

The Death of the Co-Authors: Revisiting a Case of Womanness-in-Writing, Betrayed

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In my presentation, I would like to revisit a project that I was working on more than 10 years ago. Even though completed, it continues to represent a challenge. I am acutely aware of the fact that my job was not done properly then, that neither my research method, nor my personal strength, nor the state of my scholarly and ideological awareness at that time were sufficient for me to cope with it. I feel defeated and betrayed by the analytical, historical, and human complexity that I was dealing in my object. But I also feel a traitor myself, like someone who gave a promise and never was strong enough to keep it.

What I failed to do then is hardly possible to repair now. My dear friend and co-author in the project, Natalia Kozlova, is now dead. There is no return for me to that *gaya scienza* that we were enjoying together at that time, in a state of true *Gelassenheit*: serene and fearless. Together, we set out on a breath-taking academic adventure, a desperate plunge into the depth of another woman's writing – Evgeniia Grigor'evna Kiseleva, a semi-literate retired cleaning woman from Donetsk region, a war veteran, a labour veteran, a mother and a grandmother, and the author of a capital book about her own life. For Natasha and me, Kiseleva was a discovery of an unknown continent of “womanness-in-writing”, as it was represented in two modes at the same time: as the experience of a body *living* through a life, and as the experience of the body *writing the memory of* this living-through. Both Kiseleva's living and writing were a joy and a pain, and so was our – Natasha's and mine – living through Kiseleva's text and writing about our experiences of reading it. Kiseleva is now also dead.

Nevertheless, today I return to Evgeniia Grigor'evna's writing and thus commemorate both her memory and the memory of my dead co-author Natalia Kozlova. I believe that now I have the means of dealing with Kiseleva's writing. I will be analysing it with the help of the category of *patientia* (which I constructed for a different study and only later on realized that it continued my reflection about Kiseleva). *Patientia* (cf. with Giorgio Agamben's category of passive power) is a biopolitical category: its purpose is to look at subjectivity as it is produced in language and narration as primarily a corporeal experience (not as a cognitive or ideological construct). *Patientia* refers to a subjectivity that expresses itself in the non-nominative (oblique) cases (cf. Russ. *ia kbochu* – *mne kbochetsia*; *ia priekbala* – *menia ugorazdilo priekhat*).

This oblique grammar of subjectivity (normatively correct, but not entirely regular) creates a very peculiar relation of subjectification between language and its subject: the subject appears as receiving an event rather than initializing it. Where is the limit drawn for the subject's ability to receive and what does the subject do when she reaches that limit? I want to describe *patientia* as a game with the normative power of language, not at all a direct confrontation, but an oblique evasion-in-challenge. This game is full of narrow escapes and therefore its pleasures are keen and quite sadistic. These perverse pleasures, I believe, are not entirely limited to the cultures of totalitarian languages.