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**Literary book of blind authors – subject of interdisciplinary research. Reflections on methodology**

**Introduction**

The many-sided question of literary book authored by visually impaired persons is not a common area of interest of scientific research. It appears to be an object of considerations /mainly critico-literary ones/ only on the occasions of publishing individual or complete editions of fiction or poetry books<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile the creative activity of persons with vision impairment and their consequent literary work constitute a valuable area of inquiry, applicable to many-sided analysis, e.g. bibliological and typhlopedagogical. Biographic references take a considerable role in this production – the question of the author's own disability. The specific character of the creative work /technical and organization solutions/ comes from the visual impairment of the author. It is the Polish Association of the Blind /PZN/ who has a considerable share in developing practical skills, editorial process and promotion. Literary critics refer to the fact of the visual disability of the author rather too often in their reviews and are not free from a patronizing attitude in their opinions. The mentioned factors are a sufficient reason to isolate the interdisciplinary field of inquiry: „literary book of visually impaired authors”.

Artistic activity and its results, being factors forming and defining at the same time the uniqueness of the blind author's social functioning, are interesting from the typhlopedagogical perspective. What is essential for a bibliologist is the book, its visually impaired author and the influence of the fact on the contents, the system, the circulation and the social functions of the book. The interdisciplinarity of the investigative approach comes from the position of

scientific inquiries in the - often mentioned in bibliological sciences - communication theory that recommends conducting research /the so-called communication survey/ according to the pattern: the communicator /sender, author/, the contents, the means of communication, the receiver and the result of the receiving<sup>2</sup>. The suggested model of inquiry corresponds to the functional approach in the book study, aiming at exposing its social functions<sup>3</sup>.

### **Remarks on the basic areas of inquiry**

According to the adopted communicational and functional approach, the basic areas of inquiry and particular fields of inquiry are isolated.

**THE AUTHOR.** Inquiries in this field aim at identifying the creators and their output within a given geographic and chronological range what results in describing the environment by means of demographic data as well as compiling an enumerative and subjective bibliography. The subject of description is the creation process: the origin, the evolution, the progress in the mental sphere /the process of an act of creation/ and the organizational and technical process /the setting of intellectual work of a blind person/. The survey also includes the meaning of the literary work for the creator himself /self-rehabilitation, self-creation, sense of life/. The participation of the blind author in the literary and social life is also a point of interest.

**THE WORK.** The analysis aims to describe the specific character of a literary book that means defining the theme areas. The almost commonly present and so specific area concerning the visual disability of the author: the terminology used to name the visual disability, the description of cognitive processes, reporting the attitude to himself, to his disability and creativity, to the world, to people, to the fate, to God – has been especially thoroughly judged. Thereby the literary book of visually impaired persons makes it possible to investigate the progress of the psycho-social process of accomodating to the disability<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Czerwińska M., *Niepełnosprawność i osoba niepełnosprawna w polskojęzycznej literaturze pięknej i naukowej. Bibliograficzny warsztat biblioterapeuty*, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>2</sup>Goban-Klas T., *Komunikowanie masowe*, Kraków 1978.; Wojciechowski J., *Czytelnictwo*, Kraków 2000.

<sup>3</sup>Migoń K., *Nauka o książce wśród innych nauk społecznych*, Wrocław 1984.

<sup>4</sup>Czerwińska M., *Integracyjna wartość twórczości niewidomych poetów. Biblioterapeutyczna analiza poezji Krystyny i Jacka Rosów*, (w:) *Integracja osób niepełnosprawnych w edukacji i interakcjach społecznych*, red. Z. Kazanowski, D. Osik-Chudowolska, Lublin 2003, s. 235–241.; Czerwińska M., *Jakość życia osoby z dysfunkcją narządu wzroku w poetyckim zapisie niewidzących twórców – terapia przez sztukę w redukcji obaw i kreowaniu*

Describing a literary work also includes defining its editorial and formal features /traditional and alternative typography/. Thus the subject of the survey is the so-called system of the book.

THE RECEIVER. The inquiry of the receiving consists in defining the registrations of the authors and their works in the national library and information system. An analysis of literary critiques /reviews/ is also necessary. On this basis it can be concluded as to the social circulation and the functions of the book.

### **Remarks on the strategy of the survey**

The subject and the range of the survey place it most of all in the qualitative strategy. It enables: taking a look at phenomena in their natural environment, studying sensitive and private phenomena, comprising persons of various level of self-consciousness, intelligence, eloquence, learning vicissitudes of particular persons or penetrating the phenomena<sup>5</sup>. They refer to the fundamental phenomenological and hermeneutical indications that order focusing on what the studied “thing” says about itself<sup>6</sup>. The qualitative research strategy enables „entering” into the notional world of the blind authors to understand what and how they think, how they interpret their own experience: their disability, their creative expression. It enables referring to the context of the origin of the work, the specific language, the author’s position. The phenomenological assumptions indicate the necessity to regulate the thoughts included in the literary and extra-literary statements, to reconstruct the creator’s opinions, to extract the hidden assumptions, the interpretations of the key categories. One of the essential values is the „non-assumptioness” of the qualitative research procedures. It is not justified to be direct by precisely formulated hypothesis while analyzing literary texts, opinions obtained by an interview, editorial documentation, literary critiques, etc. It seems more adequate to employ pre-assumptions resulting from the hitherto existing knowledge and experience of the

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*nadziei*, Prace Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie: Psychologia XI 2003, s. 17–28.; Czerwińska M., *Twórczość literacka osób niewidzących - sztuka i terapia*, (w:) *Metody i formy terapii sztuką*, red. nauk. L. Kataryńczuk-Mania, Zielona Góra 2005, s. 173-182.

<sup>5</sup>Łobocki M., *Wprowadzenie do metodologii badań pedagogicznych*, Kraków 1999.; Bauman T., *Strategie jakościowe w badaniach pedagogicznych*, (w:) Pilch T., Bauman T., *Zasady badań pedagogicznych. Strategie ilościowe i jakościowe*, Warszawa 2001.; Czerwińska M., *Biblioterapia w jakościowej strategii badawczej*, (w:) *Forum pedagogów specjalnych XXI wieku*, T. 3, pod red. J. Pańczyka, Łódź 2002, s. 57 – 73.

<sup>6</sup>Sawicki M., *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, Warszawa 1986.; Zemło M., *Fenomenologiczna metodologia A. Schutza*, Principia 1995, nr 13-14.; Bauman T., *Strategie jakościowe...*, op. cit.

researcher. A qualitative inquiry does not require a numerous group for the survey, which corresponds to the demographic character of the circle of the blind authors. It is essential that choosing the „object” to be studied is substantially reasonable and the survey is conducted until reaching the state of a theoretical satisfaction in the process of collecting the data. The indicated fields of inquiry lead the research into the area of ethnographic survey, case studies, phenomenographic research. The ethnographic survey concerns the blind authors /e.g. their career analysis, life progress, social roles/ as well as the literary groups /the structure/. The case study, conducted according to N. K. Denzin’s assumptions described for the biographic method<sup>7</sup>, has a clear representation in studying the origin and the evolution of creativity, its reasons and the meaning for the blind author. The phenomenographic research, assuming that people give various meanings to the surrounding world - coming from understanding it<sup>8</sup> - find their reason particularly in the analysis of the contents of the blind author’s literary work and literary critiques.

The qualitative strategy is completed by the quantitative strategy necessary in collecting, elaborating and presenting the data concerning demographic parameters of the authors’ environment, descriptive and editorial features of their works and their registration in the library and information system.

### **Reflections on the methodology and techniques of the survey**

The survey strategy adopted hereby is accomplished by choosing methods and techniques. The bibliological and functional method, employed in inquiring the book as a relationship of all its elements and bibliological processes, is especially significant. It determines employing the accompanying methods among which the most significant are the biographic and bibliographic ones. The biographic method consists in describing and analyzing the progress of human life examined in the context of a segment of a given social reality<sup>9</sup>. In the presented model of inquiry there are two types of it employed: the case study /artistic biographies of the

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<sup>7</sup> Nowak A., *Metoda biograficzna w badaniach pedagogicznych*, (w:) *Orientacje w metodologii badań pedagogicznych*, red. S. Pałka, Kraków 1998, s. 1000.

<sup>8</sup> Bauman T., *Strategie jakościowe...*, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Włodarek J., Ziółkowski M., *Teoretyczny i empiryczny status metody biograficznej we współczesnej socjologii*, (w:) *Metoda biograficzna w socjologii*, red. J. Włodarek, M. Ziółkowski, Warszawa-Poznań 1990, s. 3–12.

authors/ and the monograph /editorial and promotional activity of the PZN/. Both these types of the biographic method make it possible in particular to reach subjective experience of the inquired persons and look at the interesting problem from their own point of view. The intensified open interview, which has taken an intermediate version between the autobiographic and narrative interview and the expert interview – the so called narrative expert interview, has been considered particularly useful in collecting the data. It is a semi-standard interview based on the interview “guide” containing the initial and penetrating questions. It has been applied first of all to the authors but also persons related to the editorial cycle and promotional activity<sup>10</sup>. The interview concerning the literary activity of the interviewee is accompanied by a questionnaire collecting demographic data, i.e. an interview of a highest degree of standardization. It is an expression of joining the biographic method /the dialog method/ and the sounding method<sup>11</sup>.

Equally essential in this model of inquiry is the bibliographic method in its various types. It is employed to collect the inquiry data – by means of both typographically traditional bibliography /the national bibliography, subjective bibliographies/ and automated information and search systems. The bibliographic analysis of documents has been employed which is the basis to describe them. The bibliographic method of describing publications and arranging compilations of bibliographic descriptions has taken the version known in bibliological sciences i.e. bibliography of chosen literary environments.

When characterizing editorial and formal features of the literary book and setting its registration inside the library and information system, the bibliographic method takes the form of the subjective analysis method of considerable sets of books, the structure and typological analysis, the bibliometric method<sup>12</sup>. Thus it is correlated to the document analysis method<sup>13</sup> because the subjects of the survey are such documents as: written, numeric, sound ones; existing and intentionally created ones; official and personal ones – verified by internal and

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<sup>10</sup> Jacob G., *Wywiad narracyjny w badaniach biograficznych*, (w:) *Jakościowe orientacje w badaniach pedagogicznych*, red. D. Urbaniak-Zajac, J. Piekarski, Łódź 2001.; Konarzewski K., *Jak uprawiać badania oświatowe? Metodologia praktyczna*, Warszawa

<sup>11</sup> Konarzewski K., op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> *Bibliografia – metodyka i organizacja*, red. Z. Żmigrodzki, Warszawa 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Łobocki M., *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych*, Kraków 2000.

external critique of their sources. Consequently the qualitative, quantitative and formal analyses have been employed<sup>14</sup>. The analysis of the contents of the literary works is essential. It is achieved by these techniques: choosing the category, inquiring the lexical level of the frequency dictionary of the language of the text and marking the semantic fields.

## Conclusions

The presented model of scientific inquiry is not a conglomerate of accidentally used methods but a conscious methodological pluralism integrated by the functional approach. It corresponds to the triangulation rules understood as a way of collecting and elaborating data. The result of the survey accomplished according to the mentioned model is a many-sided, complex study important both to bibliological and typhologic sciences in their theoretic and practical dimensions.

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<sup>14</sup> Adamski W., *Metoda „dokumentów osobistych” w socjologii*, Studia Socjologiczne 1969, nr 1.; Łobocki M., op. cit.

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The many-sided question of literary book authored by visually impaired persons is not a common area of interest of scientific research. Meanwhile creative activity of persons with vision impairment and their consequent literary work constitute a valuable area of inquiry, applicable to many-sided analysis, e.g. bibliological and typhlopedagogical. It is suggested to isolate the interdisciplinary field of inquiry: „literary book of visually impaired authors” as well as a model of scientific inquiry, based on communication and functional approach. There are basic areas of inquiry isolated in it: the author, the work, the receiver. The model is placed in a qualitative research strategy based on phenomenological and hermeneutical assumptions and comprising ethnographic research, case study, phenomenographic research. The presented model of inquiry employs the bibliological and functional methods, together with the methods closely related to it: biographic, bibliographic and document analysis.

The presented model of scientific inquiry is not a conglomerate of accidentally used methods but a conscious methodological pluralism integrated by the functional approach. It corresponds to the

triangulation rules understood as a way of collecting and elaborating data. The result of the survey accomplished according to the mentioned model is a many-sided, complex study important both to bibliological and typhological sciences in their theoretic and practical dimensions.

### **Książka literacka niewidzących autorów – przedmiot badań interdyscyplinarnych. W kręgu rozważań metodologicznych — streszczenie**

Wieloaspektowa problematyka książki literackiej autorstwa osób z niepełnosprawnością wzroku nie jest częstym obszarem zainteresowań badawczych. Tymczasem aktywność twórcza osób z dysfunkcją narządu wzroku i wynikający z niej materiał literacki stanowią wartościowy obszar badawczy, zdalny do wieloaspektowych analiz, np. bibliologicznych i tyflopédagogicznych. Proponuje się wyodrębnić interdyscyplinarnego pola badawczego: „książka literacka niewidomych autorów” oraz model badawczy, oparty na podejściu komunikacyjnym i funkcjonalnym. Wyodrębnia się w nim podstawowe obszary badawcze: autor, dzieło, odbiorca. Model umiejscawia się w jakościowej strategii badawczej, opartej na założeniach fenomenologiczno-hermeneutycznych i obejmującej badania etnograficzne, studium przypadku, badania fenomenograficzne. Prezentowany model badawczy wykorzystuje metodę bibliologiczno-funkcjonalną, wraz ze ściśle powiązаныmi z nią metodami: biograficzną, bibliograficzną, analizy dokumentów.

Zaprezentowany model badawczy nie jest konglomeratem przypadkowo stosowanych metod, lecz świadomym pluralizmem metodologicznym, integrowanym przez podejście funkcjonalne. Odpowiada zasadom triangulacji, rozumianej jako sposób zbierania i opracowywania danych. Efektem badań realizowanych według omówionego modelu, jest wieloaspektowe, kompleksowe opracowanie, istotne zarówno dla nauk bibliologicznych, jak i tyflogicznych – w ich wymiarze teoretycznym i praktycznym.