sense of security at the time of departure was provided by the idea that she and her husband were going to see her mother, who had been living in Italy for years. This was due to the belief that she had a network of contacts and was able to support

Weronika in finding her way in a new country without any knowledge of the language or the cultural codes. At the moment of her decision to leave, although Weronika has plans in Poland (Master's degree and academic career), she decides to emigrate, seeing this idea as an opportunity. In this perspective, referring to Andrzej Piotrowski, Kaja Kaźmierska, and Katarzyna Waniek's (2011) reflections on the biographical experience of gainful employment outside the country of origin, one can notice that Weronika is not driven by the traditional impulse to go abroad for better earnings. In this case, work is a secondary motif. This decision is rather characterized by the desire to meet her mother and the belief in a temporary framework of staying abroad.

Looking from the biographical perspective of "now" at this episode of her life, Weronika comments on it thusly: "I got married too early, I left [for Italy] too early." Moreover, she feels that this trip was necessary, to a large extent, for her husband and that despite being assured of a temporary stay in Italy, he did not intend to return to Poland. Overwhelmed by the new reality, she sinks into loneliness. I will now quote a long fragment of interview showing her experience as a migrant:

N: So, after the wedding, I was in love, I loved deeply, I left for a completely different reality, I couldn't find myself there. And, and I felt like my parents at that moment, who also couldn't find themselves in their own country at that time [time after year 1989]. I was in another country, this language barrier, those stereotypes of women. He, as a man, managed to cope without any problems. And the world of information technology is governed by different laws than the hu-

manities one. I could not find myself there, I wanted to go back. I was crying, he was shouting that I was no good for anything, that the worm had come out again, that I'm a parasite, that I didn't have a job, I'm doing nothing, and so on, and so on. "You're like your father," because my father didn't find a job in the end. My mother went abroad, my father stayed at home, took care of us. And my mother's whole family was resentful of that fact. And that's what they called him, a parasite, that he doesn't do anything, and so on. And it was all like that, like a bomb that dropped on me. Being abroad is not easy. I always say that this is a terrible country, terrible people. To go on vacation for two weeks, yes. But, to live there, it's especially for me, as a woman/ because they have a stereotype of the woman at home. And when she goes out and goes into education, it's a completely different story. And here, too, there was a problem with me. My husband was used to his mother working in [name of place], his father in [name of place], so they had those state jobs. And they never had this problem with the job, so he doesn't know what it means to look for a job. So he has those other values in his head and he got a good contract because he's a computer scientist, so he got it without a problem. And he got a permanent contract, just like his parents. And I didn't, because I just got to the point of what to do. Because I am seen as neither a babysitter, or a caregiver for the elderly, or a prostitute. And there's no month I would not receive such proposals of prostitution. And, and this is so hard to go through...And I couldn't find my place at work as a nanny, because I don't like children. I love mine, but they are children who know the rules. But, to raise someone else's children in such a way, it's beyond my strength. I don't like them screaming, crying, being so bad, no, no, no, it's

beyond my strength. My children, yes, because they are my children who are longed for, loved. But, not other people's children. They exist, because they exist, someone wanted them, so let them do the child-care. I have more feelings for older people and I have a lot of respect for older people because I was raised by an older person. I was with her when she died, I know what it looks like [she means aunt Ida here]. And I'm not put off by the fact that something goes wrong with a human body. But...I have no health for that, I had spine surgery, so I can't carry someone, and the [old person's] body is much heavier, it looks different. So, in such jobs/ not that I think they're worse, God forbid, I have great respect for the people who do it. But, I can't, uh, I can't, uh, I can't, uh...

**I:** Do this kind of job.

**N:** Do this. And what happens, and what happens is that after my bachelor's degree I realized at some point that my husband and I were arguing a lot, especially since we bought a flat there [in Italy]...And, in our house, there are arguments about money because my husband requires me to do this kind of work. I worked as a nanny, I worked, I cleaned houses, and I was also a companion for the elderly, but these were never contracted jobs. Yes, it was an unofficial job market. And I understand that he is afraid of what will happen to me. I'm in my thirties and have no experience. I mean, I have experience, but I don't have it documented, so, at some point, I'll probably be starving when I'm an old grandmother, and I'm aware of this if nothing changes. Or, I don't know, I will work for the rest of my life.

In the experience of migration, Weronika's main theme is the difficulty in taking up a permanent job. Very soon it turns out that the narrator does

not have sufficient competences nor professional experience. Like her parents in the 1990s, she fell into the trap of a mismatch with market rules. However, there is also a barrier to Weronika's assimilation of two cultures: Polish and Italian. Krystyna Slany (2008a:23), referring to the concept of cultural valence of Antonina Kłoskowska (1996), describes the model of the migrant's identity developed in this way as a two-way identity. It generates: "Double integration. The migrant's strategy consists of searching for new values so that they become useful and own, and, at the same time, do not force a leave from the original heritage" (Slany 2008a:23). Weronika, strongly connected with Poland and considering returning to this country, is not inclined towards the integration of the Italian and Polish cultural contexts.

At the same time, she struggles with having to fit in the Italian labor market as a caregiver for the elderly, as a nanny, or as a sex worker. In her life's history, she confronts the professional roles assigned to her by the Italians with a desire to pursue academic work. During her ten-year stay in Italy, she obtained a Master's degree at an Italian university. At the time of the interview (the year 2015), she is a participant of a doctoral course at one of the Polish universities. She justifies her decision to get a doctorate with the aforementioned intention to find an academic job in Italy. This stage of her biographical experience is also connected with the need to eliminate tensions between the aspirations of the narrator and the attitude of her husband, who requires her to "go to normal work." Moreover, her obstinacy in her efforts to take up employment at a university in Italy is confronted with the Italian

academic reality, in which obtaining a full-time contract is not easy, according to Weronika.

In addition, it should be noted that Weronika gave birth to her first daughter during her Master's studies in Italy. The second one was born when the narrator started her doctoral studies. In this way, the biographical experience of being a migrant fits into her life history, as well as the biographical experience of being a mother. What is important, Weronika's story about migration in the context of having and raising children, despite the hardships of motherhood abroad, is also full of positive references. All the other dimensions of her biographical experience of migration: marriage, work, family and friendships, integration with the new historical and social context, are connected with building a narrative about the costs of migration. In the interview, we often encounter difficult fragments in which Weronika emphasizes that she is suffering. Below I quote one of such passages.

**N:** I had Professor T. here, he is here, I mean, he was a translator of literature...It was he who pushed me like this and he says to me: "Mrs. Weronika, I'll help you, because I see the potential, I see that you want and know how." I owe these studies to him, that I got there at all and that I finished them in time...Because, in July, I graduated from these studies [Master's studies] so that he could push me for a doctorate. He says: "You have to go to Poland for your doctorate." And I promised him this, and promised that my daughter would speak Polish. Because then I had only one daughter. And I didn't attend classes later, because it was difficult for me having a child. I was alone, my husband didn't help me either. And it was terrible be-

cause I really wanted this child and suddenly I got a small, small/ small baby in the hospital, I don't know how this human works. A foreign language, strange/ which bothered me very much at first, not today, but for me, it was, how does it work? What's going on? So, a strange environment, here a husband, who has to sleep, because he goes to work, there me, doing my Master's thesis. Everything at once, I decided that I would manage, yes. Although I had moments when I was standing on the balcony with my daughter and saying and, "It will end soon, yes. This emigration will end." I'm sorry. [The narrator is crying]

**I:** No, it's okay, it's okay...

**N:** That's how it turned out.

Shortly after Weronika took up her doctoral studies, Professor T., unfortunately, died, leaving the narrator without the much-needed support in her academic career. In the above-mentioned fragment, the interviewee also points to her feeling of loneliness in Italy. The final passage of the quoted story in which the narrator admits to suicidal thoughts: "Although I had moments when I was standing on the balcony with my daughter and saying, and, 'It will end soon, yes. This emigration will end,'" proves the destabilization of the new precarious balance in the sphere of everyday matters maintained by Weronika. The narrator's experience also manifests itself in "using the energy to somehow sustain this precarious balance" (Schütze 2012:428-429). This can lead to a growing state of biographical disorder in the presence of suffering markers.

Weronika, as a migrant, finds herself at a time when an overwhelming amount of duties is coupled with clearly visible issues in her biography:



marital problems, lack of support for her aspirations, inability to take up permanent paid employment. What is significant, the relationship between Weronika and her mother, which was to be revived by their living together in Italy, has not significantly improved. Therefore, the context of being a migrant woman's child, which the narrator mentions in terms of suffering and longing for the mother, has not been worked through by Weronika. This multitude of complex and difficult aspects causes chaos in Weronika's biography, which "is sometimes even more intolerable than the mechanisms that set the trajectory in motion" (Schütze 2012:425).

At the end of this part of the analysis, it should be stressed that the narrator first experiences the trajectory of her mother's emigration to Italy in the mid-1990s, and then the one in which her personal experience of emigration is involved. In the context of her biography, the difficulty of undertaking biographical work also plays an important role. In the case of Weronika's life story, I see the narrator's attempts to shape her reflection on alternative paths of her own life, but they do not lead to an interpretation of her own biography within the framework of her own ideas about herself. They are rather suppressed by her strong sense of deprivation and loneliness. Also, taking up biographical work is difficult due to the loneliness felt by the narrator most of the time in her biography. Such a state of affairs not only makes it difficult to control the experience of trajectory, but also to construct a positive image of one's own biographical identity. At this point, it is worth referring to the beginning of the interview, to the preamble, which is formulated by Weronika:

I was born in the first half of the 1980s, and that's a story too, because I'm from the end of the fifth month, the beginning of the sixth month. I don't remember those times, of course, it's from my family's story, especially my mother's. I'm from the end of the fifth month, the beginning of the sixth month. So it was a struggle for life in my case and I'm really fighting all the time, for everything. Nothing comes easy to me, I was not born under a lucky star, and, indeed, even my husband, who met me later, noticed that in everything I manage to do ehm how much work I put into it and I'm always struggling.

The "eternal struggle" referred to by Weronika is connected with the above-mentioned difficulties of the narrator in constructing her biography. Her trajectory experience is visible in her life story on three levels. First, the physical one, connected with an illness due to which the narrator underwent many difficult spinal operations, has problems with lifting, and now (the time of the interview) learns that she is losing her eyesight. Secondly, the mental one, connected with her illness, but also with low self-esteem, which began at the time of Weronika's education and socialization, when she strongly felt the lack of support of meaningful others and their faith in her potential for "being talented." Thirdly, it manifests itself in her experience of being a migrant and in her efforts to get used to the new Italian social reality. This feeling of a certain mismatch and the need to fight for oneself, especially to increase one's self-esteem in the eyes of others, accompanies Weronika even in the present perspective (at the time of the interview). Thus, the narrator, in the context of the biographical experience of migration, makes a constant effort to keep a "precarious new

balance of everyday life" (Riemann and Schütze 2012:349).

## Summary

The time of transformation resounds in Weronika's biographical experience as difficult on several levels. First, because of the aforementioned change in the logic of power, whose consequences are: the loss of a sense of stability in the life of her family in exchange for the precarious professional situation of her parents, and the extreme transition of her family from affluence to poverty. What is important in this perspective is the aspect of deprivation of the possibility of satisfying the need for work, analyzed in the text, which is clearly visible in the fate of Weronika's parents.

Secondly, Weronika's mother's decision to emigrate in the mid-1990s contributed to her taking economic responsibility for the fate of her family. This put her in the role of "distant mother" (Urbańska 2015), while the father of Weronika was delegated to taking care of the house and bringing up the children. Thus, the role of the breadwinner of the family is transferred to the mother of Weronika and the traditional marriage roles were reversed. The mother's migration also coincided with the narrator's period of education and socialization. In this view, the analysis of Weronika's case correlates this dimension of her biographical experience with the impact of the transformation process and the motif of being a migrant woman's child. As I tried to demonstrate in the article, the narrator did not manage to take control of the experience of the trajectory, which, due to the migration of her mother, she experienced during her education.

This stage of Weronika's biographical experience was connected with the disturbance of the ontological security (category used by Anthony Giddens [1991]), the essence of which is the sense of order and continuity of events, including those outside the direct experience of an individual, external to him. For Giddens (1991:53), the essence of individual's ontological security is "trust in existential attachment points, in an emotional and, to some extent, cognitive sense, based on the certainty acquired in a child's early experiences that others can be relied upon." For Weronika, who had experienced a strong sense of alienation and trauma from the lack of such "others" for many years of education, the sense of ontological security was undermined at that time.

I also think that, in the case of the analysis of this biography, an important rhetorical figure is the metaphor of imprisonment. In a physical sense, from the corset that Weronika had to wear for many years because of several serious back surgeries. But also, in the mental sense, imprisonment: (1) in exile in Italy, where it is clearly difficult for her to function; (2) in her memory of the past—in the interview she repeatedly returns to the time before 1989, perceiving that time as when "being truly happy"; (3) in the difficulties associated with her undertaking academic work in Italy and integration with the local culture.

The analysis conducted in the article aimed to show a certain connection between Weronika's experience and the history of her parents in the dimension of the difficult experience of the transformation period in Poland. Moreover, my intention was also to

capture the processuality of transformation in the narration of the migrant woman's child and in the context of women's economic migrations after 1989. In such a perspective, we obtain an account of the phenomenon of transnational motherhood supplementing the previous reflections on "distant mothers" and the euro-orphanhood discourse with the analysis of the biographical experience of a migrant woman's child. Additionally, an interesting aspect of the text is the fact that Weronika has entered the same migration context as her mother has been functioning in for 20 years. At the same time, the

costs of being a migrant in the life history of the narrator may be an interesting case for the researchers of the problems of migration of women.

Another research motif, not explored in this article, could be a comparison of Weronika's history with another narrative whose author also experiences a negative image of the time of transformation in Poland. The point would be to focus on individual biographical experience, connected, as in the case of Weronika, with the collapse of a certain whole world in which the narrator was embedded.

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