

Arranging a *Niebko*.

The Role of Description in My Prose

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I will start with an example of description from my novel *Niebko*:

Backyard. She would spend hours playing with children outside; wandering around apartment blocks, collecting pieces of glass from around kiosks and dumpsters, because this was where most bottles tossed away by drunkards could be found. They would collect scattered, colorful candy papers, little leaves, and would arrange them into so-called *niebka*. None knew who came up with this name. They would dig little holes in the ground, arrange beautiful patterns using candy paper, flowers and leaves, cover it all with a piece of glass, and bury it all. You had to remember the topography of the spot well, know where the treasure was hidden.¹

Why did the narrator enjoy arranging *niebko* so much? Why did I use this word as the title of my book about people who were displaced and uprooted, based on the biography of my parents and grandparents, as well as on my own childhood? Perhaps because to arrange a *niebko* is to stop, pay attention to something, kneel down. In this game, the ground metaphorically touches heaven. In order to arrange a *niebko*, one has to dig deep and hide a treasure to which we later return and which we rediscover, which we guard. **For me, description is to uncover something and to create such treasures, little gems of existence. It is a way of putting together the spiritual with the mundane.**

¹ Brygida Helbig, *Niebko* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WAB 2013), 284. All translations of excerpts from Helbig's prose henceforth by me, PZ.

Ever since I started writing, I have favored description, regardless of whether it was an essay for my Polish homework, or my first short stories. I started writing poetry when I was a child, describing my feelings (which were inspired by specific events), such as: “Today we are leaving for East Germany/ oh what joy, how happy I am!”. Or later, when I was 14: “Little waves shimmer in the sun, reed shines in the golden sun, I look at the azure, further and further, at the lake of my dreams”. Those were states of happiness, the feeling of being one with nature, easefulness, metaphysical longing, the urge to be close to someone. I would write my poems – especially ones that were more descriptive – in beautiful places, relishing this special state of mind of being there. My state of mind required expression, extension, deepening, relishing, so I would write; for this purpose, I always carried a piece of paper and a pen with me. I felt that some unusual scenery would allow me to experience something special and to create special descriptions. My favorite places were near water, with reflections of the sun dancing on the surface; they would tempt me with their depth.

Apart from poetry, I also kept a diary from the age of 13. It was my way of slowing down, learning reflection and mindfulness (although obviously at the time I did not know the latter word), deepening my life. It helped me to enter my own space of absolute, uncontrolled freedom. Actually, this was the reason why I devised my own alphabet – so that no one would have access to that intimate world of mine, I would protect it from strangers. My diary also had a ritualistic significance; it allowed me to start “a new life” and to describe its quality. It created an opportunity to be reborn, purified; it was a way of communicating with what we would today call a higher spiritual self, the universe, or God; thus, it was a prayer of a sort. Today, such practices are rather popular, and in Germany, therapeutic writing has been fashionable since the 1970s. However, in Poland, this topic has not been discussed much, and I was simply too young to look at it from a meta-perspective. It was a purely intuitive activity, a natural need.

At the time, my favorite book was *Anne of Green Gables*. For me, the events were of secondary importance, and I found the descriptions of places which were important for the protagonist to be the most interesting, especially the descriptions of her room, her favorite tree, and the Lake of Shining Waters, as well as what was happening in her head, her attitude to life, and the creations of her famous imagination. All of these things were increasingly anchored in my own psyche; they became part of my internal, and eventually also external landscape. I would read *Anne* ponderously, typically while sitting on the windowsill of my tiny room, looking at a sunset or my favorite poplar, which I named – following Anne’s example – “Snow Queen”. I would read very slowly, and, more significantly, I would reread the books numerous times. I am confident I have read all seven volumes several dozen times. Nothing could surprise me in those novels; I was not interested in the plot twists. What made me happy was going deeper and deeper into that world, because this is what having read the novels so many times and relishing the descriptions of the internal life of the unconventional, creative protagonist allowed. I saw *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett in a similar light.

Some of my girlfriends read *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or *Winnetou* at the time, but I was never interested in such books. I was not into adventure books, was not thrilled by action-packed plots; on the contrary, I found it off-putting, especially when the story lacked moments that allowed for some reflection, when there were too many things happening. Despite those reservations,

as a teenager I read *The Three Musketeers* (recommended to me by a friend), and even *With Fire and Sword*, but I have never reread those books, whereas *Anne* was like the Bible to me. I liked its lyricism, depth, calmness, its slightly parable-like character. I was not interested in pace or moving forward on the horizontal line; I craved frequent stops and going deep, repetition, mythical time, and analyzing universal truths.

My favorite book from the obligatory reading list at school was *Nad Niemnem* by Eliza Orzeszkowa, which is famous for its descriptions, which are much detested by students. I loved them, although sometimes I found the descriptions of nature, which seemed to be the goal in and of itself, deprived of any psychological element, to be boring (I think that even Orzeszkowa had some such descriptions). However, typically, those descriptions of nature came together, intertwined with the description of what was happening with the protagonists. Such descriptions made me feel blissful. Later, as a university student, I fell in love with *Siekiera-żada* by Stachura, with its song-like character, reflexivity, and melancholy. I felt even stronger about *The Street of Crocodiles* by Bruno Schulz and how he managed to create such suggestive pictures with great psychological depth out of memoirs – a symbolic autobiography. Schulz's images and atmosphere, which approach fantasy writing, myth, collective subconsciousness, have become a great source of inspiration for me.

Full of huge wardrobes, big sofas, pale mirrors and kitschy artificial palms, our apartment was getting deeper and deeper into the state of neglect as a result of my mother's negligence, who would while her days away in the shop, as well as the negligence of the long-legged Adela, who, unsupervised, would while her days away in front of a mirror standing on a longish dressing table, leaving everywhere around traces such as hairs, combs, shoes and corsets, all scattered around.²

I will admit that my own descriptions in my early diaries and first attempts at writing prose were incredibly kitschy and probably extremely boring. My novel *Łzy*, which takes place at a cemetery, is one example. I left it in my room when I went to Germany, and my parents later threw it away. I never won a literary contest in primary school, even though I tried, encouraged by my Polish teacher who enjoyed my essays, always full of pathos. However, in my essays for the competition – or at least in one of them that I remember – I bored readers with lyrical descriptions of girls who would spend hours looking out of a window, living in their hermetic world, to which I myself liked to escape for various reasons. As if I did not have any experience in “conquering” the outside world, as if I did not have access to action, plot, and tension! One reason may have been that I did not have much sense of subjectivity as a result of my strict upbringing. In my childhood, there was no room for adventure or free will, which would have allowed me to move the world. I can see a lot of interdependency between writing and life...

Even today, I find it hard to construct short stories or novels based on surprising plots, such as a journey. I think that the only short story approaching a literary reportage, which I constructed consciously on this scheme, is *Steinfels - teren prywatny*³, an afterword to *Niebko* of

² Bruno Schulz, *Sklepy cynamonowe* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1989), 13. [Translation mine, PZ]

³ Brygida Helbig, „Steinfels – teren prywatny”, *Tygiel Kultury*, nr 1-6, 2015: 169-180.

a sort. In this short story, I describe capers related to looking for the grave of my grandfather, a Galician German, in Bieszczady. The protagonist leaves Berlin in her old Skoda for the Bieszczady wilderness to find her own roots; hence, she leaves the state of passivity, going against her everyday attitude towards reality, i.e. participating in it. Thus, I find this short story significant. The narrator goes on a mission, and it is a big one. There are not so many descriptions, focusing strongly on the story itself. Description also brings the risk of boredom and stagnation. In *Steinfels*, whenever it occurs, its role is to inspire interest or even create some tension, or to lay groundwork for some action, more so than in my other works;

I am several kilometers away from the Ukrainian border. Poles go there every day to trade, importing Ukrainian beer, which they use to sedate the inhabitants of a care home on the Polish side. And Ukrainians come to Krościenko to sell their alcohol and candy next to Biedronka. “But apart from that it’s all peace and quiet here. Sometimes there are helicopters hovering above the border, there have been some gunshots lately, but nothing has happened here yet!”⁴

However, I would like to return to my early professional writing. My first poetic novel, *Pałowa*⁵, had a highly descriptive character and was largely based on my aforementioned teenage diaries. In this novel, just like in the diaries, descriptions sometimes have a symbolic meaning, referring to mythical spaces and uncovering the internal life of the protagonist for the reader. The first scene of the novel is a description of the protagonist being lost in great fumes, while the landscape of her soul is highly oneiric:

Slowly, swinging her hips, she walked step by step down the dusty stairs of her house, and walked the carved riverbed of a dried river; it was a huge, broad gorge paved in colorful leaves, the leaves were cold and wet, fall-like and gashed by the rain, she walked with her head covered in a scarf, a hot scarf that hugged her back and neck, the wind smacked her in the face, she walked slowly, step by step, her feet on the leaves, so she walked step by year and year by step, very rhythmically and decisively, leaving behind steaming mist like a pale wedding veil.⁶

The final scene of *Pałowa* is a symbolic description of rebirth – a memory of a holy communion and an announcement of a haircut:

Anna Maria was standing on a balcony and even the priest could not see her. Anna Maria was looking at the girl, who was slowly and shyly walking up to the altar, and knelt down at the feet of the holy Host. Anna Maria was crying bitter tears. Tears of return and farewell. (...) She was standing there like a bride, on this green, on this hill, with her groom’s arms around her – wind, time... She was standing, she was kneeling, she was looking at the water. And when the dust twirled around her, she understood that her hair is broken, damaged, matted. I will have a haircut tomorrow, she thought. And because everything went away, Anna Maria thought herself up from the beginning. She simply thought herself up once again.

⁴ Helbig, *Steinfels*, 171.

⁵ Brygida Helbig, *Pałowa* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo „b 1”, 2000).

⁶ Helbig, *Pałowa*, 10.

I believe that for me, writing was a performative, magical activity of creating something inside me, some inner reality. **One of the most important tools of this self-creation was description.**

For a long time, I found it difficult to avoid kitsch while writing descriptions. Already in *Pałowa* I started to dilute it with the grotesque. I think that I owe that to Gombrowicz, then to the Gdańsk “Totart” and the artists from the Berlin “Klub Polskich Nieudaczników”, which freed me from the claws of shallow sentimentalism and the banal. I started my attempts at telling the plot and constructing action, at least as an alibi, but under the conditions of the satirical, grotesque character of the text. Although before I favored description, now a grotesque disfigurement of events and creating “anti-plots” have become the domineering element of my prose, as can be seen in *Anioły i świnie w Berlinie*,⁷ *Enerdowcy i inni ludzie*.⁸ However, even in those two books, I do not build tension; instead, I put genre scenes and a punchline next to each other. They no longer consist of satirical descriptions – they are dynamic, with energetic storytelling. But it is never serious, as if all action was like a puppet show to me, and the most important thing being what the puppets represent. **In order to avoid description-related “boredom”, I have learned strong metaphorization, linguistic games, and rhythm apart from satire.**

A few more words about *Enerdowcy i inni ludzie*. This prose book contains, among other things, the psychological short stories *Lieber Rainer* and *Kallemalle*, in which I attempt a psychological analysis of former inhabitants of East Germany, their frustration after unification, as well as their mutual relationships characterized by various traumas. **There are numerous elaborate descriptions of the internal lives of the protagonists, which I often make more dynamic through free indirect speech. For me, it is an important stylistic device, the aim of which is to “liven up” description:**

Uta already had her own apartment, she hated her mother, a kindergarten teacher, who spent her life serving and being submissive to her husband, a doctor, who traveled to conferences with his mistresses, and in his free time trained Uta, always dissatisfied with her achievements. Uta was in a permanent state of rebellion against that old woman. She would never be like her: deprived of free will and bitter. After her husband died, all she does is complain about the world. She is forever sick, fussy, she takes no responsibility for her own life, groans, moans, grumbles, she can go wherever she wants, do whatever she wants, just get lost.⁹

She does not let him go to pubs, slowly disappearing from the landscape, to have hot dogs and minced chops, to go to Saxon Switzerland with Dieter and Uwik like they used to, where they could sleep with a knife in their hand in the rocks, and laugh, joke after joke, feeling like a real man. She did not let him look around at women, and it was not his fault that all those waistlines, breasts and buttocks attracted him like a magnet. Like those Turkish girls who started to appear in the streets. Reiner would only have to scare away their husbands.¹⁰

⁷ Brygida Helbig, *Anioły i świnie w Berlinie* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Forma, 2005).

⁸ Brygida Helbig, *Enerdowce i inne ludzie* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Forma, 2011).

⁹ Helbig, *Enerdowce i inne ludzie*, 13.

¹⁰ Helbig, *Enerdowce i inne ludzie*, 14.

Enerdowcy also contains a typical lyrical short story, which consists almost solely of description – *Meksykańska dziewczyna*. In that short story, there are hardly any inhabitants of East Germany; it is a story about the life of the first-person narrator, operating in pictures, intimate, and suggestive of autobiography. Its plot, if one can talk about the plot of a text which is one long description of a state of mind, takes place in Międzyzdroje, by the sea. The open space supports the narrator's project to look deeply inwards and into the past. The events, even the dialogue, become part of description, almost like a "photograph" found somewhere deep in a memory drawer or taken by the mind itself. Is such a description static? Not necessarily, for something moves in it. **Such a description is like a "moving" picture. There is motion in it, but this motion is not linear; rather, it is spiral, fuelled by associations, feelings, and intuition:**

And it was not so long ago that I myself was 17 and had ordinary potato pancakes in Międzyzdroje, rather than Berlin kebab. I fed seagulls, swans. I threw myself in the cold water with my boyfriend at midnight. I laughed out loud. And so. Long ago. (...) To be an old woman is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is being a bitter old woman. (...) People talk to each other, but often they do not hear each other. "The cucumbers are quite good", says the husband. "Tablecloth, what tablecloth?", says the wife. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to buy pickled cucumbers at the beach. My mum tells me about her headaches. And my daughter says to that: "You know what, your body is screaming." Mum bursts out laughing. They are worlds apart from each other, but they can laugh about it. They walk down a rainbow over an abyss. It is me who stays in the abyss.¹¹

And what does it look like in *Niebko*? Although there are numerous historical events happening in the background, it is actually very descriptive. The novel starts with a description in the first sentence: "Willi collects Easter bunnies". I try to attract the reader's attention to an intriguing detail from Willi's everyday life, the space in which he lives. "He likes best those by Lindt, in a golden paper, with a tiny bell and a red ribbon around the neck. He will not allow anyone to eat them. Careful! Stay away from the bunnies." I describe an object and the emotional attitude of a character to that object, and this is a mystery. The emotion must be interesting enough so that the reader wants to find out about its origin:

Basia. (...) always burns something in the kitchen because she is forever chasing something, forever running away from something. She takes vitral from a drawer to at least rescue her children. So here we have Wunderwaffe, laughs Ewa. She is seemingly laughing, but she obediently swallows one pill after another in the blood-red sauce, because, first of all, it is impolite to refuse your mother, and secondly, she has already believed it herself that she would be more vigorous. Marzena also swallows, and how! So eagerly.¹²

The objects described here, the Easter bunny and vitral, are supposed to attract the reader's attention. And they do it due to the emotions of the protagonists – weird, incomprehensible, intriguing. Of course, there will be numerous events in *Niebko*, but I typically present them as descriptions. **I select events from the lives of my protagonists, Willi and Basia, which**

¹¹Helbig, *Niebko*, 72.

¹²Helbig, *Niebko*, 5.

have been retold to the narrator by her parents over and over again, so that they became an element of a picture in her head. Thus, I describe them, rather than tell what pattern they created in the mind of the narrator, how they make her feel, or “what they do with her.” Of course, I also want them to “do” something with the readers, to make them feel something, to make them think. But mostly, I want them to feel. Descriptions of the state of the narrator’s mind are a recurring element of *Niebko*. Those are never a simple psychological diagnosis, as I mostly use allusions, ambiguity, references, and I pass over some elements; all of that is supposed to lead the reader to a transgenerational trauma, the transformation and symbolic healing of which are what *Niebko* is about.

Thus, *Niebko* consists almost solely of pictures, although they are absent from the graphic layer of the novel. My plan was to include some drawings or photographs that would highlight its poetics in the novel, or even its meditating character, but the publishing house said no. However, sayings repeated by parents, family proverbs, and songs sung by ancestors, which are frozen into an acoustic or visual “picture” in the mind, return like a chorus. Quotes repeated in several places stop the pace of events, which is not focused on moving forward in the first place. In *Niebko*, everything is a “holy picture” of a sort, which the narrator creates and at which she looks (it is holy only to her, obviously). **Thus, even events are presented by the narrator in the form of a description, the constantly-recalled aspects of the same experience, repeating, deepening, completing, and adding new elements to that collage, new flowers to a niebko, new colors to the kaleidoscope.**

Additionally, the elements of the outside world frequently construct a metaphorical bridge to the inner world of the protagonists and the narrator. A description of the post-war Szczecin is an example: “Ruins in the Old Town. Bullet marks on the walls of the beautiful tenant houses, like those in Berlin, just one story shorter. And smaller ones, from shooting from street cannons. The whole city is riddled. Riddled city, riddled people.”¹³ And to that I will add: the entirety of *Niebko* is riddled; full of marks and holes, empty places, silence. How does one describe silence? I think I do it by suspending an unfinished thought, stepping aside as the narrator into the shadows, and allowing the picture I just sketched to “take over.”

I like the chapter about the narrator’s childhood and her grandparents in *Niebko*. I try to convey their life’s rhythm, and how it left its marks on her body:

Her world was predominantly about grandma and grandpa. Grandpa Jakub was an unusual man. He had beautiful, although slightly-faded blue eyes, and he could tell the future. He loved horses. He would swing her in a cart pulled by another one of his friends through the town basked in the sun. She would ride with him, basked in the light, blissful and almost dead from happiness, full of ants on her fingertips, with the violently swinging sky opening up in her head, with the drumming of horse hooves in her ribs. Nothing more beautiful can be imagined, nothing more intoxicating.¹⁴

¹³Helbig, *Niebko*, 235.

¹⁴Helbig, *Niebko*, 269.

I like to base my novels and short stories on facts, writing “autobiographies” and new “biographies” over and over again. The external action is already “given”, so I do not need to invent it (I do not like it!), I “just” look for this little bit more to each story. Instead of creating tension, I focus on the psychological and metaphysical dimension of events. At some point, metaphors enter the text; on some level, it starts to somewhat come out of the text, as if the story, thanks to the persistent digging deeper and deeper, suddenly found a connection to old stories and pictures of humanity, myths, symbols, and archetypes. And then everything arranges itself, and we have “big magic”, about which – in a somewhat kitschy way – Elisabeth Gilbert and Julia Cameron write.¹⁵

In the novel *Inna od siebie*, based on Maria Komornicka’s/Piotr Włast’s biography, I also (and maybe even more) worked in a kaleidoscopic, movie-like way, juxtaposing frozen images from the life of this genial writer, who took on the identity of one of her ancestors, Piotr Włast, in 1907. **The pictures from Komornicka’s/Włast’s life are put together with images from my own life, of which the reader is, of course, unaware. In my opinion, those scenes are the strongest, and while writing them, I felt a connection to my own biography**, like, for example, in the scene in which the father punishes her teenage daughter for being rebellious.

Of course, there is action in *Inna od siebie*, but it is clearly suspended, intertwined with descriptions of slowed-down actions and the movements of the protagonist, which, apart from their obvious meaning, have another, psychological, though only suggested (for example with a metaphor, allusion or omission) dimension.

The novel opens with a description of a dead body, dressed by nuns in a dress for the funeral. Through this final picture from Włast’s biography, I introduce the reader to the very center of the problem.

The corpse does not protest. The corpse does not care.

- Really, sister?

Sister Franciszka has some doubts, taking out from the wardrobe some modest, dark clothes, some kind of a robe, for the stiff, bony corpse, which they had just washed – skinny, lamentable. It lies there in the same way he was born; one could cut him down and put salt on him, and he would not do anything. Especially that he was in pieces while still alive, yet maybe not salted. Consumed raw and without any seasoning. And so he lies there and he no longer squeaks, he had even stopped complaining. And there is so much prejudice against them.

And no longer than two days earlier he called himself Piotr, demanded various privileges, and he was nothing but trouble.

¹⁵Elisabeth Gilbert, *Wielka magia* (Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, 2015), Julia Cameron, *Droga artysty* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szafa, 2017).

I devote several pages to a sarcastic description of this situation, and then I move on to the final months of Włast's life, spent in a care home. **When describing his internal life, I use a lot of irony, which typically occurs together with free indirect speech, which, as I have already mentioned, highlights the "borrowed" character of a picture, somewhat transformed by the narrator's psyche, and so full of nuances and perspectives. Thus, it becomes a "living picture" of a sort.** The most important thing is not what happened, but rather what the protagonists experience and see in it, what the narrator sees in it, and what the reader can see in it.

Ever since I started writing, I have been most fascinated about discovering the truth, the secret of our existence, with finding the essence, the source of us. For me, writing is a completely spiritual activity, to a large extent based on extracting things from memory, and creating and analyzing "sacred" pictures, i.e., those which are key for me. In this practice, the external connects to the internal, the material with the spiritual. Heaven connects with earth (like in a *niebko*), a metaphorical meaning with a literal one, and the metaphysical dimension results from penetrating some matter, an object, nature, experience, body, emotions. I would place thusly understood writing with images, or "describing", in a "feminine" creative paradigm, although it could also be employed by men. However, it is not a coincidence that in patriarchal societies, it was usually men who were fascinated with adventure novels full of action and tension, rather than descriptions and images. Whenever I arranged *niebka* with my girlfriends in the backyards, there were no boys with us (except for our younger brothers, who were forced to spend time with us). Today, men (and not just artists) are beginning to find pleasure in arranging *niebka*, practicing mindfulness and contemplation. Perhaps this is a sign of changing times. I see here a (perhaps a bit utopian) chance of creating the *new earth*¹⁶ which modern mystics write about. This is a vision of earth in which previously ignored values are becoming more appreciated, where *yin* and *yang*, the left and the right hemisphere, a description and a story, and intuition and intellect will be equally valuable. For so far, they are not.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

¹⁶Eckart Tolle, *Nowa Ziemia* (Konstancin Jeziorna: Wydawnictwo Medium, 2016). Wizję takiego świata moim zdaniem roztaczała w swoich pracach naukowych w swoisty sposób niemal od początku swojej działalności także prof. Maria Janion. Napisałam o tym kiedyś doktorat: Brygida Miszewski, *New-Age-Diskurs in der polnischen Literaturwissenschaft und Lyrik der 70er und 80er Jahre* (Monachium: Peter Lang, 1995). Esencję tej dysertacji przedstawiłam w języku polskim w: Brigitta Helbig-Mischewski, „Guru przełomu tysiąclecia. Dyskurs Nowej Ery w pracach Marii Janion”, *Teksty Drugie* 1/2 (43/44) 1977, 165-192. [http://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_\(43_44\)/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_\(43_44\)-s165-192/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_\(43_44\)-s165-192.pdf](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_(43_44)/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_(43_44)-s165-192/Teksty_Drugie_teoria_literatury_krytyka_interpretacja-r1997-t-n1_2_(43_44)-s165-192.pdf)

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

The paper is devoted to the creation and function of description in the prose by the author, as well as about the mutual relations between the categories of description and storytelling. The function and structure of description is compared to the childhood game *niebko* (also known as a *sekret*), referring to the title of one of her novels (*Niebko*, 2013). The author considers the (not only artistic, but also psychological) genesis of the dominance of description in her prose. She points out the methods which she used to “liven up” descriptions in her prose, so that it is not too static and “boring”. She considers descriptions as a tool to “deepen” experiencing her own existence, as well as that of the reader – and so their mystical and therapeutic aspect.

MINDFULNESS

prose

short story

therapeutic language

metaphor

SPIRAL

autobiographism

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Brygida Helbig-Mischewski (Brygida Helbig) – writer and literary scholar. Her research interests include migration literature, modern Polish and German literature, intercultural communication, gender. Her latest novel is *Inna od siebie* (about Maria Komornicka/Piotr Włast, 2017). She devoted her habilitation to this writer, *Strącona Bogini* (Universitas, Kraków 2010), in German *Ein Mantel aus Sternenstaub* (2005). Her novels *Niebko* and *Enerdowce i inne ludzie* were in the final of the Nike literature award. She studied Slavistics and German philology at Bochum University. Her PhD thesis was mostly devoted to prof. Maria Janion, she received habilitation from the Humboldt University in Berlin. Editor of: *Fährmann grenzenlos. Deutsche und Polen im heutigen Europa* (with Gabriela Matuszek, 2008) and *Migrationserfahrungen im vereinten Europa* (with Małgorzata Zduniak-Wiktorowicz, 2018). She writes for Cosmo radio station in Germany, founder and scientific board member of the University of Three Generations in Berlin. Currently a professor at AMU in Poznań. She lives in Berlin. |