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## Memory Boom and Imaginarium of Holocaust in Polish Literature for Young Readers

**Abstract:** The article is an attempt to show the changes that have place in the literary representation of the Holocaust in works addressed to young audience. The author presents individual titles of texts including them in the extremely popular today post-memory narrative and Polish educational policy. Particular attention is devoted to books published in the Year of Korczak which were not only meant to familiarize young audiences with this great teacher but also to recall the figures of women who supported Korczak in his activities. In this sense the texts that tell about the Holocaust also testify to the presence and role of women in building a great pedagogical work created by Korczak and thus into fit into the modern phenomenon of herstory. The article is a voice in the discussion on the role of memory which among other things, cannot be petrifed on the literary topos of the Holocaust, but should occupy a central place in the pedagogy of empathy.

**Keywords:** Holocaust, literature for children and adolescents, Janusz Korczak, postmemory, education, empathy

Memory undergoes changes connected with ideological, political or aesthetic transformations. Thereby it should be seen in terms of generation, that is a community, as well as in terms of institution's programme and role, which give a suitable shape to it. The effect of such actions is the generation of post-memory which in the perspective of Marianne Hirsch (Hirsch, 2000) distinguishes the memory of these people, who experienced particular events – here: the Holocaust, from the memory of those who were born afterwards and are free of the type of experiences. Postmemory becomes not only a space for a given generation community, a place for continuous determination of meanings, but also an area of oppression by the institution which develops strategies for memory. The peculiar flexibility of postmemory written in various post-memory narrations attributed to next generations causes it to simply become an interpretation of the events told.

It is worth then to examine postmemory representation of the Holocaust, which is shaped by the literature for the youngest readers, not only in order to

catalogue the picture of the Holocaust, as it is also worth to indicate the ways of narratives which profile the shape of “fourth generation’s” memory.

It seems that the Holocaust has always been associated with memory, as the remembering imperative has accompanied all practices connected with the Holocaust inseparably. Idith Zertal in the excellent book *Naród i śmierć* observes that the Holocaust has become part of the Israeli project of remembering not only as an incomprehensible but, above all, disgraceful event (Zertal, 2010). Thanks to Hannah Arendt’s reportages from Jerusalem trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, the Holocaust has ceased to be the problem of the survivors only, as since that moment it has been in the limelight not only for Israel, but also for the whole world.

It is therefore no surprise that the first attempts to teach the Holocaust inspired by the radio lecture with the meaningful title *Wychowanie po Auschwitz* given by Theodor W. Adorno took place in the 1960s. According to the philosopher, the education should be subordinate to preventive formulas so that the Holocaust would never repeat. His suggestions of education had a clear authoritarian character as it excluded pedagogy from any kind of participation in the creation of a totalitarian state. What Adorno considered to be the basis for education about the Holocaust was empathy (Szuchta 1999).

It seems that empathy is still in the centre of the contemporary education, although methodology of teaching the Holocaust managed to develop mechanisms enabling the shift from the emotional level to the intellectual generalization and historical knowledge. The safe and non-traumatizing education of the Holocaust is guaranteed by the presence of these three levels and the fact that educational actions starting from emotions, through understanding to the moment when events are placed in the historical context are being taken.

It is worth to observe that nowadays the education about the Holocaust is still given new tasks, apart from the obvious education about the event. The more time passes since the historical time when it took place, the more often it is included in the discourses distant from the primary methodological assumptions. Thus the contemporary education about the Holocaust does not limit itself to the release of empathy or acquirement of knowledge about the past, but it is written into the modern project which is based on conception of multicultural and postcolonial education. The former one is based on the process of multicultural learning during a contact with the Other which is made by including the education about the Holocaust in the education model which prepares the society to live in the conditions of cultural diversity. The latter one, with a simultaneous certainty that the memory about the Holocaust is safe, evokes different narratives which require cultural memory. That model of teaching prepares for the flexibility of thinking and education to experience the meeting with the Other authentically and deeply. The change in the educational approach to the Holocaust requires however the acceptance of multidirectional model of memory which would take into account and legitimize the

number of existing narratives without indication of the one which would be dominant.

As Ernst van Alphen states, there is a serious threat resulting from the fact that the memory about the Holocaust is more frequently played, rather than reworked (*Afekt, trauma i rozumienie...* 2012). What is more, the researcher encouraged to adopt a limited trust attitude towards knowledge about the Holocaust. His experiences after work with students confirmed that they are tired of something possibly called a label of the Holocaust education which demarcates behavioural rules and norms. Students demand another way of experiencing memory of the Holocaust, which is built mostly on the emotions. The necessity of the places of passion in the education about the Holocaust can thus mean satiety with facts and data. In consequence there is a refusal to take part in the “theatre” of memory, which was presented in an excellent way in the popular cartoon *Nie pojedziemy zobaczyć Auschwitz* by J r mie Dres (born 1982) (Dres 2013). The title reads as the declaration of anti-memory of thirty-year-olds that is “the third generation”.

The Polish young people’s memory about the Holocaust is shaped mostly by school, especially during history and Polish language lessons. That is why the canon of required reading plays a vital role. Sylwia Karolak summarized the issues regarding Holocaust “required reading” at length (Karloak 2014). The researcher indicates two crucial dates in the calendar of the Holocaust readings present in Polish language education. She makes note of the fact that the first literary text about the Holocaust *Dymy nad Birkenau* by Seweryna Szma-glewska which for many years had influenced the post-Holocaust imagination of next generations appears on the required reading list for primary schools in 1947. The list of vital changes in the canon of required reading is closed in 1991 by Hanna Krall’s *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem*. Meanwhile it seems that despite the changes that have currently taken place in school viewpoints of the Holocaust, there is no reading canon which has managed to establish. Moreover, I believe that its too compact structure would in a way turn against the “liberty” in the development of postmemory, which – let it be repeated one more time – is created within the time frames of a particular generation that is here and now and thus meets the emotional requirement of the contemporary and suits the binding aesthetics. I fear that the difficulties with speaking about the Holocaust which the Polish school wrestles with do not result from the lack of the canon or from its instability. They result from the fact that the area of the Holocaust was isolated from the thematic range of Jewish history and culture and was made practically the only one centre of school narratives about Jews. The consequence of this phenomenon is, on the one hand weak representation of the Jewish-related literature (excluding of course texts about the Holocaust), and on the other hand – making a fetish of the texts about the Holocaust.

It appears that contemporary conception of education about the Holocaust in Polish studies is narrowly specialized to build such an order of narration in

which other “Jewish topics” treated so far as a functional context cease to be subjected only to the central problem of the Holocaust. However, it does not mean that it loses its unprecedented character as the event has been settled in historical and cultural sphere, and most importantly, this location does not mean the end of the narrative about the Holocaust, but a significant change in its structure, in which the development of consciousness that the other world had been lost holds a special place.

After all it is the longing, and not the trauma (Ankersmit 1997) caused by the text present at school, which constitutes the ethical aim of the Holocaust-oriented lesson. Possibly the unthinkable teaching success is based on the confession: I miss you, Jew<sup>1</sup>. Possibly the memory scope of “third” and “fourth generation” should be outlined by the vectors of longing and loss.

Revision of student’s sensitivity, which is individual and could be placed in common feeling guidelines, surely constitutes an enormous challenge for Polish language teaching. One possible reason for that is the fact that the school acquaintance with the textual world of the Holocaust demands discipline, which comes not only from the ideological straitjacket, but is an inseparable requirement of the demanding reading in which a student is assisted by the teacher. In such texts the category of freedom of reading should be exchanged to reading with the Other, which would mean that the young person is assisted in reading by an adult. These are also the reasons why Polish language lessons signed with an encounter with a text about the Holocaust become ethical events.

Even more discipline is demanded from the creator who decides to tell the youngest about the Holocaust. Difficult and exceptionally responsible art it is, as it is connected with the obligation to testify the past constructed up to contemporary standards. Memorial de la Shoah (“Biblioteka Shoah”) (Czapliński 2004) thoroughly catalogues these stories among which children’s literature plays an important role from the pedagogic viewpoint. It is easy to investigate where this readiness of “fourth literature” to undertake Holocaust-related topics came from. The causes should be sought in the transformations, let them be called methodological and cultural ones, among others in touching problems which so far have been a taboo, in memory studies and in postmemory narratives, in experiences with modern definition of historical prose under the banner of White or in postcolonial withdrawal of one discourse advantage.

One may be under impression that post-Holocaust children’s literature constitutes a preparatory phase to encounter school texts about the Holocaust. Moreover, these texts contribute to evocation of the sensation of lack, which is understood as longing after irreversible loss, which in turn can be considered as a binding matrix of remembering. In that understanding the superior

<sup>1</sup> I mean a social action initiated by Rafał Betlejewski. The performer took photographs of random passers-by in post-Jewish areas and placed the notion on the wall “I miss you, Jew” which was a peculiar turnout of anti-Semitic slogans.

category of postmemory is constituted by the trace which proves that what is not here existed in the past. "Fourth literature" makes then an attempt to thread the Holocaust narrative, and following on this, to organize memory (Roskies 2014), although in that case the reader finds themselves in the area of imagined Holocaust – *imaginarium* of Holocaust. Nonetheless, even the narrative is subjected to certain strategies of story-telling. Krystyna Kuliczowska distinguishes three dominant styles of war narrative which are addressed to young recipients (Kuliczowska, 1983: 83). The first one is represented by stories which use the upheavals of an adventure bearing the tragedy of war event as it were. The second one inscribes war narratives into the convention of fairy tale. The third one is a testimony describing real characters, while the domain of the fourth one is psychologization of characters and depicting the destructive influence of war. It is not difficult to guess that the researcher strongly stands for these types of "humanistic" narratives.

Joanna Papuzińska reconstructs the process of stereotypization of Jew in prewar texts for non-adults in her insightful sketch. She demonstrates that the reading young people did not have a chance for a neutral encounter with Jewish culture as before the war they were encouraged to anti-Semitic readings (which were in the end not included in the canon), and after the war the Jewish subject was dominated by the Holocaust. It can be admitted then that the war was a censorship for standpoints of Jewish matters, yet it was not the number of texts that changed, but their quality. The analysis of this category led the researcher to the assumption that the texts about the Holocaust created the literary stereotype of "Jew – beaten man" (Papuzińska 1996: 105). Thus the Holocaust in novels for young readers never constituted the centre of the plot and its casualties or witnesses always were situated on the sidelines of the described world. It is exactly because of the absence of Jewish subject in the national gallery of heroic twins<sup>2</sup> or brave teddy bears (Królikowski 1995) why the excellent, although forgotten by school, novel by Anna Kamińska *Żołnierze i żołnierzyki* is worthy of note. The climactic scene in the novel is the murder of mister Seidl, the Jewish artist hiding thanks to fake documents on the Aryan side. He is shot in his own atelier. At the moment of his death, he is playing *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego*, which is an evidence for his "Polish Jewishness" (a trick known from *Pan Tadeusz* after all). The fear, which by chance is a witness of the crime, promises the victim eternal memory.

The post-war literature includes also such books in which the subject of the Holocaust comes to the fore. I have in mind the unfinished novel by Maria Zarębińska *Dzieci Warszawy*. This is a story of Polish children who having felt responsible for Szymek, the fugitive from a ghetto, help him survive on the Aryan side. The Jewish subject is also realised in an interesting way by Maria

<sup>2</sup> I mean a series of adventure novels by Cezary Leżeński about Jarek and Marek the brave twins.

Kann, *nota bene* the author of the brochure *Na oczach świata*, informing about the uprising in the ghetto. Her novels present an unusual phenomenon which can be called the commonness of sphere. She is one of the few who shows the common suffering of Jews and non-Jews, healing any kind of divisions between them (*Niebo nieznane, Sprawa honoru*).

The year 2012 announced The Year of Janusz Korczak was especially significant in the contemporary literature addressed to the youngest readers regarding the Holocaust. There was a great crop of literary texts introducing the young to the figure of Janusz Korczak: *Pamiętnik Blumki* by Iwona Chmielewska (2011), *Jest taka historia. Opowieść o Januszu Korczaku* by Beata Ostrowicka (2012), *Po drugiej stronie okna. Opowieść o Januszu Korczaku* by Anna Czerwińska-Rydel (2012) and *Zwyczajny dzień* by Katarzyna Zimmerer (2012). It is worth to have a closer look at them, as their analysis will enable us to acknowledge the phenomenon of memory boom in the literature for the youngest readers.

The stories about Old Doctor are a part of the first type of the narrative which is present in postmemory discourse in children's and young people's literature. The biographical narrations, which are in question, are not chronology-based, but they concentrate on the details which enable us to capture the essence of Doctor's history, without celebration of its tragic final at the same time. And thus, the detail in the protagonist's story is its centre or – its centres, which are everywhere and nowhere. The episodic, anecdotal and oral nature are the characteristics of the narrative which is not part of the mainstream, since it belongs to someone who themselves have been left outside the binding centre. The biographical practice will then be based upon a fragment, a vestigial testimony which will become one from representations, that is one possibility of narration, thanks to suitable organization.

The biography for young readers usually meets one more crucial condition given, or rather extorted, by the present day. The generation of young enthusiasts of literature free of war experiences is equipped with postmemory, which according to Marianne Hirsch, is very strong and special kind of memory just because its attitude towards the object or the source is transmitted not through memories, but through imagination and creativity (Hirsch 2010: 254). This notion was deduced by the researcher from the observation of prewar photographs, which were placed in the American living room belonging to her Jewish friends who survived the Holocaust. According to Hirsch, these are photographs which remain special instruments of memory, as they are located between memory and postmemory (Hirsch 2010: 254). It may be assumed that a photograph constitutes in "separate literature" the most popular metonymy of postmemory concerning the Holocaust.

There is no accident then that the cover of Korczak's biography by Anna Czerwińska-Rydel *Po drugiej stronie okna. Opowieść o Januszu Korczaku* presents the photograph of Old Doctor made before the war in 1938. The other photographs, which were placed in the book were modernized, among oth-

ers thanks to application of colours to monochromatic presentations, retouch of background or descriptions of photos made in children-like hand writing known from school notebooks. The documentary material acquires new quality in the process as it is involved in a contemporary narration, which substantially changes the attitude towards an object, an exhibit and a document. Artefacts do not take the museum's space but they act, as it is their only activity which guarantees the authentic encounter with the past. That is why the photograph undergoes modernization, as the retouch appropriates it and includes it into the new order, securing it memory. The price that needs to be paid is the consent to the modification of old narration by introduction of notes written by next generations in the margins of an existing story.

This phenomenon has been greatly depicted by Czerwińska-Rydel. By emphasizing particular "biographic" details, she constructed the figure of Mr. Doctor and gave it unusual nature. The author proposed not so much the "childish" figure of Korczak, adjusted to cognitive abilities of a young reader, as "miniatures" from his life, which preserving some kind of "localness", strive to complete narration about the protagonist.

Another book addressed to young recipient is awards-showered *Pamiętnik Blumki* by Iwona Chmielewska. The narrative of this specific book being referred to as *picturebook* begins with "family" photograph presenting twelve children and Korczak who is staying behind them. On the one hand the photograph makes a reference to school photographs, which belong to the rituals of education, on the other hand – it demands a theoretical support. As Susan Sontag states, photographs express innocence, fragility of live heading for the destruction and this connection between photograph and death haunts everybody's photographs (Sontag, 1986: 57).

Nonetheless the photograph drawn in the book and the activity of taking a photograph itself, as the children forming two lines were opposed by a person taking it, does not indicate only death. It rouses dread in an adult recipient, as they, and not the child, know the fate of the presented group of children. The author used the trick called by Hirsch "the photograph of the Holocaust" (Hirsch 2010: 251) just in the beginning. People looking, according to the researcher, are attributed a phrase: we know that everyone will die, and their world will be destroyed. The photographs of the Holocaust constitute the same representation of the things, which do not exist anymore.

The story of Korczak presented in the child-diary of Blumka is located in the margin of narration. An adult, even if this is Old Doctor, does not constitute the centre of story. They appear on the way, become a background for all children stories. Chmielewska, while deciding on the original trick of giving the floor to a child, clearly indicates the reference to deeply-rooted in the subject of the Holocaust figure of testimony. Blumka following the example of Anna Frank, Dawid Rubinowicz, Rutka Laskier or Dawid Sierakowiak keeps a diary.

Children diary-writing gives a completely new quality to a testimony. Narration is alien in children's stories, including Blumka's, the stories are rather situated in the area of postcolonial relations, which so far have not been included in the sphere of serious discourse. The little analyst keeps her writing in a notebook with lined paper, which even more emphasizes the informality of her testimony, although paradoxically in Korczak's case this is exactly a child's relation which seems to be the most appropriate. If a man is then recognized after the fruit of their own labour, then the "ministories" about specific children create Korczak's image, the great teacher of small things – tissues and X-ray of a frightened boy's heart.

If it is really the way, then the biography is just a record of a fight for memory, as it is not only about remembering, but about the knowledge how to remember. The experiments with memory may then lead to some generalizations, which means that the individual history originates universal rules.

The rule is illustrated by the two books for children in the most distinct way: *Jest taka historia. Opowieść o Januszu Korczaku* by Beata Ostrowicka and *Zwyczajny dzień* by Katarzyna Zimmerer, who is *nota bene* the granddaughter of Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, the author of the first post-war book about Old Doctor and the daughter of Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, the creator of the latest biography of J. Korczak.

The plot of the former takes place in contemporary times, and J. Korczak himself appears in some kind of flashback memories belonging to the grandmother of Jasiak from class IIIc. It turns out that great-grandmother's story comes back once in a while in the rhythm of some narrative ritual which is present in the relations of the old lady and her grandson. The story told by the old makes the grandson to stimulate his imagination every time he hears the story. And then the children from the Orphanage are brought back to life. But it is not the summoning of the images from the past that is the most important, but their combination with the present day. Jasiak ponders not only on the fate of Korczak's children, but also on the topicality of his idea. The present day usually does not withstand this juxtaposition, as Doctor with his total devotion to the children, with his sensitivity, gentleness find his followers with difficulty. As it is difficult to respect a teacher who humiliated obese Zuzia by addressing her as "doughnut-blubber". Jasiak, thanks to his grandmother's stories, is equipped with prosthetic memory which he appropriates, although he is not its "lawful heir".

The same "nebulosity" of earlier creations of Doctor in books *Po drugiej stronie okna* and *Pamiętnik Blumki* has been changed to certainty. The similar change can be observed in *Zwyczajny dzień* by Katarzyna Zimmerer. The text tells about difficult daily life of an eight-year-old Szymek, whose life experiences make him consider the world. Interestingly enough, each chapter of Szymek's adventures is preceded by a quote from Korczak's works, for example "The teacher is allowed to roll a notebook into a trumpet, and what would

happen if any of us tried? They would say that we don't respect it. Because with children, everything needs to be perfect" (Zimmerer 2012: 41). It is not hard to guess that the boy's adventures constitute only a convincing *exemplum* of Korczak's truths. It is typical that in Zimmerer's book quotes of Korczak replaced his biography. It was possible on one condition – namely a new narrative had to be created which would transform Korczak's "chansons de geste" into recommendations how to wisely love a child.

The second dominating postmemory narrative are stories which authors or protagonists are girls or women.

I have already mentioned one of girly narratives while characterizing *Pamiętnik Blumki* – a peculiar phantasm of a Holocaust diary. One may be convinced that it is not an accident that girly notes place a woman in the centre while reading and watching a picturebook *Ostatnie przedstawienie panny Esterki. Opowieść z getta warszawskiego* by Adam Jaromir and Gabriela Cichowska. This work is the sum of phantasms of ghetto memoir writing, since the book was only woven with quotes or paraphrases of notes from the "real" *Dziennik* by J. Korczak and fictional child's diary – Gena's diary, brought up in the Orphanage. Two narrations – the tutor's and the foster child's – are lead simultaneously in that way so that they can be included in the democratic discourse about the life of orphans in the Orphanage. At the same time, the paper is after all immortal, that is why Gena decided to write – *her story* (Burzyńska 2006: 401) – the memory after her beloved friend, Esterka Winogronówna, who was entrusted with an unusual task to prepare a performance based on *Pocztka* by R. Tagore with other children. Amal, the main protagonist is lying in bed ill. He wants to get out of a stuffy room but the doctor does not let him do it. The boy is looking forward to receiving a letter from the king, which is supposed to be his ticket to freedom. Gena plays a bit part in the performance, but she is bothered with it – she is to play the role of Sudha, a girl laying flowers on the chest of dying Amal.

The description of the performance preparations is for the author of *Ostatnie przedstawienie panny Esterki* a pretext not only to make "the sketch of daily life" for the Orphanage, but most importantly to select Miss Estera out of the tutors who remain in the shadow of J. Korczak. In the story by A. Jaromir Mr. Doctor represents the trend of masculine narrative, dominated by the observations and commentary. Next to all of it, the child's story of Gena is proceeding and the central character there is the assistant of J. Korczak. She is seldom allowed to speak, but instead she is relentlessly "read" by the girl.

"Separate literature" resembling non-fiction literature and legitimizing the right to shape the postmemory, presents its readers a gallery of authentic characters, who are protagonists, or protagonists and at the same time narrators of written stories. The series of books "Wojny dorosłych – historie dzieci" published by Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego and Wydawnictwo Literatura in Łódź, or the series „Warszawa 1944” published by Wydawnictwo Muchomor

cooperating with Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego address the contemporary demand for counter-stories related by children and fictionalized memories of post-war childhood.

There are three books regarding the Holocaust that also fit into the tendency: *Bezsenność Jutki* by Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala, *Wszystkie moje mamy* by Renata Piątkowska and *Ostatnie piętro* by Irena Landau. While the first one is the pretext to present the story of the destruction of the ghetto in Lodz by means of a fictional girl's history, the second one – while presenting the fate of an authentic figure Szymon Bauman, evokes the memory of Irena Sendlerowa, then the third creates a narrative parallel to an occupation one, but not parallel to “Jewish” duology by J. Papuzińska, consisting of *Asiunia* and *Mój tato szczęściarz*.

This direction of narration shows the theological nature of Holocaust biographies for a young recipient, who has an opportunity to acquire themselves with fates of children situated in the broad historical context. Thus the stories of Jutka, who managed to escape the ghetto in Lodz signed with typical topoi of the Holocaust, namely a hiding place, a wall, Wielka Szpera, phantasm-figure of Chaim Rumkowski, the camp in Chełmn nad Narem, becomes an *exemplum* of fate of Jewish children. Whereas the story about Szymon concealed by five women comes to an end with a biographical note of Irena Sendlerowa, additionally strengthened by comments from Lila Pohlmann, a woman who demanded the Nobel Peace Prize to be awarded to the woman who saved Jewish children's lives, and Elżbieta Ficowska, a girl saved by I. Sendlerowa. The third case – *Ostatnie piętro* I. Landau – seems to be the most interesting one, as the author decides not only on autobiographical exposure, but also takes up the fictional challenge, which double difficulty consists in, on the one hand the portrayal of the micro world of a Jewish child hiding from the German, and on the other hand the portrayal of the overall variety of attitudes and behaviours of the Aryan towards the girl of Jewish faith.

Nonetheless, the value of I. Landau's book is sought also in something else. Thanks to the fact it is a biographical story, and its protagonist is the writer of stories for children and young people, *Ostatnie piętro* creates an alternative history belonging to Jewish narrations just by side of already mentioned books by J. Papuzińska, who is an acknowledged creator of fourth literature. And thus, great historical events such as Powstanie Warszawskie are reflected in the uprising in Warsaw ghetto, and children's personal tragedies such as loss of home, parents or separation with the relatives are experiences belonging to both girls regardless of religious affiliation. The parallelism of their stories, although it is a consequence of completely different historical regularities, without doubts should be found puzzling not so much with the similarities, as mostly with the differences between Polish and Jewish fates.

It is difficult to imagine a medium better from a fairy tale, which somehow mediates between a child and a textual world. In that case, is the fairytale

about the Holocaust thinkable? On the one hand, the text of this type builds narration upon reader-known tales' morphemes, but alters them so that they would not cause the effect of too big proximity with its traditional variant. On the other, it makes an attempt to inscribe events which are probable or actually took place into the fairytale, universal order, although the events are totally indifferently to the experiences of the young generation. The result of that is a story, which though at first sight seems to be familiar, as it is a fairytale, still stays strange or rather unaccustomed, as it touches the subject of the Holocaust, which in turn is never subjected to the procedure of familiarization.

The book by Joanna Rudniańska XY called by the author a fairytale<sup>3</sup> requires adaptation of double perspective, which will help to observe two rather exclusive tendencies in the text: fairytalizing of the Holocaust and the extermination of the fairytale.

The former one results from the search of the suitable form, which would manage the tasks given to literature about the Holocaust dedicated for the young recipient. The stories should be told, but not to traumatize. A fairytale, the genre which in its principles fights the fears of childhood, is probably able to make an effort to meet such needs.

The narrator – storyteller uses the structures known from *Morfologia bajki* by Władimir Propp. He outlines the space and time of the book – Rudniańska places it in 1932 in the eastern Europe, in Poland by the river called Bug. The specification of the time and place would rather make the text resemble a legend, but the fairytale morphemes which appear in the narrative signalize a closer connection with the genre. The narrator presents the protagonist, that is a hero, with whom the reader is going to identify. Not only the words are used to do that, but the narrator uses also symbolic illustrations resembling pictures known from a Japanese method *kamishibai*, dividing the story into some narrative sequences thanks to which it can be remembered.

In that case it is a story about twin sisters. The plot is bound by the loss of mother or rather the abandonment of her children, who from now are out at the old lady's mercy and disgrace. She turns out to be a half-witch, a half-fairy who on right of Propp's donator appears (Propp, 1968: 4) when the girls need her help. The girls are Jewish. They go to two families – Polish and Jewish one. They are both called Hania, and to differentiate between them the narrator introduces two notions – X and Y. They are loved and happy, although neither of them knows about the existence of her sister. When the war breaks out, Polish parents of one Hania hide her identity, while the family of the other girl has to leave their home and move to the ghetto.

As a matter of fact, this rule of contrast is actually applied to the whole text, as thanks to it a young reader can “experience” two different lives – of a Jew-

<sup>3</sup> Rudniańska very often uses traditional genres to build war narrative. That is also the case in published in 2015 *Bajka o Wojnie*.

ish and Polish (though in fact also Jewish) child. The motif of “duality”, here additionally emphasized by the status of twin protagonists, is not strange in literature undertaking the problem of coexistence of two worlds – Polish and Jewish. “The sons of sun” and “the sons of moon”, although seemingly together, in fact live in completely separate spaces, which is dramatically stressed by the wall surrounding the ghetto in Warsaw. The double character of figures, known for instance from *Sublokatorka* by Hanna Krall, where the narrator is at the same time a beautiful and fair Polish girl with soldierly-insurrectionary past and dark, frightened, continuously hiding Jewish girl (Głowacka 2009: 179), facilitates the reader to identify themselves with the suffering Other.

Usually the fairytale finale is a guarantee of a happy end and, in a way, the ending of XY is also like that. Both girls survived, stayed together forever, but Hania X has still missed her real parents who were murdered.

This anti-fairytale (Gajownik 2010: 311-32; Leszczyński 2007: 27) has been given an opposite direction of intergenerational communication – the story ends with information: “I dedicate the fairytale to the memory of a girl, Hania Rotwandówna who, in some sense, was both Hania X, and Hania Y. And when she grew up, she became my mother” (Rudniańska 2012: 61). It is the daughter who tells the story to her mother, not a parent telling it to their child. The specification of the story seems surprising, though the title itself XY allows the reader to consider it one of universal stories, where all those whose experiences are placed in Jewish fate can identify themselves.

As can be seen, Rudniańska not only exploits the genre of fairytale in the search for a form, which would make the Holocaust history bearable, but at the same time she diagnoses traditional literary paradigms, which do not withstand the clash with the subject of Holocaust. I admit that this is an exceptional attitude towards the representation of the Holocaust in “fourth literature”, as this fantasy convention is usually considered by the creators as a chance to throw the readers off realism of historical narration. It arises a possibility to pass over or replace dangerous places in Holocaust narrative by metonymy.

Rudniańska herself uses this trick in *Kotka Brygidy*, a novel in which a speaking cat gets her small owner from a ghetto and Helena, the main protagonist changes into a cat and in this form leaves Warsaw and lands in Jerusalem. The fantasy is also not alien to *Arka czasu* by Marcin Szczygielski. The main character – a Jewish boy, who is in the Warsaw Ghetto is by means of a magic device – the title ark of the time – every now and then transferred to the future. Short shots from his adult life suggest the reader that the story will have a happy end, and gripping scenes will have a happy final.

It seems that narrations about the Holocaust addressed to a young reader cannot use the same form of familiar closeness, which allows to ask about the hypothetical choices made by contemporary children and young people. The questions asked directly “What would I do, if I was on the Other’s place?” may lead to trauma. Though it is not about treating the Events of Holocaust as

one's own and including them in own experiences, but about developing critical and self-preservation distance with retention of empathy (La Capra 2002: 130–131). These are the essential conditions that need to be met while communing with literature. As Martha Nussbaum convinces, distance that is the awareness of one's separation from a suffering person, is the basic characteristic of empathy (Nussbaum 2003; Krawczyńska 2004). It seems that the two forms of narrative – a diary and a fairytale – permit the former and the latter, with a simultaneous respect of both recipient's age and solemnity of the subject analysed.

A completely different attitude in the construction of postmemory is presented by Paweł Beręsewicz. His book *Wszystkie łajki Marczuka* provokes to disassemble the rusty topic of the Holocaust. Marczuk, seemingly the main protagonists, gets a Jewish mother with two children out of trouble. And here a change comes. It turns out that Marczuk has never existed. He is a phantasm, the creation of imagination, the outcome of books, films and testimonies of survivors created by an contemporary secondary school student from Choszczówka, an anti-biography of the same rank as fabrication of Wilkomirski. Adam Zieliński, who is a student of secondary school, creates a hero with whom by virtue of his age he could identify. But the reason for his phantasmal adventure is not the need of compensation or auto-therapy. His created character is a purely commercial figure, as the boy only wants to take revenge on his greatest and non-popular rival. That is why he distorts the history. In his version the narration about Holocaust is equipped with all types of essential elements. Adaś knows the rudiments of Holocaust very well. His story could not be short of: victims – even “doubled” or “tripled”, as the mother with the daughters constitute a figure of a victimarousing special sympathy not only thanks to being Jewish, but also because of their femininity and childishness; a hiding place; a search; a denunciation; an escape; a traitor; cruel German soldiers; a noble Jew, who forgives the harm done to him by a Polish; a small house which becomes an ark for seeking help Jews.

Adam cynically exploits the topic of Holocaust to gain popularity among his peers. Marczuk's profile created on Facebook is given more and more likes, thus it can be admitted that homework from Holocaust has been done. The students identified the pictures remembered from Polish and History lessons, that is considered them theirs. The creation of Marczuk answers the need of shameful history of Polish-Jewish relations, which they were probably also taught at school. The narrations about the past require the presence of a protagonist who is some kind of an alternative and antidote for stories difficult to comprehend.

Marczuk is then an ideal product of postmemory industry. His creator sees a chance to make a name for himself. It is not about remembering, but cynical exploitation of Holocaust narratives. The history of a hero saving Jews which is woven from probable events, second-hand stories, borrowed literary devices

becomes a postmodernist story, what is more, aware of its artificiality. It has one advantage though – ceaseless questioning of one's own ontological status. It asks "who are you?" and "are you real?". The honesty demands to acknowledge the falsification of the truth.

I treat Beręsewicz's book as a variation about postmemory. Its plot includes the warning against offhand manner, which can be used towards the memory about the Holocaust. The novel is dominated by a cold-cynical distance, and the story itself is created out of the desire for fame, or maybe publicity. It must be admitted that this type of "practising" the Holocaust, its instrumentalization is of no surprise these days.

But Beręsewicz says much more. The book is an excellent suggestion of the way to talk about the Holocaust: without attributing trauma to "fourth generation" – as it is a category, which does not concern them. In return we are given a story about truth, honesty in speaking about the past and about intention that we pass it with. The form, that is the representation of the Holocaust, as Beręsewicz seems to convince, is still to be settled.

The book by Beręsewicz offers a completely new narration, which distorts postmemory reading, to which "fourth literature" have accustomed its readers. The revolutionary nature of principles in the story is based on the alteration of the question from "How does the Holocaust story affect you?" into "What are you going to do with knowledge about the Holocaust?"<sup>4</sup>.

Thus it seems that these are questions fundamental not only for contemporary literature for children, which has an ambition to construct postmemory, but also for the education about the Holocaust and the past in general. They induce into search of such ways of story-telling, so that the memory build upon the foundation of narration about the past would not immobilize, would not overpower and would not isolate but would shape and educate for the responsibility.

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<sup>4</sup> A book by Mikołaj Grynberg is worth to be reminded here, as the author takes photos of visitors to Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and asks them for the reason of their visit there. The album is entitled *Auschwitz. Co ja tu robię?* And in reference to the findings it can be paraphrased *Auschwitz. Co z tym zrobisz?* (Grynberg 2009).

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