

About a Private and an Ideological Home

Home is hard to swallow
Home is like a rock
Home is good clean living
Home is - I forgot
~~ Lene Lovich

While being asked about Polish word for Heimat the first thing that came into my mind was the division put forth by sociologist Stanisław Ossowski. He once told that there is a private fatherland and an ideological fatherland.

In Polish there is a word for mother land – macierz – but no one uses it in this meaning. Literally I can translate it as matrix (mathematical term).

So the private fatherland is a place one is connected with in a very personal relation. The backyard everyone had to play in. My own room, shops around my family's house, paths I followed with this girl or boy while holding his or her hand. The weight of this hand, so precious in emotional categories, is the value of my private fatherland.

Ojczyzna, a fatherland, means a heritage inherited from a father; a heritage that my father inherited from his father and so on.

While growing older one is able to connect, via symbols like flag, with a bigger land – an ideological fatherland. We may never see the whole country but still we know that behind all of us there is something bigger – in spatial and historical way. An ideological fatherland stands as a final point. The real patriot is a person whose private is as big as ideological. Jumping from my neighborhood into a land structured with symbols – it is a life in The Imaginary.

A tragedy and trauma appears when The Imaginary is destroyed with The Real. Something like that happened once in a history of Polish country. The Partitions that took place between 1772 and 1918 equaled more than one hundred years of dependency. The tragedy so important because Polish gentry used to think that they are the greatest, what was enrooted in Sarmatism – an ideology stating that second estate (gentry) is qualitatively something different than other population of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Sarmatians were thought to be the prehistorian Polish people that invaded Slavs but later incorporated their language. As a result the gentry appeared in their own eyes to be battailous, brave and free.

And then surprise – boozy and self-glorified second estate was vanquished and then ruled by foreigners. In the XIXth century some writers and historians started to

incorporate the ideology to the society. The story of how the Poles struggled with dependency is very long but one can find ideas of Sarmatism for example in Henryk Sienkiewicz's books – Nobel Prize laureate, who taught Polish people history of their nation in a very idealized version.

Jan Sowa, sociologist and cultural researcher, wrote once that The Partitions are our national trauma – something still existing deep down in an unconscious structures. While incorporating it into widely defined society, the image of ideological fatherland have changed. Among the flag, the emblem and the motto God, Honour, Fatherland stand The Partitions.

This last symbol connecting Polish people with their country not only defines what is inside the borders but also what is outside – the dangerous world. Our national duty is to prepare for any possible intrigue against us, our national duty is to be suspicious. In my opinion the trauma is sometimes so strong that it makes people forget about private and force them to be afraid only about what is ideological.

Polish case makes visible some problems, so important in today's world. In some sort it is a problem of Lebenswelt – pretheoretical world of personal experiences. Can the experiences from my personal fatherland be lied with an ideology? The fundamental basis for me, this private fatherland is not only my home, but even more my body. In the first place my body – as an idiom – is a starting point. In the second place my body may be transformed into a battlefield where discourses fight each other, where the net of meanings is woven, according to certain political strategies.

The body of Poland collapsed and was jointed because of pre-existing involvements of ideological nature, that eclipsed the reality. Here is what the trauma hides from us – we ourselves made the home collapsed, we ourselves changed the people into slaves.

The Poles have not learned anything from the Partitions, what is clear every time when Polish government, highly supported by citizens, stresses as the most important thing for us the national interest.

Today the reality is calling with the voice of paradox. The whole globe was made a private fatherland for us and also this globe, full of feeling bodies, soon will be wallowed in an inflation of everything what we have known. An ideological fatherland, our national and cultural values, are becoming a lie, mediating the relation between our corporal world of experiences and the private father and mother land of the whole globe.

Piotr Piasek
Poland
University of Lodz
piotr.franciszek.piasek@gmail.com