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## Generative script capacity in the so-called the Masurian saga by Małgorzata Kalicińska

Pojemność generatywnego skryptu w tzw. sadze mazurskiej  
Małgorzaty Kalicińskiej

### Abstract

**Introduction.** Since the beginning of the 21st century, both in the social (public) space and in the latest subject literature, interest in the needs of people in the autumn of their life is experiencing a renaissance. This is expressed, among other things, by generativity (life-giving), understood primarily as the care for future of the following generations (often it is also a form self-self-care and caring for the future of people in the immediate vicinity). One of the manifestations of generativity is the activation of the so-called generative script in the narrative. An example of such a structured story can be found e.g., in the trilogy written by Małgorzata Kalicińska (House by the Backwater (2006), Return to the Backwater (2007), Love over the Backwater (2008)). The character in whose creation the generative script has the great importance is Barbara, Małgorzata's mother.

**Aim.** The aim of this article is presentation of the category of generativity in contemporary literature, especially in the form of a family saga. Particular emphasis will be placed on the theoretical and practical aspects of implementing generativity in the narrative process of a person in the autumn of life. The text is also an encouragement to conduct-

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ing regular research on the phenomenon of generativity in Polish literature, which is still lacking.

**Results.** The article shows that focusing on the so-called phenomenon of generativity is achieved in many ways. Generativity manifests itself in the process of narration conducted from the perspective of people with life experience who have been affected by Gauguin's syndrome. Three heroines of the story from above the backwater (Bronisława, Barbara, Małgorzata) share their experiences, observations, and thoughts (activating the generative script), showing, among other things, care for family and neighbours, but also indicate the importance (and consequences) of taking care of themselves and following their own needs.

**Keywords:** maturity, generativity, Masurian saga, contemporary novel, narrative, Małgorzata Kalicińska.

### **Abstrakt**

**Wprowadzenie.** Od początku XXI wieku zarówno w przestrzeni społecznej (publicznej), jak i w literaturze najnowszej zainteresowanie potrzebami osób w jesieni życia przeżywa renesans. Wyrazem tego jest m.in. generatywność (życiodajność) rozumiana przede wszystkim jako troska o przyszłe pokolenia (nieraz stanowi też formę opieki nad sobą i przyszłością osób w otoczeniu). Jednym z przejawów generatywności jest uaktywnienie tzw. skryptu generatywnego w narracji. Przykład tak skonstruowanej opowieści spotykamy m.in. w trylogii Małgorzaty Kalicińskiej (*Dom nad rozlewiskiem*, 2006; *Powroty nad rozlewiskiem*, 2007; *Miłość nad rozlewiskiem*, 2008). Postacią, w kreacji której skrypt generatywny ma niebagatelne znaczenie, jest Barbara, matka Małgorzaty.

**Cel.** Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie kategorii generatywności w literaturze współczesnej, zwłaszcza tej o charakterze sagi rodzinnej. Szczególnie wyraźnie zostaną zaakcentowane teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty wdrażania generatywności w proces narracji osoby w jesieni życia. Tekst jest także zachętą do regularnego prowadzenia badań na temat zjawiska generatywności w literaturze, których na polskim gruncie wciąż brakuje.

**Wyniki.** Artykuł unaocznia, że tzw. zjawisko generatywności podejmowane jest na wiele sposobów. Ujawnia się ono m.in. w procesie narracji prowadzonej z perspektywy osób z doświadczeniem życiowym, które zostały dotknięte syndromem Gauguina. Trzy bohaterki opowieści znad rozlewiska (Bronisława, Barbara, Małgorzata) dzielą się swymi przeżyciami, obserwacjami, przemyśleniami (uaktywniając skrypt generatywny), okazując m.in. troskę o rodzinę i sąsiadów, ale też wskazując, jakie znaczenie (i konsekwencje) ma umiejętne opiekowanie się sobą i podążanie za własnymi potrzebami.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dojrzałość, generatywność, saga mazurska, powieść współczesna, narracja, Małgorzata Kalicińska.

## Introduction

People tend to remember actions, people, objects, events, places, time and feelings, and they give representations of events in the form of a script (Trempała, 2011, p. 207), also known as a story or narrative (storytelling)<sup>1</sup> (Wołk, 2001, p. 45). The stories captured in thoughts and words accumulate in memories, which can have cognitive functions (above all, they help to organise life experiences), emotional functions (e.g., they influence the formation of emotional attitudes towards the world), social functions (e.g., they support the formation of bonds, serve to build self-presentation, help to fulfil obligations).

According to the dictionary of literary terms, a narrative is a monologue utterance presenting a sequence of events arranged in time order, connected with the characters participating in them and with the environment in which they occur. The dynamic phenomena unfolding in time result in the narrative being dominated by the story; the predominance of static references in space usually takes on the character of description (Sławiński, 1988, p. 303). According to Zofia Mitosek, “the subject of narration are human actions, activities and events occurring in a wide field of social experience. By conveying information about human behaviour, storytelling incorporates events from collective practice into the plot field, which shows these events” (Mitosek, 2001, p.175). Barbara Bokus believes that:

Each narrator creates a representation of the event in his or her own way. But also each participant in the event (presented in the story) interprets what is happening (has happened), and perceives the course of action in one way or another. Thus, a narrative may include not only the presentation of the changes occurring – according to the narrator – in the external reality, but may also show the image of these changes in the minds of the participants of the events (Bokus, 2001, p. 64).

Following Jerzy Trzebiński, it is worth recalling that narrative is “people’s way of understanding the world” (Trzebiński, 2001, p. 87). As the researcher notes, people “tend to see stories in the stream of events around them. Psychologists believe that it is the structure of human knowledge about the world that determines this narrative way

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<sup>1</sup> A short story is a type of speech that reports on a sequence of related events. The term is used to describe a certain type of communication, distinguished by its theme. Sometimes a story is also referred to as what it is about, i.e., a story, a set of ordered events. Bogdan Owczarek accepts this dual understanding of the term, according to whom a story is a trans-genre, trans-genre and trans-media formation of narrative activity and organisation of story events. Thus, the story can be understood in two ways: as a story and as a past. According to Marcin Wołek, the narrative describes the narrator’s utterance through which the world is presented to the reader. Such an utterance sometimes takes forms other than an account of events (Wołk, 2001, s. 45).

of seeing reality” (Trzebiński, 2001, p. 87). The process of understanding is structural (Cierpka, 2008, p. 379), it is governed by cognitive rules of interpreting reality, and it is controlled by cognitive schemas, which means that narratives are “mental forms of understanding the world, structuring our experiences in terms of human intentions and the problems that arise from complications on the way to realising these intentions” (Trzebiński, 2001, p. 94). Such structuring of experience in Małgorzata Kalicińska’s *Masurian trilogy* takes the form of a generative script, among other things. This is also the understanding of concepts I adopt in this research paper (Bolińska, 2017, pp. 211–219).

In the presented paper, I will operate primarily with the tools characteristic of the work of a philologist (textual explication), while the purpose of the work is to present the formula of generative script on the example of three novels by Małgorzata Kalicińska, which make up the so-called “Masurian trilogy”: *Dom nad rozlewiskiem* (2006), *Powroty nad rozlewiskiem* (2007), and *Miłość nad rozlewiskiem* (2008). I am aware that it is not possible to exhaust the subject in this article. However, the decision to undertake this strand of research stems from the fact that, in my opinion, M. Kalicińska’s saga combines the form of stories that take into account the belief in the goodness inherent in people with the motif of the word, which materialises in specific actions taken by the characters in her stories. One of them is the telling of family stories (Julkowska, 2018, pp. 9–77; Marecki, 2017) and the arduous changing of one’s own lifeline, which I wanted to at least hint at, as about this series the issue has not yet been taken up in research<sup>2</sup> (Marecki, 2014a, pp. 140–155; Marecki, 2014b, pp. 57–70; Marecki, 2017, pp. 60–181). All the more so because, as Zofia Mitosek points out, “communication and the construction of plot do not exhaust the richness of the field that is referred to as the anthropology of storytelling. The search for the genesis and function of a story involves the conviction that there are some semantic universals at its core” (Mitosek, 2001, p. 175). In the reflection that is now emerging, the choice fell on generativity.

### **On adulthood and generativity**

It is assumed that the life of an adult spans between the ages of 20 (25) and 65 (even 85) and is divided into three stages: early adulthood (approx. 20–40 years of age), middle adulthood (40–60 years of age), and late adulthood (over 60 years of age)

<sup>2</sup> The motifs developed so far are related to, among other things, the myth of the arcadia, the centre-periphery/urban-rural opposition, the spirit of sentimentalism, the tradition of tales of affection, the conventions of popular literature, etc. (Martuszczyńska, 1997; Syska, 2010; Marecki, 2014b; Majk, 2021; Marecki, 2017).

(Bee, 2004). Also, so-called “old age” (overlapping with so-called “late adulthood”), called senior age or autumn of life, can be internally differentiated. However, in the psychological literature, there is no uniform position on the criteria for the onset of old age and its periodisation. Different ranges appear. In principle, three phases of old age are distinguished, viz: 60–70 years of age, 70–80 years of age and 80–90 years of age. The literature on the subject also provides the terms: young old (persons aged 60–75) and old (persons aged 75 and over) (Steuden, 2011, pp. 19–21).

The stages of adulthood cover a total of several decades, and during their duration changes occur which require the organism to adjust to new conditions, both external and internal, and at the same time “adjust the environment to the programmes implemented by a person with a specific personality” (Oleś, 2011, p. 37). This is because development is a quality resulting from changes in various areas of human existence, i.e., on the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and moral planes. As Krzysztof Biel writes:

Adults define themselves in society by creating a personal myth or life story that gives human life a sense of unity, purpose, and meaning. The personal myth that emerges during adulthood creates a generative script that defines the goals that the individual wants to achieve in the future to make their mark on the world and leave their mark for future generations. This generative script is a personal internal narrative that points the individual in the direction of generative behaviour toward herself (personal history), society and the surrounding world (Biel, 2017, p. 51).

The term generativity was used in 1950 by Erik Erikson to refer to the so-called “seventh developmental stage” in the psychosocial concept of human development that he created (Erikson, 1950). Exposed in the text, generativity was considered to be the second stage of adulthood and is understood as a concern for establishing priorities in life, including guiding and supporting the future generation (Erikson, 1950, p. 267). Generativity, therefore, translates into a preoccupation of adults with those they leave behind and the legacy they will leave behind. According to Erik Erikson:

[...] generativity is primarily about conceiving and raising the next generation, although there are people who, due to misfortune or through special and natural talents in other directions, do not have offspring, but satisfy this drive in alternative forms of altruistic care and creativity that can absorb their parental responsibility (Erikson, 2004, p. 93).

Although E. Erikson’s concept of human development was developed more than half a century ago, the phenomenon of generativity itself has not been deep-

ened and developed by the researcher (Biel, 2017, pp. 49–52). Theories of generativity were created and developed by Dan McAdams and Ed de St. Aubin (1992). They identified seven psychosocial characteristics that oscillate around individual and societal tasks of serving the next generation. These are cultural demand, inner desire, concern for the next generation, satisfaction with life, self-esteem, stabilisation of life goals, and a sense of coherence. It is also worth signalling that researchers often point to the fact that in all cultures there is a form of generative action involving the preparation of a legacy for the next generation. Thus, as it were, there is a natural transmission of values motivated by the desire to pass on tradition. It is not infrequently bought with the difficulty of choice, the burden of decision and laborious work. According to Fergus McNeill and Shadd Marun (2008, pp. 224–239), when generativity is modelled and appreciated by others, it becomes a source of joy and a kind of inner strength that often binds a community together. This is the case in the stories known as the *Masurian saga* (Zatora, 2022). As an incidental aside, it is worth adding that the very concept of saga enters into a relationship with generativity. For, as the dictionary of literary terms explains, a saga encompasses epic works wrapped around the history of a family (Sławiński, 1988, p. 455). It originated in the Old Icelandic tradition, where in the form of a prose story it presented the fate of a hero known from history or legend, or the history of a prominent family (Sławiński, 1988, p. 454). It was, moreover, an intermediate creation between chronicle and romance, with a distinctly regional cultural imprint (Marecki, 2014a, 2014b, pp. 140–155). Nowadays, it has primarily the character of a novel of manners, which is capacious enough to also contain family stories (Zatora, 2022).

### **The *Masurian saga* in close-up**

Embedded in the realities of the Masurian landscape, the topography of the area and culture, the three-volume story (literary cycle) (Sławiński, 1988, p. 79) by M. Kalicińska is achronological. We learn about the earliest events in the life of the family settled in the Pasy area during World War II (the arrival of Bronisława and Michał with their children from a wealthy estate to a poor Masurian village) in the second part. One could even say that *Powroty nad rozlewiskiem* is a kind of prequel to the series, the centre being *Dom nad rozlewiskiem*, while the volume entitled *Miłość nad rozlewiskiem* is a kind of sequel.

In the first part of the trilogy (*Dom nad rozlewiskiem*), we have a first-person diary narrative (Wołk, 2001, pp. 45-61) conducted by the main character, Małgorzata (a woman in middle adulthood). She recounts her experiences as a mother, wife, and

daughter from the position of a woman who lost her job in a big city (Warsaw) but, as a consequence of the changes implemented, gained her own place on earth, especially when, changing the course of her life, she decided to get to know her mother and the circumstances of how she was abandoned as a child.

In the second part (*Powroty nad rozlewiskiem*), Kalicińska introduces another protagonist-narrator, Barbara (in late adulthood/first stage of old age), Małgorzata's mother, who settled by the floodplain as a result of complicated events and life choices (including leaving her husband and child, leaving with her lover for another town) presented by her from a rather personal perspective (the time of events is earlier than in the first volume). At the same time, she supplements many of the themes from part one and illuminates them in a slightly different way. This volume is the story of the protagonist's growing into adulthood and generativity, as well as her belated motherhood and mature love for a man (Tomasz).

The last novel (*Miłość nad rozlewiskiem*) has a two-part structure. On the one hand, it allows Małgorzata, who again assumes the position of narrator-protagonist, to confront and revise various points of view, and to reflect on her maturity. On the other hand, it introduces a new character of the narrator-protagonist, Paula (a friend of Małgorzata's daughter Marysia), who perceives and comments on the reality at the backwaters of the lake in her way (she observes her friend's family from the sidelines, from a certain distance, becoming part of the Masurian community).

The generative script in the stories from the floodplain is activated most strongly in Barbara's narrative, to which I will devote more attention. It is worth recalling that its essence, according to D. McAdams and E. Aubin, is founded on psychosocial properties focusing on both individual and social goals of serving the next generation. Cultural demand and intrinsic desire are considered to be the motivational sources of generativity, as they condition the emergence of another characteristic, which is a consciously exhibited concern for the next generation. As K. Biel emphasises, "this trait positively correlates with life satisfaction, self-esteem, stabilisation of life goals and a sense of coherence, while it negatively correlates with depression" (Biel, 2017, p. 51). Caring with a belief in the goodness of the human species can foster the creation of commitment. This is all the more so because belief in the human species is associated with the belief that human life can be developed and improved in future generations (even in the face of evidence of deprivation and destruction). Commitment, meanwhile, prompts the decision to take action to help others, which in turn reinforces commitment itself. It should also be mentioned that, as psychologists have argued, it is possible to perceive an inner desire in human beings for generative initiatives. Hence, components such as personal desires and the need to have and realise them, self-esteem, enjoyment of life, goal-setting and the pursuit of goals, a sense of inner coherence, and concern for the next generation are strongly emphasised in the

generative script. It is worth highlighting their existence in the stories of the women from the floodplain, which confirms the existence of a generative script.

On the one hand, it is the age of the protagonists that is important (these are mature women in advanced adulthood; Małgorzata is in her 40s, Barbara in her 60s), on the other hand, the choice of place and quality of life (village instead of city, place of residence, life goals, importance of the environment, coping with difficulties). Settling (and consequently living) in the *Mazury* [Masusia] region of Poland is connected, among other things, with a change in their habits and tastes, with a different rhythm of life than hitherto, with the acquisition of new skills, such as organising one's household, in which first Bronisława, then Barbara and finally Małgorzata become housekeepers in their own home and housewives in the kitchen. Each in turn (Barbara, Małgorzata), drawing on the shared experience of her predecessors, arranges the family nest, changes its décor (with time also its purpose, especially when a guesthouse is being established), tends the home garden, makes preserves and preserves from the gifts of nature (e.g., compotes, preserves, pickled mushrooms, cured meat, etc.), writes down the recipes of the dishes she creates (e.g., a calendar, a notebook) and passes on information on how to manage them to the next generation of women. Each of them also becomes the organiser of family Christmas Eve parties and an advisory voice (and authority) for residents. Notable examples include the act of establishing guardianship over a neglected girl and then raising a child with a disability (the story of Kaśka Król). A relevant illustration is, for example, the reaction to Felicia's death (Bronisława teaches her daughter Barbara her duties towards the deceased, who will only in time understand the lessons she received years ago from her caring and wise mother). The kind interest in the affairs of the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses and the help shown to (and received from) the neighbours is also part of a survival strategy in a new place and an expression of concern for others. Thus Bronisława takes on the burden of supporting her family after the war, reacts to Kaśka Król's misery, supports her neighbours and instils family values in her daughter. Barbara penetrates the environment of the Masurian population slowly, at first she is the object of gossip and curious stares, but her knowledge, organisational skills and gentle firmness make her an authority (however, initially she is treated kindly as the daughter of Bronisława, respected by the local population, and then she independently earns her position as the "advisory voice"). She gradually befriends the depressed forester's daughter-in-law of Zawoja, Lidka, becomes a confidante of Ola Karolakowa, visits her ex-husband Stanisław on his deathbed, and is not indifferent to the unhappiness in the Wroński family (an example is the search for the missing Karolinka). Finally, Małgorzata, having come to an understanding with her mother, settles in her house and farm, takes over the family inheritance, forms an alliance with Elwira, enters into a relationship with Janusz (a dentist suffering from alcoholism) and offers her help to



Anna Wrońska, known as Wrona, who starts working in the boarding house she has founded.

A particular example of caring for others is the aforementioned story of Kaśka Król, cared for first by the eldest of the family, Bronisława, and then by her daughter Barbara and granddaughter Małgorzata. We get to know Kaśka's story as a person with a disability already in the first part. Barbara passes her on to Małgorzata, having previously met her through Bronisława. Kaśka is a middle-aged woman who lives in Pasym together with Barbara, Małgorzata's mother. Barbara tells her daughter how Kaśka (as she is called in the community) ended up in the family. Her story is painful but brief. The mother, Marianna Król, after several miscarriages, finally gave birth to a daughter who developed late (this is the time after World War II). After her death, the approximately two-year-old child was left with her father, who neglected her. Overwhelmed by the situation, Barbara performed a so-called "public adoption" in an evangelical church and soon took formal custody of the girl. After the death of the child's father, it turned out that as a form of thanksgiving for her act of bravery, she also received the notarised property of Joseph King, a local blacksmith. In *Powroty nad rozlewiskiem*, Kaśka's fate is forever intertwined with that of the family's protagonist, Bronisława, and her family (in the final part we attend Kaśka Król's funeral).

As has already been indicated, the theme of generativity resonates particularly clearly in Barbara's lifeline. In this necessarily truncated analysis of the character's behaviour and experiences, it is worth pointing out several stages (highlighted in the novel). Well, change takes place primarily through the protagonist finally realising that she is at a crossroads:

It was all the same to me where I was living. I had been depressed since January. I didn't manage to be a lady bon vivant or a vamp or a contortionist in black. Even Winnicka, in Train, had a financial background, a husband I think, so she could be a femme fatale, and I was what? No permanent ground, no permanent job, everything temporary, just whatever (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 165).

The daughter of Bronisława and Michał makes the painful discovery that she took infatuation for love and wanted to bestow her feelings on her lovers, while she was the only one truly committed to her relationship with Andrzej (among other things, she left her husband and daughter for love, which turned out to be a pipe dream). The sudden death of her mother, the responsibility for the dependent, defenceless, lonely Kaśka, as well as the family home left unattended – as external circumstances – all contribute to the protagonist starting to consider rebuilding her existence. In a silent conversation with her mother, she confesses:

Mum, how would you react if I told you about how I live my life? Mum, how far apart we are, me and my husband... Mom, you were right, without love it's impossible. It's a trap. I feel like I'm dying again... (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 105).

A gradually emerging inner desire to return to the place where she felt comfortable, and safe, at home years ago motivates her to decide to drastically reshape her lifeline. Leaning into herself with care and understanding brings solace. The heroine shares a memory:

In the afternoon I came back from the library and went to the spillway with my mother's crystal rosary and my grandmother, whom I had never seen. I got to talk to them again. The footbridge was knocked down, so I crouched on a stump, off the bank, excited. Lit up by a memory (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 247).

Barbara slowly achieves satisfaction with her life, which she realises rather late in life. However, the clarity of this confidence gives her a sense of self-worth and, consequently, of life's fullness and meaning, finally a stabilisation of her life goals and an inner coherence felt as a union with nature. Finally, she discovers:

I feel a great need to go to the forest. I am drawn there somewhat inexplicably. The weather is nice, only raining at night. Just the right aura for mushrooms and mysteries. The forest absorbs my problems. I walk along the paths, the familiar nooks and crannies and breathe in the slightly humid, aromatic air with my full breasts. In some places, the mulch is very saturated with water. The moss springs up like a sponge. It has the colour of malachite (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 278).

The decision to change, based on her reflections and needs, involves restructuring her surroundings and way of life. As a woman marked by many experiences, she notes:

I don't think I was given a peaceful life. Forgetting... I gave up. Bronia didn't adopt Kaśka to get rid of her now like an old sack. And the house? A workaround? I know that the Karolaks will help. But can I manage? I have grown away from rural life (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 165).

The protagonist's uneasy change of life priorities allows her to regain peace of mind, gives her stability and opens the way to inner freedom. Barbara confesses:

A year has passed. I have indeed changed a lot since that walk. I am stronger. I have more energy, a willingness to deal with difficult things and to make every effort. I know how to act, I rarely hesitate and I see that people treat me differently. I feel the power and freedom within me. I walk with my head held high, I talk on the street with friends and neighbours honestly and courageously. Sometimes I laugh out loud (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 280).

The choice of a new form of activity (such as taking care of the household, caring for her disabled foster sister, entering into a close relationship with nature), in time, no longer requires justification, as it brings the certainty that the new life has a different value from previous experiences. As her inner assent to the new order of existence emerges, the protagonist becomes aware of the difference between her former and present state: "I have been wrapping presents in my room since the morning. This time I want them to be accurate. To make everything as beautiful as possible" (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 204). Małgorzata's mother also discovers that ordinary everyday life combined with the celebration of tradition has extraordinary power. Just before Christmas, she is surrounded by reflection:

In the morning we go to the cemetery. On foot, as Mum used to walk. At noon, Misia is due to arrive. She's braved it!

A lot of people at the graves. Lights out, drowning in snow. Still raining! Graves cleaned up and decorated with a Christmas tree with mistletoe. Parents are looking at us from the "porcelains." We are. All in harmony, mum! I have also come to terms with myself and Hanka has considered this (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 204).

Her rediscovered love and longing for her mother make her realise where the meaning of her life choices and activities lie. She ceases to live her memories and discovers that she needs the presence of living loved ones. She realises that the past has shaped her. Relates:

The boys and Misia went to dress the Christmas tree. I took down from the attic a huge box of ornaments made by Mum's hands. There are intricate spiders made of straw and woollen pom-poms, toadstools made of crepe paper and thin tissue paper, snow stars made of thin white paper tubes intricately joined together, and some lanterns made of coloured cardboard. Beautiful. Mum didn't like baubles, because she thought it was German (Kalicińska, 2008b, p. 205).

Barbara shoulders her destiny and learns to fight for each day, while not neglecting to look after herself and the people around her. However, the aforementioned changes also bring problems, such as economic collapses, which she eventually manages to overcome (thanks, among other things, to the help of her half-siblings and kind neighbours). Equipped with new strengths and convictions, Barbara now knows how to live her life and what she wants to pass on to her recovered daughter, Małgorzata.

### **The salutary sequence in the narrative**

In the case of Barbara's script, it is still important to consider the valuation theory (Hermans, 2008, pp. 115–138). It is understood as an interpretation of experience not related to a specific or fixed narrative pattern, but susceptible to the subject's current situation and reflection.

The person values experiences, giving them a certain meaning, but neither can deviate too much from their essence (without risking losing touch with reality) nor is subject to some mechanism in this regard that escapes self-reflection (apart from dissociation). The process of valuing aims at selecting subjectively important experiences, ordering them and integrating them into a system of personal meanings (Oleś, 2011, p. 131)

– as is the case with Barbara's lifeline, which the writer has given the character of a return to the past, based on an insightful self-analysis, thanks to which the protagonist's identity is transformed. D. McAdams

understands identity as a story that develops throughout a lifetime, binding together a personal past, present and future to give coherence, purpose and meaning to life. Different developmental periods add further identity elements. Initially, these are sensory impressions, characteristic emotions and their changes, imagery (e.g., characters, personifications of animals), then motifs of childhood play – the desire to reveal a strong Self and the desire for community – then important characters, values, a reflectively adopted self-concept, an individual way of defining the continuity of experiences, interpersonal relationships and a frame of reference in the form of norms and ideals, and finally personal models of adult life (imago), commitment to others (generativity), wisdom. The arriving elements do not add up to the previous ones but form a unique whole with them (Oleś, 2011, p. 133).

Barbara's attitude created by M. Kalicińska is also an exemplification of the beliefs of scientists and therapists, according to which generativity can (and even should) be learned.

Finally, in the way, Barbara's character is created and her way of narrating, it is also worth noting that, according to scholarly sources, scripts of experience acquired during childhood are characterised by a high degree of permanence, especially if they are not fully realised. Consistent with the concept of scripts is the narrative identity theory of D. McAdams (2001):

For at the basis of life history lies a characteristic way of experiencing emotions, expressed primarily by the emotional sequence, i.e., the transition from positi-

ve to negative emotions (contemplative sequence) or from negative to positive emotions (salutary sequence), which is typical for a person. These determine how experiences are interpreted and are repeated many times over the years (Oleś, 2011, p. 131).

Both theories argue in favour of the constancy of narrative patterns. It is evident from Barbara's narrative that M. Kalicińska has equipped her character with the ability to use a redemptive sequence. In addition, D. McAdams distinguished two types of change: developmental, which tends towards openness, credibility and evolution of the subject matter towards a deeply humanistic approach (it involves a gradual transformation of the personal myth in a direction consistent with the general trend of human development), and personological, associated with a complete reconstruction of the life story (the reconstruction of the personal myth or even constructing it from scratch is involved) (McAdams, 2001; McAdams, Aubin, & Logan, 1993, pp. 221–230). From the data collected and the analyses carried out, it appears that it is primarily the former, i.e., the developmental one, that Bronisława's daughter becomes involved in (as a consequence of the reconstruction of the personal myth).

In Barbara's developmental trajectory, one can see the realisation of the concept of E. Erikson, who observed that the opposite of generativity is stagnation or self-blame. Barbara, overcoming crises, seems to be reborn. Similarly, her development, divided into stages, reflects the spirit of the researcher's proposal, which strongly emphasises the fact that human development takes place in stages. He also pointed out that at each stage there is a crisis between opposites fighting each other. Failure to overcome moments of crisis can result in negative consequences. However, overcoming crises positively influences the course of life.

This overcoming becomes Barbara's contribution, and her choices, as well as her achievements, become part of the contemporary understanding of generativity, as it is nowadays considered to be such behaviour that involves preserving, nurturing and/or maintaining what is considered worthy and valuable (such as nurturing children, grandchildren), while preserving and honouring (cultivating) traditions and participating in rituals (at school, church or at home) that connect generations and ensure continuity over time (McAdams et al. 1993). One could even risk saying that M. Kalicińska's *Masurian saga* may contribute to the popularisation of such a "nurturing" understanding of generativity and such a vision of it, the essence of which lies in maintaining the continuity of family history and traditions and the well-being of the local community.

### **The Gauguin syndrome**

In the trilogy written by M. Kalicińska, I also notice the presence of a phenomenon called the “Gauguin syndrome,” described in the literature as an attempt to stimulate personality changes. It contributes to the activation of the generative script and is associated, among other things, with a change in the external functioning conditions, influencing life decisions. The existence of Paul Gauguin, the French painter and sculptor, who radically changed the trajectory of his fate, serves as a prototype for the changes mentioned above (Oleś, 2011, pp. 238–241). As scholars emphasise, the sudden change in lifeline is an attempt to find one’s self and to create a new identity and self-concept.

Piotr Oleś, a researcher in the field of adulthood, proposes several criteria by which the Gauguin syndrome can be described. These are a significant change of life priorities, choosing and undertaking a new form of activity, justifying the sense of existence within the new activity, choosing and accepting other values than the previous ones, the feeling of freedom and internal consent, the decision to change taken independently (without pressure from relatives), which may be connected with a worsening of the economic or social situation (Oleś, Kłosok-Ścibich, 2009, p. 9–25).

The Gauguin syndrome can be seen in the fates of both Barbara and Małgorzata. Both women, influenced by the so-called “external circumstances” and personal reflections, first change their place of residence from a suburban (or metropolitan) to a rural small town (Pasymie area), and then their lifestyle. The daughter of the doyenne of the family, Barbara, leaves her husband and child because she meets what she thinks is the love of her life; so she changes her place of residence and life priorities. Bronisława’s granddaughter and Barbara’s daughter Małgorzata (abandoned as a child) seeks her own path in the home of her unknown mother and radically changes her system of values. The change also concerns her approach to life, noting the slightly different course of time than before, admitting feelings she was not aware of, including amazement at the rhythm of life in the floodplain, delight at the blossoming nature, surprise at the (sometimes pushy) curiosity of her new neighbours, etc. There is also a decisive modification of the economic situation (women have to cope with new material and social conditions). At first, it is quite difficult, but it gradually improves – Bronisława becomes an independent housewife, which consequently gives strength to her daughter, as Barbara, who discovers in herself unknown layers of innovative farming solutions, will start to act similarly. Over time, Małgorzata will become an investor and owner of a Masurian guesthouse but will be able to count on the financial support of her ex-husband, Konrad. With this new form of activity also comes a complete change in the sense of life. The women realise what is most important. There is a transition, as it were, from the world of things to the world of people,

an opening up to loved ones, nature and living according to its rhythm, and an acceptance of what each day brings (reconciliation with oneself).

### **The narrative quality of mature people**

It seems that the heroines' narrative is, on the one hand, a space for understanding themselves and their surroundings (Tokarska, 2008, pp. 471–500), while on the other hand, it becomes a form of expression, an ability to structure their experiences. It enables all women in life's twists and turns to put their lives in order, it allows them to understand disasters or failures, and it even becomes one of the conditions for adapting to stress. It is even believed that "the inability to narratively structure experiences in important spheres of an individual's life reflects negatively on their functioning" (Trzebiński, 2001, p. 94).

In the case of the women of the floodplain, the provision of story-building material can be considered the basis of the cognitive and therapeutic process. M. Kalicińska's heroines-narrators try to structure their knowledge and their experience of events that are crucial in their lives and, at the same time, universal or common in their cultural circle (e.g., adolescence, love, various family events, death of relatives, or neighbours). The stories within which they begin to understand the world are socially co-constructed and therefore proceed in multiple ways (e.g., memories overlap or one evokes the other, and the narrative is full of associations, and digressions). One could even risk saying that the information appearing in the stories is a reflection of the developmental processes of the women representatives of the family, including their maturation and the transformations that are part of this process. One of the processes (and stages) that allow one to order and understand one's life and the events that have occurred (or are still occurring) in it is precisely generativity, also called "life-giving," which the author of the saga seems to emphasise quite strongly. This generativity, understood as the ability to bring to life new beings, new creations and new ideas, including the ability of self-constitution in terms of the final development of identity (Witkowski, 2009, p. 130), undoubtedly becomes the participation of the heroines-narrators of the *Masurian saga* (e.g., restoring the farm, planting a garden, building a guesthouse, rebuilding relationships, and creating bonds).

Analysing how the narrative is conducted, it is furthermore noticeable that it is characterised by a high degree of coherence, reflexivity and openness to ambiguous evaluations and interpretations. Moreover, in many places, it involves an agreement to respect opposites and to take into account the complex axiological-existential relationships of the plots and events presented. In Barbara and Małgorzata's narratives, the theme of time is strongly emphasised, there is a motif of death, the

limitation of life, and the need to put experiences in order, revealing responsibility and a desire to influence the younger generation and care for others, and even “the transmission of values, experiences and wisdom, and assistance in adapting to the requirements of adult life” (Oleś, 2011, p. 134). Referring to the concept of E. Erikson, Lech Witkowski further argues that generativity is a kind of life-giving force. He relates it to both procreation (productivity) and creativity (Witkowski, 2009). Generalising, he treats it as the ability to bring new beings, creations and ideas into existence, as well as the ability to (self) constitution (in terms of the ultimate development of identity), which can certainly also be applied to the heroines of the trilogy.

## Conclusion

When existential, axiological or philosophical themes become apparent in narrative identity, we may associate them with the balance of life, wisdom or spiritual-religious commitment and see the activation of a generative script in the story of a particular subject. This is the case with the *Masurian saga* and the heroines-narrators created in it. This is evidenced, among other things, by the choice of themes (including, for example, coming to terms with time, passing on a legacy to the next generation, taking up the thread of a person with a disability, presenting family histories) (Mitosek, 2001, pp. 175–193), the overcoming of various difficulties by the protagonists, the programming of the heroines as persons showing above-average care for others. According to researchers:

[...] the development of the generative script entails changes in mentality and behaviour. The former includes a belief in the importance and well-being of the human species, while the latter includes a real increase (or emergence) of commitment to other people – caring is reflected in action (Oleś, 2011, p. 134).

As P. Oleś emphasises, changes in (pro-social) motivation are not so much a function of age but rather correspond to the generative script (the essence of which is concern for others, an altruistic attitude) and are connected to the awareness of passing time. Moreover, “the development of a generative script contributes to the consolidation of identity and the strengthening of the sense of autonomy, as well as satisfaction with life” (Oleś, 2011, p. 135). It also provides a sense of power and fulfilment. Through the narrative framing of change, the female protagonists signal that an understanding of the meaning of life is taking place in them, as well as cognition and even understanding of the meaning given to individual experiences and events, which become more generalised. They become a representation of the experience of



many women and even of a generation, especially the post-war (Barbara) and turn-of-the-century generation (Małgorzata). The novelistic matter of all volumes of the *Masurian saga*, shaped by the fabric of the ordering narrative, illustrates that the presentation of analyses and conclusions is favoured by the achievement of middle age (middle and late adulthood). In all parts of the Masurian stories, an important place is given to the search for timeless and universal reference points and the perspective of a supra-individual existence, which sometimes has a sentimental tinge (Syska, 2010, p. 123-132).

The generative script in the *Masurian saga* is a form of narration (quite personal), which indicates, and even sets, the direction of the characters' generative behaviour about themselves (personal stories), the local community and the surrounding world. The nature of the narrative means that the personal myth takes the form of "giving life" and can be expressed in the saying: "I am what survives me" (Erikson, 1968, p. 141), as the rudimentary roles in the theory presented are: commitment (goal-setting and decision-making), action (creating, maintaining, offering), and narrative (a generative script within the human life story) inscribed in the care of the next generation (Tokarska, 2008, pp. 471–500). The saga also refers to the poetics of sylvanism<sup>3</sup> (Nycz, 1984).

It should also be emphasised that, according to E. Erikson, the fact of having or even desiring offspring does not, in itself, equate to generativity. The point is that the virtue that awakens at this stage of developmental tension is "care" (caring) expressed in the desire to take care of "persons, creations, and ideas" as an expression of an instinctive tendency towards benevolence (Witkowski, 2009, p. 130). Saga reveals that generativity (life-giving) can be understood quite broadly, including as a commitment to care for oneself, others and the future. After all, it is a consequence of both the individual's inner commitment and social expectations and needs.

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<sup>3</sup> Sylvans as a type of writing can even be considered as a supra-species category.

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