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# THE MICROARCHIVE OF RECOLLECTIONS. ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN WIESŁAW KĘPIŃSKI'S EGO-DOCUMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The article aims to analyse the memoirs of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's fosterling Wiesław Kępiński, with particular attention to the archives they contain (photocopies of manuscript notes and photographs). The article argues that collected ego-documents constitute 'microarchives' for Kępiński, in which he can recall his foster father (who had passed away) and create (and re-create) his own vision of his past next to him. Methodologically, the paper refers to family studies, research on vernacularity, and on melancholy.

**KEYWORDS:** Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Wiesław Kępiński, ego-document, archive, family, memoir

The investigation into the relationship between Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's private life and his literary output has been substantially popular over the last decade.<sup>1</sup> However, the omitted aspect from

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1 E.g., M. Radziwon, *Iwaszkiewicz. Pisarz po katastrofie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010; A. Król, *Rzeczy. Iwaszkiewicz intymnie*, Wydawnictwo

the current analysis is the writing output created within the poet's family circle, namely, the publications of Maria Iwaszkiewicz-Wojdowska (the artist's daughter),<sup>2</sup> Ludwika Włodek (Iwaszkiewicz's great-granddaughter),<sup>3</sup> and Wiesław Kępiński (the writer's fosterling).<sup>4</sup> Despite being represented in a substantial number (ten bibliographic items), none has as yet been academically studied in a context of family studies. Importantly, the mentioned books are not merely of a sentimental character, or supplements to Iwaszkiewicz's biography. Owing to the archival materials contained in them (photographs from the collections of the writer's family, the artist's notes or manuscripts, privately printed documents), they present to a wider audience 'documents of the past, knowledge sources and manifestations'<sup>5</sup>, and from the intimist point of view, they constitute even a 'therapy tool' for those who wrote them.<sup>6</sup>

Wiesław Kępiński's ego-documents<sup>7</sup> seem a particularly interesting research subject because they form a collage of archival materials showing the period of the writer's fosterling's life when

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Wilk&Król, Warszawa 2015; R. Romaniuk, *Inne życie biografia Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza*, vol. I, Wydawnictwo Iskry, Warszawa 2012 (vol. II - 2017).

- 2 M. Iwaszkiewicz, *Kuchnia Iwaszkiewiczów. Przepisy i anegdoty*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik, Warszawa 2018; see the following by M. Iwaszkiewicz: *Luźne wspomnienia*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Miasta-Ogrodu, Podkowa Leśna 1998; *Z moim ojcem o jedzeniu*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1980; *Z pamięci*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik, Warszawa 2006; *Portrety*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik, Warszawa 2020; *Portrety i rozmowy*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie SEDNO, Warszawa 2022.
- 3 L. Włodek, *Iwaszkiewiczowie. Opowieść o rodzinie*, Wydawnictwo Marginesy, Warszawa 2021 (First edition: *Pra. Opowieść o rodzinie Iwaszkiewiczów*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2012).
- 4 W. Kępiński, *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik, Warszawa 2006; Idem, *Upagniony syn Iwaszkiewiczów*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2019.
- 5 All of the Polish-English translations come from the article's translator, Magdalena Iwińska
- 6 M.P. Markowski, 'O kolekcjach', in: Idem: *Anatomia ciekawości*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1999, p. 34.
- 7 The term: ego-document used after S. Roszak, 'Ego-documents - some remarks about Polish and European historiographical and methodological experience'. *Biuletyn Polskiej Myśli Historycznej*, 2013, no. 8, pp. 27-41; *Egodokumenty. Tradycje historiograficzne i perspektywy badawcze*, eds. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Pacevicius, S. Roszak, Wydawnictwo, Toruń 2015.

he lived at Stawisko (Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's house in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw). His publication is enriched with the reprints of Iwaszkiewicz's photographs, and photocopies of his manuscripts and letters. The artist's archival records (from the Iwaszkiewicz family's private collection and from the Museum of Anna and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in Stawisko) have been complemented with scans of Kępiński's written when he was a boy, photocopies of notes from his notebooks, early drawings, or, among other things, photographs connected with different places (Podkowa Leśna, Warsaw, Sopot).

Kępiński's memoirs are interesting to read if only for the fact that they contain a testimony of a person saved from the two-day massacre of civilians in Warsaw's Wola District in 1944.<sup>8</sup> His autobiographical books record the recollections of that event, additionally imprinting its reminiscences in the further adult life of of their author. Reading the reprinted manuscripts or drawings of Iwaszkiewicz's fosterling permits an insight into his adolescent attempts to overcome the war trauma. It also allows us to see his ways of establishing relationships with the members of the Iwaszkiewicz family who were looking after him, and who came from an entirely different background than Kępiński. Investigating how he presents his guardian through archival records is not only of relevance for Kępiński's biography, but also because it contributes to the knowledge of the life and oeuvre of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz.

The present study puts forth a thesis that Wiesław Kępiński, by incorporating in his books archival records related to Iwaszkiewicz and himself, creates a kind of a 'microarchive' of the relationship with his guardian, thus presenting a 'privatised' record parallel to what is contained in the official and institutionalized writer's archive at Stawisko Museum. The archive created by the artist's fosterling plays a performative role, creating his own vision of the

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8 For more see P. Gursztyn, *Rzeź Woli. Zbrodnia nierozliczona*, Wydawnictwo Demart, Warszawa 2014.

story of his adolescence at Stawisko. This paper tries to interpret how Wiesław Kępiński composes his autobiography by setting in motion cultural contexts connected with the category of melancholy, and trauma since, according to Katarzyna Szalewska, an archive may constitute 'space [...] for a historiographic record of the past and psychoanalytical autotherapy, by working on documents, and working through a trauma',<sup>9</sup> The paper raises the question of whether Kępiński's 'microarchive', created in his books, can be a space of a 'dialogue' between him and the memory of Iwaszkiewicz. It also reflects on Kępiński's attitude towards his archive: maybe creating family memory traps him in a sort of 'memory chalet', not permitting him to confront the difficult past.

#### KĘPIŃSKI AND IWASZKIEWICZ: MUTUAL LITERARY INSPIRATIONS

The life story of Iwaszkiewicz's fosterling can be known by reading *Inne życie* [Another Life]<sup>10</sup>, the second volume of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's biography by Radosław Romaniuk and from a series of interviews and statements appearing in *Spotkać Iwaszkiewicza. Nie-biografia* [To meet Iwaszkiewicz. A Non-biography]<sup>11</sup> edited by Anna Król. The life of Kępiński, miraculously saved from death and living in the writer's household from the age of 14, was inscribed Iwaszkiewicz's literary works. Kępiński was an inspiration for the 1953 poem \*\*\* [Widzisz, wyjeżdżasz na długie czasy] [You See, You Are Leaving for Long] which ending verbalizes a message to the boy who was in his care ('you too grow, gain force/ and be as I always repeat/wise, brave, and nice').<sup>12</sup> The reflection of the

9 K. Szalewska, "Topo-grafie archiwum - o genealogii i melancholii", in: *Świadectwa pamięci. W kręgu źródeł i dyskursów (od XIX wieku do dzisiaj)*, eds. E. Dąbrowicz, B. Larenta, M. Domurad, Wydawnictwo Alter Studio, Białystok 2017, p. 250.

10 R. Romaniuk, *Inne życie. Biografia Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza*, vol. II, Wydawnictwo Iskry, Warszawa 2017, pp. 210-214; 275-282.

11 *Spotkać Iwaszkiewicza. Nie-biografia*, comp. A. Król, Wydawnictwo Will&Król, Warszawa 2014, pp. 26-30.

12 J. Iwaszkiewicz, "\*\*\* [Widzisz, wyjeżdżasz na długie czasy]", in: *Wiersze*, vol. II, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 'Czytelnik', Warszawa 1977, p. 242.

teenager's image can also be found in the short story *A Girl and the Pigeons*,<sup>13</sup> which was elaborated on by Robert Papieski (among others) in the introduction to the selection of Iwaszkiewicz's and Kępiński's letters.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the traces of the writer's fostering in the oeuvre of Iwaszkiewicz can be identified in the novel for teenagers *Wycieczka do Sandomierza* [A Trip to Sandomierz]<sup>15</sup> and the short story *Jadwinia* [Jadwinia],<sup>16</sup> as well as in the unfinished novel *Pokolenia* [Generations] (dated to 1951 or 1952), which still remains in a manuscript format.<sup>17</sup> In each of the enumerated works, the writer's fosterling served as an artistic inspiration, a model for the character. Interestingly, let us point to the fact raised by Papieski that Kępiński as an adult also looked for literary 'inspiration' in the figure of his guardian, this yielding Kępiński's short story *Uniesienie* [Elation] (a variation on Iwaszkiewicz's *Wzlot* [Ascent]) and *Marginalia*, serving as a set of comments on the works by the writer from Stawisko.<sup>18</sup>

It seems, however, that the boldest attempt to 'pay back the debt' for the opportunity of having been raised in the artist's household is to be found in Kępiński's ego-documents composed of the above-mentioned epistolographic corpus. This includes *Męczymy się obaj. Korespondencja z lat 1948-1980* [We Both Find it Hard. Correspondence from 1948-1980] compiled by Robert and Agnieszka Papieski in 2014 and two memoirs: *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy* [Nineteen Sixty-One] (2006) and *Upragniony syn Iwaszkiewiczów* [The Long-awaited Son of the Iwaszkiewicz] (2019). Both of the latter publications, essen-

13 J. Iwaszkiewicz, 'Dziewczyna i gołębie', in: *Opowiadania zebrane*, vol. II, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 'Czytelnik', Warszawa 1969, pp. 533-594.

14 R. Papieski, 'Wstęp', in: *Męczymy się obaj. Korespondencja z lat 1948 - 1980*, comps. R., A. Papieski, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2014, p. 12. See also: R. Papieski, 'Sierpień w lipcu', *Twórczość 2009*, no. 10.

15 J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Wycieczka do Sandomierza*, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 'Czytelnik', Warszawa 1953.

16 J. Iwaszkiewicz, 'Jadwinia', in: *Opowiadania zebrane*, vol. III, Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 'Czytelnik', Warszawa 1969, pp. 144-177.

17 More on the works with 'Kępiński in the background': R. Papieski, 'Wstęp', in: *Męczymy się obaj...*, pp. 10-18.

18 Ibidem, p. 27.

tially approbative of the author of *The Maidens of Wilko*, present their author's autobiography. Substantial differences can be spotted between the two where the first talks of the recollections of the Wola massacre, also containing testimonies of the witnesses to those events, and the second one is dedicated mainly to the description of Kępiński's life in Iwaszkiewicz's home. Nevertheless, both function as a very personal 'first-person' story about their author's past. Bearing in mind the interpretative potential of the 'father-son' relationship contained in Kępiński's reminiscent reports, in this paper, the main investigation subject will be the 2019 publication which, in a way, 'sums up' the writer's fosterling's reflections on his own life at Stawisko.

### 'THE LONG-AWAITED SON OF THE IWASZKIEWICZS'

The title given by the publisher (Prószyński i S-ka) to Kępiński's memoirs suggests that the Iwaszkiewiczz enthusiastically decided to become the boy's guardians ('long-awaited'), and as could be supposed, it heralds a happy relationship between the guardian and the boy in his custody<sup>19</sup>. However, a reader acquainted with the letters collected in *Męczymy się obaj...* already knows that their conversations usually evolved into disputes, followed by attempts at reconciliation. This paradox can be justified with the difference between the stages in life at which Kępiński was as he thought differently as a youth compared to when aged. On top of it, there is this aspect of thoughts being 'confected' (as phrased by Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński in his *Sonet V*), that is, being affected by the smoothing power of senile memory. Additionally, the genealogical difference between 'the younger' and 'the older' Kępiński has to be

19 The title proposed by the book author was *My Stawisko* (this is information shared by Robert Papiński, PhD, an archivist at the Museum of Anna and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in Stawisko). This title also suggests that Wiesław Kępiński was a kind of the writer's foster son, although his legal status was never settled. He was never (legally) adopted to live with the Iwaszkiewicz family. The only thing that can be said about that situation is the Stawisko residents secured his guardianship and conditions for development and education.

pointed to. Letters, written 'from life, reporting live'<sup>20</sup> are generally much more emotionally charged, while memoirs are written after an elapse of time, with the person writing having much greater distance from the issues presented, also aware that the latter is being written for a bigger audience.

Kępiński's memoirs render an 'idyllic' atmosphere with Iwaszkiewicz shown in them as a being a valiant and brave man, acting as an authority. Furthermore, when reading Kępiński's reports, one cannot help feeling that he continuously re-lives the images from his childhood. The manifestation of this 'immersing' in the presented reality can be found in the author's words concluding the memoirs, *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy*, which he addressed to himself: 'Goodbye, little Wiesio from Wola! Miraculously saved! I do hope that you have not wasted what you were given: the life and the joy that this life brings'.<sup>21</sup>

Knowing the correspondence, we are aware that the young boy living in the writer's house felt alienated. There is hardly any mention of it in the *Upragniony syn...*; this later story can be regarded as simplified in its plot compared to the epistolographic record published. When going through the presented story, Kępiński is ten, then twenty-three when, due to Iwaszkiewicz's connections, he is assigned a flat; he marries, and is immediately afterwards divorced. Such a brief description of the later period from the biography of the author's life contrasts with the exceptionally detailed

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20 S. Skwarczyńska, *Teoria listu*, comps. E. Feliksiak, M. Leś, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2016, p. 25.

21 W. Kępiński, *Sześćdziesiąty...*, p. 100. The author of both publications eagerly inscribes himself into an image of an exceptionally fortunate individual, which in a way interlaces with his biography: Wiesław Kępiński survived a WW II massacre, since he fled from the place where his family were executed. As he mentions during that event sixty people were murdered, that is why for his 2006 publication he nicknamed himself *The Sixty-first*. After having been put up provisionally at his sister's, it was decided that Wiesław had to find for himself a more appropriate home which would give him an opportunity for education and better development conditions. The means to accomplish this was an announcement in *Express Wieczorny* about a boy who had miraculously been saved from the massacre and would like to find a new place to live. Among others, Anna Iwaszkiewicz responded to that appeal. See R. Romaniuk, *Inne życie...*, pp. 210-214.

presentations of the days spent as a boy with Iwaszkiewicz's family. In his memoirs, Kępiński does not expose his personality traits, passions, or interests. The gaps between the events of the wedding and the divorce are filled with the descriptions of his professional activities and Iwaszkiewicz's accomplishments. It is, however, difficult to ascertain unequivocally whether this is happening based upon the author's conscious decision (since he decided to write good things only about the time he spent with Iwaszkiewicz), or because of his selective memory.

What bonds the figures of Iwaszkiewicz and Kępiński most strongly, despite their actual distance in daily life, are the fragments from the archive of the writer's fosterling. This is the issue that requires particular attention.

#### MICROARCHIVE: MANUSCRIPTS

The editorial advantage of the edition of the *Long-awaited Son* and of *The Sixty-first* is the meticulous care taken to ensure the legibility of the author's scanned notes. A reader can, thus, find in these books (among others) photocopies of Kępiński's diary in which he daily wrote a sentence reporting on what had happened to him at Stawisko, beginning on the day he entered that household in 1947.<sup>22</sup> Bearing in mind that Kępiński started writing as a child, his handwriting gradually changed from a childish into a youthful one, while the notes began to look less aesthetical, becoming more 'warped', full of exclamation and question marks, probably reflecting the boy's various emotional states. The photocopies of the diary, treated metonymically with respect to the author's memory<sup>23</sup> in the 2019 edition, essentially contained descriptions of his life in Iwaszkiewicz's company and emotions that accompanied encounters with Stawisko famous guests. In the recollections from

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22 W. Kępiński, *Upragniony syn...*, pp. 91-94.

23 See 'Every so often I look into my memory: notebook [emphasis by Magdalena Krzyżanowska] in order to pick out the most interesting moments'. W. Kępiński, *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy...*, p. 92. On treating memory as a prop also in D. Draaisma, *Machina metafor. Historia pamięci*, trans. R. Pucek, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warszawa 2011, p. 74.



2006, Kępiński added what else could be found in his youthful records:

When I was already at Stawisko I started filling in a notebook in which I pasted various coloured photos from papers: painting, sculpture, and others, but also with a malice aforethought and satisfaction photos of the execution of different concentration camp commandants (women included). In them you can see lorries with the tailgate lowered, with their back to the gallows. Convicts sit on stools in those lorries. A noose is put over the head, the lorry moves away...<sup>24</sup>

The above quote says a good deal about the selection of archival materials Kępiński decided to adopt when publishing his memoirs. While in *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy* from 2006, Kępiński publicized the whole content of his notebooks, in the 2019 book, he limits this knowledge claiming that his childhood notes oscillated exclusively around his life at Stawisko. It can be thus supposed that he wanted to detach himself from past traumatic events. This continuous communing with the archive he collected seems to close him up in a loop of autoreferentiality, oscillating mainly around the experience of the trauma and loss.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the archive he amassed, as Katarzyna Szalewska remarks:

... does not fulfil its promises: it does not prevent from destruction, oblivion, it is too random and too vast to be able to provide a reply. Loss is hidden in the unordered archival collection: the archive contains everything and nothing at the same time, in itself becoming a synonym of melancholic loss. [...] In this understanding the archive constitutes space of the loss accumulation: it does not guarantee the reaching of the melancholy source, it only exacerbates the very desire.<sup>26</sup>

24 Ibidem, p. 47.

25 Additionally, it is worth paying attention to the aspect which K. Szalewska phrased as follows: '[...] the autobiographic subject also becomes an archive of their own traumas and personal losses, carrying inside their own and family story, either imagined or narrated'. (K. Szalewska, *Topo-grafie archiwum...*, p. 258). Kępiński thus through the continuous communing with Iwaszkiewicz's archive internalizes it, himself becoming an 'archive' of his own experience, saturated with the testimonies to the contacts with the writer whose personality moulded him.

26 Ibidem p. 254.

### MICROARCHIVE: (NON)VERNACULAR PHOTOGRAPHS

The desire for self-cognition and bringing Iwaszkiewicz closer is fulfilled in the *Long-awaited Son...* by Kępiński collecting his guardian's photos. The reader may find it surprising that the story dedicated to Kępiński's childhood carries photos of Iwaszkiewicz as an aged individual, taken in various formal situations (e.g., when the poet was receiving decorations or at work). The writer's photos, the posed and formal ones, accompany the stories of his fosterling and deal with his school adventures. This makes them appear as being out of chronological order to the reader as, for example, the photos from the 1960s describe the emotions the boy felt in the 1940s. This can be considered an interesting issue for further interpretation, since a family photo is usually 'homely', forming the family *lingua franca* presenting (most often chronologically) a coherent story of its members.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Kępiński sharing private photos, we have to do deal with the problem with the afore-mentioned vernacularity: private photos are exposed for viewing by individuals who do not come from his family, and who thus do not have a 'common language' with him, and who are detached from the story narrated in the text.<sup>28</sup> What can be judged as another interesting approach is the juxtaposition of the ennobling photos of Kępiński's guardian with the story about his own childhood. The comparison of photographs and written text makes one recall the reflection once written down by Wojciech Śmieja with respect to Tomasz Jastrun's volumes of poetry and feature columns.

It goes without saying that photos serve to objectivize and give credibility to their content which is by definition extremely subjective. There are merely several photos in this collection, and

27 A. Mazela, 'Kolekcjonując cudze wspomnienia. Granice wernakularności fotografii rodzinnych'. *Kultura Współczesna*, 2015, no. 3, pp. 123-141.

28 'Pulling family photographs out of the context and not allowing to complement stories, significantly impoverished their content, to the extent of even impeding and changing their interpretation. A family photograph allows a trip into the past, to specific moments and places, in space [...] For a stranger who enters the world of a given family without any knowledge of the individuals shown in the photo, this trip is not possible'. *Ibidem*, p. 136.

they were meticulously selected. In the photos we see people who are unquestioned authorities: Astrid Lindgren, Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, Sławomir Mrozek, and others. The photographs that are particularly interesting to us (namely those illustrating the father-son relation) appear surrounded by the ‘photos with authorities’; it can be supposed that such a selection of photographs has its defined rhetoric purpose: the impact of his authority the writer first consolidates showing himself with celebrities, and subsequently uses forcing his vision of fatherhood.<sup>29</sup>

Jastrun’s aspiration to reach such a ‘rhetoric goal’ signals, according to Śmieja, the ‘calculated and measured author’s presence in the text’.<sup>30</sup> Official photographs, next to the photos of the poet with the child, are meant to ennoble parenthood as a practice equally important to that of fulfilling the role of a representative of the world of literature. In the case of Kępiński’s story, a similar phenomenon, though not identical, can be observed where there exists no piece of Iwaszkiewicz’s writing in which the writer tries to present himself to the public both as an important diplomat and writer, as well as a father. As seen in the context of the *Upragniony syn...* and *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy*, we can sooner speak about the fact that the foster ‘son’ wants to present to the public his relationship with the writer as being meaningful. The photographs were, therefore, meant to boost in the readers’ perception of the importance of the poet’s story as the boy’s tutor.<sup>31</sup>

The juxtaposition of ‘serious’ photographs of Iwaszkiewicz with humorous stories from Kępiński’s childhood was intended to bring

29 W. Śmieja, ‘Zapisać ojcostwo (Tomasz Jastrun, Jacek Podsiadło)’, *Autobiografia*, 2015, no. 1, p. 75.

30 Ibidem, p. 76.

31 A father-tutor, adviser, authority.... The images with which Kępiński shows Iwaszkiewicz can be regarded as so-called father’s phantasms which exist more in the head of the writer’s fosterling than in the reality concerning the writer. The described phenomenon is defined by Magdalena Wasąg as ‘a peculiar imagination scenario which sons implement, while the main role in them is played by the father. Quite often this borderline blurs between where *the son father ends and where the son begins.*’ See M. Wasąg, *W cieniu ojca. Awangarda prozatorska lat 30. XX wieku. Rudnicki, Napierski, Schulz, Tarn*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2019, p. 16.

the foster 'father' 'closer', and maybe, even to 'domesticate' him. This would thus not only legitimize the 'father-son' relationship in the readers' eyes but it would also attempt to describe the writer, for Kępiński's own sake, as his own memento. The photos of the writer (or with the writer) attached to the life story of Kępiński would then aim to boost his own role in the writer's life.<sup>32</sup> They were also characterized by a certain attempt to 'conserve' the recollections, holding onto the images of the photographed individuals who had already passed away.

Interestingly, the 'formal' photos were accompanied by the photos of Stawisko shot by Kępiński himself. Their incorporation into his visual story can be interpreted as an attempt to remember the writer's house in harmony with the images fixed previously in the memoirs. The attempt to return to early years in life, was also expressed by Iwaszkiewicz's foster 'son' in one of his epistolary requests:

I'd love so much all of this, as it is, to exist forever. I would like again to have my room upstairs, the pigeons, the desk in which everything would be neatly arranged. [...] It would be good to live here together again. I would live the illusion that things are as they were before.<sup>33</sup>

#### EMPTY SPOTS AND MELANCHOLY

Kępiński's microarchive is strictly focused around Iwaszkiewicz. Its author even started a separate notebook into which he pasted newspaper clippings dedicated to his guardian, faithfully following his literary and political endeavours. Despite the fact that archival materials constitute almost a third of the book, they are

32 We also need to point to the format in which the letters of Iwaszkiewicz and Kępiński were edited. The corpus of the correspondence between the guardian and his fosterling has the same graphic layout as the writer's letters to his daughters. Although this might seem an unimportant issue, uniformizing of both editions provokes the reflection on the importance of the boy's presence in the writer's life. Although to-date a multitude of Iwaszkiewicz's letters have been published, each, even if released by the same publisher has a different layout: only the letters to the writer's daughters and the 'foster son' look identical. A reader unfamiliar with Iwaszkiewicz's history may thus think that the epistolography with Kępiński ranks among the family series, of the siblings.

33 J. Iwaszkiewicz, W. Kępiński, *Męczymy się obaj...*, p. 585.

not always commented on. Next to Kępiński's archival documents from his childhood appear his statements from the times when he recalls his youth. In effect, the manuscript photocopies from the author's notebook remain undiscussed, they function as if independently. The lack of any comment by the author of *The Sixty-first* on his earlier statements can be understood as a proof of the incapacity of the grown-up person writing the memoirs to distance from his old self. In his narrative, the layer of perceiving the world by a child and a mature person mix, and actually (from the reader's perspective) it remains unknown when the author of the memoirs goes through his adolescence.

The archival materials discussed by Kępiński are the reprints from his childhood letters to his guardian. Importantly, they feature his self-depreciative remarks concentrating on; 'I was such a pea-brain then', and 'I made mistakes when writing'<sup>34</sup> (despite being 9 when he was writing and his school education requiring substantial rounding up). The negative judgement of the letters expresses the undertone of the writer's memoirs: Iwaszkiewicz is always exalted, and his fosterling criticized, mainly by himself. If we were, however, to decide that the author's narrative is not objective by observing that he tries to give a 'nicer' undertone to his memoirs, one could ask why he inserted the depressing moments, inciting the need for self-criticism. Could this imply the complications brought about by his lack of educational background in comparison to the well-rounded Stawisko residents? Or maybe this was the impression of 'insufficiency' towards the guardian's expectations, which 'concentrated on three goals: the need to take care of the boy's education, and to appropriately mould his character, and equip him with the capacity to communicate with other people'?<sup>35</sup> As a result, the memoir's protagonist criticizes himself although he could have easily adopted a distanced attitude towards

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34 Ibidem, p. 156.

35 R. Papiński, 'Wstęp', in: *Męczymy się obaj...*, p. 7.

his guardian's decisions and acts.<sup>36</sup> These self-accusations are regarded by Marek Bieńczyk as a melancholic feature, resulting from the sense of loss, perhaps, of a good relationship with his guardian or of intimacy, as described here:

[Melancholics - M.K.] in experiencing self-accusations and self-tormenting usually redirect on themselves the reproaches addressed to the lost object of affection, and this negative, destructive equalling of libido with the loss, this narcissistic absorption of the object and turning oneself into its substitute, casting the object's shadow over oneself, constitutes the basic mechanism which changes the loss of the object into a loss occurring inside one's own 'self'.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the private 'ups and downs', seventy-year-old Kępiński does not decide to honestly revise his own relations with the writer. His books are predominantly dedicated to how he would like to recall Iwaszkiewicz. He, thus, communes more with the 'screen memory' (a certain vision of what his past childhood looked like), and not so much with the attempt to verify the remembered facts.<sup>38</sup> In his publications, it is hard to find information on the quarrels the two men had, on the feeling of not being understood, and on the reproaches related to financial issues. Keeping up to the expectations of him as a 'long-awaited' son, Kępiński does not tackle any problematic issues which are the elements common in their biography. Therefore, he does not recall the unpleasant situation which they both suffered during their holiday together in Sopot,

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- 36 Interestingly, when reading Iwaszkiewicz's correspondence with other addressees, the writer's attitude to Kępiński, undertoned with sorrow, can be found: 'looking at Wiesław whose life I devastated with the bourgeois whim to bring up a foster son [emphasis by J.I], is there any room for a talk, for friendship. See A., J. Iwaszkiewiczowie, J. Lisowski, *Listy 1947-1979*, comps. R., A. Papiescy, Wydawnictwo Akademickie SEDNO, Warszawa 2020, p. 351.
- 37 M. Bieńczyk, *Melancholia: o tych, co nigdy nie odnajdą straty*, Wydawnictwo Świat Książki, Warszawa 2014, p. 24. As the Author adds, the feeling of loss is often so overwhelming that melancholics 'never free themselves from the experience' (p. 16). Bieńczyk's statement can also be referred to Kępiński's experience.
- 38 P. Lejeune, 'Miraże dzieciństwa', trans. R. Lubas-Bartoszyńska, in: Idem: *Wariacje na temat pewnego paktu. O autobiografii*, trans. W. Grajewski, S. Jaworski, A. Labuda, R. Lubas-Bartoszyńska, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2007, p. 238.

when the writer's foster 'son' was mistaken by Anna Kowalska, Polish writer for Iwaszkiewicz's lover. Neither does he speak of the visit paid to Stawisko by Jerzy Błeszyński, Iwaszkiewicz's sexual partner, and Kępiński's peer. This happened when Kępiński was already an adult and he was frequently interrogated by strangers about his foster 'father's' intimate life.<sup>39</sup> When tackling selected challenging issues, Kępiński would most likely not have said anything new, perhaps because these have already been well documented by contemporary biographers. However, such reflection would certainly contribute to exposing the writer's foster 'son's' emotions, the challenges he had to face, whether all this had any impact on his perception of Iwaszkiewicz. For instance, whether this made him more tolerant, or, contrariwise, more conservative regarding the writer's private matters.

Furthermore, Kępiński does not tackle the motif of living together under one roof in Iwaszkiewicz's household with the poet's daughters Maria and Teresa Iwaszkiewicz. As far as it can be judged from the memoirs of Maria, author of *Z moim ojcem o jedzeniu* [With My Father on Food], it is known that their relation was conflict-free. Contrariwise, they might have been on quite friendly terms, possibly because when Kępiński arrived at Stawisko at the age of 14, the girls were already in their twenties, and had their own company.<sup>40</sup> In this respect, too, the reader is deprived of the chance of becoming acquainted with Kępiński's opinions and emotions. It is, therefore, unknown, whether the presence of the writer's older children in any way affected the alienation the young man could have felt, and whether he felt the urge to compete with his guardian's daughters for the writer's attention.

Thus, the image of Iwaszkiewicz in the recollections of his fosterling is gentle and conciliatory, and one could even say, kind to

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39 These motifs are also tackled by Anna Król, See *Spotkać Iwaszkiewicza. Nie-biografia*, comp. A. Król, Wydawnictwo Wilk&Król, Warszawa 2014, s. 38.

40 Although the figure of Kępiński appears in the letters of Iwaszkiewicz to Maria Iwaszkiewicz and Teresa Markowska, see J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Listy do córek*, comps. A., R. Romaniukowie, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2009, p. 93.

the artist who had already passed away. It is likely that Kępiński assumed that due to his gratitude to the writer, he would not touch on those (and many similar) questionable issues of the life they shared, but that he would leave to the generations to come an orderly picture of his relations with Iwaszkiewicz. However, this suggests that his recollections are a sort of fantasy regarding their 'father-son' relationship, and not a report on its actual state.<sup>41</sup>

The numerous archival pieces, not commented on, and sometimes 'scattered' across the pages of a private narrative force the reader to seek a key which would help interpret the album recollections of its author. It is our belief that the answer is hinted at by another owner of a micro-archive, the artist Alessandra Violi, who in the *Lexicon for an Affective Archive* presented her work consisting of an attempt at fitting the memory of a beloved person (her deceased mother) in one box.<sup>42</sup> The author of *the Boxes*, having gathered various sentimentally marked objects that had belonged to her mother, wrote the following:

Maybe the fact that I inserted one archive inside the other was an exchange of gifts, since I cannot truly say whether the box with things [...] was for you, or for myself staging in my memory your death as a theatre with endless shows and affective animations.<sup>43</sup>

Violi's reflection, thus, concentrates on the private archive as a gift: for herself and for a beloved person whose image is preserved in the family collection. The particularly interesting aspect is connected, in a way, with her performing the archive, animating it. She refers to the latter thought in the following:

This is how I have found out that boxes do not serve to keep objects that belong to our deceased: the spirits, but to blur the time. Just like your old hat box which now contains your archive, my affective

41 More on how this relationship could be perceived by Iwaszkiewicz, see R. Romański: *Inne życie...*, pp. 275-282.

42 A. Violi, 'Boxes', trans. M. Kositorny, in: *Leksykon archiwum afektywnego*, eds. M. Pustianaz, G. Palladini, trans. K. Tórz, Wydawnictwo Słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2015, pp. 25-27.

43 A. Violi, *Boxes...*, p. 25.



processes do not come from the past or from the present. They stick out from the order (archive), inhabiting the transfer space . . . <sup>44</sup>

Kępiński's archive 'transfer space' found its use in his private story of Iwaszkiewicz in which he recalls facts - for his own and the readers' sake at his discretion. On the other hand, it may be a study of his own private microarchive, unreliable memory, and the wish to remain within the sphere of childhood (or incapacity to leave it because of a trauma). This collection is composed both of documents and concealments concerning the difficult relationship with his foster 'father', and the complications or the feeling of alienation in the family of, essentially, strangers.

### CONCLUSION

Wiesław Kępiński's ego-documents (and particularly their last publication issued in 2019) testify to the long-term impact that Iwaszkiewicz had on the life of the author. Out of the writer's photos, his own childhood notes, and drawings, Kępiński composes his microarchive - an alternative to the official collections dedicated to the artist. His publications, saturated with the wish to bring closer a 'distanced' Iwaszkiewicz, are an attempt at 'meeting with' the (no longer present) writer-guardian. Although such an encounter would be possible, through an archive, only after Iwaszkiewicz's death, would composing his own 'box' with recollections mean that Kępiński would not be rejected by his foster 'father'?

The story of Iwaszkiewicz's fosterling, trapped in his own microarchive, keeps Kępiński in his vision of childhood. From the selection of archival materials made by Kępiński, it would seem that he had not worked through his war trauma (or the trauma of being neglected or unadjusted to the 'intelligentsia' household of the artist), which he might continue to be unable to do while staying within the circle of his own archival records and recollections. Therefore, in his books, he constructs his own archive, for his and Iwaszkiewicz's sake, in an attempt to bring the latter

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44 Ibidem, p. 26.

closer to himself and to refill the void of Iwaszkiewicz's absence (or lack of intimacy) in his life. The good 'puff' he gives to the writer is an attempt at winning the writer's approval. Kępiński's attitude to Iwaszkiewicz can be considered as panegyric, at his own expense. The story built of archival records by the writer's fosterling does not aim at revising his relationship with the artist, nor to find answers to the questions that bothered him with respect to their relationship, and so, it does not show Iwaszkiewicz in a different light than the idealizing one. An alternative to this image would thus be the one emerging from their correspondence or written biographies (e.g., the one by Radosław Romaniuk).

Another issue already mentioned is the feeling of melancholy which accompanies the author of the memoir in the course of communing with the immense collection of archival records and creating his own private archive. Following the example of Marek Bieńczyk's work, this feeling could spring from a feeling of loss.<sup>45</sup> Kępiński's notes and archival compositions can be interpreted as

... the desire to find the source (also as the beginning and authenticity), thus a promise of closing up the trauma which inaugurated it by revealing the secret which remained hidden in it or finding the fact which (for an inexplicable reason) was lost or disappeared.<sup>46</sup>

The above-mentioned desire inserted in Bartosz Dąbrowski's statement (called an 'archive fever' by Jacques Derrida)<sup>47</sup> is, in

45 This is only one of the interpretations of the origin of melancholy based on Sigmund Freud's theory. This is also what P. Dybel and K. Dzika-Jurek write about. See P. Dybel, *Przemijalność piękna i melancholia Freuda. Teksty Drugie*, 1999, no. 3, pp. 17-31; K. Dzika-Jurek, *Problem ciężaru. Melancholia w twórczości Magdaleny Tuli*, doctoral dissertation under Prof. E. Dutka defended in 2014 at the University of Silesia in Katowice, see pp. 20-38: <https://sbc.org.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?showContent=true&id=139135> [accessed 7 May 2022].

46 B. Dąbrowski, 'Przypadłość archiwum. Fikcja dokumentu w narracjach o zagładzie (Mieczysław Abramowicz, *Każdy przyniósł, co miał najlepszego*), in: *Narracje po końcu wielkich narracji: kolekcje, obiekty, symulakra*, eds. H. Gosk, A. Zieniewicz, Wydawnictwo Elipsa, Warszawa 2007, pp. 246-247.

47 J. Derrida, *Gorączka archiwum. Impresja Freudowska*, trans. J. Momro, Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, Warszawa 2016, p. 11.

turn, treated by Katarzyna Szalewska as a symptom of an inherited disease which is sharing information on a traumatic 'thus remaining within the tabu sphere, therefore non-articulated [...] past of the ancestors'.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it may be so that the greatest loss causing melancholy in Kępiński's archives is the fact that Iwaszkiewicz did not speak about himself, that he talked to his foster 'son' with reproach, and with grudge. The numerous archival records provided by Kępiński and composed into a *decoupage* on the recognizable foster 'father' testify mainly to the impossibility to talk to him, and the attempt to imagine him, bring him closer.

Therefore, Kępiński's documents can be classified under the *l'écriture mélancolique* heading.<sup>49</sup> Only on the surface do they seem to explore the motifs omitted in Iwaszkiewicz's biography - in reality, they constitute mainly a series of anecdotes which reiterate the writer's image as that of the head of the family, an individual devoted to his loved ones. The reminiscences of the author of the *Upragniony syn Iwaszkiewiczów* aim at 'out-talking' the unfamiliarity with the writer, bringing the writer closer to him, 'meeting with him'. The ego-documents signed with the first and family names of the Iwaszkiewicz's fosterling rarely reveal their author's emotions and artefacts, and they omit the descriptions of essential experiences that bond him to the writer. In other words, while responding to the unsaid in Iwaszkiewicz's story, Kępiński creates new oblique elements, treating himself instrumentally versus the biography of 'the great writer and his family'.

*Translated by Magdalena Iwińska*

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48 K. Szalewska, *Topo-grafie archiwum...*, p. 259.

49 M. Bieńczyk, *Melancholia. O tych, co nigdy nie odnajdą straty...*, p. 36.