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**SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS entitled „Obrazy pamięci (Images of Memory)”**

My attention was drawn to the issue of memory, influenced by observing the process of recalling memories by an elderly person. Someone very close to me, that is, my grandmother, was the direct inspiration for the eponymous "Images of Memory". My grandmother was disabled, confined to her bed as a result of a spine fracture. Following a severe stroke, she never left her room for three years. I observed that she frequently repeated herself and forgot what she had said a moment before. From a sociable person who loved being surrounded by people, she suddenly turned into a loner. When I tried to talk to her, she quickly withdrew, either unwilling or too tired to continue. Her recollections were the only significant form of dialogue to her. My grandmother's memory, which, with time, was slowly becoming blurred, returned owing to the objects she found precious – they could bring back the memory of places in which she had lived and the people important for her. These mementos worked like "memory fuzes". When she tried to remember scenes from her life, she asked for a box containing her memories in the form of photos, letters, calendars, postcards and other documents. An old tattered photograph from her childhood could awaken her to life, energise her. Then she would passionately describe moments from the past. Her memory, elusive as it was, reached much further than whatever was captured in the picture frame.

The stories returning under the influence of seeing the mementos initially seemed very much alike, but each story familiarised me with the identity of persons I had not known before. Then the image captured in a photo became more complete and went beyond the boundaries of the figural depiction. After many months spent on conversations concerning the mementos, I noticed that, while viewing the same photographs again and again, her memories recalled started to repeat. When I inadvertently mixed up the photos, which had been arranged chronologically, I discovered one of the key aspects of memory I had not paid attention to: the mixed up images started to reconstruct memories anew. Under the influence of changing the sequence in which her mementos were viewed, my granny started recalling moments she had never mentioned before. I realised then that the objects I defined as "memory fuzes" can influence the process of recalling past events. Switching the order of the mementos (photographs) made the collection of returning memories expand by new stories untold before. I decided to call this phenomenon a "memory superstructure". I understood that the memory is a place where we accumulate information and experiences, but the path to them leads through reminiscences which are fragmentary and incomplete. They are not a tangible reflection of our memory but are more like a mirage, which, depending on the manner of interpretation, recalls more or less realistic images. While listening to family stories, my attention was drawn to the multithreaded



nature of the reminiscences. I wondered whether it is possible to transmit the real image of remembered events while telling others about them.

The first chapter of my doctoral thesis is devoted to various forms of memory. I start my deliberations from comparing memory to narration. I wonder whether family stories told from generation to generation can be a kind of literary truth. Based on examples, I conclude that the variability is a feature of the past, as the processes of memory taking place in the human mind undergo continuous reconstruction. I proceed then to describe the interrelations between the individual and collective memory. For this purpose, I draw on the opinions of such researchers as Maurice Halbwachs, Alejda Assman and Jeffrey Olick. Based on Jan Assman's theory, I describe the communicative and cultural memory, differentiating the two concepts. The chapter ends with an attempt at defining memory as a form of subjective selection.

In the second chapter, I point to the existence of various vectors of memory. The first of them – photography – is an instrument which allows for the preservation, storage and selection of memories. I then describe the collective practice of gathering and collecting photos in private archives – family albums. I draw attention to the existence of objects of daily use which bring back memories. I define them as „memory fuzes”.

The third chapter concerns the processes of memory – their functioning and role in the life of a human individual. Among them, there are: sensory perception, imagination, remembering, recalling and forgetting.

The fourth and last chapter of the doctoral thesis is a description of an artistic project entitled „Obrazy pamięci (Images of Memory)”. It is a series of twenty-two graphic works in which I undertake the theme of our memory, the process of recalling memories, as well as of forgetting. The key moment in my artistic work was finding the adequate form of visual representation of the character of memories which accumulate and stratify in human mind, subjected through this to diluting, fading and blurring. In my project, I ask a question of myself and the viewer about whether there is a one real image of our memories or whether it is a collection of various images which, in the lack of context, result in the multiplicity of interpretations. The family photo album became a pretext for me for seeking the visual stimuli which release reminiscences from our memory and for checking their influence on our present existence in order to establish what role they play in a human life.

I decided to observe closely the principles based on which our memory functions and learn about its complicated mechanisms. Its double nature turned out to be interesting and, at the same time, inspiring: the one which organises and systematises life experiences and the other which

introduces confusion, modifies and deforms, thus possibly leading to the erosion of memories. The whole situation is made more complicated by the vulnerability to external factors. Remembering is reconstructing the past, devoting attention to it, striving for the salvation of the order of values, the memory of the dead, of the objects no longer existent, the private history of someone's life. There is a danger that the history conveyed will become distorted. I assume that, with years, family mementos become artefacts, reminding us about people and places to which we slowly lose access due to generational replacement. The workings of the memory are complex and mysterious, they have their own energy. They usually use the set of associations inspired by the imagination, visual images and emotions.

The image of the past is a type of mirage exceeding the boundaries of the past remembered, demonstrating the illusory nature of our memories, their movement, variability and transience, the unreal and distorted reflections of the photographic representations which we instinctively consider true. The series of graphics entitled „Images of Memory” points to the existence of a thin line between the truth and fiction – an artistic creation.

It does not suggest an unambiguous answer to the question about the nature of the image emerging from memory, but it invites interpretation and drawing one's own conclusions concerning personal reminiscences. It encourages reflection on the memory artefacts collected during the course of life and handed to us by our ancestors, in which family histories deserving preservation are hidden.

