Template of ideas: The charm of storytelling in academic discourse

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Abstract

In this text, we argue that the stereotypical, traditional way of academic writing may be disempowering and inhibit the development of new ideas and practices. We characterize the stereotypical template for academic writing, reflecting on how expression and communication works in relationship to such templates. We illustrate our argument with students' images of fiction versus academic writing, and an own attempt at "cross-template" translation. The discourse can be enriched, we believe, by colorful, engaging storytelling – a development which is taking place with the growing interest in narrative knowledge.

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Writing and expression

We are both people who like to read (and in that we are no exception). We often read very different things in one sweep: Richard Rorty, then Philip K. Dick, then Terry Prachett, and then John Van Maanen. Many times, we have been wondering about the meaning of genres: how disparate or how similar they are, how easy or difficult they are to blur, cross over, mix. Repeatedly, we found ourselves discussing academic writing: why it is so different, and why it is so often not „good literature." Sometimes it reads very good, and it makes us, readers, happy, but also somehow surprised. This surprise and our reflections resulted in the writing of this paper. At first, we wondered if we would write it creatively ourselves but decided against it, choosing to structure and compose it in a way recognizable to us as an „academic article." Such a form reflects, to some extent, the deadly linearity of thinking against which Gibson Burrell (1997) protested, and which he counteracted by placing text flowing in two opposite directions on the same page. It can also be seen as an ordering leading to the "hideous purity" of a single order (Law, 1994), leaving no place for subversive counterarguments or discontinuities in its totality. Yet none of the copies of this text we have printed out while writing it looked this orderly – they were all scribbled over, crossed out, and discontinuities seemed much more visible than any totality. The text's current form, however, strives to represent our focus in this paper – what we perceive as the more typical ways of writing academic texts: neither the extremely one dimensional texts nor the rich, beautifully written ones, that can be read with pleasure by any admirer of *les belles lettres.* We thus try to place the style of this text within the same category: typical and medium. To some extent, it is the standard way of raising a voice in the academic debate, and to some degree we do it self-consciously, to explore the paradoxes of writing while we are in the process.

In this text we address the process of translation of ideas into academic papers. We reflect on how the *templates of academic texts,* a contemporary institution for communication of scientific ideas, within us affect the ideas that they translate. In the process of conscious translation the templates of expression become more visible. We also reflect on the notion of narrative science, as we believe that the boundary between academic and literary writing is more solid that many of us may suspect. The theme is neither new nor unknown – the old debate about Geisteswissenschaft versus Naturwissenschaft, which began with Dilthey, Simmel, and Weber, is still carried on as the discussion of sociology versus cultural studies. In this paper, we wish to add a few reflections to that debate – on the one hand, regarding the genre of writing itself, and on the other, its possible relevance for organization development.

While thinking about writing texts, we have been wondering about communication in general. Why do people engage in it? Why is it important? How do we go about it? We assume that whatever there is that we want to share with others, let us call it an inspiration, is actually a sublime and ungraspable state of mind. The sharing does not happen „directly" and what is shared is the outcome of a process of translation — inspirations are translated to various communicable

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forms. There exist numerous ready-made templates for expression, tested and socially approved forms into which the elusive and solitary state of mind is to be approximated, hopefully transforming it into a relationship called to life through communication. Both the state of mind and the relationship we regard as processes, not really as „states," and certainly not as „things." Expression is then striving for breaking out of the solitude of impression. However, the impressions themselves are tied into the social circle, being typically caused by an encounter between the person and someone else's attempt(s) at expression. Even the encounter between someone and a tree is, as far as we can see, a meeting with the expressions authored by people: the meaning of an image is offered under the process of socialization. It is based on all the experiences of and about trees that were formerly made by and communicated to the viewer. Thus, anything we think of contains shades of others entering our mind. Anything we try to communicate is reaching out beyond the all-encompassing loneliness of the mind. This paradox is, in our opinion, the motive driving people to communication.

The state of mind is a process impossible to grasp, so is the relationship. However, the expression has to be graspable, it has got to have a recognizable form. In such a form different things are to be found: interesting and uninteresting, old and new, inventions and plagiarism, etc. „Interpretation" is the process of transforming content into impressions. To reach out for the message, we have to first be able to perceive it. The perceptible has to be recognizable at least at a minimum level, so we can decide on where and how to begin, or, where and how it was intended for us to begin interpreting. The expression needs to be somewhat novel and surprising as well, so someone would bother and reach out for it. If it is something very well known, there is no reason to go into all the trouble. However, collecting impressions is rarely undertaken in order just to „assemble" them. People are active translators, they pick up ideas in order to use them — and as they do, they engage in the process of learning. We see learning not as collecting the pieces of a ready made map. It is a process of remaking the pieces, more or less imaginative, more or less kitschy. We learn things to paste them onto the walls of our internal realities. Some do it completely idiosyncratically, and they are proclaimed mad. Some do it without a strong willingness to add a personal touch. Some experiment and innovate. To summarize: people translate ideas into their own reality in the learning process. However, no matter what we do and what we are like, most of us, with the possible exception for severe catatonics, desire to break through to the other side of reality, i.e. to the others we suspect (or assume, or hope) to be somewhere out there.

We have learned some ways of what we believe is understandable expression, as well as to interpret signals we receive assuming that we are able to extract a message from them, in various media including painting, talking, waving the hand, playing music, kissing, writing, etc. All of these different media have their own libraries of templates for authoring the idea to be communicated. Such templates are thus necessary both to translate *im*pressions to parts of the own reality and to translate these states of mind to *ex*pressions in order to communicate. The circle closes as the these expressions are themselves turned into impressions of their recipients.

In this text we consider only writing, which has its own set of rules and limitations peculiar to it, as do all the other forms of expression. A writer has to content with the near anonymity of the reader – even though the choice of where to publish the work is crucial, the bond between the author and the recipient is much more impersonal than in any form of a face to face contact. Also, the code for communication is severely limited, comprising mostly of the language as represented through the use of alphabet, with only so much additional (or considered additional) information that can be conveyed by the layout of the text and possibly tables or illustrations. We concentrate on one template for writing, that of academic texts. To better understand what is happening when this template is adopted, we contrast it with another, that of fiction (literary narrative writing). We understand fiction as an artful construction, or selection of that which is deemed appropriate.

When we started to write this text we did not quite foresee where the explorations would lead us. We still do not have a complete map and we do not strive for one – that would kill our (or anybody's) further motivation to play with this idea. However, we have learned that translation between templates is much more difficult than we first thought. The boundary between them can be demolished, but then one discovers what is underneath: not a neat line to be easily crossed but a realm of chaos. By that we mean

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the totally unordered unpredictability, i.e. everything in an indecipherable form, and not the deterministic version of chaos. It cannot be seen by people because it is beyond their perception – being „everything" it is also „nothing" in the sense that it is invisible, it is an empty space. What we see looking at the empty space is then in a way a reflection of ourselves: our creations, imaginations, reflections, thrown at us in a particularly uncomfortable form, elusive and ambivalent. Such an exploration is also subversive in itself, as is always the questioning of unbreakable barriers — if they can be disputed, anything can. It takes much energy to try. Many new and borderline ideas are violently rejected by representatives for traditional science, in an aura of intense emotions and pain disguised as rational argumentation. Disputing the unquestionable is not always worth trying: some of the newfound ideas may turn out to lead nowhere. These are the reasons why we undertook our exploration of this theme — now we would like to present and define the key concepts we address.

Templates of expression

The templates are internalized editing rules, or an institution in the social constructivist sense of the term (for such contemporary uses of the term, see e.g. Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson (1996) adopts the metaphor of „editing rules" to describe collective action (the essay is dedicated to the circulation of organizational forms and practices). The editing process she understands as a process of translation. It is restricted by implicit rules, and so the process is characterized by social control, conformism and traditionalism. Thus, the circulation of prototypes gets directed and restricted by the editing rules that often are not subject to choices or discussions, and that often are taken for granted by the authors and editors. Similarly, we see the templates as sets of such rules.

The academic template

Ben Agger (1990) argues that writing and reading are in decline. This degradation affects academic writing among other discourses. Speaking from a politically engaged standpoint, he states that, in order to be a discourse, „writing must solicit its own response by readers empowered to understand it and then engage with it" (p. 37). He further maintains that neither popular culture nor academic writing succeeds in inviting to a dialogue, the latter „reporting itself as an objective account purged of authorial intentionality, perspective and passion" (p. 37). The author has to adapt to various expectations directed at him or her by audiences who have the power to influence the fate of the text (whether it will be published and where), and is forced to adjust the writing, thus often flattening out and streamlining the statement. In the case of academic writing, the publishing rules and the academic standards of tenure play the most important role. In addition, academics typically have little or no training as writers and they are not expected to. „One writes 'for' publication, not for real readers, who carefully consider, and then respond to, one's argument" (p. 123). Adaptation is enforced through a complicated hierarchical structure of legitimity, some publications being valued more than others (depending on „where" the text is published). And so, most academics write „specialized, pedantic, pointless prose in the styles to which they become accustomed by the people who write for, edit and manage leading journals and university presses" (p. 137) if they want to establish a career. In the case of literature, the decline is due to commercialization. It becomes streamlined and commodified.

We do not hold such a catastrophic image of the entire genre — there have been numerous examples of creative academic writing recently (such as e.g. the book by Margery Wolf, 1992, quoted below; Van Maanen, 1995; and in organization theory — for example Heather Höpfl's article on poetics and rhetorics, 1995; Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges' and Pierre Guillet de Monthoux' edited book about fiction and management, 1994). On a more general scale, the emergence and popularization of the new computer-based media for written communication: the Internet and the CD-ROM publications, provide inspiration and means for new ways of expression in writing. Nevertheless, we believe in the need to discuss the implicit as well as explicit rules governing, in this case, the academic style, and to look towards different genres for possibilities of improving the expression.

Ben Agger's criticism of academic writing in its most common form pertains, especially, to the institutionalized distortions of the rules of how and why to write. „It is a prejudice of positivists that scholarly writing somehow defies or transcends literariness; instead they model writing on mute

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representation, simply disclosing facts existing outside the writer's purview" (p. 76). According to Agger there are following norms on academic writing: it reflects on what has been published, it is dominated by technical codes, it is done by people within institutional networks within the disciplines, it does not invite readers from the outside of their professional communities to join in a dialogue. The writer is more concerned about „getting published" than „being read."

A book edited by L.L. Cummings and Peter Frost (1995) specifically concentrates on the problems of publishing in the organizational sciences. The book focuses mainly on the „hows," and contains mostly recommendations to authors and reviewers. In our opinion, the book is strongly US (and positivist) biased, and many perspectives familiar to us, as Europeans, are missing. Nonetheless, the American inclination of the book carries a message of its own in our opinion. Technical recommendations abound. Most of them concern the organization of work towards publication. A few concern style. Richard Daft (1995) in his essay on reasons why he, in his role as reviewer, has rejected manuscripts for *ASQ* and *AJM,* recommends that authors use understatements rather than overstatements as rhetorical devices, as the latter suggest amateurism. Benjamin Schneider (1995) makes another point about style, with paradigmatic consequences: „journalism" is writing that

> fails to meet standards of reproducibility, public verifiability, reliability, and so on — the current standards for our positivist research. Research that deviates from the positivist tradition will have to defend itself or it will be considered journalism (p. 219).

Nevertheless, as we have pointed out already, it is increasingly recognized that straying from the positivist path does not necessarily lead to inferior science, and there are quite a few interesting examples of innovative academic writing. We would like to point to anthropology as the field of many inspiring developments. John Van Maanen (1988) describes the many writing styles present in contemporary ethnography: apart from the dominant realist tales, there also exist confessional and impressionist tales, as well as many other styles. The author presents own examples of the above writing styles, pointing to the possible reasons for (and against) using them. Another book on writing ethnography, edited by John Van Maanen (1995) elaborates further the possibilities arising from adopting a reflective and literary writing style. For example, Marianne Paget (1995) introduces the dramatical way of presenting ethnographic material: the ethnoperformance.

Indeed, some of the authors of the chapters in the book edited by L. L. Cummings and Peter Frost (1995) are not content with the current normative institution of academic publishing in organization science. Stanley Deetz is among the most radical critics. He points out that the control of knowledge production by academic journals results in the development of an elitism: publication assures status more than communicates understanding. He describes the process of academic publication in terms of four main closures stifling expression: the closure of the inner worlds, through the withdrawal of discussion of personal values through neutralization; of the outer world, through a similar procedure; of relation to others, by enhancing social relations based on power; and finally, of the relation to language:

> Journals frequently implement certain style preferences that preclude research programs resulting in a different kind of report. The long-term prohibition of the use of the word *I* functioned not only to enforce false expressions of neutrality and objectivity but also hampered the direct expression of researcher positionality and self-reflexive consideration of the effects of research procedures (p. 55).

Furthermore, jargon and obscure style can „add weight to positions that otherwise would not stand the test of interrogation" (p. 55). Stanley Deetz describes the situation as one of systematically distorted communication, where the problems derive from ideologies shared by the community, or, in our terms in this paper, are institutionalized. Barry M. Staw (1995) states that „it almost always appears that publications are biased toward normal science" (p. 93), and further:

> Our own creative ideas are criticized as shallow, ungrounded, inconsistent with existing theory, or just plain wrong. Our methods are often viewed by reviewers as deficient, flawed, and inappropriate, when they are of course cleverly adapted to the new theory or type of data. As authors, we try to innovate but are soundly rebuffed. We get angry and go off and review some else's paper in the same way for the same journal (p. 93).

The above mechanism is, in our view, characteristic of institutionalized responses. The author does not perceive any solution to this dilemma, at least not to the problem as it is currently conceptualized. F. David Schoorman (1995) points to a possible solution: the

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writing of a chapter in a book may be an opportunity to publish innovatively. However, one must be asked by the editor to make such a contribution. Michael Pacanowsky and Mary S. Strine (1995) address the uniformity of language in prominent American academic publications. They introduce a (hopefully!) fictional character of the Grand Scrivener, who, together with a colleague, in fact authors all the contributions to *ASQ*. „Haven't you ever noticed the unity of style" (p. 229) they inquire, explaining that in the past, just the Grand Scrivener sufficed to write all the articles, but since the late sixties a new style emerged and came to dominate the field (abounding in numbers and tables). Even though we believe that the variety of style is much greater in European journals, the criticism describes well what we think of as the mainstream way to use language in publications.

What we present below is a characteristic example of the template such as we see it, not in its normative version (hardly ever followed to a letter), but in our own reading of what we often encounter in the discourse of social science (and especially in organization science), overstressing, arguably, the template's rigidity.

Our exemplary academic paper definitely starts with an abstract and ends with conclusions followed by a list of references. Both the abstract and the references might not be considered parts of the main text, but as they are a unique element of almost all the academic texts, we see no reason to exclude them from our discussion. We shall now take a closer look at each of the parts.

The aforementioned abstract, set to graphically stand out from the rest of the text – through the use of a smaller or more compact font – serves the role of a taster of things to come in a paper. It is supposed to catch the reader's attention and attract him/her to reading the rest of the text; thus, its role is to whet the appetite without giving the whole feast away, to hint at the paper's content and yet leave the ideas to be explored throughout the text proper. Surprising or subversive conclusions can be mentioned here, but left deliberately fragile and unargued.

The main body of text begins with an introduction detailing the assumed perspective and methods, as well as mentioning all the contributions in the field up to date that the author can dig up, particularly the ones presenting similar viewpoints. Opposing views are discussed as well, the criticism of which only goes to show that the author is not blind to different ways of assessing the situation, having deliberately chosen his/her path. The general tone is that whatever is the subject of the paper is not, as it might seem, anything new, but has been not only proposed, but also discussed and accepted by at least a notable part of the academic community.

If the paper is linked to some research results, the empirical findings are discussed here, as well as some of the methods and modes of research. Such a description serves not only to present the results as a basis for further argumentation, but is also a bid to satisfy the reader's demand for the ability to evaluate the research. Such an ability is quite illusory, as the reader is left with just the author's fragmentary account which cannot, given the length of most academic papers, go in-depth into the technicalities of the research methods and their implementation.

The empirical findings are followed by the theoretical discussion, where the author finally shows what the paper is really about, at last able to relate the more controversial ideas as his/her own and not necessarily as a direct development of somebody else's contributions. If the author can find such a predecessor, stating it is still viewed as desirable. The references can be spaced somewhat more widely in this part, the basic need for legitimation having already been satisfied, and their role now being only to reaffirm the scientificality of the paper and the acceptable level of the author's knowledge of the field of study. They do not, of course, exhaust the list of associations or sources of the ideas and lines of thought presented in the text, though such is their official capacity. Their role is rather to capitalize on the texts and authors deemed the most important by the author, who declares his/her community of choice, the authors s/he would like to be associated with, or the most influential scientists s/he would like to argue with.

Whatever the theme of the paper, the discussion's role is to steer the reader towards the conclusions, i.e. the actual thesis of text, the original idea that prompted the author to write the paper in the first place, though perhaps somewhat transformed (or should we say, translated) through the process of writing, of making the said idea conform to the template of a academic text. The conclusions have to somehow spring from the main body of text, yet at the same time be sufficiently novel as to warrant their inclusion. They should not only wrap up the text, but do so in a rather unexpected way. Thus, one of the most conventional

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and authoritatively defined parts of the paper is at the same time the most limiting and demanding the most creativity – the author is obliged to close the text, but preferably not in an obvious way, as that would endanger the conclusions' role as the integral part of the paper which would have been really unpardonable. The final part, the list of references, is endemic to academic papers and should, therefore, be awarded special attention, being the most visible feature differentiating such a text from any other literary genre. This is the place for the ultimate legitimation – more evocative, forceful, and, most importantly, easier to check by the reader than whatever research facts the paper may describe. The sheer force of the lines upon lines of referenced works is what's supposed to remove any doubts of the scientificity of the text, and part of the glory of the referenced works' famous authors' is supposed to somehow pass on to the referring author of the text. Many people begin reading scientific publications by checking the references, as they are the easiest way to establish the paper's positioning – this is the reason we have placed our bibliography at the beginning, rearranging the text so that its structure reflects the order in which it is usually read. Any paper written using the academic template ends thus with a note stressing its scientificity, the final bow (which in our text is instead an opening bow) towards the academic audience, with perhaps a hint of apology for whatever unorthodox ideas might have been presented. Nevertheless, however charming a text structured this way may be, we would like to consider the possible alternatives.

Towards narrative writing?

Lately, the possibility of developing alternative ways of writing for science to adopt has attracted quite a lot of discussion. In her essay *Narration or science? Collapsing the division in organization studies* Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) explores the links between science and storytelling (narration). Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984) discussed the two kinds of knowledge: the *logo-scientific,* or what under modernity came to be seen as "true science", and the common-sense everyday knowledge, or the narrative mode. Czarniawska-Joerges considers reintroducing narrative knowledge into social sciences and humanities, and particularly, into organization studies. She reminds of traditions of the discipline, such as case studies, studies of organizational stories and various interpretative approaches. If scientific ethos ("good scientific writing is true writing") is to be abandoned, then we are left with questions of beauty and use. Representation from relational truth comes to mean political representation: "Theories do not 'represent' reality; theoreticians take upon themselves to represent other people and even nature" (p. 27). Czarniawska-Joerges ends her article by arguing for

> a conscious and reflective creation of a specific genre, which recognizes tradition without being paralyzed by it, which seeks inspiration in other genres without imitating them, which derives confidence from the importance of its topic and from its own growing skills (p. 28).

In *A four times told tale* (1997), Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges explores the links and relationships between the elements of the genres: fiction and scientific realism. She believes that organization science has much to gain from a conscious blurring of genres, especially in times when boundaries are being questioned. The researcher should then explore how the boundaries are being constructed rather than taking them for granted. Pierre Guillet de Monthoux and Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1994) speak of the value of studying literature for management learning and for the enhancement of our understanding of organizations and organizing. Nelson Philips (1995) claims that „the barriers between fiction and fact, and art and science, have become increasingly difficult to defend" (p. 626). In fact, „social scientists often do what writers do: they create rather than discover, they focus on the unique and individual, they use illustration and rhetoric in an effort to make their case" (p. 626).

Monika Kostera, Piotr Kurczak and Jerzy Kociatkiewicz (1995) argue that science is art and can be both conceived of metaphorically this way and evaluated aesthetically as a way of artistic creation. The authors propose a vision of science deliberately and intentionally produced to be beautiful, to evoke feelings in people. They reject the notion that there is a truth to be found "out there" (Rorty, 1980/1994). Science does not have to be precise or specific. Academic texts can be more open (Eco, 1973). „The poetics of an 'open' text aims [...] to inspire the interpreter to 'acts of conscious freedom', to make him an active center for an unlimited net of relationships, whom he is to give an own shape, not being limited by a *compulsion* implied by the given rules of organization of a given text" (pp. 27-28). Whereas positivist science is, in its intention, a more closed text, aiming at precision

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and accuracy, non-positivist academic writing can abandon these myths, and the templates, and reach out towards the subjective dimension of human experience, directing itself to the personalized reader through the use of fiction. We understand fiction as artful construction, and such authored construction is anyway impossible to avoid in scientific writing. What we propose here is to go further: toward a conscious use of fiction in academic writing, much in the best tradition of Geertz's *thick description* (1973).

Images of interpretation

The above overview represents some of the current epistemological ideas as reflected in the literature. To flesh out the picture, we have asked our friends, attending an elective course in led by one of us for Master's level students to express their idea about academic writing on the one hand, and literary writing, on the other. The theme of the lecture chosen for our request was academic writing, the rules of referencing, etc. The attendants of the lecture are to our knowledge people who read quite a lot, mostly fiction of various shades, but also some academic texts. Some of them have recently began to write such texts themselves, they are, however, sufficiently new to the genre to look at it from a distance. We suggested that they do that by writing poems or drawing pictures, but they were free to choose any other form, and some did. We received poems by one author, a „table" containing two poems by one another, origami type shapes by one, and drawings more or less of graffiti type by 12 people. With a few exceptions, the creations were unsigned. The participants had c:a 30 minutes do complete their work, and did not have at their disposal any other materials than a pen and a piece of paper. This limited the creators' possibilities for finding more original or elaborate forms of expression. The results that we recount below are not representative in the statistical sense of the term, but in our opinion they express important and inspiring ways of thinking about (academic) writing.

Dariusz Jasiński, the author of the poems (written originally in English), handed his work over to us some time after the lecture.

Scientific papers

Shared ideas
drained from the sea of minds
Connected wisely
by those who want to play the Game
Explored by
prospectors who define their gold

Why cannot they hunt alone?

Fiction

The vision, the idea, the scene,
mixed together with some emotions
the trial of looking for something
that may even not exist -
the answers to questions of the own mind.

Most creations have a common theme: the rigidity of the scientific form of writing in contrast to the fluidity of fiction. The „table" by Marcin Plewka contains two written „definitions:" on the left side the author expresses his view of literature as a force that is producing visions of strange creatures out of glimpses of time, carrying the reader away into infinite spheres of time and space. On the right Marcin described academic writing in terns of rules: it should not be banal, it should refer to the real world, demolish myths and give hope. However, academic writing can also shake the order of the world.

The drawings typically portray both genres on the opposite sides of a sheet of paper. The both sides differ significantly: academic texts are typically presented as ordered, boring and repetitive, sometimes even rigid figures, while fiction as chaotic, rich and interesting. One author, Antoni Ozynski, produced two sketches: one depicting a framed rigid text full of mathematical symbols and figures neighboring to a vaguely framed one from which a sun bursts out into the surroundings. The author has labelled the second: „also a very good academic text." The other page contains a verse written mirrorwise:

THE VOID
IS
THE FORM

THE FORM
IS
THE VOID

THE FORM IS NO DIFFERENT
FROM THE VOID...

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The author of an origami shape produced the most original creation – one single representation, embracing both genres. It is a boat made of a sheet of paper inscribed with reflections about academic texts: „the arguments do not have to be logical, they should awaken imagination, enable the reader to see what the author had in mind. This reminds of something enigmatic, perhaps a pyramid. Fiction is beautiful, but beauty can also be ugly. Fiction should be interesting and invite the reader to understand the world of the author. It is like a door, or maybe like mountains?" The reflections are signed „I" and the signature is positioned in the place of the name of the boat.

The drawings typically contrast geometric and rigid shapes with fluent, dynamic images. Academic texts are symbolized through lines and angles (straight lines, vectors, tables, etc.). Fiction can be a landscape, arrows pointing in different directions, a map filled by comments, images, sweeping lines, called *Gosciniec* (an expression with two meanings in old Polish: road, and a gift from a journey). Academic texts and fiction are seen as each other's opposites, the former being framed, ordered, rectilinear, conclusive, unidirectional; and the latter — open, imaginative, ambivalent, funny, living, interesting. A few of the designs use a different symbolic: one depicts two pages from, respectively, literary and academic texts. The first is a set of parallel rows, whereas the other is lines, bullets, tables, and waves. Another, signed Tomek, depicts the both genres as roads. The academic one is more schematic, but on the margins you can meet a lot of interesting things: mandalas, hearts, crosses, footsteps. Fiction is an enigmatic road without a clear trail, having the shape of a flower. Here, too, there is a lot of things on the margins: question marks, hearts, a sun, and an anarchy symbol. Similarly, the drawing representing „also a very good academic text" and the boat carry, in our reading, a related message: good writing can be open and creative, and it concerns both academic writing and fiction.

Translating Science into Fiction

Translations

Bruno Latour (1986) suggested that ideas spread through a process of translation where travelling ideas meet the stationary. In this meeting friction is created, producing energy that makes translation possible. This metaphor is an alternative to the old notion of "diffusion", suggesting physical laws governing the spread of ideas. Everything that happens to ideas does so because of people encountered along the paths of their travels. Barbara Czarniawska Joerges writes about the meeting of "travelling ideas with a frame of reference, that is ideas in residence" (1994: 209). Ideas thus become materialized, turn from the state of being "reality conceived" into "reality practised" (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1995: 171). This metamorphosis is the essence of the individual act of translation, or a concrete process taking place in a concrete time/space. Translated ideas keep their character as objects (texts) and can be read in different ways. It is the reading that brings ideas to life. People are needed to energize ideas: they read them, misread them, reject them, author them, etc. In other words, people must have some motive for picking up ideas, which do not move driven by some mystical force (the Invisible Hand of the Market?) but have to wait rather passively to be moved about. All they can do is to make an impression motivating people to do something with them.

This metaphor makes us think of translation as a creative process. There are, however, strict rules for how they should be carried out, rules for creation, rules for understanding. Such rules are used for example in the process of writing academic texts when ideas are translated into the template of „academic writing."

Margery Wolf (1992) carries out what we would call a cross-template translation of an anthropologic narrative, retelling thrice the same story: first as fiction, then as field notes, and finally as a feminist essay. In each version the story reads differently, and *does* different things to the reader. She explains why this dramatic shift happens:

> An ethnographer is guided by certain rules of evidence — call them scientific if one must — that are assumed by her readers. Her competence in meeting these standards is another issue. A writer of fiction, however, has another set of rules — all she needs do is tell a convincing story. The novelist or short story writer is in total control of the information presented, the attitudes and motives of her characters, and the sequence of events [...] More important, she can [...] cut off many alternative explanations for the events she purports to describe (p. 56).

Thus, the *rules* one adopts in writing, strongly influence the story itself. What Margery Wolf calls „sets of rules"

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we here describe as templates of writing, and these become most visible when the story is translated across them.

We would like to point to the various processes of translation that take place when (scientific) ideas are set into motion. The first takes place between the conceptualization of the idea and the template of the written text. The second occurs when the text is read. To show how the processes work, we would like to present the following essay, being a cross-genre translation between a text that appeared in a academic journal and our reading of the text. We believe that academic writing can be translated into various templates at both stages we distinguish, i.e. when an idea is written down as a text, and when it is read. We think that this is not „just" a case of atypical interpretation, but a possibly interesting departure point toward a discussion on writing genres in organization science.

The following text is a translation of a discussion between Martin Parker, Stewart R. Clegg, Norman Jackson and Pippa Carter in Organization Studies (1995) over postmodernism and critical approaches to science into fiction.

Ellipsium

The smell of stale beer and cigarette smoke nearly overwhelmed Martin as he entered the bar. Frayed ends of various heated discussions engulfed him in a wave of cacophonic, yet somehow familiar and soothing, noise. The jazzband the place was famous for has just finished playing, the musicians still on-stage, busy gathering up their instruments. Baudrillard, hunched in a corner over his can of Evian and his toothbrush, was hardly visible through the smoke, and the obscurity. Not quite real, half asleep and mumbling to himself, his voice quite distinct owing to the peculiar acoustics of the place.

"...it was a hyper-real non-event," he said and passed out.

Edward, recognizing Martin, waved in the speaker's general direction.

"Good old Baudrillard! For that I think he should be sent there. He does have a thing about the gulf war."

Before he could reply, a deafening noise shook the place. It was the drummer of the band, a new guy, and Martin did not recognize him. He attempted to stand up, a considerable achievement in his drunken state. He has managed to bring his whole drum set, still plugged in, crashing to the floor on top of himself. Martin hurried to help the guy, assisting another musician from the band whom he recognized as Stewart, already valiantly struggling to free his comrade from the wreckage. Having accomplished the task, they sat down at one of the tables together. The atmosphere was gloomy, and they sat in silence for a long while. Finally, Martin spoke:

"This postmodernism of yours is a dangerous and potentially disabling set of ideas, y'know. "

"Why is that?" Martin's statement made Stewart slightly uneasy.

"Look, you relativists make it sound as if there were no guarantee of the certainty of anything at all. You believe that everything around you is a delusion by the evil demons. And you're bloody right, but you're making things easy for yourselves."

"Hey, you're inviting me to a dialogue from a rather uncomfortable position? It's pretty much either-or with you, isn't it? You never compromise?"

"You very well know I don't, and now that we know the evil demons are not the figments of our imaginations we thought them to be, it's bloody time to choose sides!"

The whole conversation was steadily increasing in volume and the final words practically echoed throughout the whole place, causing intrigued glances from the suddenly hushed patrons. Two of them actually got up and began approaching Martin's table. For a moment he wondered if he didn't overdo it — he didn't want to get beaten up and the strangers did not seem too friendly. An appeasing gesture from Stewart stopped them from taking any possible violent actions. Still, they halted behind Stewart's chair, arms folded across their chests, looking threatening. Martin, after a brief pause and looking up at the newcomers, resumed in a somewhat calmer voice:

"Hey, I'm not alone in this point of view – the woman who cleans my office in Keele might not use the same wording, but she is of the same opinion. I'm sure what we need here is a dialogue based on mutual respect. "

One of the newcomers, a bearded man of impressive height, pointed his finger in Martin's direction, and asked accusingly:

"Do you imply that you and your cleaning lady have a truer understanding of the world than we do?"

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"I don't claim to speak for others, I only state my own truth, because I wish to condemn. You may ignore me or silence me, but don't be so damn stupid as to forget what's going on in the world around us: genocide, revolutions, terrorism, capitalism and everything we used to call apocalypse. If we don't choose sides now, we open our way for disempowerment and disembowelment by the demons."
The other newcomer, a tall woman with long curly hair, cut in:
"And of course *you* are the one to decide where the demons are?"
The bearded man riposted:
"We all know Truth is the demon – there's no need to argue about that, but you claim that everyone except you is a bloody idiot, leaving you to pass the ethical and political judgements."
"We must have some clear standards – agreeing that 'anything goes' invites regress and, consequently, the demons. My point is that some political or ethical positions are wrong and others are right. Progress is the way to go, dammit, and that's the only way towards liberation."
"How can one be sure? Papal infallibility? " Stewart nodded at the picture of pope Max I hanging over the counter. All three of them looked at Martin, then at each other, then once again at Martin, the shock of the sudden realization momentarily paralyzing them. Finally, the bearded man managed to stammer out:
"Do you claim to be God? "
"I didn't say that" replied Martin, an enigmatic smile playing on his face. He stood up and left, before the astonishment had the time to wear off.

In the silence of the cold rainy night, the sirens of an ambulance cut across the streets. Martin started, all of a sudden feeling completely confused. He looked up at the neon sign of the bar, trying to remember.
The smell of stale beer and cigarette smoke nearly overwhelmed Martin as he entered the bar. Frayed ends of various heated discussions engulfing him in a wave of cacophonic, yet somehow familiar and soothing, noise. The jazzband the place was famous for has just finished playing, the musicians still on-stage, busy gathering up their instruments. Baudrillard, hunched in a corner over his can of Evian and his toothbrush, was hardly visible through the smoke, and the obscurity.

Toward imaginative storytelling

This is the part of the paper where the conclusions are normally to be found. However, we would prefer to share our reflections and not "conclude" or close the theme.
We have considered the boundaries between the templates of expression of ideas. We have also tried to translate an academic text across templates. Neither of us has had a previous experience of the template for writing fiction, although we both have an experience with the creation of lived narratives (roleplaying games; see e.g. Kociatkiewicz, forthcoming). We also have an experience as academic writers. This enabled us to tentatively explore what is on both sides of the boundary between the templates we were studying. „Just" creating a piece of fiction for one who is new to it, or writing an academic text for the first time is not the same as conscious translation. The first process is more that of learning, perhaps with the help of earlier experiences that can serve as frames of reference. The latter forces the person to cross the boundary between templates. We are both bilingual and what happens during a translation between templates is similar to what happens when a bilingual person finds him- or herself in the company of people simultaneously speaking both languages. It takes time to change modes of thinking, from one language to another. It is more difficult when we are forced to translate (many bilingual people have signalized this problem to us). One can experience chaos and confusion, sometimes panic. Sometimes, we may arrive at a state of split consciousness: of being in both linguistic realities at the same time. It can be exciting, but also painful. Especially painful are the moments of disorientation that occur when one is addressed suddenly in a language one does not expect. Being surprised by the chaos between linguistic realms is a difficult experience (there is a wonderful book about experiences of painful transitions between languages, *Lost in translation,* by Eva Hoffman, 1989/ 1995). Acquiring more routine with simultaneous multilingual conversations makes people create a separate template between them, it is called simultaneous interpretation.
And then, there is the issue of the „content." What is being communicated? Not information, for sure. Images? Readings? This is how we dealt with it, by assuming that it is our readings that cross the border with us, or the pictures, associations, and images that

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the text invokes. Margery Wolf (1992) retold the same story within three templates, achieving different ends, making the reader feel in different ways. She reread the story differently herself — the writings date from different periods in her life and contain different intentions and different expressions. She carried the interpretations with her from each version to another. In our own translation, *Ellipsium,* we have not recreated (reconstructed) any story of the original authors. Our narrative is the "shadow-side" of what we have read, a consciously alternative interpretation of a text. The chosen text is a collection of well written and suggestive statements, not representative of the stereotypical academic template we here present. It awoke our imagination, and looked like a good story material. There are other possible plots that could be developed in such a story: perhaps a detective story, fantasy, or whatever.

We think that texts that catch our attention do provoke to such "shadow-side" storytelling, not aiming at the reporting of what the text says or answering with rational argumentation, but rather invoking images of associations "around" the text. One of our colleagues uses a similar method in his teaching (organization theory): he asks his students to read a textbook chapter and then to either write fictive stories or make short video films about a given topic (structure, strategy, motivation, etc.). The students actively use their imagination, for example, one group wrote an essay about Napoleon managing a large contemporary Polish firm. The story is purely fictional, it uses the standard literary devices such as suspense. On the one hand, the students link the topic to their imagination, give it life through the images they relate to it. On the other hand, it has some surprising relevance for management. The students "discovered" interesting connections between the present and the past, as well as between passion and rationality, aspiration and domination. This teaching method enables the development of imagination and more personal learning and also helps to develop organizations, as it permits the students to think of them in alternative, associative ways. One of us often asks students to write down short fictive essays about things that come to their minds when they think of some key terms which are used in the course she teaches. For example, she has asked students of organization sociology to write such a personal definition of organization. Most wrote dark kafkaesque stories, some ironic parodies, and some heroic narratives in which the hero lost against overwhelming odds. Few stories were cheerful or optimistic. Through this exercise they expressed the images of organization that they carry with them emotionally, but that are seldom expressed in the rational discourse about organizations that they lead in classrooms, or in working life. The exercise also gave them to opportunity to discuss what they would like to change in the organizations they know, and how they would go about changing it. The surprising (to most) insight was that most would try to change organizations through organizing (rather than solitary actions). Thus we arrived at another dimension of organizing that the students also carried within them, one that contained a potential for change. We would like to recommend this "cross-template" teaching method based on storytelling: for academic teachers, as well as for organizational development aims, as we think it has a considerable capacity for the development of new ideas and the rethinking of exiting models.

In this text, we have been arguing that reading across templates can be inspiring. Reading and writing within the templates can be enriching, too. The frames of mind linking various literary communities, including the academic community, require modes of communication mirroring the shared attitudes. These modes take the form of idea templates, or literary genres, best suited to the presentation of the most common ideas in the most common way. While such a situation enables easier understanding and a better forum for discussion of the mainstream ideas in the mainstream way, or, in other words, what brought the community together in the first place, it definitely hinders innovative approaches that fall beyond the margins offered by the templates. On the other hand, the templates may also help to develop creative ideas and to communicate. We believe that they are helpful if they are soft and if they are problematized by the users. If they are rigid and function as iron rules not reflected upon, they kill creativity and inventiveness instead. In other words, we believe that a kind of *ex ante* openness to translation and communication is especially important and valuable.

It would be helpful to become reflective towards the templates and also to develop some new type of template for „boundary" writing and talking, based on what is already in use in e.g. the ethnographic writings we quoted earlier in this text. Narrative science legitimizes such endeavors, so it may be a

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great way to go, helping to embrace innovative and different approaches to academic writing. The various instances of translation that we have addressed in this paper: between the idea and the written text, between the writing and the reading of the text, and between templates for writing, show, we believe that the transition between the templates of expression is not just a problem of a chosen style, but of the taken for granted conceptualization of the genre of templates as such and the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have influenced the creation of each template. Narrative science has, then, a difficult task in counteracting the „decline of the discourse." It is not only a matter of breaking the epistemological ropes, of blurring genres, letting more free thought in, etc. It is more a development of a new template, that is neither copied from science nor from fiction, and probably not necessarily replacing any of them, but rather enriching. A colorful, imaginative, and puzzling way of speaking of organizations. We believe that storytelling is the foundation to construct such a template.

Table 1

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
1	165	212.2	0.8	122	3	213	9028	843	11.2	34.3	24	45
2	198	182.8	0.8	121	323	2312	9324	34.45	23	489	87	936
3	912	12.2	0.6	343	23	5	-92	234	76	567	13246	3675
4	298	12.2	0.5	6654	23	436	95785	346	9797	45	8476	412
5	28	12.7	0.9	3294	566	6756	98341	-75	5	2	4089	64
6	27	219.0	0.8	3224	4	3244	23	123	4	35	34	865
7	8187	12.2	0.5	233	344	-54	9532	34.45	6	-45	6556	856
8	918	12.2	1.0	232	34	35	8354	-0.29	8	6	978	56
9	09182	12.3	1.1	323	54	978	94	19435	45	6	87.6	45
10	01892	23.4	1.3	3242	34	45	8935	3294	98	4365	54.44	32
11	271	231.3	1.1	545	756	-45	745	234	81	94	0.433	9832
12	218	12.4	0.8	423	6545	36	3298	592	32353	38	0.45	22
13	19	45.4	-0.7	4532	45645	72368	94305	869	9665	836	3234	11
14	1022	54.4	0.7	32423	34	543	89342	432	56	2	32	51
15	19082	34.4	1.4	34	24	756	9342	103	8.13	976	3.4	24
16	01929	344.4	1.5	424	325	89	84	46.11	46	667	434.3	1253

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