

KATARZYNA KUCZYŃSKA-KOSCHANY  
Adam Mickiewicz University



# *Panienka,* *Godzina Polski, 1916:* Irena Tuwim's Literary Debut

To most of us, Irena Tuwim (1898-1987) is known predominantly (and, unfortunately, often only) as the younger sister of Julian Tuwim (1894-1953)<sup>1</sup>. The siblings function as a tandem also in children's literature, which is confirmed by the recently published volume titled *Julian i Irena Tuwim dzieciom*<sup>2</sup> (*Julian and Irena Tuwim for Children*). Some know that if it had not been for Irena Tuwim, we would not have the masterly renditions of *Winnie the Pooh* or *Mary Poppins* as well as many other books for children, youth, and adults (Tuwimówna<sup>3</sup> translated works from English, German, and Russian – several hundred titles in total). She received many prizes as a translator and she was recognisable as a sister of an outstanding poet, especially by the readers of the wonderful *Łódzkie pory roku* (*Łódź Seasons*) – these are memories, reprinted several times, from the childhood spent together with her brother Julian in Łódź. This does not mean that it is not necessary to take a closer look at this one-of-a-kind symbiosis of the Tuwim siblings, peruse carefully (and publish critically) their correspondence, a priceless document of communication between brother and sister also on issues of literature, art,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Zawiszewska, *Siostra Szekspira, czyli Irena Tuwim*, [in:] *Twórczość niepoznana. Szkice o literaturze*, eds. J. Grądział-Wójcik, A. Kwiatkowska, L. Marzec, Kraków 2015, pp. 29-51.

<sup>2</sup> *Julian i Irena Tuwim dzieciom*, illustrated by A. Pękalski, Warszawa 2012. The selection includes the following works by Irena Tuwim: *Marek Wagarek*, *O pingwinie Kleofasku*, *Co okręcił wiezie*, and *Pampilio*.

<sup>3</sup> In Polish, the suffix '-ówna' – when added to a masculine surname – forms the surname of a daughter, i.e. it also indicates that a woman has not been married. [translator's note]

and world views<sup>4</sup>. Only during the war, when they were on different sides of the Atlantic, they wrote 170 letters to each other<sup>5</sup>.

Hence one reads Irena Tuwim as a source of knowledge on someone and something different than herself: on Julian Tuwim, on the Łódź of the early 20th century, her two husbands – Marek Eiger (Stefan Napierski<sup>6</sup>), an excellent bibliophile, essayist, critic and translator, but also a homosexual (which may be of importance to a heterosexual woman), whom she divorced; and Julian Stawiński<sup>7</sup>, a lawyer, diplomat, writer and translator, but also a compulsive alcoholic (which usually does not guarantee marital bliss either). Finally, the letters also concerned literatures in other languages. After all, Irena Tuwim is primarily a source of knowledge about herself; she is a poet of the female fate in the 20th century (as I will try to indicate shortly, starting with her debut poem); an outstanding poet associated with the Skamander group and appreciated as much as Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska or Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna in the interwar period. Before 1939, Tuwimówna published three volumes of poetry in well-known publishing houses and they were very well received by (I shall add: heavily masculinised and paternalist) literary criticism of that time. These included: *24 wiersze (24 Poems)* (Tow. Wydawnicze, 1921), *Listy (Letters)* (W. Czarski, 1926), *Miłość szczęśliwa (Happy Love)* (F. Hoesick, 1930). After publishing the last of the said volumes, the author became a member of the PEN-Club. Though the contemporary eye sees it in the context of historical poetry – i.e. comparatively – Irena Tuwim, as a poet, was brave linguistically, consistent in her poetic imagery, also in erotic poems. If I wanted to use more old-fashioned terms, I would say that she was authentic. This is a truth about a dramatic existence (the childhood of the Tuwims was overshadowed by the ill-matched marriage of their parents and their mother's mental disease; an unhappy wife of a gay man writes about "happy love" and excellent children's poetry will be later written by a woman who lost her child) and, at the same time, about imagination that would stop at nothing.

Irena's baby did not survive; the beloved dog Kubuś, to whom Julian Tuwim wrote wonderful letters (from America to Great Britain), died very young<sup>8</sup> (AA, 127-129). And, as Anna Augustyniak recalls in the title of the first Polish biography of the poet, "She did not die of love"<sup>9</sup>; she lived very long, working, writing for children, translating, commenting, reminding; in a word – being a kind of institution.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Letters of Julian Tuwim to his sister Irena Tuwim-Stawińska, from the collections of the National Library in Warsaw, vols. 1-2 [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations and titles in English were translated from Polish].

<sup>5</sup> The information is cited after: Julian Tuwim, *Listy do przyjaciół pisarzy*, ed. T. Januszewski, Warszawa 1979, p. 7. The abbreviation LDPP is used later in the article, together with page number.

<sup>6</sup> Irena Tuwim and Marek Eiger were married from 1922 to 1930.

<sup>7</sup> After the divorce from Eiger, Irena Tuwim was married to Julian Stawiński from 1935.

<sup>8</sup> A. Augustyniak, *Irena Tuwim. "Nie umarłam z miłości"*. Biografia, Warszawa 2016, pp. 127-129. Later in the paper referred to as AA, together with page number.

<sup>9</sup> "I did not die of love" are the words of Irena Tuwim from the poem starting with the words "I'm lying on the bottom of water, on the bottom of the river" from the volume titled *Miłość szczęśliwa*, [54] – they are at the beginning of the second stanza of this short poem.

Upon returning from emigration caused by the war, Irena Tuwim publishes selections of her pre-war poems (re-issued, popular among readers, and invariably appreciated by experts), but she no longer writes, with occasional exceptions, new poems (mostly on the time of the war)<sup>10</sup>. It seems that some part of her creative powers died. Coming back today to her debut poem, one can find the poet anew, buried by our times under piles of re-makes and (unfortunately) simplifications of *Winnie the Pooh*, reprints of *The Story of Ferdinand*, *Mary Poppins*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, books by Edith Nesbit, Edward Fenton or *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, and, finally, subsequent editions of *Co okręt wiezie* (*What the Ship Carries*), *Marek-Wagarek*, *Pampilio*, or *O pingwinku Kleofasku* (*On Kleofasek the Penguin*).

The author of Tuwimówna's monograph writes:

Irena made a debut in a Łódź and Warsaw evening newspaper, a Polish language daily titled *Godzina Polski* published by the Germans during World War I. The connection of the German occupier with the newspaper caused that Poles dubbed it "gadżina polska" (Polish viper) and hence the name *gadzinówka*<sup>11</sup>. It was a social and political as well as literary daily newspaper. On Sunday, 11 June 1916, readers could see the poem *Panienska* (*A Maiden*) signed by Irena J. Tuwimówna on the twelfth page, in the middle of the column. This J., taken from the name Julek, was supposed to buoy her up and was her answer to a similar gesture of her brother. (AA, 57-59)

Irena Agnieszka<sup>12</sup> was born ("with a clear face, no birthmark") on 22 August, 1898 (one can often find the incorrect date of 1900 in library catalogues; the poet herself also used 1902 as the year of her birth, e.g. in her PEN-Club membership card) at 5 Szulc Passage, in the flat no. 13 in Łódź (AA, 28), as the second child of assimilated Jews Izydor Tuwim and Adela née Krukowska. Therefore, at the time of the publication of her debut poem, the student of Eliza Orzeszkowa Gymnasium for Girls at Spacerowa Street in Łódź<sup>13</sup> was nearly eighteen years old. Her brother, a poet and Esperantist, exchanged correspondence with Leopold Staff from as early as 1911, and was in love with Stefania ("staffly in love" and "steffly in love", as he writes himself).

Before the poem of the talented gymnasium student is quoted, it is worth making a digression about the early origins of the word '*gadzinówka*'

<sup>10</sup> During the war and emigration years, Irena Tuwim published three poems and an article in *Wiadomości Polskie* in 1940, and subsequent ones in 1942: *Paryż* (*Paris*) and *Warszawa* (*Warsaw*) (26 IV 1942, no. 111) as well as *Powroty* (*Returns*) (10 V 1942, no. 113). The opinions of the siblings on the issue of publishing in Polish emigration newspapers were divided. In his letter to Antoni Słonimski of July 1942 (sent from White Plains), Julian Tuwim writes: "As for Mietek and his associates, I don't care much about this lot. But why does Lilka publish there? My Ira has been already told off for working for *Wiadomości*" (LDPP, 214)

<sup>11</sup> The derogatory word "gadzinówka" is the result of a pun: the word "godzina" (hour) in the name of the newspaper *Godzina Polska* (*The Polish Hour*) is substituted with a very similar word "gadżina", which in Polish denotes a viper, a small poisonous snake or, metaphorically, a very unpleasant person whom you cannot trust. [translator's note]

<sup>12</sup> Hence the later Polish name of *Mary Poppins*.

<sup>13</sup> On the same street there was a free library for labourers and the Jewish Literary and Musical Association 'Hazomir' [a nightingale' in Hebrew] (AA, 59).

which was typically associated with the press dependent on the oppressor at the time of the General Government during World War Two. In one of the interwar dictionaries of the Polish language one can read:

*"gadzinówka = gadzinowy of (viper) newspaper, using gadzinowy (viper) funds"*

*"gadzinowy [adjective from gadzina] (viper); figuratively gadzinowy (viper) fund = e.g. used by the German government for fighting the Polish nationality; a fund for secret purposes"<sup>14</sup>.*

Thus, the word was settled in the Polish language of the interwar period, which is no longer obvious today, and it is due to the Second World War oppressor that it was established in Polish for good. Coming back to the poet and her debut, here is the poem:

Wie o tem, że jest szara, brzydka  
i nieśmiała,  
Chodzi w długiej, „na wyrost”  
uszytej sukience –  
W szkole powodem śmiechów  
i drwinek się stała  
Przez zwykłą małomówność i czerwone ręce.

She knows she is grey, ugly and shy,  
She wears a long dress a size up –  
At school she became the laughing  
stock  
Because of her reticence and red  
hands.

Życie jej jest jak senna nuda  
jednolita,  
Jak szara beznadzieja jesiennych  
wieczorów...  
Do szkoły chodzi, wraca, uczy się  
i czyta  
Długie, nudne powieści nieznanich  
autorów.

Her life resembles constant  
boredom,  
Like grey despair of autumn  
afternoons...  
She goes to school, returns, learns  
and reads  
Long boring novels of unknown  
authors.

Czasami wyjmie nuty z zapyłonej  
szafki,  
Z pod palców jej popłynie melodia  
fałszywa,  
Lub na żółkłych klawiszach tępe  
bębni wprawki,  
Nie wiedząc, że swą własną tragedię  
wygrywa.

Sometimes she takes notes from  
a dusty shelf,  
And a false melody flows from under  
her fingers,  
Or she patters dumb exercises on  
the yellowed keys,  
Not knowing that she is playing her  
own tragedy.

<sup>14</sup> M. Arct, *Słownik ilustrowany języka polskiego*, vol. I, 3rd edition [1928], p. 158, "panienka" [later referred to as MA, together with volume number (Roman numeral) and page number (Arabic numeral)].

The author of the biography of Irena Tuwim comments on her debut in the following manner:

She made her debut with a poem which made references to classical style and which depicted an image of a maiden from rather poor middle class. Did she write about herself? She is more likely to have created a complex portrait, but it was important that she showed a girl who was learning. It was the beginning of the new century and she, Irka Tuwimówna, could also get some education (...) <sup>15</sup>. (AA, 59)

Perhaps there are more important things in this poem than the fact of it being a regular Polish alexandrine with a caesura after the seventh syllable, with regular ABAB rhyme scheme (alternate rhymes in the four-line stanza). This is precisely how a maiden would have written about herself (and this is how Irka wrote as a 13-year-old – AA, 53-55). The poem *Panienka* is, in fact, a paradigmatic portrait of a young female from a rather poor family, all internally contradictory. Both Young-Polish (with obligatory boredom which in the third stanza changes into a note, so it is so boring that it becomes voiceless<sup>16</sup>), and linguistically suggesting new lightness (“she will patter dumb exercises”); and slightly moralistic (which is a bit funny in an older teenager) and, at the same time, written with a real sense of humour (what is more fascinating to read than “Long, boring novels of unknown authors?”); full of sober observation (as indicated by the first stanza), and full of complexes (a long dress a size up, red hands), which is depicted in the same stanza. A similar situation is with the style of this poem. This is such a dress a size up. The same goes for the title (it seems to be accompanied by ironic quotation marks).

Who is, therefore, that “maiden” in 1916? It is easier to say who she is not: she is no longer a girl (who reads novels for girls; a maiden, as we know, “reads / Long, boring novels of unknown authors”), she still is not a woman (who would read romances). The following advertisement can be found on the pages of the issue 105/1916 of *Godzina Polski*:

A company office in Prussian Silesia  
is looking for  
a junior bookkeeper  
to run the current account  
(*Kontokorrente*)  
and a MAIDEN  
who can write on a Stoewer typewriter  
and stenograph in Polish and German.  
Necessary knowledge of Polish and German.  
Applications only by Christian persons are considered<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Earlier, i.e. as a 13-year-old, Tuwimówna wrote poems which her elder brother Julian would steal and rewrite (with malicious commentary) (AA, 54, image of 1911).

<sup>16</sup> Another pun. In Polish, the voiced word “*nuda*” (boredom) changes into the voiceless “*nuta*” (a musical note). [translator’s note]

<sup>17</sup> *Godzina Polski* 1916, no. 105, 13 April 1916.

(Irena Tuwimówna could not be the Maiden written in capital letters in the advertisement: admittedly, her surname indicates her single marital status<sup>18</sup>, but the candidate is 'disqualified' by her Jewishness.)

In the interwar period, the Polish 'panienka' (maiden) was, to quote a dictionary of the epoch again, a diminutive form of 'panna' (maid) (like it is today), but it also denoted "a young girl"; it was also observed that the vocative case "maid" was "a way of addressing a servant in a restaurant or an inn, etc." (MA, I, 498); maidens as well as maids are no longer to be found (as designates); they are only relicts in the language ("eligible maiden" or "maidenly", meaning 'virgin', 'innocent', 'unaware'). In the early 20th century, one hundred years ago, these meanings (due to the existence of living designates) were alive themselves. In turn, the author of the poem, Irena Tuwim, is more reminiscent (in the painting *Piosenkarz* by Roman Kramsztyk from 1924) of a *poétesse*<sup>19</sup> than a maid (AA, 25).

The word 'maiden' rarely returns in the subsequent poetic works of Tuwimówna. If it does, this is more in the context of the dramatic contrast between the fate of a married woman as compared to the freedom of a single woman (as in the poem *Zdarzenie*, [57]<sup>20</sup>)

It seems that the author of the poem *Panienka* consciously (precisely un-maidenly) distances herself from the colloquial use of this word, and signing her debut with the maiden name "Tuwimówna" is not only a sign of respecting the social norm but also playing with it (hence her brother's initial as a symmetrical gesture with regard to his gesture). The poem is definitely not "maiden-like" (MA, I, 498) but un-maidenly (perhaps) due to the need to distinguish herself from her mother ("it was romantic, unhappy Mother writing in secret her «memoirs» disdained by the Father"<sup>21</sup>, and the daughter made her debut, revealed her thought in verse, in poetry). In *Kwiaty polskie* (*Polish Flowers*), Julian Tuwim writes about his mother visiting a summer resort in Inowłódz (this "provincial panopticon"<sup>22</sup>) in 1912:

Bo księstwo o manierach  
dworskich,  
Rody Rotwandów i Przeworskich,  
Poznańscy ani Natansony  
Nie zaglądały w tamte strony.  
Oni po Ritzach. Biarritzach,

As the duchy with their court  
manners  
Houses of Rotwand and  
Przeworski,  
The Poznańskis and the Natansons  
Did not visit these regions at all.  
They chose to go to Ritz or Biarritz,

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>19</sup> Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz wrote about her in *Marginalia* in the following way: "She was very affected, stylised for a «poetess»" (cited after: AA, 62).

<sup>20</sup> All numbers given in square brackets refer to page numbers from Irena Tuwim's *Wiersze wybrane*, Warszawa 1958.

<sup>21</sup> I. Tuwim, *Łódzkie pory roku*, Warszawa 1958, p. 10. Later referred to as ŁPR, together with page number.

<sup>22</sup> J. Tuwim, *Kwiaty polskie*, 3rd edition, Warszawa 1954, p. 20. Later referred to as KP, together with page number.

Ostendach, badach, zagranicach,  
 A moi łódzcy Goldbergowie  
 I co lepszego w Tomaszowie –  
 Zjeżdżali tu. I tu, nieśmiała,  
**Panieńsko smutna** i nerwowa,  
 Z Irą i Julkiem przyjeżdżała  
 Pani Adela Tuwimowa.  
 KP, 21, emphasis by KKK

Ostend, resorts and foreign  
 countries,  
 And the Łódź family of Goldberg  
 And the better ones in Tomaszów –  
 Arrived here. And it was here  
 where shy  
**Maidenly miserable** and tense  
 Mrs Adela Tuwimowa  
 Arrived with Irena and Julek.

Irena Tuwim used to design herself starting with her first poem: un-  
 maiden, un-miserable (dashes are used here on purpose). She got married,  
 she got divorced, she wrote, created, lived. Not everything was successful,  
 but this is a topic for another story. Only her-story. This story would contain  
 both the translation of *Anna Karenina* (on which Irena Stawińska was work-  
 ing in Ostrowia in the 1930s) as well as a poem devoted to her, and the poem  
 titled *Madame Bovary*, the poem titled *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore*, as well as  
 translations (paraphrases) of this major French poet. In the 1930s, the author  
 of *Panienska* translated the book titled *The End and the Beginning* by Hermynia  
 zur Mühlen, an Austrian aristocrat and then a communist (AA, 111-112).

It is known that Irena Tuwim published other 'portraits' of men and  
 women of those times in *Godzina Polska*. Agata Stawiszyńska writes about it  
 in her draft titled "Życie literackie w Łodzi w czasie I wojny światowej" (*Lit-  
 erary life of Łódź during World War I*): In the years of World War I the younger  
 sister of Julian Tuwim, Irena, made her debut as a poet (...). The first poems  
 of the young poet appeared in *Godzina Polska* first in 1916. The sixteen-year-  
 old Irena [the author of the drafts gives the incorrect date of 1900 as Irena  
 Tuwim's year of birth, which is often repeated in the sources instead of 1898  
 – a note by KKK] tended to present the greyness of human life devoid of  
 any hope for a better future. Characters of her poems included ordinary  
 city dwellers who lived in an almost automatic way, not going beyond the  
 roles which were assigned to them. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that  
 the young poet entitled this cycle of poems *Szarzy ludzie* (*Grey People*). The  
 eponymous characters become part of the grey background of Łódź: dirty,  
 crowded streets, gloomy dwellings of downtown tenement houses. (...) [Stawiszyńska  
 quotes a fragment of *Panienska* here as the most paradigmatic  
 poem – a note by KKK].

A similar atmosphere is depicted in the poems *Nauczycielka* (*A Teacher*)  
 or *Szary człowiek* (*A Grey Man*) from the same collection. Apart from the  
 monotony of life they show the gap and complete lack of understanding  
 between a miserable man and a man free from worry. Another frequent  
 motif includes passing people by in the street, which is a symbol of vari-  
 ous fates and different aims. In her poems from the cycle *Miasto* (*A City*),  
 Tuwimówna presented the sadness and greyness of the city nooks and  
 crannies known to her from autopsy. Some of her works of that time  
 also show the frozen bourgeois world of dusty living rooms in which

it is no use looking for life as in *Po staroświecku*<sup>23</sup> (*The Old-fashioned Way*),  
*W salonie* (*In the Living Room*)<sup>24</sup>.

It is worth quoting fragments of poems collected in early cycles as they are like a pendulum between the poetics of the picture to be found earlier in Polish poetry and the Skamander poetics coming into view on the horizon (Tuwimówna seems to already sense this modernity, the colloquial language of 'Pikador' authors, but still, like a chronicle writer assisting Bolesław Prus with verse, she notes what she can observe):

*Nauczycielka* (*A Teacher*) (*Godzina Polski*, 2 VIII 1916, no. 220, p. 6):

W bucikach wykrzywionych, brzydka i niemłoda	In her bent shoes, ugly and no longer young
Spieszy nauczycielka ze szkoły po błocie,	The teacher is rushing in the mud from school,
Marzec. Deszcz pada chłodny. Z dachów kapie woda,	March. The rain is cool. It is drip- ping from roofs,
Mokną brudne ulice w długiej, zimnej ślocie.	Dirty streets get wet in long cold rainy weather.

*Szary człowiek* (*A Grey Man*) (*Godzina Polski*, 25 VII 1916, no. 215, p. 6):

Czasem tylko, gdy z wolna przez ulicę kroczy,	Only sometimes as he strides through the street,
Spojrzy się na przechodniów rozba- wione grona	He'll look at groups of amused passers-by
I jak gdyby zawinił, w dół opuszcza oczy,	And he looks down as if it was his fault,
Wtuliwszy szarą głowę w chude swe ramiona.	Having ducked his head into his thin arms.

*W salonie* (*In the living room*) (*Godzina Polski*, 15 XI 1916, no. 317, p. 8):

Przed oknem stoi pani w pół-ciem- nym salonie	There is a lady in a half-dark living room
Na ulicy ostatni słycać świst fabryk.	Whistle of factories dies down in the street.
Milknie miasto powoli, cichnie hałas dziki –	The city slowly gets quiet, wild noise fades –
Wszystko w zmierzchu liliowym, jak w śnie dzikim tonie.	All sinks in lily twilight, like in wild dream.

<sup>23</sup> *Godzina Polski* 1916, no. 341, 8 XII 1916, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> A. Stawiszyńska, *Życie literackie w Łodzi w czasie I wojny światowej*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Litteraria Polonica" 2012, no. 4(18), pp. 73-74.



In the last fragment it is already possible to hear as if obviously futuristic tones of Polish futurists (early Tuwim, early Iwaszkiewicz, Bruno Jasiński).

In the volumes of poems published in the interwar period, the poet does not lose her sense of observation, but she no longer uses the quasi-epic poetics of the picture, she does not write in the third person. The lyrical 'I' appears there, often full of real dramatism [*Tam (There)*, 18; *Jak umierałam (When I Was Dying)*, 20], and if they are portraits, they are extremely clear, like the three-part poem *Madame Bovary* [28-29] (from the volume *Listy*) or a miniature titled *Romans (A Love Affair)* [40] (from the volume *Miłość szczęśliwa*). Around 1930, Irena Tuwim writes poems which are more than bold, like the one with the incipit "Wypoczywamy z Bogiem" (*We are resting with God*) [48]. It is possible to find poetic prose in her last pre-war book: hence the author of *Panienka* becomes bolder, shaping the poetic matter in different ways (though not necessarily changing the topic: *Nuda za oknami (Boredom Behind the Window)*, [59]; *Miłość (Love)*, [66]).

During the Second World War, she clearly identifies with the poetic and ideological choices of her brother, Julian, when he writes his manifesto titled *My, Żydzi polscy (We, Polish Jews)*<sup>25</sup>. Still on the other side of the ocean, Irena writes a poem titled *Moment (A Moment)*, starting with the words "Faces of young Jewish girls, my sisters led to genocide, / were not feminine or poetic. / Oh, no!" [93].

Interestingly, it is worth remembering that the poem titled *Miejsce (The Place)*, accompanied by a motto from her brother Julian: "I will not go", is the last poem in both Irena Tuwim's choices of her poetry (identical) of 1958 and of 1979. This is a declaration of some kind: included not only in the title and the motto (an obvious gesture of reference, similar to that in the initial in Irena J. Tuwimówna, with which the poet signed her debut, a compositional framing device), but also in the content and the form. This poem by Irena can be stylistically confused with the poem by Julian.

As Irena Tuwim confesses in *Łódzkie pory roku*, she becomes a poet under the mighty influence of her brother:

There is less and less space on the shelves: thick books of "Chimera" and "Sfinks" appear, navy blue and white ones from the "Sympozjon" publishing house, volumes of "Insel-Verlagu" in vivid, colourful covers, and poems, poems, poems! Zygmunt Różycki, Kazimierz Wroczyński, Jan Stanisław Mar, Dębicki, Tetmajer, Łochwickaja, Zawistowska, and Savitri, and they are all overshadowed, like a blooming branch, by Staff.

There was a lot of melancholy, mists, tears and sadness everywhere. Under the influence of these books and the poetic atmosphere, which prevailed in our home, I began to write poems myself. They were, naturally, about melancholy as well as about anemones, agaves and arumas, even though I had no idea how they all looked like. (ŁPR, 103)

<sup>25</sup> And then, after the Kielce massacre in 1946, he said bitterly: "I dreamt of the Poland of Lublin but I found the Poland of Kielce" (AA, 153).

Thus, the primary poetic impulse was – in 1911 – auratic and typical of the Young Poland. In 1916, the year of her newspaper debut, things turn out to be slightly more complicated.

It is a topic for another paper that the siblings steal each other's poems (the 17-year-old, let me add, stole inept verse of his 13-year-old sister and supplied them with a malicious commentary) and that they steal each other's rhymes – it is known who stole from whom (one could make quite a big catalogue of their common consonances in their children's poems); that they are siblings who derive pleasure from making pastiches of each other. (In addition, it is all very vigorous, puerile, and characteristic of Skamander... I will not add that it is "of the spirit" as it is more "of the body").

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## SUMMARY

The author of the article deals with the poetic newspaper debut of Irena Tuwim (1898-1987), an outstanding author and translator of children's literature, but also a poet who is forgotten or read only on the margin of the literary output of her brother, Julian Tuwim (1894-1953). The poem titled *Panienka (A Maiden)*, published in *Godzina Polski* in 1916, is hereby subjected to a contextual analysis and referred to other poems by Irena Tuwim as well as confronted with her existence, also in the auto-emancipatory dimension.

## Keywords

Irena Tuwim, Polish poetry, debut, fate, emancipation

**Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany** (born 20 December 1970 in Poznań) – professor, specialist in Polish studies, comparatist, essayist, author of poems as well as poetic and autobiographical prose (an award in K.K. Baczyński

Competition, 2006). She specialises in poetry and its interpretation as well as the reception of poets writing in German and French in Poland; the Holocaust; synopses of poetry and visual arts; and European and Polish literary essay. She is the author of numerous books, including: *Rilke poetów polskich* (2004; 2nd edition 2017), *Rycerz i Śmierć. O 'Elegiach duinejskich' Rainera Marii Rilkego* (2010; 2nd edition, 2015), *Interlinie w ciemności. Jednak interpretacja* (2012), 'Все поэты жиды'. *Antytotalitarne gesty poetyckie i kreacyjne wobec Zagłady oraz innych doświadczeń granicznych* (2013), *Skąd się bierze lekcja polskiego? Scenariusze, pomysły, konteksty* (2016), and *Nikt nie widzi dobrze. Eseje* (2018), as well as of a volume of prose titled *Zielony promień* (2006). She also co-edited the collection of Anna Pogonowska's poems, *Wiersze (nie)zapomniane* (2018). She has published about 300 scholarly papers and drafts. She is the co-author of a textbook titled *Staropolskie korzenie współczesności* (2004). The academic supervisor of the Association of Jewish Culture and Literature Lovers "Dabru emet" (UAM). Mother of Tobiasz and Lena Miriam.  
e-mail: eadem@amu.edu.pl