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# Tales of Ambivalence

Stories of Acceptance and Rejection  
among Swedish Expatriates in Poland

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## Abstract

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Stories about another country and others often contain moral and ideological tensions and ambivalences. This report analyses and interprets work-related stories among Swedish expatriates in Poland in order to highlight that aspect. The stories are told in interviews. When telling stories of their arrival in Poland, the expatriates may be seen as interrelating certain kinds of utterances. These utterances draw on the narrators' initial impressions of the Polish scenery and surroundings, various surprises or sudden changes in their impressions as well as other Swedes' opinions. By dialogising these points of view, a space for individuality and self-construction seems to be created. Simultaneously, an ability to be on the move is conveyed. Whereas arrival stories often end by drawing tolerant conclusions the expatriates' use of oral quotations articulates work-related protests or discontent. When bringing in others' voices, the narrators may be seen as struggling to understand and control the perceived novelty or otherness that the particular others are said to represent (a "mentality"). In so doing, narrative figures as "the child" or "the fool" may be presented, imputing certain characteristics to Poles as well as Swedes. In and through citations, the expatriates also engage in struggles with themselves.

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# 1 Introduction

*Throughout the history of economics the stranger everywhere appears as the trader, or the trader as stranger. As long as [an] economy is essentially self-sufficient, or products are exchanged within a spatially narrow group, it needs no middleman: a trader is only required for products that originate outside the group. Insofar as members do not leave the circle in order to buy these necessities – in which case they are the “strange” merchants in that outside territory – the trader must be a stranger, since nobody else has a chance to make a living.*

(Georg Simmel 1950/1964, p. 403)

An additional variation of Georg Simmel’s stranger seems to exist in today’s economic and working life: the company expatriate. To live and work abroad during a certain period of time is in some contexts common and highly praised, especially among privileged groups in Western societies. Working abroad is associated with learning, personal development and intercultural meetings bringing new insights.<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps also associated with a particular life style and a particular point of view. Expatriates are neither local inhabitants nor tourists, neither completely at home or away. They are to some extent supposed to make their new place familiar and recognizable but nevertheless continue to underline their distinctive otherness. In that sense expatriates may very well acquire, or strive to acquire, some of the features Simmel associates with a stranger: a certain character of mobility and border-crossing, a certain tendency to survey conditions from an outsider and insider angle, a certain attitude of distance in combination with proximity, indifference with involvement. Maybe one might add another feature as well: a willingness to narrate, report on and account for events and dramas in the foreign territory, and to turn one’s understanding into a quality or asset of one’s self and one’s world view.

One might even say that narrating is a central point of being an expatriate. Without narration a crucial goal seems unachievable: to form experiences from abroad. Some authors claim that experiences are not only shaped by but also presuppose a narration, that they hardly exist autonomously (Chase 1995, p. 31; Abma 1999, p. 193; Sacks 1992, vol. II p. 248; Dyer & Keller-Cohen 2000, p. 284; Migliore 1993, p. 354). In any case, to relate one’s experience to someone is not just emptying out the contents of one’s

head but organizing a tale that is told to a specific recipient by an authorized narrator. It is not only the entitlement of having experiences that contains an aspect of social order but also the specific packaging of these experiences. As Harvey Sacks points out, experiences may for these reasons be seen as “extraordinarily carefully regulated sorts of things” (Sacks 1992, vol. II p. 248; cf. Silverman 1998, p.13).

The position of expatriates as strangers brings a certain quality to their stories and storytelling. These are not only formed in the context of social particularities of being an expatriate but also in the context of general social practices of recognizing and accepting – or resisting, rejecting and protesting against — the perceived unfamiliar, new and strange. In that respect the empirical source of this report, Swedes working and living in Poland, appears to be a significant example.

From some Swedish points of view Poland is more or less regarded as having been rediscovered in the last ten years. Since the fall of communism a wide range of political, economic and cultural connections between Poland and Sweden have been constructed or reconstructed. Although some of these connections are mainly official – for instance the project “Poland in Focus” that was arranged during 1999 by the Swedish government – a considerable part appears to be taking place in private arenas (e.g. in tourism and the labour market), trade and business fields.<sup>2</sup> According to the Swedish Trade Council there are now between 800 and 1000 Swedish companies in Poland.<sup>3</sup>

My focus is however not on business or economics as such but on wider sociological and social psychological problems. One background to these problems consists of the traffic of resources, people, discourses and symbols that is taking place between Western and Eastern Central Europe (Sampson 1998, p. 154, 158). Capital and experts are brought from West to East, migrants move in the opposite direction (Ibid.). Officially produced images of countries and nationalities are being assimilated, modified or rejected in everyday and professional practice (Herzfeld 1997).<sup>4</sup> Experiences of others are being shaped in relation to historical categorizations and generalisations. Within these experience-shaping processes, scholars often distinguish aspects of power, authority and control, as well as corresponding identity-constructions. In broad terms, Westerners are occasionally seen as engaged in a sort of practical Occidentalism, in a striving to celebrate and spread Western ideas and life styles (Sampson 1998). They are seen as elevating some experiences or perceptions and rejecting others, thereby implying or announcing a quintessential and expanding

West, obtaining shape in relation to the perceived East (Carrier 1996). For instance, Kelly-Holmes (1998) argues that Western marketers and advisers in Eastern Central Europe play a key role in the production of market discourses, that is in the socialisation processes in which consumption, its symbolism and “the language of the market” are being taught. Western managers in Eastern Central Europe are sometimes even compared to missionaries engaged in a crusade (Kosera 1995).

Suggestions and observations such as these may be seen as implying that Westerners formulate firm stereotypes or categorizations in which their experiences from Eastern Central Europe are put. As Billig (1987/1996) points out, such a view is also common when social psychologists describe cognitive processes in general: categorizing human actions is seen as necessary and stereotyping as an inevitable result (Ibid., p. 156). Not wholly discarding this view, Billig nevertheless argues that it is one-sided. The concept of tolerance is neglected, even the possibility of having other thoughts than “stereotyped” ones is dismissed, because all experiences are regarded as “mediated by distorting categories or schemata” (Ibid., p. 157). Since language contains categories and categories are believed to contain a built-in bias towards the simplifications of stereotyping, Billig writes, an expression of tolerance simply must be seen as involving further simplifications and distortions, unavoidably producing further stereotyping (Ibid.).

In my view, Billig’s arguments may serve as an empirical sociologist’s inspiration or challenge. They may encourage a pursuit of other analytical tools than (merely) categorizations, stereotypes and the like, that is tools that allow for more nuances and more complexity when studying people’s habits of describing and viewing others, not just focusing on “what is the stereotype?”. To study oral stories and oral storytelling might be one way to accomplish this. Even a very short story about another person or another group and the associated way of conduct may contain or indicate delicate combinations of both a constructed type and constructed tolerance, and the narrator may through the story express or indicate both authority and resistance, both moral struggles with others and with oneself. Stories may be sites for social tensions and ambivalences. Western European ways of telling stories about Eastern Central Europe might in this respect be informative. Also in more official arenas, for instance in the EU enlargement negotiations, highly ambivalent attitudes towards this region are, to all appearances, ubiquitous. It is accepted but must change, it is wanted but also not wanted.

In this report I try to view stories and storytelling among Swedish expatriates in Poland as such sites for social tensions and ambivalences. My purpose is to describe and interpret some narrative patterns and episodes among these expatriates from a qualitative perspective (cf. Katz 1999, p. 76–77). Since a pattern or episode probably always presumes breaches and exceptions toward which it may crystallize, the purpose also includes an interest in narrative individuality; how individual narrators relate themselves to the expected way of talking. Tentatively a narrative may be defined in terms of James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (1994, p. 147): as an account that offers some scheme, either implicitly or explicitly, for organizing and understanding the relation of objects and events described.

I try to fulfil this purpose in two ways. First, I analyse *arrival stories*, that is stories about how the expatriates arrived in Poland in the first place and the circumstances surrounding this arrival (chapter 2). These stories are interpreted in terms of the expatriates' self-constructions. The narrators' selves could be seen as regenerating, as certain recurrent utterances in their accounts are being juxtaposed and put together.

Secondly, I analyse *oral quotations*, that is, passages that are portrayed as recited or reported in the expatriates' stories and conversations (chapter 3). Especially when the expatriates are talking about problematic experiences in Poland they use such quotations to describe other Swedes, Poles and themselves in vivid ways. This could be seen as a way to comprehend others and position oneself in relation to them.

These two approaches focus seemingly crucial aspects of expatriate life, to arrive and to get involved, to cross a border and to start working, and their associated meanings seem to be kept alive in both separated and unified forms. Whereas arrival stories often involve tolerant and open-minded narrative themes in relation to others and the novelty they are said to represent, the use of quotations often highlights the narrators' protests or discontent. The investigated stories are thus stories of acceptance as well as rejection. By focusing how these themes appear in narrative forms rather than in de-contextualised utterances a certain approach is indicated that in my view lies beyond more one-dimensional lists of "stereotypes" or "common views" that run the risk of essentialising social relations and typification processes, as well as people's use of meaning in general (cf. Holstein & Gubrium 1994, p. 263; Berger & Luckmann 1966/1991, p. 74–75; Blumer 1969/1986, p. 5).<sup>5</sup> Narrators do not just tell stories in straightforward ways. They speed them up or slow them down, they fill them with comments

and corrections, they infuse others' voices, they point at connections between their own biography and wider societal changes, and so on. Exactly how a narrator makes use of the social background of his or her story – in this case often different aspects of the dramatic transformation process in Poland during the 1990s – is however not to be stated in advance. It is instead an implicit theme in my way of displaying and analysing them. Each story points out several connections to its contexts, many even point out connections to images of these contexts, making the interaction between a social world and its narrative characteristics a topic of the story itself.

In addition, my analysis is characterized by an ambition to depict oral storytelling not as an isolated and subjective phenomenon but as a social and intersubjective one. The stories are not to be seen as verbalized inner dramas but as shared and meaningful communication, although distinct and unique in their respective compilations (Bruner 1990, p. 13). This social aspect is of course also evident in the interview situation. Even though the interviewees attract more narrative spotlight than the interviewer, all utterances and stories are viewed as produced within a frame of collaboration between these actors (Holstein & Gubrium 1997, p. 153; Chase 1995, p. 5). The ambitions to convey all this – narrative tensions and ambivalences as well as the social character of storytelling – are however not to be seen as fulfilled. The report is primarily an exploratory study.

The analysis is guided by symbolic interactionism, constructionism and ethnomethodology, inspired by fragments of conversational analysis and narrative analysis. At some interpretive levels Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on language, speech and novelistic discourse are functioning as organising devices. These points of departure mean that, instead of just focusing on *what* is being said, I also try to comprehend *how* it is said (Gubrium & Holstein 1997, p. 148; Zimmerman & Pollner, 1971, p. 82, 102). To understand is therefore not equivalent to defending or supporting. My aim is neither to question or confirm the accuracy of the specific utterances and stories the expatriates are presenting but to look upon these stories and utterances as significant in themselves.

## Methodological remarks

Since some reflections on the concrete interview situations are incorporated in the analysis I do not include a separate section on methodology in this report. Some overall remarks may nevertheless be appropriate. My material consists of 25 taped interviews with Swedes and some people of mixed Swedish-Polish descent working in Poland. In this report excerpts from 10 persons are included. Many of the interviewees are working as managers at various levels; others are small entrepreneurs, assistant managers or leaders of a project (two are publicly employed as representatives and consultants for Swedish companies). They often stay in Poland for several years although some may stay for shorter periods and/or commute between Sweden and Poland. Some have studied Polish. Their colleagues are Swedes and Poles as well as other nationalities. The largest part consists of men, which most likely reflects the gender division among expatriates (Ström & Gustafsson 1995). Several interviewees have also worked in other countries inside and outside Europe.

The interviews took place in Poland (Warsaw and Gdansk) and in Sweden (southern part). Some of the interviewees were contacted through a club for Swedish expatriates in Poland, others were reached through various companies. Many interviewees gave me suggestions of other persons to interview – colleagues, friends or acquaintances. The material has in other words partly been gathered through a snowball sample.

The interviews were between one and two hours long and conducted in Swedish. A few interviews were carried out with two interviewees who are working together. Some of the themes in the interviews were predetermined, for instance questions on working experiences, everyday life and experiences of crimes, bribery and risk taking<sup>6</sup>, whereas other themes came up within the interviews. The conversations were shaped in a way that allowed the interviewees to elaborate and change topics and the interviewer to interrupt and interfere on selected occasions (cf. Holstein & Gubrium 1997).

My methodological approach implies several weaknesses. The diversity in the interview conversations makes a more systematic investigation difficult. My varying participation in the conversations has also emphasized and reinforced some utterances among the interviewees while other utterances are passed by. Further, a series of structural factors are set aside in the analysis: impacts of gender, age, educational level, branch of occupation etc. This is

however not to be understood as a neglect of the importance of such factors but as a consequence of the perspective of this study and its delimitations.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, this perspective also has advantages. It may make some interactional basis of the production of opinions and knowledge evident, not disregarding more subtle phenomena and paradoxes, among them my influence as interviewer, that otherwise might be overlooked.

At a more general level, additional methodological circumstances ought to be mentioned. My perspective (as all perspectives) illuminates some aspects but ignores others. There is, of course, no necessity to choose to study stories and storytelling in this context, to focus stories of acceptance and rejection, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on language and speech, etc. My perspective is not just helping to distinguish certain traits and characteristics in the material but also arranging this material in certain ways that put other traits and other characteristics out of sight. My preconceptions, general worldview and theoretical interests are intimately integrated in this arranging process. Without implying that this probably inevitable puzzle would thereby be solved, the many and rather lengthy excerpts in this report may be looked upon as a kind of balancing opportunity. As presented pieces of an empirical material, I hope that it is possible to view these excerpts as invitations to picture different and conflicting ways of analysing and interpreting in relation to those ways which I display here.

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## 2 Arrival stories: regenerating an expatriate self

Beginnings in stories are important, but also stories of beginnings. To tell stories about how something began or got started may not only clarify fundamental meanings of crucial events but also illuminate aspects of the storyteller's self and its social embeddedness. For instance, stories among hunters about the first prey they brought down may highlight the narrator's coming of age and acceptance into a community, as well as a hunting culture and its values (Adelswärd 1997). Stories about one's decision to run a marathon for the first time may highlight sedimented cultural themes that belong to a typical romantic narrative: a test of the self is arranged, involving forces of good and bad, the result of which is dependent on the hero's commitment to the good (Murray 1994). Parents tell stories about the day a disabled child was first diagnosed in strikingly similar ways, conveying (among other things) that the child's accomplishments have far exceeded the original diagnosis and that the parents' insights have ultimately triumphed over medical professionals (Engel 1993, p. 821).

In the latter study, David M. Engel labels these stories "origin stories"; stories that transcend time and reorganise the earliest and most basic set of oppositions in an event. Retelling such stories may not only reactualize what occurred but also adjust or revise an initial memory. As Zerubavel (1996b, p. 286) points out, remembering is more than just a spontaneous personal act. It may be regulated by social rules, expectations, motives and aspirations.

In this chapter, I try to analyse and interpret various arrival stories among Swedish expatriates in Poland, focusing the narrative compositions and their linkages to the narrator's self.<sup>8</sup> The expatriates' arrivals may be seen as beginnings in several senses: a new job or a new assignment may have been accepted, a new company might be started, a new place to live and work in is encountered as well as new people with whom one is supposed to cooperate. Additionally, the arrivals in many cases signify the expatriates' first impressions of a relatively unknown country and its inhabitants, actualising not only the narrator's opinions about this country but also others' opinions and their implications. Questions or visions about one's future may be put forward, as well as doubts or expectations.

### Where the heck have we ended up?

My first example is an extensive one and may to some degree be seen as a complex model for arrival stories, filled with recurrent features. Speaking to a Swedish small entrepreneur, here called Jonathan, I ask if he remembers the first time he came to Poland:

- 1 Yes, I remember that. And it was the first win-first week in March '97, it
- 2 was, and we were driving down and there weren't any leaves on the trees,
- 3 so the countryside looked a mess, coming down, seeing Poland, then. In
- 4 the first place the roads, we came down from Swinoujście then, and we
- 5 were driving down to Poznan and then you see the roads, there are holes
- 6 and we had to drive at thirty ((kilometres per hour)) and drive around the
- 7 holes, then [[laugh]] and the Poles are coming there hooting, they've got a
- 8 fantastic way of driving, they're driving really dangerously but somehow
- 9 they end up on their side of the road again somehow, but anyway, coming
- 10 down in this awful winter, or spring-winter month, then, seeing Poland. It
- 11 doesn't look nice, you may say, absolutely. We thought 'where the heck
- 12 have we ended up?'. It was just like twenty, twenty-five ((Swedish)) miles
- 13 from the Swedish border and maybe just five miles to, yeah, Swinoujście
- 14 lies just at the border to Germany. But still such a big contrast.

This excerpt shows some characteristics in the expatriates' origin stories: a statement of a rather exact time of arrival, a number of negative visual details from the scenery and an expression of some kind of surprise or astonishment in relation to these details. According to Jonathan, the untidiness of Polish nature and roads as well as the dangers in Polish traffic were striking, yet these impressions are told in a light tone, even with a laugh (line 7). Jonathan is conveying a feeling of absurdity, most evident in a quotation (lines 11–12) and a description of slow-driving Swedes who are trying to avoid the holes in the roads while "the Poles are coming there hooting" (line 7). In a slightly ironic way Jonathan twice underlines the general significance of his observations – he is "seeing Poland" (lines 3 and 10) – as if he is implying that these first memories are a bit too typical and too consistent with his initial expectations, a coincidence that seems to make the whole experience funny. One of Jonathan's more explicit points so far is expressed in the bottom line: Poland is very close to Sweden and



Germany but still characterized by such a “big contrast”. Further on, Jonathan explains his own conclusions at the time of his first arrival:

Then coming down, meeting this terrible road and this boring landscape, the first you do, so you eh get yourself a little opinion, because anyhow it's difficult to avoid having prejudices completely. So that, but, and then I thought that 'if it's looking like this, if they cannot build roads, if they cannot build houses, can they really like *supply* these things on time?'

“These things” refers to the products that Jonathan and his colleagues were planning to buy in Poland. Jonathan is thus not only presenting a way to construct knowledge about people's abilities out of his impressions of roads and houses, he is also presenting *an excuse* for doing this. This excuse is achieved partly by a comment on the difficulty of avoiding jumping to conclusions, partly by a quotation. Jonathan is quoting himself as he was thinking at that moment, displaying his old attitude in a sort of quasi-logical question: “if it's looking like this... can they really...?”. In such a way a historical figure is brought into the report – the former Jonathan – whose prejudices are fit for use in the perspective of the present Jonathan – that is the narrator.

In another part of our conversation Jonathan reconnects to this feature of his origin story and illuminates his changed attitude:

But then you're coming down, meeting the people and then you notice that, well, they're not different from us. They've got their traditions and we like, what we've got, our traditions. So that eh, of course you see here now that it's shabby and things like that, but as I usually say, 'drive out to any hole at all around here in the countryside ((in Sweden)), it's looks almost as rotten there' it's just that there ((in Poland)) there are a few more ((such holes)).

Jonathan tries to moderate the significance of his initial impressions and evens out the absolute differences between Poland and Sweden. A presentation of a favourite phrase (“but as I usually say...”) fulfils this project, framing the untidiness of the scenery as a potential universal experience rather than a particular Polish one, although this untidiness is described as more frequently found in Poland than in Sweden. Jonathan is depicting himself as enlightened; he is proclaiming a tolerant “they're not different from us”. This depiction also includes a distinction towards other Swedes: Jonathan says:

And eh also here in Sweden, I've got the impression that people consider Poles and Poland, it's like, well 'they're gathering strawberries'.<sup>9</sup> And they're people that are coming here in the summer, trying to get money for themselves and stealing and messing around, so that is, so to speak, the image that I had of Poland before...

These distinctions – between the narrator's former and present self as well as between the narrator and other, prejudiced Swedes – seem to be crucial in the expatriates' origin stories, not only in their established and static sense but also in their sense of being redrawn and reproduced.<sup>10</sup> Jonathan's last expression above, “the image that I had of Poland before”, is a useful verbal tool in manufacturing new images *and* manufacturing the image of having get rid of false images. This procedure resembles some story patterns that Hunt and Benford (1994, p. 5) distinguish among activists in social movements. In and through these stories the narrators depict their previous views as false or naïve whereas their new ones are portrayed as conscious or aware. This type of tale thus follows a formula of “once I was blind, but now I can see”.

### Sure it was grey, concrete right through

To compare one's own insights with other Swedes' lack of insights may not only function as a concluding moral of an arrival story but also as the narrator's rhetorical take-off as these stories begin to get told. Below is an excerpt from my conversation with Paul, an entrepreneur who works both in Sweden and Poland:

- 1 **David:** Do you remember the first time you went there?
- 2 **Paul:** Yeah, yeah, very well. And this- this image you've got of Poland as-
- 3 as a Swede today, many who haven't been there, that I had too you know,
- 4 that certainly it's a big country and the economy's growing well but just
- 5 this thing that it's grey and boring and dirty and- and not many goods in
- 6 the shops and- and things like that, you know. But, sure it was grey, you
- 7 know, there is, the houses, there's no paint on the houses and everything,
- 8 it's grey, it's concrete right through, it really was like that, you know. And
- 9 eh when you're coming from the terminal and you're going to drive to

10 Gdynia, you're driving through an industrial area and it simply looks damn  
 11 boring, you know, there—you got this image 'oh, what kind of coun-  
 12 try is this?'. And I remember we arrived at this building where our office is  
 13 today and we were going to inspect these premises, as Howard and I had,  
 14 and Simon, had—had been offered. And it was completely unbelievable,  
 15 how it looked. I thought that this won't *ever* be fixed. And when we had,  
 16 when we were going to inaugurate the office one month later, I think it  
 17 was six or eight weeks or something, I thought 'this will never work, you  
 18 cannot transform this into something we're interested in'. But it did work  
 19 and eh eh we're still there in these premises.

By mentioning other Swedes' "image" of Poland and suggesting a distance from this image as a point of departure (lines 2–3), Paul seems to make it possible to actually elaborate this image using his memories as a material. In this way he avoids being understood as prejudiced; the listener already knows that this elaboration is more or less seen as "an image" rather than the undisputable truth. Paul's first visit is simply associated with an overwhelmingly clear confirmation of his low expectations (lines 6–7). Looking back at his first impressions of the premises that his company was going to use, Paul retells his hesitation and pessimistic conviction (lines 17–18). The fact that everything *did* work out is Paul's point so far (line 19). He is not only puncturing his own historical conclusions, he is also implying another recurrent feature of the expatriates' origin stories: the struggle to carry out your work and business ideas despite all obstacles.

Many elements in Paul's depiction are similar to Jonathan's story above. Paul's question, "oh, what kind of country is this?" (lines 11–12) has for instance quite the same rhetorical function as Jonathan's "where the heck have we ended up?". Both make an initial doubt or hesitation manifest and turn them into an object of almost institutionalised reflection. Why are these questions recited? One answer may be found in the delicacy of the expatriates' self-presentations. It is probably not only important for them to avoid being portrayed as prejudiced, but also to avoid being portrayed as naïve and unsuspecting, as if they wanted to say: even if I reject the simplified versions of the conventional Swedish images of Poland (I am not prejudiced), to some extent there really *is* a reality behind them (I am a realist), and I am not the one who are going to pretend the opposite (I am not a hypocrite). A safe way to ventilate this is to quote yourself as you were thinking in the past. The former attitudes are made into an object for the present narrator, an object to wonder at, perhaps regret and mock or merely investigate.

Furthermore, the expatriates' origin stories tend to organise certain biographical and societal developments into a coherent entity, emphasizing that the most important things in Poland actually have happened since the narrator arrived. Further on in my interview with Paul, when he returns to his origin story, this tendency becomes evident:

1 ... during these years that I've been involved since-, the first time I went  
 2 down there was in the beginning of 1994, a little more than six years ago,  
 3 yeah, it's a whole generation of development that I have been experiencing  
 4 during these six years, eh, so then if you say like, you get down there, I said  
 5 it was grey and boring, it was—it was—you were walking through the shops,  
 6 you were treated like you've got lost, nobody cared eh, it was, the goods in  
 7 the shops were only so-so eh the quality of food was like, when you were  
 8 going out to eat, it was always, all the menus in Polish, it was like—and *now*  
 9 it's like any tourist country at all. I would say that supplies in the shops in  
 10 Poland are better than in Sweden. There you've got a bigger, larger supply  
 11 of goods, a greater competition than you've got in Sweden. You've got,  
 12 still you're, you may enter shops where they cannot speak anything but  
 13 Polish and really don't welcome you but— but there has been an *enormous*  
 14 change. People are realising 'if I don't do a good job towards a customer  
 15 who walks right in then I probably cannot keep my job', you know. That,  
 16 that has, the *mentality*, the treatment of people when you're entering as—as  
 17 a Swede has changed very much, I think.

Enthusiastic over the recent changes in Poland, Paul here reconnects to his origin story (line 5) and uses it like a storyteller's spring-board: it takes him down to lift him up even higher. The contrast between his first impressions (lines 5–8) and the contemporary situation is then underlined: "and *now* it's like any tourist country you want" (lines 8–9). According to Paul, the treatment of customers is getting better (lines 14–16) and the choice of goods in Polish shops is better than in Sweden (lines 10–11)—"it's a whole generation of development that I have been experiencing during these six years" (lines 3–4). Without the indicated arrival story as an introducing contrast, the latter observations would seem quite ordinary, trivial and difficult to construct a story upon. As a result of this indication, however, a societal development is attached to his personal arrival, as if this was to be seen as a natural point of departure in depicting a development. Although such a perspective may seem reversed in relation to a conven-

tional one – Paul’s arrival most likely had a minimal effect on the Polish societal development – it is probably well established in everyday conversations. Paul is pointing out what Harvey Sacks calls a “private calendar”, a way to organise time in which events in the world in general are located by reference to the speaker’s relationships or biography (Sacks 1992, vol. 1 p. 36–37). Moreover, this time the initial impressions in the indicated arrival story are *not* provided with any relativistic markers. When used in this way, the impressions are not associated with an “image”.

Paul’s last-mentioned remarks on being a customer in Polish shops may be worth an excursion. Some episodes in my material, such as Paul’s comments above, indicate that Swedish expatriates in Poland may look upon their entry into a Polish shop as a cultural litmus test. Observing the supply of products and the staff’s conduct, the expatriates may look for either a proof of an *improving* level of service in general or a proof of a (still) *inferior* level of service in general, compared to Swedish or Western equivalents. The expatriates are reporting this event and transforming it into a significant examination in the presence of another Western foreigner in Poland, for instance me.

In a conversation (not recorded) with a Swedish expatriate, this reported cultural litmus test was conspicuous. This particular expatriate, who lived and worked in Warsaw, was confidently praising the latest economic changes in Poland and among the Poles in general. He was pointing, though, to his recurrent visits in a small neighbourhood shop as the actual sole flaw in an otherwise spectacular development towards market economy. In this shop, he said, he was not only confronted with the staff’s ignorance and lack of service attitude, but also time after time kept on the run as he used to enter the shop just before closing time and the staff refused to help him after they had closed. The expatriate seemed upset by his account and said he felt humiliated. He presented this experience as a proof of lingering communist features in contemporary Poland.

My point is neither to cast doubt on nor confirm the contents of this kind of reports. My point is instead to reflect on the significance of retelling them. As in the case of Paul’s comments above, although he on the contrary perceives an improved level of service when entering Polish shops, an *evaluation of customer service* seem to be a rather stable corner-stone in the expatriates’ storytelling. Moreover, the outcome of this evaluation may make them proud *or* offended. The narrators thus repeatedly create opportunities to portray themselves as sensitive customer service evaluators, implying an ability to survey and judge commercial situations in Poland with

the help of a few glances in shops and supermarkets. As shown in the excerpt above from the interview with Paul, such opportunities may be prevalent in expatriates’ origin stories.

### Objectifying the change of perception: Colouring the images

The co-existence of a perception change and a change in what is being perceived in the expatriates’ origin stories has already been made clear, that is the combination of a reported formal drama with a reported substantial one. Sometimes this aspect is particularly evident. The narrator may be eager to show that his initial impressions of Poland and the transformation of these impressions are both a consequence of a selective attitude *and* a consequence of objective facts. Below I ask Frank, a leader of a project in a big Swedish company in Poland, if he remembers his first visit in Poland:

- 1 **Frank:** Yes, I remember that and at that time I had, I hadn’t signed the
- 2 contract or anything, then I went down and met some people and formed
- 3 an opinion before I signed the contract. Then I went down, it was a dark,
- 4 grey day in January. All big cities you came to, they turned extraordinarily
- 5 grey, you know [[laugh]]. I thought it was terrible. It was awful. It was
- 6 terribly cold and it was ten degrees below zero and it was foggy, I mean, no
- 7 place looks nice in such weather you know. It was very grey, I remember.
- 8 And it is a rather grey city in the winter. There are a lot of parks, but during
- 9 the winter they aren’t particularly beautiful, when it’s leafless. It *isn’t* a
- 10 beautiful city, Warsaw. There are parts that are beautiful but as a whole it’s
- 11 terrible. But then, when I met some colleagues, future colleagues, then you
- 12 got a completely different image, it was a very good atmosphere down
- 13 there, a very positive working spirit, working climate. Felt like joining,
- 14 thought that it appeared very exciting.
- 15 **David:** Yes. So now you haven’t got the same image of Poland as you had?
- 16 **Frank:** No, no, it has *completely* changed, you know, it has become much
- 17 less grey [[laugh]] and more colourful, definitely.
- 18 **David:** More colours?
- 19 **Frank:** Much more colourful.
- 20 **David:** [[laugh]]
- 21 **Frank:** Much more colourful.

In this arrival story, Frank is highlighting the effects of climate and weather – the fog, the temperature, the grey daylight, the leafless trees – in his effort to make his initially bad impressions of Poland understandable and accountable. These seemingly unquestionable facts are used together with an aesthetic statement – “it *isn't* a beautiful city, Warsaw” (lines 9–10) – to make a sort of caricature of the conventional Swedish or Western image of Poland. His evaluation is laconic: “I thought it was terrible. It was awful” (line 5). He seems to examine his experience and find it exaggerated, not his perception alone but, in addition, the circumstances that structured it. His laughs (lines 5 and 17) imply that he may consider the story too good to be true. Poland was, so to speak, scrutinized during the worst possible conditions.

Despite the detailed and evocative descriptions, Frank’s explanations make it clear that he is telling his story entirely from his present position. When he says “I mean, no place looks nice in such weather you know” (lines 6–7) the listener understands that Frank’s initial impressions at least partly are to be treated as a result of a set of unfortunate circumstances rather than authentic information. This is also made obvious when Frank later reassures me that his image of Poland has “*completely* changed” (line 16), a change that is symbolized by colours versus greyness. The reported social climate is the story’s major counterbalance: “a very good atmosphere down there, a very positive working spirit, working climate” (lines 12–13). This is said to have affected Frank in a positive way and this is also presented as Frank’s rational reason for accepting the job and signing the contract, in spite of his terrible view on arrival in Warsaw.

As a whole, Frank’s arrival story may illustrate the significance of nuances and self-corrections in the narrator’s performance (laughs and reflexive comments) as well as the significance of narratively constructed facts that render the narrator’s initial impressions reasonable, for instance the temperature, the fog and the winter. Also shown is the importance of expressions indicating that these impressions are historical (e. g. “I thought”, “I remember”). If the above-mentioned social climate is the story’s major counterbalance, all these subtle ingredients are the minor ones. They soften the content and rescue the narrator from the potential shame of being seen as categorical. What would happen if some of these small manoeuvres were excluded? The story would perhaps become conspicuously blunt and direct, and its turning point (the changed perception) hard to grasp.<sup>11</sup> Such a version of Frank’s story, a condensed or concentrated version, might even appear to be something which could not be said:

**Frank (altered version):** ... I went down, it was a dark, grey day in January. It was terrible. It was awful. It was terribly cold and it was ten degrees below zero and it was foggy. It was very grey. It *isn't* a beautiful city, Warsaw, it's terrible....

### Alone with your brief-case

Feelings of being chosen and thrown into an adventure sometimes emanate from the expatriates’ arrival stories. In the excerpt below, Tommy, a Swedish expatriate in a rather small company in Warsaw, has just told me about his career and business considerations concerning his move to Poland. Then he picks up an earlier question:

- 1 **Tommy:** So that was my reasons, but – but what did it feel like? Well, it
- 2 felt like great fun, exciting, a feeling of dizziness, to come here alone with
- 3 your brief-case and trying to do something and run a business and, it feels,
- 4 for me things like that feel very challenging and interesting and—
- 5 **David:**—Mm yeah, it must have been special anyway—
- 6 **Tommy:**—And then I had never been in Poland before you know, it felt
- 7 strange with these vast buildings and things like that and then you may say
- 8 that at that, four years ago, partly there weren't at all so many buildings as
- 9 there are now and then the air was extremely bad here, because there were
- 10 few cars with catalytic converter and that has changed enormously, yeah,
- 11 if – if ten percent of the car fleet at that time had catalytic converters, hardly
- 12 that many, then it's about ten percent of the car fleet that *don't* have cata-
- 13 lytic converters now, I would say, in Warsaw. So that is a big difference.
- 14 But what did it feel like, well, felt like a big adventure, you know and it-
- 15 it was, it felt very stimulating.

Although Tommy’s version of his arrival in Poland has some dark strains (a description of strange vast buildings and bad air) his assessment of his arrival is whole-heartedly positive. Tommy uses expressions like “challenging and interesting” (line 4–5), “a big adventure” (line 14) and “very stimulating” (line 15). The arrival and the prospect of running a business are associated with “a feeling of dizziness” (line 2). In telling me that Warsaw at the time of Tommy’s arrival four years ago was a slightly harder place to live in, Tommy creates a relief-effect, making his biographical accomplishment

even more astonishing and at the same time embedding it into a societal development: the increase in cars with catalytic converters. The dark strains are thus integrated into his positive feelings, co-producing the exciting sense of taking a certain risk or confronting a danger.

Coming to Poland “alone with your brief-case and trying to do something and run a business” (lines 2-3) seems to be Tommy’s primary rhetorical picture of his excitement, as if he wanted to suggest that his initial experience is best understood as a tough exposure for an isolated businessman. In this manner, the origin story that Tommy is outlining seems to convey not only a meaningful restart for his border crossing career but maybe also a regeneration of his working motives in general. His arrival seems to be portrayed as a renaissance of his professional self, symbolized by a description of perhaps the most basic initial position for people in his line of business.

### Using the origin story: Turning Poland up to date

Arrival stories may also be included in other pictures that the expatriates present. Sometimes they are just briefly mentioned. The connections between the biographical change and the societal, as I have tried to illustrate above, may in this way be made even more striking. This is evident in a conversation with Maria, an official adviser to Swedish companies in Poland, working in Warsaw. Below she is reporting her observations when she and her visiting mother attend a restaurant in Poland. The arrow shows the position for the indicated arrival story:

...my mother has been here on a visit for a couple of days now and yesterday was her birthday so eh the whole family went to a restaurant yesterday evening, and it was like a middle range restaurant but then we- we, then we started thinking about this *again*, and she’s here ((Maria’s mother)) maybe twice a year, you know and we said that ‘this is unbelievable’, if you look at- at how people are dressed in restaurants, you know, good lord, they are more modern here than if we had been back home in Malinö in a restaurant. And- and when we, at that time when we ((the family)) arrived ((in Poland)) at Christmas time in ’94, God I hated it. I thought that it was terrible. It was so grey and appalling and people looked sad and depressed

and terrible clothes and it is completely unbelievable, you know [[laugh]], what has happened...

Talking about spectacular changes in Poland, Maria so to speak relies on her mother to achieve a trustworthy description. The mother seems to be regarded as a cultural witness, presumably independent and neutral since she only visits Poland “maybe twice a year”. Maria is even implying that she is taking the role of her mother, seeing the Poles’ way of dressing as the mother does and retelling their shared reaction with a collective phrase: “we said that ‘this is unbelievable’”. As a narrative figure, the mother has the fresh eyes that Maria needs to make her point. With her help, the modernity of present Poland may be rediscovered. Further on, when Maria’s own arrival story enters, her and her mother’s joined observation are contrasted with her initial impressions of Poland: grey and appalling and sad people with terrible clothes. Her former judgement “God I hated it” is recalled, widely divergent if compared to her present judgement “they are more modern here”.

The arrival story is thus helpful in making a sharp change in Maria’s storytelling distinguishable and comprehensible. In this context, it seems to be functioning as a narrative pillar or support in Maria’s efforts to become a competent transformation observer. It makes it possible for her to show that she considers herself as not only having experienced the modern Poland but also the former or old Poland.

### Speeding up the story: A reluctant way of telling

Not all interviewees are telling their origin stories freely and without hesitation. Some episodes in my material even indicate that this way of narrating your arrival in Poland may be regarded as tiring and worn out. Below is an excerpt from my conversation with a Swedish managing director called Chris, taking place in a hotel lobby in Warsaw. The arrow marks what might be called a shortened and lukewarm arrival story:

**David:** ...when you came to Poland for the first time, was it at that time you began working, was- was it in ’97, ’95?  
**Chris:** In ’95, I came to Poland for the first time in January in ’95.  
**David:** Do you remember that, how it was?

**Chris:** Yes, terrible.

**David:** Could you tell? [[short laugh]].

→ **Chris:** No, it was like grey and dark and snowy and cold and there weren't any shops and () and so on, everything has happened since then you know, you may say. But we decided to do it, my wife and I, we went there together, we said 'we go in for this, we do want to get abroad you know' and then you have to go for it.

**David:** That was the starting-shot, that you wanted to get abroad? Was it?

**Chris:** Yeah. That was the thing that actually, that-that-, I brought up that question already in '93, I think, that I wanted to get abroad.

(...)

**David:** But then you hadn't been to Poland before?

**Chris:** No. I had the same image of Poland as everybody else, you know.

Looking at the content, this excerpt seems to display a concentrate of certain features in the expatriates' origin stories: the historical confirmation of the conventional image ('it was like grey and dark and snowy and cold and there weren't any shops') together with a presented conviction that this impression is equal to a general point of departure from which all development took off ("everything has happened since then"). In addition, Chris expresses a biographical embedded decision – this time by the narrator together with his wife – to challenge the pessimistic images and stay abroad despite his initial impressions. More interesting, though, is Chris's reluctance about the whole subject. He answers my question "do you remember that, how it was?" with a simple "yes, terrible", leaving all details unspecified. Trying to repair this disruption, I ask another question – "could you tell?" – combined with a self-correcting laugh. Other interviewees mostly start to recall and verbalize their memories without this explicit encouragement, since a question like "do you remember?" is more or less spontaneously understood as "could you tell me *what* you remember?" rather than "is it true *that* you remember?"<sup>12</sup> Chris then tells his arrival story in one sentence, preceded by a "no" and ending with "and so on". Emphasizing his and his wife's choice to go abroad, he quickly puts an end to his story, almost before he started telling it. Also his initial short answer – "yes, terrible" – might be seen as an extremely compressed arrival story, consisting of just one evaluative word, "terrible". A complete arrival story is avoided and another subject elicited.

Chris' hesitation and brevity display what Rogers et al (1999) call a 'language of smokescreens and evasions' (Ibid., p. 88). His expression "and

so on" seems to be held up like a sign saying: the rest of the story is in here but I do not bother to expand it.

There may of course be a broad range of motives for Chris to act like this, most of them beyond my knowledge. His arrival may for instance be associated with a shock or a trauma that he does not want to touch upon in this interview. He may also be ashamed of his initial impressions, regarding them as at least partly connected to former prejudices. Without ambition to fully understand this episode, I would nevertheless suggest that the excerpt above might be looked upon in a particular way that might encompass both these and other possibilities. To tell others about how you arrived to Poland may among some expatriates be regarded as a foreseeable and highly conventional narrative practice. You are supposed to already know the conventional Swedish images of Poland, how they may be confronted, explained and transcended as well as the moral of such a move. In other words: my question may be leading the expatriates to a well-known and predictable narrative landscape. Such a landscape may, as Chris indicates above, be quite boring to visit, even if invited.

### Interpreting arrival stories: A play of utterances

According to David M. Engel, an origin story deals with how something was produced or began to be. It transcends historical time and reconnects to the beginning. To tell such a story is a way to wrestle with an account of what occurred until seemingly fundamental truths shine through, truths that illuminate not only the past but the time of the retelling; an origin story regenerates the narrator's self (Engel 1993).

Engel even suggests that stories of this kind constitute a form of myth making in everyday life. As myths they not only reflect and weave meanings around interactions but also establish models for behaviour. A myth, Engel says, is a story that is considered sacred, exemplary and significant. Sometimes it is constructed by subordinate or disempowered groups and consequently works as a critical social commentary, but more often it reflects dominant ideological systems in a society. Anyhow, the myth starts with materials of human experiences but transforms the particularities of these materials into narratives that speak more broadly about self and society (Engel 1993).

As has already been indicated, parts of Engel's conceptual framework may be useful when the expatriates' arrival stories are to be interpreted. Yet details in such an interpretation remain unclear. If the expatriates' selves are regenerated in and through the stories, then *how* is this regeneration accomplished? What, more specifically, do the interviewees do when they tell arrival stories?

In order to discuss these questions I review some passages in the above excerpts, using some of Michail Bakhtin's key concepts. Certain aspects in the above analyses are addressed once again while others are left behind. This interpretation is therefore to some extent summarizing. All nuances and details mentioned above are not taken into account.

My suggestion is that the expatriates fulfil their self-regenerations by means of *dialogising different types of utterances*, or "languages". Simultaneously, they are dialogising some corresponding points of view.

"Dialogisation" is Bakhtin's term for verbal processes that relativise and de-privilege a word, discourse, language or culture. An undialogised utterance is authoritative and absolute whereas a dialogised utterance is, so to speak, aware of competing definitions for the same thing (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 427). This awareness originates from the interrelations of languages. All languages may be juxtaposed to one another and mutually supplement or contradict one another. They may be interrelated dialogically (Ibid., p. 291-292). If that happens, they lose their inviolability, their indisputable and predetermined quality, and the necessity of choosing one's orientation among them emerges (Ibid., p. 296).

In order not to misinterpret this, some remarks might be appropriate. A "dialogue" is not necessarily something harmonious; it may very well be characterized by a conflict or polemic. As a matter of fact, Bakhtin frequently calls the interrelation between utterances and languages a "struggle" (Ibid., p. 292, 331, 342, 354). Further, a "language" is not necessarily equal to a *national* language, it might also refer to *social* languages – the language of a profession or an age group, etc – or simply *another's* language, that is a language that does not belong to the speaker in question (Ibid., p. 271-272, 291, 430).

Additionally, all languages are not merely linguistic phenomena, they also contain specific points of view, or forms for conceptualising the world in words (Ibid., p. 289, 291-292, 411). When different languages are interrelated dialogically, so are different points of view (Ibid., p. 314). Bakhtin argues that an artistic organisation of this dialogisation is precisely what distinguishes the modern novel. A novel is multiform in style and variform in speech and voice.

The language of a novel is the system of its "languages"; the narrator's, the characters', the persons' those characters refer to, and so on.

Therefore, a novel permits a multiplicity of voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (Ibid., p. 261-263); a novel permits *heteroglossia*. All this, Bakhtin emphasizes, is nevertheless far from an exclusively literary phenomenon. The basic heteroglossia is in fact social and extra-literary, and works as a prerequisite for the novel. When its diversity of voices enters the novel it is turned into a subject for the author's "artistic reworking" (Ibid., p. 300). This particular artistic reworking is *not* present in everyday speech (Ibid., p. 339). Yet *some* kind of creative reworking is undoubtedly taking place here too (Ibid., p. 337).<sup>13</sup>

If Bakhtin's perspective is taken into consideration, a certain collection of "dialogues" may be identified in the expatriates' arrival stories. The most fundamental one is obvious: the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. The stories in question are told in a conversation in which both my initial questions (on remembrance) and my follow-up questions are significant. Taken as a whole, the arrival stories are often told as a reply to a narrative invitation (see note 12). Cases such as Jonathan's, where the story is extended and elaborated almost as a monologue, and Maria's, where the arrival story is embedded into another account, indicate that the significance of my participation varies. My questions may be almost rejected, as in Chris's telling. They may also encourage the interviewee to end his story with an explicit moral, as in the case of Frank.

In addition, there is a subtler instance of dialogisation. It involves different types of utterances or "languages" that are verbally interconnected and thereby mutually responding each other. To highlight and understand this interconnection, I try to distinguish these utterances in order to, so to speak, put them together again.<sup>14</sup> First, there are *comments on Polish scenery and surroundings from the narrators' perspective*. These comments are often retrospectively oriented and refer to something more or less inferior, appalling or indifferent. Some examples are listed below:

...we were driving down and there weren't any leaves on the trees, so the countryside looked a mess, coming down, seeing Poland... (Jonathan).

...when you're coming from the terminal and you're going to drive to Gdynia, you're driving through an industrial area and it simply looks damn boring, you know... (Paul).

It *isn't* a beautiful city, Warsaw. There are parts that are beautiful but as a whole it's terrible... (Frank).

...it felt strange with these vast buildings and things like that...(Tommy).

...God I hated it. I thought that it was terrible. It was so grey and appalling and people looked sad and depressed and terrible clothes... (Maria).

...it was like grey and dark and snowy and cold and there weren't any shops... (Chris).

Taken out of their conversational contexts, these utterances all seem to convey feelings of something strange or odd, as if the interviewees wanted to say: I was not used to Poland and did not like it. Not ignoring the fact that these utterances are used in a variety of ways – to accomplish a narrative contrast, to depict oneself in an ironic way, to create a temporal lineage, and so forth – they still in themselves seem to be critical toward the perceived Poland. The scenery and the surroundings are somehow dismissed.

Further, the arrival stories seem to contain *utterances that verify some kind of positive surprise or sudden change*. Some of these utterances appear to reconnect to the utterances above in a polemic or reversed way:

I thought 'this will never work, you cannot transform this into something we're interested in'. But it did work and eh eh we're still there in these premises. (Paul).

But then, when I met some colleagues, future colleagues, then you got a completely different image (...) it has *completely* changed, you know, it has become much less grey [laugh] and more colourful, definitely. (Frank).

...and then I thought that 'if it's looking like this, if they cannot build roads, if they cannot build houses, can they really like *supply* these things on time?' (...) So that eh, of course you see here now that it's shabby and things like that, but as I usually say, 'drive out to any hole at all around here in the countryside (in Sweden)', it's looks almost as rotten there? it's just that there ((in Poland)) there are a few more ((such holes)). (Jonathan).

...we said that 'this is unbelievable', if you look at- at how people are dressed in restaurants, you know, good lord, they are more modern here... (Maria).

Utterances such as these may be looked upon as involved in a dialogue with the former utterances. They relativise and deprivileges the initial impressions of Poland and remind the listener and the narrator that there are competing definitions. In this manner, the first utterances not only lose their sense of indisputability, they are also engaged in an often unresolved dispute with the second type of utterances. It is as if the interviewees wanted to say: If my initial impressions were not completely wrong, they at least were not equal to the whole truth, now listen to what happened...

Some expatriates' arrival stories also seem to include or annex *references to other Swedes talking or thinking about Poland*. Such references are portraying other evaluations of Poland within a falsifying, contrasting or just slightly questioning frame. Below are some illustrations:

...here in Sweden, I've got the impression that people consider Poles and Poland, it's like, well 'they're gathering strawberries'. And they're people that are coming here in the summer, trying to get money for themselves and stealing and messing around... (Jonathan).

...this- this image you've got of Poland as- as a Swede today (...) that certainly it's a big country and the economy's growing well but just this thing that it's grey and boring and dirty and- and not many goods in the shops... (Paul).

I had the same image of Poland as everybody else, you know. (Chris).

Such utterances, once again taken out of their conversational contexts, dismiss other Swedes' utterances that at least somehow evaluate (or indicate an evaluation of) Poland, Poles or "the Polish". This time the interviewees seem to convey a distinction, as if they wanted to say: I am not like other Swedes in relation to Poland.

This, however, does not mean that they want to present themselves as *opposite* in relation to "other Swedes". In that case, the interviewees would have been unequivocally celebrating Poland from the very beginning. The very combination with the first type of utterances indicates that the expatriates instead are anxious to work out their own position. They both complain about the Polish scenery and surroundings, and complain about other Swedes' utterances on Poland, which often actually deal with the scenery in just that way they themselves initially did (as something more or less inferior, appalling or indifferent). In addition to this, they include utterances about a positive



surprise or sudden change. When these utterances are being juxtaposed—joined or contrasted, merged or independently displayed in animations, mixed in various and individual ways—a space seems to be created in which the speaker may develop his own, individual views. This space is, so to speak, a result of three rejections: against the Polish scenery and surroundings, against unchangeability and lack of surprises in one's own first impressions and against other Swedes' opinions.

If the arrival stories are to be seen as self-regenerating, this could be seen as a site for the regeneration. The expatriates are not to be found solely in the language that dismiss Polish scenery and surroundings, or in the language of other Swedes' similar evaluations or in the language of positive surprises and sudden changes. They are to be found *in between* those languages. To renew oneself, these types of utterances may be *played out* so that the speaker may carve out a position in relation to them. In analogy with Bakhtin's depiction of a novelistic author, the interviewees utilize now one language, now another, "in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to them" (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 314).

That is not to say that the expatriates are *neutral* in relation to these types of utterances. Some may tend to identify more closely with one type, someone else with another type. However, many seem to strive to *appear neutral*, as if eager to manifest individuality. Yet they are using these types of utterances and thereby reproducing them, even if they are used as targets for minor narrative disputes.<sup>15</sup>

The utterances may be seen as standing for particular points of view which the expatriates have to take into consideration: their own first point of view, the "surprising" point of view and other Swedes' point of view.

According to Engel, when people are telling origin stories they may imply that the ending in these stories will be achieved again. The stories are thus pointing forward as well as backward; they build up models (Engel 1993). This remark touches upon a commonly emphasized aspect of everyday storytelling: stories are not just told, they are also *enacted* and *lived* (Gubrium & Holstein 1997, p. 147, 153; Robinson 1993, p. 15–20). What would that remark mean in this context? One answer could be formulated in terms of the action that constitutes the substantial basis for the arrival stories, that is *to cross a (national) border*. To tell a convincing arrival story and play out utterances that one needs to position and construe oneself as an arriving individual—in this case a constructed autonomous, unprejudiced, tolerant, open and realistic arriving indi-

vidual—seems to mean that this positioning and construing is looked upon as possible and desirable to repeat, when or if another border is crossed.

Such a readiness might perhaps be crucial for expatriates. One day they may choose to, or be expected to, live and work in another more or less unfamiliar country, and consequently once again arrive for the first time. Some of the expatriates have also been working in other countries and express an ambition to go to some other place when their period in Poland is over.

A readiness like this is sometimes seen as a contemporary ideal. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) argues that "being local" is becoming a sign of social deprivation while "being on the move" is a sign of success and prosperity. "Mobility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values" (Ibid., p. 2). Bauman actually states that "nowadays we are all on the move" (Ibid., p. 77), some voluntarily, others by force. To be on the move is in Bauman's view not only associated with geographical mobility but also social changeability and adaptability.

There seem to be at least one link between the above-analysed stories and Bauman's wider implication of mobility. The expatriates' stories could be interpreted as conveying a narratively constructed and celebrated *ability* to be on the move: to transcend one's former self, to encounter the odd and new, to embrace and grasp something different.

### 3 Wrestling with others' voices: Resisting the "mentality"

References and quotations of others are common devices in storytelling, not only when intercultural topics are brought into play but in a wide range of speaking activities in general.<sup>16</sup> To invite others' voices and explicitly link one's speech to others' appear to be fundamental components in human narrating.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the particularities of such invitations and links—irony, mockery and polemic are just as dependent on others' words as agreement, embracing and praise—they seem to be intrinsic parts of verbalizing and acting out social relations.

Presumably this is reflecting the social character of man's becoming. According to George Herbert Mead (1934/1967), taking into one's conduct the attitudes of others, especially in and through language, is a prerequisite for the appearance of a self. It is by employing others' attitudes towards oneself, by taking the role of the other, that a self emerges and obtains shape. In the introduction to Mead's book "Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist" (1934/1967) Charles W. Morris states that "man is essentially the rôle-taking animal" (p. xxi). Thus, if this stance is taken, there simply is no alternative. To refer and recite is not only a human habit but also a necessity.

The significance of reciting in everyday speech may be intensified as social life differentiates. The importance of attaching one's own words to another's increases as the importance of the very encounters with these others increase. This is one of Mikhail Bakhtin's central ideas. He argues that the transmission and assessment of the speech of others have become one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human communication (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 337). Another's word is the subject of passionate talk, an object of interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, further developments and so on (Ibid.; cf. Billing 1987/1996, p. 270-276).

We can go so far as to say that in real life people talk most of all about what others talk about – they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people's words, opinions, assertions, information; people are upset by others' words, or agree with them, contest them, refer to them and so forth. (...) Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words. At every step one meets a 'quotation' or a 'reference'... (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 338).

By "quotation" and "reference" Bakhtin is however not talking about *literal* quotations or *authentic* references but quotations and references that first and foremost are presented or understood as such, as the speech of another, no matter how accurately transmitted (Ibid., p. 340). In other words, quotations in speech should be treated as speakers' creations, not as correct representations of other's utterances or earlier utterances (Holsánová 1998, p. 110-111).

Further, even if a speaker were actually to present a correct quotation, the act of quoting in itself transforms what is being said. Transmitted words are always subject to changes. Even the most serious utterance may for instance, if moved to a new conversational context, easily become comical (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 340). Although this observation may look trivial, it has profound

significance. Mimicry is sometimes identified as a vital way in which people relate to so-called late modern discourses, a way that may end up throwing the discourse mimicked into question (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, p. 129). The very act of appropriating another's word may thus loosen its control. In that sense mimicry is providing a basis for ideological struggle (Ibid.).

The latter aspect is one of my themes in this chapter. When Swedish expatriates in Poland tell stories about their work and everyday life their speech is full of others' words. Citations of Poles as well as of other Swedes are prevalent – as dramatized rejoinders, thoughts, motives and ambitions, as staged commentaries from individuals and collectives, and so forth. In addition, the expatriates sometimes cite their own speech. In this manner the narrator is animating and emphasizing significant parts of his or her narrative.

Still these inserted words do not always fit into the accounts in a completely smooth way. Inserted rejoinders may not only convey a consent in relation to the speaker's explicit statements but also a supplement or additional problem. This is to say that besides using citations as a way to express a certain position (Sacks 1992, vol. II p. 310; Holsánová 1998, p. 105) a speaker may also *elaborate* such a positioning as the other is taken into account in and through citations. To listen carefully to citations may therefore make audible the narrators' struggle to understand and handle, no matter how accurately or proficiently, the perceived novelty or otherness that the particular other is said to represent.<sup>18</sup>

Trying to capture this process I use a special transcription technique in this chapter. Speakers often distinguish their quotations through diverse prosodic qualities<sup>19</sup>; a different speech style or "voice" is used when somebody is quoted (Holsánová 1998). Although this is not always the case – a citation may for instance be marked out solely with words like "he said" – information about these speech styles or "voices" may be illuminating when citations are to be interpreted. Therefore I transcribe speakers' prosodic changes by indicating them as separate "voices" (VOICE 1, VOICE 2 etc). My analytical descriptions of these voices are however not exclusively focusing on prosodic qualities but general social hints and allusions. Thus, instead of trying to describe a voice merely in terms of its sound I try to describe it in terms of its connotations and implications. What does the speaker sound like when quoting another? What figure is the speaker seeming to resemble or mimic?

This approach has clear limitations. Voice changes not connected to quotations are for instance not highlighted. The tone of the speaker is described in various ways in various excerpts, making systematic compari-

sons difficult. On the other hand my approach also have advantages. By treating each voice change in its own right the various quotations are understood in a contextualised way that takes implicit relationships to the surrounding speech and interaction into consideration.

### We're not sufficiently clear: Avoiding a caricature

As mentioned above, the expatriates' storytelling include a number of citations and voices that display a range of nuances and implications that are not always being explicitly stated. Citations may be used as the speakers' narrative spotlight, step by step highlighting various aspects in social relations from a certain point of view. In order to draw attention to this, I begin by analysing an excerpt from an interview with two Swedish expatriates in Poland. The interview took place in a conference room in the office of company C. in Warsaw. Initially, I asked the interviewees (who knew each other well) to tell me about their specific work. After a while, they started to talk about their jobs in general.

**John:** ... I think one of the biggest problems is that we're a bit soft. So that, a classical example is that if you're in a meeting, some Swedes and some Poles, so, yeah, one finishes the meeting saying that (VOICE 1) 'one could do like that or what do you think?', (VOICE 2) 'yes, that would perhaps work', aha. And then you finish. And then the Poles think (VOICE 3) 'damn we've not taken any decision, what shall we do' but we think it's obvious and clear that we said (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'one could do like that' and then we'll do so, you know. So that they are used to a completely different—

**Larry:** — We're not sufficiently clear.

**John:** No.

**Larry:** We don't have that authoritative, dictatorial way of giving instructions, you know. Like (VOICE 4) 'you'll do that, you'll do that, that must be ready tomorrow, that must be ready this afternoon'. Instead when you give them a task as— as we're used to, >then it is not like they're taking care of it, (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'we'll do it as fast as possible' and then they come back with it < they don't do that. If you ask them after two days (VOICE 5) 'eh what happened to that?'. (VOICE 6) 'Well, you didn't say it should be finished *today*'.

**John:** No, it's an endless (process).

**Larry:** [[laugh]]

John's statement that Swedes are "a bit soft" is followed by a couple of quotations that seem to make this statement vivid and dramatic. These animations have some distinguishable characteristics. When John and Larry are citing themselves, a normalizing or conventionalising speech is used. John's rejoinder 'one could do like that or what do you think?' (VOICE 1) is uttered in a careful and light way, contrasted to the almost sighing answer by the implied Poles: 'yes, that would perhaps work' (VOICE 2). The next voice, referring to what the Poles think, is a bit sharper: 'damn we've not taken any decision, what shall we do' (VOICE 3). Its counterpart, signifying what the Swedes think, does not however entail any noticeable change in tone. It would in fact be difficult even to notice this latter quotation if it were not a quotation of a quotation. When saying 'one could do like that' John is citing himself, or rather he is citing a constructed citation in the very beginning ('one could do like that or what do you think?'). In this way, it becomes clear that the Poles are portrayed as saying one thing (VOICE 2) but thinking another (VOICE 3) while the Swedes say and think the same.

Thus, John is achieving this point by *citing an earlier constructed citation*, namely citing "the Swedes' talk" when talking about what they think. The fact that he avoids changing tone could also be seen as important in this case. In this manner, the Swedes as story characters are almost not given any particular features, they just appear to be neutral or rational. This transparency is attained since the recited characters' tone equals the narrator's (who, of course, is a Swede). The Poles, on the other hand, appear as playing a double game, hiding their views.

Still, the discussion has begun with a statement in which the Swedes are given a certain feature; they are described as "a bit soft". In itself, this description portrays the Swedes as problematical. When this statement is being animated, however, it seems to be put into an understanding context. If somebody hereafter is to be seen as problematical, it might as well be the Poles rather than the Swedes. To some extent, however, the Poles are also put into an understanding context — they are also recited — albeit that this understanding hitherto is less sympathetic.

When Larry is putting forward the next citation, he is not trying to illustrate how Swedes behave but how they do *not* behave. His speech becomes louder, making a caricature of a person giving orders (VOICE 4):

‘you’ll do that, you’ll do that, that must be ready tomorrow, that must be ready this afternoon’. Further on, this is contrasted with a lack of voice change and a higher speed when Larry illustrates the Poles’ behaviour in the same way, that is when he is explaining what *they* do not do (or say): “then it is not like they’re taking care of it, ‘we’ll do it as fast as possible’...”. Thus, Swedes are portrayed through a contrasting parody of order giving while the Poles are portrayed through a contrasting depiction of assumed normal acting.

Subsequently, Larry’s recited question ‘eh what happened to that?’ is put in a slightly critical way (VOICE 5), while the Poles’ answer has the tone of somebody being baffled, somebody who is *too surprised*: ‘Well, you didn’t say it should be finished *today*’ (VOICE 6). This animation could be seen as a way to portray stupidity. In this context, a person who says ‘well, you didn’t say it should be finished *today*’ discloses the fact that he or she has not understood that the Swedes actually wanted it to be finished today (or earlier), *even if they did not say so explicitly*. And why did the Swedes not say so explicitly? Larry’s suggestion is clear. They do not want to become living caricatures of persons who give orders.

Although this avoidance could be seen as quite the same argument as John’s statement “we’re a bit soft” and Larry’s “we’re not sufficiently clear”, it implies a different evaluation. Whereas it might be difficult to appreciate and sympathize with people who are “soft” and “not sufficiently clear”, it is easier to appreciate and sympathize with people who want to avoid giving orders, not to mention avoid becoming caricatures. Consequently, the citations seem to contribute to an evaluation of the presented statements in favour of the Swedes. In this evaluation the stupidity that Larry is portraying is a necessity. As Bakhtin points out, narrators sometimes need fools because a fool interacts dialogically with an intelligence. This interaction allows the narrators to teach a narrative’s special wisdom (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 403–404).

Seen in this light, also the initial recitation of the Swedes (‘one could do like that or what do you think?’) acquire a shade of foolishness. It portrays the Swedes’ lack of awareness of the seemingly objective fact that Poles act differently, that you cannot speak to them like this. The Swedes are in this way also in some respect the fools in the story, albeit in a more subtle way. Thus, the citations not only illustrate and exemplify John’s and Larry’s storytelling, they also add new elements to it.

John’s and Larry’s discussion then continues at another level, without citations. The excerpt below starts where the former one ended.

**John:** But we’re raised in different ways, we’re probably not different as individuals, I don’t think so but everyone gets influenced by one’s environment.

**Larry:** And there we go with the backpack again.

**John:** Yeah.

**David:** The backpack?

**Larry:** Yeah, the one you’re carrying around on your back.

**David:** —The one you’re carrying around—

**Larry:** —Yes.

**David:** Yeah, mm. But eh—

**John:** —That is really I think the big difference between Poles—

**Larry:** —Yeah, that is perhaps the most difficult thing too, when you’re coming here and you’re totally new and you don’t have any experience, that is to understand how differently we function, you know, to be able to function together. They also think that, you know, the Poles, they often think that we Swedes are very *ehm dry* and kind of entirely *too effective*, we, if you – if you go, come to the work in the morning, you know, or if you meet somebody then you say, you know, we just say hello actually and how are you.

**John** Yeah, at best—

**Larry:** —At best, you know.

**David:** Aha, yeah, yeah.

**Larry:** The Poles, they – they can start talking for fifteen, twenty minutes, you know about [[laugh]] what they did yesterday, I mean they’ve got a completely different social pattern.

**John:** And when people go on vacation for a week, then they *expect* you to tell about that. We don’t do that, you know. Larry has ( ).

**Larry:** But so, in that case—

**David:** —[[Laugh]] But what do you do then, like, do you adjust yourself so that you become a bit, or you ( ) on your side?—

**Larry:** —A bit, a bit.

**John:** Yeah, we’re trying to adjust ourselves eh at our best, they get *used* to us being that way, it’s not like we’re being stuck-up or something like that, but C. ((John’s and Larry’s company)) is a bit boring.

**Larry:** Yes.

**John:** We don’t talk so much with each other and so on.

**Larry:** Many probably think they – they adjust more to us than we do to-[[laugh]] to them, actually.

“We’re raised in different ways”, John says and Larry presents a metaphor: the backpack. A culturalizing frame is introduced in which the speakers may inter-

pret the quotations in the first excerpt and their implications. Now, the Poles are not portrayed as stupid, just different. Utterances such as “to understand how differently we function” (Larry), “we’re trying to adjust ourselves” and “they get used to us” (John) indicate that the speakers in a more abstract way are striving to comprehend the perceived differences and their complications. Simultaneously, John and Larry portray themselves as understanding actors; perceptive, sensitive, and able to discuss the topic in an elaborate way. The speakers’ *mutual* role taking probably belongs to this portrayal. The conversation between John and Larry is a sample of consensus.

Consequently, the quotations and the following discussion could be interpreted as the speakers’ collaborative striving towards understanding others as well as each other. Quotations such as these may perhaps be looked upon as everyday analytic tools, visualizing various aspects of a relation from a certain angle. These tools allow speakers to examine a social concern within their reachable and comprehensible horizon, as if following an assumed list with points of view that cover a range of interactional facets<sup>20</sup>: I say, you say, we say, they say, they think, we think, we never say, they never say.<sup>21</sup> From their perspective, John and Larry take several relevant roles, not only the role of the others and the roles of themselves, but also roles that others do *not* play as well as roles that *they themselves* do not play. These latter, so to speak, virtual roles, help the speakers to define the roles they find real.<sup>22</sup>

### Speaking to a child

To depict relations between oneself and others using citations may not only be integrated in a collaborative project to comprehend these relations, citations may also be used when a more explicit complaint is being launched (cf. Sacks 1992 vol. II p. 303–317). The excerpt below is from an interview with Kate, former assistant manager in company C. in Poland. It begins when Kate has started to tell me that she has been experiencing surprisingly big “differences” in Poland. Then I ask her what these differences are:

**Kate:** Well, there are big differences in the way people think, they’ve been damaged by communism, or, now I’m generalizing you know very much, if you, there is a big difference.

**David:** And, like, how can you see that?

**Kate:** They are—

**David:** —You were working there now with two Poles—

**Kate:** —Extremely bureaucratic, they’re always looking for, they’re afraid of making decisions, they’re afraid of taking responsibility, they’re used to somebody else taking care of it, eh you do what you are told to do and that’s enough (...) because a Swede, you can *often* say to him that (VOICE 7) ‘do *that*’, and then they take the whole responsibility, or (VOICE 8) ‘get *this* done’, whatever it means you have to do to make it work. Then instead they just, well, you say (NO VOICE CHANGE) ‘do *that*, call that person and say *this*’, okay, so they call him and he doesn’t answer, >then they don’t call him again because they’ve actually called and they didn’t get any answer (<.

**David:** So it is more like, they take it literally?

**Kate:** Exactly! As I thought a bit in the beginning...

Kate’s recited instructions (VOICE 7 and VOICE 8) are related in a calmly explanatory manner, just slightly more distinctly articulated than the surrounding speech. Despite their substantial similarity with Larry’s presented caricature of a (presumably non-existent) order-giving Swede above, these citations seem to be shaped in a way that underlines how *normal* and *sensible* such instructions are to be seen. The last citation is particularly clear in this sense. Although it could have been uttered quite rudely — ‘do *that*, call that person and say *this*’ — it is not accompanied by any voice change, just signalled with the words “you say”. In this manner, Kate’s citations do not *directly* illustrate her statement that Poles are “damaged by communism”. Instead they do this *indirectly*, by illustrating instructions plausibly given to and correctly understood by a Swede, instructions that however are said to be misunderstood by a Pole. Keeping these recited instructions formally close to the surrounding speech seems to contribute to the constructed frame of normality and sensibility. The instructions do not appear to play any problematic role in the interaction with Poles, they just appear ordinary, regular and commonsensical, so to speak not worthy of any vivid speech activity. The abnormal, on the contrary, is put in the Polish *response* to these instructions. In the above excerpt, this response is not recited by Kate but quickly described: “okay, so they call him and he doesn’t answer, then they don’t call him again because they’ve actually called...”. When the conversation continues Kate is using more citations to explain this response:

**Kate:** ... As I thought a bit in the beginning, when I started to realize that it is like that a bit, you have to think almost as if you’re speaking to a *child*.

and that's not because they're *stupid*, it's just because they've got a completely different *background* you know. // Or perhaps not as, or, one has to be extremely *over-explicit*, I think, tell them that (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'well, if you don't get hold of them you'll have to do this instead'. They're simply used to be controlled, I think.

**David:** Mm, mm, yeah. And eh, is there any, if one could get any example from your job, so to speak (...) first time you came to think about this or when you, when it's clear in some way?

**Kate:** Yeah, it's like, one never thinks in alternatives. It is, if I say that I want to get something delivered at some point in time > then they may just call and say (VOICE 9) 'it won't *work!*' <. (VOICE 10) 'No, no, but *everything* is possible' you'll have to say then, you know. (VOICE 11) 'But our truck doesn't go that day'. (VOICE 12) 'But you could rent *another* truck instead, you know'. (VOICE 13) 'Well, well, okay, yeah but in that case we'll do it then, then it'll work'. (...) You can't presume that things just *happen*, you have to check it and check it, sometimes it felt like you didn't do anything else, like you were running around checking (VOICE 14) 'now have you done that, have you done that?'

Kate's direction is met by a quoted protest ('it won't *work!*', VOICE 9), uttered in a firmly and slightly hysterical way. This is contrasted with Kate's citation of herself ('no, no, but *everything* is possible', VOICE 10) in a calm and more slow voice, also provided with a taste of repetition or phrasing (it is followed by "...you'll have to say then"). The continuation of the Polish protest – 'but our truck doesn't go that day' (VOICE 11) – has a tone that is similar to 'it won't *work!*' whereas Kate's staged answer is again calm and explanatory. This answer ('but you could rent *another* truck instead, you know', VOICE 12) actually seems to be uttered as a basic reminder, as a fundamental and self-evident truth that nonetheless has to be made explicit. How could the construction of this reminder be interpreted? One possibility is to reconnect to Kate's earlier mentioned opinion that in relation to some Poles, one has to think almost as if speaking to a child. A rejoinder like this answer, uttered as a basic reminder and containing a self-evident truth, could in fact be seen as archetypically *child directed*. This is how training and schooling conventionally is thought to be achieved: calm explanations of self-evident things. The "child" is subsequently given a line that seems to display what aspects of childishness Kate strives to emphasise: immaturity, irresponsibility and stubborn defiance. That line ('well, well, okay, yeah but in that case we'll do it then, then it'll work', VOICE 13) is uttered in a silent, mumbling and excusing way, as if illustrating a half-hearted concession. The Polish "child" is thus defeated, but simultaneously it

seems to hide its inner dissent, as if waiting for the next opportunity to revitalize it. To use Caryl Emerson's words when explaining Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language: "the parodied side [in a text or speech form] does not [always] take all that abuse lying down but rather fights back, resists, tries to subvert" (Emerson 1997, p. 128).

The last quotation is the most interesting in this excerpt, especially if it is compared to the first one. Both are linked to Kate's depiction of herself, but whereas the first one is uttered in a normalizing and conventionalising manner, it lacks voice change, the latter is said in a light and somewhat *overly worried* way (VOICE 14). To run around checking other people all the time – 'now have you done that, have you done that?' – is thereby described as a problematic and to some extent imperfect way of behaving, as if Kate wanted to demonstrate a self-critical attitude. In this manner, Kate not only constructs a Polish "child" with parodic overtones, she also constructs a similarly parodic Swedish "parent". This element was not present when Kate began to discuss the differences she detects between Swedes and Poles. It came *in conjunction with and throughout* her citations. These citations in other words seem to enable Kate to reflect on as well as evaluate others' and her own behaviour, not only in favour of herself but also in implicit polemics with herself.

Kate's self-criticism is however scaled in her complaining depiction as a whole. It is not shaped as an explicit criticism, raised in a straightforward way. Instead it has attained a somewhat tragic position, following a seemingly firm social logic: if Poles act like children, one simply has to act like a parent. Consequently, Kate is conveying a feeling of regret but also a feeling of compulsion and inevitability. Her self-criticism is portrayed as, so to speak, locked into her phrases.

### **Being tough, teaching responsibility, reminding oneself**

Besides stressing immaturity, irresponsibility and defiance, a constructed association between Poles and childishness may include a fear of being fooled. This aspect is elicited and animated further on in my conversation with Kate, when she is elaborating her reflections on working as a manager in Poland. Her account turns out to resemble a discourse on training or schooling, activated in response to Poles' attempts to run away from work.

**Kate:** ...*never* (in Sweden) you can be rather relaxed but there (in Poland) you've got to be rather tough. They take every chance they get to run away but it's—

**David:**—How, I mean, like how? I mean, could they for instance—

**Kate:**—Well, they can, they can, the first day they can ask (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'I have, I need to get something done, I need to go an hour earlier'. (VOICE 15) 'Sure, of course you can do that' because here in Sweden you think that each individual has, how do you say, the ultimate responsibility, I have to do my job, while it is happening that, well, now I speak about those people I've seen and worked with, you know. *They* don't have the same feeling here, instead they can come (VOICE 16) 'well, okay, it worked this day, then I'll ask tomorrow too'. So you're—

**David:**—Whereas here in Sweden it would be like, how?

**Kate:** Well, then I know, if somebody came asking me here (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'can I go?', (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'yes, of course you can' because I know that they're doing their job anyway, or that everything gets done or, I wouldn't reflect on, and there, I don't think that the Swede is asking three days in a row. But they do, which is, well [[laugh]].

**David:** Mm, what do you, I mean, what do you do? As a manager?

**Kate:** Well, then you have to say that we've got fixed working hours.

**David:** Mm. /// But that you'd never have to do in Sweden, I mean—

**Kate:**—No, that you'd *never* have to do, *never*.

When Kate is staging her answer to the correspondingly staged Polish question her voice is high and light (VOICE 15), conveying a nice attitude. This answer contains two instances of something self-evident and natural: 'Sure, of course...'. Kate's niceness seems to be shaped as exaggerated. The question that precedes the answer, however, is not uttered in a different voice, thereby conveying normality. This is consistent with her following account: a wish to leave one's work earlier to get something special done is a reasonable and legitimate wish, if not used all the time. The abnormal is to ask this question again and again, displaying lack of responsibility and, according to Kate, ultimately provoking the manager to set up fixed working hours, or to point out that the working hours are fixed.

Subsequently, when Kate is citing the Poles' reaction to her nice attitude her voice is slightly laughing. This citation does not illustrate what the Poles say but what they *think*: 'well, okay, it worked this day, then I'll ask tomorrow too' (VOICE 16). The Poles are in other words not only depicted as abusing trust, they are also portrayed as *having fun* while doing it. Their manner of playing a double game is pointed out as a consciously irresponsible lack of understanding whereas Kate is portrayed as serious and

honest. Her laugh may be looked upon as expressing an awareness of the coexistence of these contradictory frames (cf. Katz 1999, p. 92).

If seen in this light, Kate's self-citation in the beginning (VOICE 15) is still conveying a nice attitude, but it is also provided with an inbuilt self-critical touch; it portrays the speaker's naïveté and thoughtlessness. This portrayal is incorporated into the animated drama: the Poles are cheating, Kate is being cheated.

Kate's colleague Frank, who is working as a leader of a project, says much the same as her remarks above. The excerpt below is from a passage in which Frank is talking about how he has to change his conduct when working in Poland.

...What we learned, or what I learned, it was to become over-explicit. We ((some Swedes)) used to say (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'now we should think, when we are explaining this then we're doing it for kids in a day nursery'. If you're over-explicit you take away some of these misunderstandings, more details mean, so to speak, that's in the meaning of the word, it becomes more specified, it could be mis-, or it could not be understood in so many different ways, actually...

Frank is using a quotation but does not alter his voice. Although his citation is directed to a "we" beyond the interview situation and introduced by "we used to say..." it is not animated or vividly uttered. Frank is thus not imitating anyone, he is just reporting. Or perhaps: he is just reporting, thereby imitating himself as an ordinary person. Such a frame makes the quotation and its message seem rather commonplace; despite its content, it is treated as merely a detail. The explicit moral of Frank's story is not about his Polish colleagues but about himself and his Swedish colleagues. He is explaining their common social strategy in managing Poles, a strategy in which the recitation is portrayed as a routinized and shared reminder.

### Revealing the "mentality": An ambiguous need

As I have tried to show above, the efforts by the expatriates to comprehend others' and their own acting and thinking may be shaped in and through citations, as well as the expatriates' efforts to comprehend how they themselves, and others, think about others. Besides this, citations may also be used when speakers strive to comprehend how others think about what *knowledge*

one should have about others' thinking. In this particular context, the latter is sometimes explicitly talked about as knowledge about people's "mentality" (cf. Herzfeld 1997, p. 78-79). In my conversation with Peter, a Swedish small entrepreneur working in Poland, it turns out that he is being helped in his work by a Swedish-Polish woman who has been living and working in Sweden for many years and who speaks both Swedish and Polish. In the excerpt below I ask him what kind of help she offers:

Yeah, translation and telling me how their mentality actually *works* for me who doesn't understand certain things (NO VOICE CHANGE) 'how the *hell* could one do it this way?' (VOICE 17) 'Well, it's because one thinks so and so'. But also, since she has wriggled her way into the authorities and - and she's getting other information than I'd have got if I came to them as a foreigner...

Peter is describing the woman's help with a cited question and a cited answer. The fact that the question is uttered without changing voice might perhaps be explained by a common theme in this conversation, only indicated here. During the interview, Peter is repeatedly complaining about a wide variety of difficulties regarding his business in Poland. He is for instance often arguing with his Polish factory workers, who are said to work slowly and inefficiently, and the local authorities have been accusing him of tax evasion (a false accusation, according to him). The question 'how the *hell* could one do it this way?' may therefore be seen as thoroughly integrated in Peter's narrative. For him, this question needs no annotation that distinguishes it from the rest of his speech, it is perfectly regular and motivated *within* this speech. Such an interpretation may even make it hard to see this question as a citation. The only thing that distinguishes it from the rest seems to be the target to which it is addressed. It is directed to somebody beyond the speaker and the listener in this particular conversation – a Pole, a Swede, anyone. In this way, it is a rhetorical question, or maybe a rhetorical complaint.<sup>23</sup> The related answer, on the contrary, is not presented as Peter's answer but the Swedish-Polish woman's. Now Peter is changing tone, shaping his speech in a stuck-up, cocky and nagging way (VOICE 17), as if trying to convey how tiring and demanding such answers are: 'Well, it's because one thinks so and so'. The general form of this answer (it does not end with anything particular but with the exchangeable unit "so and so") implies that there are *several* answers within this form, there is perhaps one answer for each of Peter's business troubles that he is bringing to the Swedish-Polish woman.

This implication seems to contribute to the tiring and demanding tone that Peter is using. No matter what their specificities, all those answers, Peter seems to suppose, end up with the "mentality". Consequently, despite the fact that Peter is indicating that he needs the woman's knowledge he still in this quotation displays an ambivalent attitude to this need. When Peter is asking 'how the *hell* could one do it this way?' the answer that he designates to the woman is for instance not something like 'well, that's a good question, I don't know' or 'you're right, it really seems strange', answers that would have released Peter from possible guilt. The animated answer is instead implying that Peter would not have met any trouble if he had just known about the "mentality" in advance. Yet the "mentality" is described as offering several and shifting answers, not possible to articulate once and for all and consequently *not* possible to know in advance. These circumstances build up the irritation in Peter's narrative. The "mentality" is the answer – but what *is* the answer?

Thus, although knowledge about this "mentality" is highly praised among expatriates, and continually evokes lively discussions in interviews, it is also sometimes met with delicately demonstrated annoyance.

### Comprehending and controlling: Ideological encounters

I suggested above that citations and animated voices may be viewed as integrated in speakers' efforts to understand others as well as each other. What, then, does an "understanding" in which others' voices are incorporated mean? In order to discuss this I use some of Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas. This is done in a selective way; not all in Bakhtin's notion of understanding has to be accepted.

Bakhtin's image of understanding seems rather plain and down to earth. In actual life of speech, he argues, every accomplishment of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system. The act of understanding merges with the very response to this word; understanding "comes to fruition only in the response" (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 282; cf. Katz 1999, p. 46). In Bakhtin's perspective understanding and response are in fact to be seen as mutually conditioning each other; one is impossible without the other (Ibid.). "*Creative understanding*



does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing” (Bakhtin 1986/1999, p. 7). Similar to Harold Garfinkel’s view, understanding is grasped not as a common intersection of overlapping sets but as an operation, an accomplishment (Garfinkel 1967/1999, p. 31). Further, the assimilation of others’ words has according to Bakhtin a deep and basic significance in an individual’s ideological becoming as well as his or her ideological interrelations with the world (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 342). It is important to note that in this context “ideology” should not be confused with (merely) political ideology. Instead it signifies an idea-system in general (Ibid., p. 429; Bakhtin 1986/1999, p. 101). I choose to interpret Bakhtin’s “ideology” as equivalent to a distinctively prescriptive view on the world and one’s relation to it.

If this image of understanding is taken as a point of departure a kinship with the expatriates’ use of quotations seem to be clear. By using quotations the expatriates are assimilating others’ words into their own conceptual system in response to a particular issue or event that these quotations are said to be integrated with, an issue or event that is being touched upon in interview conversations. Additionally, they are not only assimilating others’ words but also their own words as if they were others’, as well as plausible words or virtual words belonging to collectives (the Poles, the Swedes, the fools) and alternative social dramas (“we never say...”, “if somebody were to say...”).

“Assimilating” should in this context most likely be understood in a very concrete way. The expatriates are taking the words of another (as they construe these words), uttering them “again” and arranging them at their pleasure. As narrators they are not, to return to Bakhtin’s terms, renouncing or forgetting themselves. On the contrary they act as narrative constructors, designating various rejoinders to fictive characters who thereby are illustrating various messages (for instance: Swedes are soft and not sufficiently clear whereas Poles are acting like fools or children, they are damaged by communism, they are afraid of making decisions, they try to run away from work, they are used to being controlled etc.) The fact that the expatriates’ staged story characters seem to act out these messages is, according to Jonathan Potter (1997, p. 161), the “beauty of recitation – it brings into being separate corroborating actors who, like ventriloquist’s dummies, seem to have life, opinions and personality of their own”.

Consequently, by changing voice and presenting quotations the expatriates are not only illustrating but also *expanding* their messages, displaying them in understandable ways and infusing fresh life into them. It is clear

that this “creative understanding”, as Bakhtin puts it, takes its departure from the narrator’s particular point of view. Poles are not understood in an abstract or isolated way but in relation and opposition to Swedes; working life in Poland is not understood as working life in general but in relation and opposition to its equivalent in Sweden, and so forth. Citations and animations in storytelling not only seem to manifest a strategic component (cf. Holsánová 1998) but a deeper and more significant component of comprehending the unknown. It signifies the expatriates’ way of taking some social conduct, both their own and others’, into account. Their stories draw on the fact that in everyday interaction, there is no gap between taking the standpoints of others and responding (Katz 1999, p. 316); the other’s voice may be *turned into* one’s own response.

A closely related theme in this process is the ideological aspect. In the beginning of this chapter I suggested that mimicry and acts of appropriating another’s word may be viewed as a site for individuals’ ideological struggle. Close to this suggestion is Bakhtin’s remark (recounted above) that the assimilation of others’ words is joined with an individual’s ideological becoming and interrelations with the world. Stylisation, parody and other ways to encourage so-called double-voicedness are in Bakhtin’s perspective crucial to accentuate the struggle for meaning inside every word (Emerson 1997, p. 128). If these standpoints are taken, what does it mean for Swedish expatriates in Poland?

One answer could be formulated in terms of the analytical points I have already mentioned. Using citations may in this context involve the use of caricatures and parodies, self-criticism and self-celebrating, animations of stupidity and cleverness etc – all narratively distributed in an intricate but occasionally fairly ordered way: Swedes are portrayed as neutral, rational and normal whereas Poles are portrayed as deviant, stupid and cheating. When the expatriates are staging their encounter with the perceived Polish “mentality” it is shaped as various “voices” with which they are struggling or wrestling. The wrestling or struggle as a whole may be seen as the clearest sign of an ideological component: it contains an ambition to resist, complain, correct and moralize, not only in order to comprehend but to control and teach. To use Bakhtin’s terms, such an ambition may be called centripetal. It serves to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world of the expatriates (Bakhtin 1986/2000, p. 270-271). It may be this aspect, here in oral storytelling, that scholars such as Kostera (1995), Kelly-Holmes (1998) as well as Carrier (1996) in various ways touch upon when writing

about Westerners' depictions of and/or relations to Eastern Central Europe (or other regions): an ambition to invoke and maintain a Western order.

It may be worth mentioning again, however, that the voices and citations are not only thought to be representing Poles but also *other Swedes* or *the narrators themselves* in this very encounter. These figures may also at least in some degree be portrayed as deviant and stupid: thoughtless, naïve, credulous, excessively worried and so on. They may also be positioned as targets in a struggle – the expatriates' struggle to learn how to change their way of acting and thinking, a struggle to employ self-control.

In addition, as I have tried to show above, the voices do not just automatically display the points the narrator wants to make. Instead of bringing accounts in line with the overall messages, invited voices may infuse plurality; Kate's usage of citations that ventilate implicit polemics with herself may be seen as an example of this. This tendency, following Bakhtin's vocabulary, may be called centrifugal. Every utterance of a speaking subject, Bakhtin argues, serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are put into effect (Bakhtin 1986/2000, p. 272).

Thus, an ordering or centripetal ambition may be present side by side with its opposite in the expatriates' stories. If we look again at the arrival stories in the beginning of this report, some examples of such a parallelism seem to be evident there as well:

...coming down in this awful winter, or spring-winter month, then, seeing Poland. It doesn't look nice, you may say, absolutely not. We thought 'where the heck have we ended up? (...) ...and then I thought that 'if it's looking like this, they ((the Poles)) cannot build roads, they cannot build houses, then can they really *supply* these things in time?' (Jonathan).

This story ends in a tolerant and relativistic manner (see pages 14–15). Prior to that ending, however, doubts are recited, indicating a voice of the narrator's former self and its thoughts. As citations, these are bringing plurality into Jonathan's speech. But in so doing a unifying narrative self-struggle is also indicated: initial and easily accessible attitudes have to be put aside, old thoughts that somehow reject Poland, Poles or "the Polish" have to be transcended. Thus, controlling and comprehending *one's own* (individual and collective) conduct in relation to the perceived otherness or "mentality", albeit in a normalising and self-favouring way, may also demand a ideological work.

## 4 Concluding remarks

In this report, I have called attention to the fact that people seldom tell stories about another country and others in straightforward or unambiguous ways. Several narrative components and passages may be seen as sites of tensions and ambivalences. Western European ways of telling stories from Eastern Central Europe, in this case Swedish expatriates on their experiences in Poland, might in this respect be informative. The expatriates are to some extent supposed to make their new place familiar and recognizable but nevertheless continue to underline their distinctive otherness.

When telling *stories of their initial arrival* in Poland (chapter 2), the expatriates may be seen as interrelating or dialogising certain kinds of utterances and corresponding points of view. A narrative space for individuality and self-regeneration is created in the course of three negative responses – to the Polish scenery and surroundings when first arriving; to the immutability of, and lack of surprises in, one's own first impressions; and to other Swedes' derogatory opinions. These arrival stories often draw on broader societal changes and end with portrayals of tolerant and realistic morals. Previous views are depicted as false or naïve whereas new ones are portrayed as conscious or aware. Simultaneously, the narrators' ability to be on the move is conveyed.

Other aspects of the expatriates' narratives include protests and discontent. Their use of *oral quotations* (chapter 3) may be seen as articulations and elaborations of moral and ideological positions in relation to others. When bringing in others' voices, the narrators are struggling to understand and control the perceived novelty or otherness that the particular others are said to represent, i. e. a "mentality". In so doing, narrative figures such as "the child" or "the fool" may be staged, imputing certain characteristics to Poles as well as Swedes (for instance: Swedes as naïve and worried and Poles as irresponsible and childish, Swedes as soft and not sufficiently clear and Poles as accustomed to being ruled by others). In and through citations and their narrative figures, the expatriates also engage in struggles with themselves, albeit in a normalising and self-favouring way. The invited voices do not just display the points the narrators strive to make but expand the stories and insert plurality into them.

To conclude this report I would like to accentuate two additional and possibly more general interpretations of the above presented illustrations of

expatriates' storytelling. In so doing, I try to indicate some further themes in my material that I have not explicitly touched upon yet. At the same time some overall themes in the report are revisited.

The first point reconnects to my introductory comments on expatriates as strangers. Focusing on their storytelling, what kind of strangers could the expatriates be said to resemble?

The second point reconnects to several of my remarks on the links between the expatriates' selves and the narrative components they use to depict experiences from Poland. This time my point of departure is a seemingly trivial verbal tool: utterances on the colour grey. What does it mean when the expatriates repeatedly use this narrative ingredient when describing Poland?

### Expatriates as self-styled anthropologists

One aspect in Jonathan Friedman's perspective on globalization concerns a supranational identification process. According to him this is needed for transnational meaning attribution (Friedman 1995, p. 78), that is what globalization is said to be about: processes of attributing of meaning that are of a global nature (Ibid., p. 73). Such an identification process involves a certain multinationalism or cosmopolitanism, significant for a globalized elite and ultimately a product of global systemic processes. "The practice of cosmopolitanism", Friedman argues, is "common to the self-styled global ethnographer of culture" and "predicated on maintaining distance, often a superiority to the local" (Ibid., p. 78). Actors that consider themselves global also consider themselves modern (Ibid.). They are "participating in many worlds without becoming part of them" (Ibid.; cf. Beck 1998, p. 100).

In comparison with this aspect there seem to be traces of the gaze of a "self-styled global ethnographer of culture" in the Swedish expatriates' storytelling. As if playing ethnographers (or anthropologists) the expatriates are striving to survey and comprehend the other country and its inhabitants. They are narratively negotiating with what they see as differences and strangeness, peculiarities and "mentalities", eager to render their new place and its social landscapes more familiar. A certain distance is clearly articulated: places and impressions are lumped together in broad themes, judge-

ments on whole populations are embedded in stories that are constructed upon a local incident or episode, and so forth (cf. Zerubavel 1996a). A superiority to the local is also formulated, most evident in the expatriates' self-images as enlightened, tolerant, realistic and well informed. Moreover, the expatriates are at least somehow portraying themselves as superior to local Swedes and their presumably narrow way of perceiving Poland.

On the other hand there are also traces of the opposite. Some stories are quite local and consequently articulate nearness, detailed practices and contextualised working experiences. Additionally, as mentioned above the expatriates are not striving to understand Poland, Poles and "the Polish" in abstract or isolated ways but in relation and opposition to Swedish equivalents. Their storytelling thus contains nationalising features. There are even traces of the irony of the globalized gaze. The interviewee called Jonathan is for instance commenting on his first arrival in Poland with the somewhat self-mocking remark "coming down, seeing Poland, then". Phrases like this indicate that Jonathan is portraying himself as aware of the impossibility of drawing conclusions on "Poland" just from short glances, an awareness that is displayed when turned into a narrative element. Jonathan appears to strive to prove his knowledge about the distant and supranational position he is attributing to himself, he strives to prove globalization reflexivity. Thus, the expatriates' manifestations as self-styled anthropologists are more complex than they initially might appear.

Furthermore, another instance of complexity is to be found in the expatriates' vocabularies of motives (cf. Mills 1940). Whereas some are describing their decision to live and work in Poland in a pragmatic way others are enthusiastic, seeking adventure and fresh professional energy or impetus. Chris seems to portray himself as a representative of the former. As was shown above, his condensed arrival story is followed by this comment:

But we decided to do it, my wife and I, we went there together, we said 'we go in for this, we do want to get abroad you know' and then you have to go for it.

A wish to "get abroad" is put forward when telling me about his first impressions when arriving in Poland. What is more, Chris is presenting a rejoinder belonging to him and his wife, a rejoinder that conveys an element of collective self-persuasion: "we said 'we go in for this...'. An internal obstacle has to be overcome. Poland thus becomes a country Chris

and his wife *have* to go to if they not are to lose an opportunity. Chris is, so to speak, a quite reluctant anthropologist.

This pragmatic account could be compared to enthusiastic ones that clearly point out missions and ideological projects. Tommy is depicting his arrival with words like “great fun, exciting, a feeling of dizziness”. He is not presenting himself as forced to go to Poland but as willing to go there. Subsequent to the recorded interview he is elaborating his enthusiasm. This elaboration turns out to consist of a discourse of transformation celebration. My notes from his office in Warsaw captured the following:

After I have turned off the tape recorder Tommy starts to talk about more personal and existential things. “What’s the meaning of life?” he asks. “To have it comfortable? No, to do some good, to become a part of a process, a development”. This is “the collective feeling within us all” Tommy says, the fact that we all want to “help”. But Sweden “feels as if it’s finished”. Tommy is nodding at me and says: “if you exist or not doesn’t change a thing”. Here in Poland it is different. Here “you’re creating something”.

Tommy explains that he would like to stay in Poland for a long time to see the country develop although he is not sure that his wife wants to stay as long as he. To stay in Poland should be almost as much fun as living in Sweden in the 40s, 50s or 60s, times when “positive thinking” was dominating. When Tommy returns to Sweden, he says, he is just asserting for himself that “here it is like it always has been”. Then Tommy is metaphorically comparing his feelings towards Poland and Sweden: it is like getting a model railway in separate parts (Poland) *or* getting it unpacked and ready to play with (Sweden) – “it’s more fun to build it”.

That’s why he is in Poland, Tommy explains. His Swedish friends definitely do not understand this. They just say (Tommy is now animating his story) “why do you go to Poland? Everything is *worse* there”.

Elements like these belong to those narrative patterns among the expatriates that are oriented toward regenerating the narrators’ selves. Tommy’s work in Poland is construed as revitalizing. In line with Friedman’s above-mentioned remark on the modern characteristics of “self-styled ethnographers”, Tommy’s account seems like a modernist’s happily predicated motives. His motives are actually presented in terms of an ambition to *return* to modernity: to create, build and act like a progressive giver. He wants to be seen as global *and* modern, as if being global allows him to be modern.

### Iconicity: Highlighting and opposing “grey”

One rhetorical force within the construction of a nation-state could according to the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld be called iconicity. The notion is derived from “icon”, that is an image or symbol that signifies something by virtue of its perceived similarity. A photograph is for instance an icon of its subject, a Vivaldi flute passage an icon of bird song and a map an icon of territorial integrity (Herzfeld 1997, p. 27, 64). The point about an icon is that although it is culturally and socially constituted it nevertheless *seems* natural. The constitutive aspect is somewhat hidden. The case of a photo is perhaps particularly clear in this respect. A photo of someone may for instance be presented to this person with a phrase like “here you are standing in front of our house”, not paying any attention to the huge dissimilarities between the photo and the person (and the house). In this sense a complete identification is rhetorically accomplished. Iconicity is a matter of creating self-evidence (Ibid., p. 65).

In the expatriates’ storytelling some instances of iconicity seem to be present. One of these involves colours, or more specifically one particular colour (or absence of colour): grey. In the expatriates’ comments on Polish scenery and surroundings (what I tried to distinguish as one type of utterances that is played out in an arrival story) grey is repeatedly mentioned. Frank says: “Then I went down, it was a dark, grey day in January. (...) It was awful. It was terribly cold...”. Maria says: “It was so grey and appalling and people looked sad and depressed and terrible clothes...”. Also Chris, although hesitant, is referring to grey: “No, it was like grey and dark and snowy and cold...”.

Grey may also be mentioned in other types of utterances, for example when Paul is characterizing other Swedes’ opinions – “that it’s grey and boring and dirty...” – as well as in his own confirmation of these opinions: “sure it was grey”, “there’s no paint on the houses”. In Frank’s story, grey is taking the role of an explicit metaphor. He describes his changed image of Poland with colour versus greyness: “it ((his image)) has *completely* changed, you know, it has become much less grey [[laugh]] and more colourful...”. Frank explains the initial impressions of grey with the help of circumstances – the fog, the winter, the leafless trees – as if eager to underline that Poland certainly was not grey *in itself*, it merely looked like that. Consequently, grey is contextualised by descriptions of bad weather and low temperature, horrifying feelings, bore-

dom and dirt. It is also contextualised by an effort to transcend this very contextualisation, an effort to *recontextualise*. The term “contextualised” should be understood in a concrete sense. The word grey is uttered close to and together with words that signify these things.

In these cases there seems to be an instance of iconicity. As a word, “grey” is after all just referring to a visual impression, a colour. To resist “grey” in a very concrete sense – that is as a colour or visual impression and *not* as a symbol – might in this context be the same as being captured by its iconicity. The expatriates may treat “grey” as a sign that is not seen as a sign at all.

Following this line of interpretation, some questions may be relevant. Why do the expatriates bother to highlight the greyness in one’s own and others’ eyes? Why do they bother to reflect on, account for or fight the greyness? If it just was referring to a colour this narrative activity would seem rather futile. What are set in motion are probably the implicit connotations of grey: dreariness, dullness, boredom, bleakness, depression, lifelessness. As clichés for Eastern Central Europe these still seem rather established. “Grey” is associated with “East” as well as boredom. Furthermore, as Conrad (1997) has observed, the underlying meanings of boredom may often be a sense of understimulation or disconnection. Situations (or objects, environments, people) that are interpreted as boring are in other words described as empty, monotonous and uneventful. They may also be described as impossible to get involved in or get connected to, often together with a feeling of being unable to leave or escape. A boring situation is associated with isolation or “a kind of ‘entrapment’” (Ibid., p. 473). Thus, if these socially ascribed meanings are taken into account, labelling Eastern Central Europe “grey” seems to be a way to label it as a site of understimulation and disconnection. The area is made into an uneventful and detached place, a place where visitors are supposed to run the risk of getting socially isolated or entrapped.

In this context, moreover, the connotations of grey take the form of a *narrative task* for Swedish expatriates. When reflecting on and opposing these clichés the expatriates are also reflecting on and opposing the idea that *they themselves* could be associated with them. Since they have ended up or chosen to work in Poland they are probably eager to avoid being portrayed as having ended up or chosen something boring, depressing and lifeless. Their reluctance to accept “grey” as an accurate description of Poland may not only be seen as a reflexive change of perceptions but also as resistance against the possibility that they, as expatriates, are perceived as

understimulated, disconnected and socially entrapped, and perceived as voluntarily favouring this.

In more general terms these remarks may highlight expatriates’ ambiguous embracing of another country and others, perhaps especially relevant in the case of Western visitors in post-communist countries. It is an embrace that not only contains an idea of a transformation of the narrator, for instance making him or her tolerant and border-crossing, but also illuminates and presupposes a simultaneous and corresponding transformation of that other country.

### Appendix: Transcription Key

<i>Italic</i>	speaker’s emphasis
((in Sweden))	researcher’s comment
()	uncertain transcription
-	self-interruption
—	interrupted or overlapping speech in dialogue
(...)	excluded passage
/	one second of silence
[[laugh]]	laugh

in relation to analysed quotations these signs are also used:

(VOICE 7)	prosodic change
>then it’s not like...<	words said with increased speed

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This rhetoric is not only frequently used in media but also within organizations. For instance, when a Swedish association for economists are providing advice for potential expatriates among its members a combination of guaranteed cognitive advantages, challenges and self-transformations are outlined: “There are many reasons to go abroad. One wants to broaden one’s mind, gain experiences or improve one’s knowledge of language. (...) Only those who are feeling physically and mentally well should go away. To live in a foreign country involve larger strains than to live in one’s own country. (...) Do not go abroad to change the world but let the world change you!” (quoted from the website [www.civiltkonomerna.se/nyttigheter/utlandet/tips.html](http://www.civiltkonomerna.se/nyttigheter/utlandet/tips.html), my translation).

<sup>2</sup> See “Svenskägda företag med verksamhet i utlandet 1997”, *”Anställda i utlandet i svenska industrin och tjänstekonener 1990-1995”*, Westerlund & Åberg 1998.

<sup>3</sup> This figure does not include Swedish entrepreneurs working in close cooperation with Polish companies or other semi structured collaborations.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Wästerfors 2000a.

<sup>5</sup> An instance of the way Swedes and Poles often are said to view each other is found in the Swedish magazine *Affärsvärlden* (“Business World”) No. 5, 2000. The article begins by stating that Swedes and Swedish companies are becoming a more and more common sight in Poland and that this country is turning “more and more like the West, but there are several traps that an unprepared Swede may fall into”. Two lists are presented to guide Swedish businessmen in their interaction with Poles. Swedes are said to be viewed as “structured, thinking and acting rational” whereas Poles are said to be viewed as “very talkative” and “slow and circumstantial”, etc. In presenting these lists as self-evident descriptions of views that people are said to hold and employ, the magazine is indicating what Harold Garfinkel calls an image of people as “cultural dopes” (or “judgemental dopes”). By that he means the “man-in-the-sociologist’s-society”, a conception of man as unreflectively acting in compliance with pre-established and legitimate alternatives of action – in this case the listed “views” – that the common culture is said to provide (Garfinkel 1967/1999, p. 68; cf. Zimmerman & Wieder, 1970, p. 288; Holstein & Gubrium 1994, p. 268). To pay attention to stories, storytelling and their intrinsic dynamics might be one way to avoid such a conception.

<sup>6</sup> Some of these themes are given a preliminary description and analysis in Wästerfors 2000b, 2000c and 2001.

<sup>7</sup> In some respect, however, one particular structural factor is taken into consideration: the societal position of the expatriates. It is their storytelling and their views that are analysed and consequently some of their legitimising strategies in relation to others. It must though be made clear that the interviewees are a heterogeneous group with different occupations, different educational level, different ages and so on.

<sup>8</sup> As will be clear further on, some of these stories are responses to my question on the interviewees’ remembrance of their first visit to Poland, but not all. A formal variation is

prevalent. Whereas some stories are long and interrupted by digressions from the subject, others are short and included into closely related accounts or argumentations.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan here refers to a slightly derogatory category that identifies Poles with seasonal workers in agriculture in some parts of Sweden.

<sup>10</sup> To be engaged in creating distinctions between a tolerant self and intolerant others – although both in other respects are treated as belonging to the same group, defined in relation to “the other” toward which the very tolerance is directed – has been described and analysed by Andersson (1994, p. 28–31, 95, 139). It is also touched upon by Herzfeld (1997, p. 158), who comments on white middle-class individuals “who take studious care not to seem to be avoiding physical contact with black (or poor, or disabled) people”.

<sup>11</sup> This possibility would certainly depend on contexts – the social context of the narrator as well as the immediate situation in which the story is told and its context within the speech. The visualized option is to be seen simply as my way to highlight the significance of subtle ingredients in Frank’s actual story.

<sup>12</sup> This is indicated in some beginnings in the previously quoted arrival stories, for instance when Frank answers my question by starting to tell his story: “Yes, I remember that and at that time I had, I hadn’t signed the contract or anything, then I went down and met some people...”. Jonathan demonstrates a similar approach: “Yes, I remember that. And it was the first win–first week in March ’97, it was, and we were driving down and there weren’t any leaves on the trees, so the countryside looked a mess...”. In this manner my question about remembrance seems to function as a narrative trigger for arrival stories, as well as my sign of interest in and encouragement of storytelling in general (cf. Adelswärd 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Further, everyday speech is not only characterised by some kind of creativity, it is also (as far as it may be viewed as verbalised discourses) characterised by dialogism. The dialogical orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that, according to Bakhtin, is a property of *any* discourse, not just novelistic discourse (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 279).

<sup>14</sup> Whereas these utterances are mixed in the stories and overlap each other in the storytelling, a temporary separation may here be relevant for analytical purposes. This is however not to say that these types of utterances have an independent existence beyond their narrative contexts; on the contrary they are of course inherent parts of the narrators’ stories.

<sup>15</sup> Such a negative dependency and its characteristics are touched upon by Mikhail Bakhtin: “one may speak of another’s discourse only with the help of that alien discourse itself, although in the process, it is true, the speaker introduces into the other’s words his own intentions and highlights the context of those words in his own way.” (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 355).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hošánová 1998; Buttny & Williams 2000; Sacks 1992, vol. II, p. 303–317; Potter 1997, p. 142–149, 160–162; Jacobsson 2000, p. 93–98, 144–155.

<sup>17</sup> In rhetoric the manner of letting somebody else utter one’s speech is called *semiotatio* (Latin). Such fictitious or imaginary speech is supposed to reflect the other person’s ethos

and authority. A speech may also be delivered with a historical person's voice; then it is called *ethopoeta* (Greek). If the speaker lets a country, a virtue, an idea or inanimate things speak it is called *prosopoeta*. These rhetorical figures are not to be seen as merely artificial tricks but as latent possibilities in language in general (Johannesson 1991, p. 151–154).

<sup>18</sup> Whereas the focus of this chapter is restricted to quotations and their contexts, such a struggle could of course also be found in a wide range of other utterances. Bakhtin underlines that “within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (Bakhtin 1981/2000, p. 354).

<sup>19</sup> Prosodic phenomena include accent, intonation, length and rhythm (Sigurd 1991, p. 41).

<sup>20</sup> A quick, summarizing look at the citations in John's and Larry's conversation seems to indicate this. Their speech contains an examination of several different speaking positions:

**One (we) say:** ‘one could do like that or what do you think?’;  
**they say:** ‘yes, that would perhaps work’;  
**they think:** ‘damn we've not taken any decision, what shall we do’;  
**we think that we said:** ‘one could do like that’;  
**we never say:** ‘you'll do that, you'll do that, that must be ready tomorrow...’;  
**they never say:** ‘we'll do it as fast as possible’;  
**we say:** ‘eh what happened to that?’;  
**they say:** ‘well, you didn't say it should be finished today’.

<sup>21</sup> Bakhtin describes this phenomenon as common, general and concrete: “Were we to cavedrop on snatches of raw dialogue in the street, in a crowd, in lines, in a foyer and so forth, we would hear how often the words ‘he says,’ ‘people say,’ ‘he said...’ are repeated, and in the conversational hurly-burly of people in a crowd, everything often fuses into one big ‘he says...you say...I say...’” (Bakhtin 1981/2000 p. 338).

<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that John and Larry are succeeding in their effort to understand, or that they act in a reasonable or good way. My point is not to evaluate their conversation. Rather, my point is to highlight the significance of bringing in others' voices.

<sup>23</sup> In rhetoric such exclamations and questions are regarded as a way to expand the dialogue, a way to invite other voices. The speaker may turn away from his or her audience and address someone who better understands his thoughts and feelings; a figure called *apostrophi* (Johannesson 1991, p. 151).

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