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TALKING ABOUT CHILDHOOD AND SIMILAR CONCEPTS: "LARGE" AND/OR "SMALL" STORIES

SUMMARY

An examination is made in the text on a terminological and semantic level of the concepts of the life story, life history, personal narrative, narrative on personal experience and talking about life (childhood) and their utilisation in ethnology, anthropology and folkloristics, but also in linguistics and psychology. Parallely with that, the forms of talking about childhood are studied in the context of large narrative entities related to that period of the narrator's life. They would be similar structurally and functionally to life stories, or one of their parts, which relate to the life period of one's own childhood, while they largely come about in some sort of exceptional situation that enables an unusually long period of attention being focused on the narrator's performance by the public. The forms of talking about childhood are also enquired into as small stories, which have a repetitive pattern that we recount for a certain time and/or those stories that are part of our active or passive repertoire in talking about ourselves that are polished, skilful performances (personal narratives), and then even smaller, awkward performances and truncated, incomplete narrative sequences, which do not contain more than the narrative minimum and allusion to people, objects, events or the like, while being woven into some sort of conversational entity (stories about personal experience).

Re-appraisal of the concepts referred to and analysis of their shortcomings and content-related overlap serves to confirm small forms of speaking about life and about childhood in ethnological and kulturo-anthropological research, while confirming at the same time the small forms of everyday talking about childhood – and about life in general – as a folkloristic subject and validation of the folkloristic focus on narrating as practice and not as form.

Key words: life story, life history, personal narrative, narrative on personal experience, talking about childhood, talking about life