



# CHANGING TRADITIONS IN NON-FICTIONAL JEWISH-CANADIAN WRITING— THE STUDY OF SELECTED TEXTS BY EVA HOFFMAN, ELAINE KALMAN NAVES AND BERNICE EISENSTEIN\*

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Recent years have witnessed a substantial growth of interest in various forms of non-fictional writing. Canadian literature has also offered a range of non-fictional texts. Among the different forms of such texts are memoirs and life narratives. The aim of this paper is to explore a selection of non-fictional texts written by authors of Jewish origins who have either lived in Canada for some time in their lives and, thus, can be associated with Canadian literature or who were born in Canada and whose writing has already achieved an established position in Canadian literature. Jewish-Canadian literature in general has a very long tradition, and writers including Mordecai Richler, Helen Weinzweig, Adele Wiseman, Nora Gold, Anne Michaels, Leonard Cohen, and Lilian Nattel have received significant critical acclaim in Canada and abroad. They have all written in English and therefore Jewish tradition has permeated English-Canadian literature.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the question referring to the choice of language seems to be crucial. The older generation of writers turned to Yiddish as their mother

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\* This research was supported by grant UMO–2012/05/B/HS2/04004 from the Polish National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki).

<sup>1</sup> Writers of Jewish origins in Canada have also written in French and have contributed to the vast body of French-Canadian literature. Authors such as Alice Parizeau, Tecia Werbowski and Régine Robin have to be mentioned in this context.

tongue and the language of their literary expression (cf. Anctil 2007). Chava Rosenfarb, the author of the monumental *The Tree of Life* (Yiddish 1972, English 1985), decided to publish her text first in Yiddish and then, after over a decade, in English in her own translation. She is said to be “one of the last surviving contributors to the rich world of Yiddish literature which thrived in Montreal before and just after the war” (Ravvin 1997: 86). The majority of the writers born in Canada and those who emigrated to North America as children, and, thus, belonging to the second or third generation of immigrants have turned to English (or French). In this way they have contributed to the creation of Jewish-Canadian literature in non-Jewish languages.

The growing popularity of ethnic memoirs and autobiographies in Canada and worldwide has resulted in the increasing number of texts which not only provide readers with family hi/stories but which also offer a metatextual inquiry into how texts are constructed, facts remembered, and photos represented. This kind of writing also raises the question of how the graphic aspect of the book influences its shape and reception. For this reason, this article will be predominantly devoted to the discussion of these visual elements in selected recent Jewish-Canadian non-fictional texts written in English in order to show the evolution of employed techniques and approaches to memoir writing. The texts analyzed are Eva Hoffman’s seminal *Lost in Translation* (1989) a text partly devoted to her Canadian experiences, Elaine Kalman Naves’s *Journey to Vaja. Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (1996) and *Shoshanna’s Story. A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History* (2003), as well as Bernice Eisenstein’s *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006), one of the first graphic memoir in Canadian ethnic life writing. The article aims at tracing changing traditions in Jewish-Canadian non-fiction. The analysis focuses mainly on paratextual information that the texts include, such as pictures, photos, various inscriptions and subtitles as well as different approaches to generic classifications that both appear in literary criticism and stem from the authors’ metatextual references.

Eva Hoffman was born in Cracow, Poland in 1945, just a few months after the end of WWII. Her Polish-Jewish parents spent the war in hiding. Together with her parents and a sister, Hoffman emigrated to Vancouver, Canada in 1959. After receiving her primary and secondary education in Canada, she moved to the USA to study and since then she has lived in the USA and England working as a journalist and academic (Brown 2001). Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation* (1989) is one of the first non-fictional books written by an immigrant from Eastern Europe to Canada. The text looks at immigration from the perspective of a mature, successful writer and journalist whose experience (as it is reflected in the text) refers not only to Poland and Canada but to the USA as well. In a selection of reviews presented on the cover of the 1998 edition the text is referred to as “[an] elegiac autobiography ... [and a] story” (Godfrey Hodgson for *The Independent*) and is compared to “travel writing” (*Guardian*), whereas Macpherson in her study on Hoffman automatically classifies the text as a memoir (2006: 62f.). The book includes elements of all these genres and, indeed, from the opening paragraphs immediately establishes an autobiographical discourse due to the use of first person narration, giving dates and other factual information and equating the ‘I’ with the author of the text. According to Karpinski, in *Lost in Translation* “the narrative ‘I’ as well as the narrating ‘I’ [...] is highly self-conscious of its own discursive practices, focusing attention on the processes of writing” (2012: 131). Since Hoffman’s text predominantly deals with exile into the new language, the concept of translation of one’s identity becomes parallel to “self-construction and self-exploration” (Karpinski 2012: 133).

*Lost in Translation* is divided into three parts titled: Paradise, Exile, and The New World referring respectively to Hoffman's happy Cracow childhood, emigration and the first years in Canada, and the period of her studies and writing career in the US. One layer of the story is especially suggestive, namely Hoffman's painful growing up not only in the new country, among new people, but, most of all, in the new language. It is the language that transforms the book into a specific kind of *Bildungsroman* and a 'translation' of Hoffman's Polish-Jewish identity into English. During her childhood years in Cracow, Hoffman did not really acknowledge her Jewish identity to a large extent. She was more interested in her Polish friends, school, and a prospective education as a pianist. She witnesses some discrepancies between her secular family and Christian friends but the subject of emigration is raised when more and more Jews leave Poland in the subsequent waves of exile. Hoffman's family considers going to Israel, too. But the unrest there pushes them to seek other solutions and Canada as "the land of peace" (1998: 84) seems to be a viable option though as Hoffman recalls, as a child, "Canada fill[ed] [her] with a sort of horror vacui" (1998: 85). For her, Poland and specifically Cracow signify the only 'real' home, culturally and linguistically, despite their being marked by the experience of the Holocaust. This "narrative of [her] childhood" (Hoffman 1998: 95) is finally closed with the end of the Batory voyage across the Atlantic and the arrival in Montreal.

The second part of the text refers to the first ten years spent in Canada and it is there that Hoffman decides to write a diary. The choice of language (English or Polish) is the main decision that Hoffman had to make, and she reflects upon the implications of her choice. The easiest way would be to write in Polish as her command of English is not good enough. However, at the same time she wonders which Eva she would be narrating. This uncertainty leads to what Hoffman presents as an inner dialogue between her conflicting selves: "And you prefer her, the Cracow Eva'. 'Yes, I prefer her. But I can't be her. I'm losing track of her. In a few years, I'll have no idea what her hairdo would have been like'. 'But she's more real, anyway'. 'Yes, she's the real one'". (Hoffman 1998: 120) The split into two Evas, the Cracow one and the Vancouver one, holds a grip over her and the decision to write in English appears to resolve the dilemma of her identity. She claims that "[w]riting in Polish at this point would be a little like resorting to Latin or ancient Greek. [...] Polish is becoming a dead language, the language of the untranslatable past. But writing for nobody's eyes in English? That's like [...] performing in front of yourself, a slightly perverse act of self-voyeurism" (Hoffman 1998: 120–21). Since the decision is made to write in English, Hoffman realizes self-consciously that using English becomes a springboard from which she jumps into the new language striving for the new identity in which, as she states, "I learn English through writing, and, in turn, writing gives me a written self. Refracted through the double distance of English, and writing, this self—my English self—becomes oddly objective..." (1998: 121).

Such metatextual commentaries are abundant in the book.<sup>2</sup> The entire text becomes a reflection on and a testimony to what it is like to have become a writer of one's own family hi/story in the new language. Alongside the creation of her new identity, the self-exploration of Hoffman's Polish-Jewish past and its legacy in the new world also comes to the foreground. One of the most significant self-conscious moments in *Lost in*

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<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of another metanarrative Jewish-Canadian memoir, Lisa Appignanesi's *Losing the Dead*, see Drewniak D. 2014. *Forgetful Recollections. Images of Central and Eastern Europe in Canadian Literature*. Poznań: Wydawnicwo Naukowe UAM, 107–124.

*Translation* occurs midway through the text, when Hoffman is not at all sure of her future in Canada and sums up her experience in the following way:

What is the *shape of my story*, the *story my time tells me to tell*? Perhaps it is the *avoidance of a single shape that tells the tale* ... I cannot conceive of my story as one of simple progress, or simple woe. Any confidently thrusting story line would be a sentimentality, an excess, an exaggeration, an untruth. Perhaps it is my intolerance of those, my cherishing of uncertainty as the only truth that is, after all, the best measure of my assimilation; perhaps it is in my misfittings that I fit. Perhaps a successful immigrant is an exaggerated version of the native. From now on, I'll be made, like a mosaic, of fragments—and my consciousness of them. It is only in that observing consciousness that I remain, after all, an immigrant (Hoffman 1998: 164, emphasis mine).

It is the linguistic sphere that contains allusions to the process of creation and blurring the borders between fact and fiction. Although the book is read as an autobiography or memoir, its more universal dimension must also be taken into account. Hoffman herself insists on such a reading, demonstrating her conscious construction of the text: “To some extent, one has to rewrite the past in order to understand it. I have to see Cracow in the dimensions it has to my adult eye in order to perceive that my story has been only a story” (1998: 242). Macpherson alludes to Eva Karpinski’s critical essay on Hoffman’s book in which Karpinski refers to the text as “a nostalgia trip” (Karpinski 1996: 133 as quoted in Macpherson 2006: 75). Such a description would again locate Hoffman’s story within the domain of fact. A similar classification comes from Marianne Hirsch who rhetorically asks how it was possible for Hoffman to call Poland a paradise if even pre-war Poland was marred by anti-Semitism and her parents’ stay in Cracow was a result of their earlier displacement from around Lvov (Hirsch 1997: 217–27). All these doubts and deliberations demonstrate the necessity of locating Hoffman’s autobiographical writing within the spectrum of fiction. There is no need to discuss the correctness of dates and places; what has to be acknowledged instead is Hoffman’s reliance upon memory and the emotional condition of an immigrant. The practice of rewriting and distancing oneself from fact creates a sphere for fiction, “a screen of doubt” to use Macpherson’s term (2006: 67). Ihab Habib Hassan asks similar questions in reference to life writing: “Isn’t memory sister to imagination, kin to nostalgia, desire, and deceit? Isn’t memory sometimes even an agent to mendacity, meant consciously to mislead or manipulate history?” (1990: 30). In consequence, the metatextual layer proves to be an important commentary on the process of transformation of factual data into a literary text.

Photographs, although mentioned in the book, are not represented in full. In the text, Hoffman refers to photos which were taken at various stages of her life: the one taken in Canada in which she does not even recognize herself and calls herself an alien (110) and the other when she meets an old friend from Cracow, Zofia Ciesin, now a pianist, giving a concert at Harvard (222). None of these photographs are presented in the text; rather they are recreated through Hoffman’s memory and discourse. The one that is selected for the cover shows Hoffman with her sister, Alina, in an autumn park and, judging by their age, it must have been taken while still in their Polish “paradise.” This choice is significant as it immediately foregrounds the nostalgic dimension of the text, while at the same time indicating the importance of the first formative years spent in Cracow.

The quandary of referentiality of photography is discussed by Gudmundsdóttir who claims that the “relationship between text and photographs defines the images’ effect

and meaning” (2003: 222). The cover photo would then highlight either the importance of the Cracow self-identification that is supposed to form a starting point for Hoffman’s self-exploration or it would pinpoint this nostalgia for the lost childhood paradise as mentioned by Karpinski and referred to earlier in this article. Ekphrasis on the other hand offers a totally different angle of interpretation. According to W.J.T. Mitchell, ekphrasis, as a description of a visual object of art, appears when

a verbal representation cannot represent—that is, make present—its object in the same way a visual representation can. [Therefore] [i]t may refer to an object, describe it, invoke it, but it can never bring its visual presence before us in the way pictures do. Words can ‘cite,’ but never ‘sight’ their objects. Ekphrasis, then, is a curiosity: it is the name of a minor and rather obscure literary genre (poems which describe works of visual art) and of a more general topic (the verbal representation of visual representation) (Mitchell 1994).

Many memoirs include ekphrastic depictions of the photos that they either reproduce or allude to. *Lost in Translation* offers such an ekphrasis with the display of only one picture on the cover of the majority of editions<sup>3</sup> and two other pictures which are then described in the text of the memoir without offering the visual representation of them. These photos become representations of Hoffman’s resistance to identify with her new self and as such gauge “the depth of their disconnection” (Hirsch 2002: 223). Therefore, Karpinski regrets that Hoffman, despite employing a range of postmodernist devices, “adopts the traditional, androcentric model of autobiography [...] and continues an earlier tradition” (2012: 150) of the self-aware yet fully controlled process of self-exploration in a non-fictional text. As a result, Hoffman’s text represents a very important voice of a Jewish-Polish immigrant, self-conscious yet following rather traditional patterns of writing non-fiction, sticking to the facts but also attempting to play with the literariness of the text seen as a story as well.

Elaine Kalman Naves’s *Journey to Vaja. Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (1996) is “part autobiography, part family chronicle, and part immigrant saga” (Editor’s note, 1996 edition: no page given). Kalman Naves lives in Montreal, where she works as a writer and a journalist. Her family roots go back to Hungary, where many Jews settled down in the past, and Kalman Naves tries to trace and reconstruct her Jewish ancestry back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From the opening pages, in the Author’s Note, Kalman Naves openly declares that “[e]ven though the people of whom I write in this book have assumed life in my imagination, this is not a work of fiction” (1996: no page given). Although the definition of the text as non-fictional is stated clearly, imaginative elements are also evident. Since many of Kalman Naves’s ancestors perished during WWII, she does not really have many sources to consult while writing her book but she has the tools: “The family had a history and I was a historian” (1996: 7). This makes her decision to write down the family story a conscious one, regarding how to approach and construct the story.

The task of writing the family history is not an easy one. Kalman Naves addresses it in a very meticulous way, offering at the beginning the whole range of paratextual sources to help the reader follow the hi/story of the family. First of all, the text includes two maps on the first pages of the book. The first one is the map of Hungary with the 1914 and 1919 borders locating the state among the neighbouring countries. Secondly,

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that this one photograph of Eva Hoffman and her sister, Alina, appears on the majority of covers (e.g. all English language editions) but the Polish edition of the book renders a collage photograph of Cracow and New York instead (1995).

the other map gives an enlarged view of the Nyírség region, showing the location of Vaja and other towns and villages in the vicinity (Kalman Naves 1996: xii–xvi). Moreover, what follows is the simplified family tree of the two families of her ancestors: the Schwarczs and the Weinbergers (1996: no pages given). One example of the visuals included in the text differs from the others. It is the “Reconstructed Plan” of the Weisenbergers’ mansion. The plan is not a mere sketch, it is prepared by an architect and resembles a design of both the location of rooms as well as the furniture in the house. Kalman Naves adds the following caption: “No one ever thought to take the photograph of the old family home because it was thought to be so unremarkable. This plan, drawn up by an architect, is based on descriptions from those who once lived or visited there” (1996: 44). The reader can, therefore, visualize the conditions of living on the estate back in the 1930s.

*Journey to Vaja* offers many dimensions of the historical background as well as basic information concerning the families. The author of this family saga tries to help her readers to orientate themselves in the complex history of Hungary, which has gone through a substantial remapping of its territory and affiliation, and the convoluted fates of the two families in question, who become representative of the other Jewish settlements in this part of Europe. Kalman Naves presents herself as the one who must document the past even if documents are scarce, as a historian and storyteller shedding light on a world that no longer exists.

Kalman Naves also includes many photographs in her autobiographical book. The choice of pictures as well as their arrangements have been a result of a thorough analysis of what to show and how to group the pictures. The most common arrangement is the presentation of set of photos in the form of an insert, which is usually placed in the middle of the text. Probably an outcome of the calculation of costs, such a decision results in a fragmented reading and sometimes a delayed juxtaposition of the picture and the text (or person) it refers to. The image/text juxtaposition here evokes Hirsch’s remarks about “the family’s unconscious optics” (2002: 11), which make the reader “take the intervention of the camera into account and see how it in itself interrupts and shapes visual relations. But if we read imagetexts, the forms of familial looks and gazes can emerge more forcefully and through a variety of lenses” (Hirsch 2002: 11). For this reason, it is important to explore the way in which Kalman Naves arranges the photographs in her text. The pictures are reproduced on the same type of paper as the rest of the text.<sup>4</sup> There are two inserts with a selection of photographs, as well as single pictures which mark the beginning of each part of the text. All of these pictures offer a choice of images of various family members and photos of the author herself (the one from 1957 when Kalman Naves was a 10-year old girl, shortly before the family left Hungary for Canada and the other one from 1995 upon her visit to Hungary). Since the photographic representation is quite wide in this book, it unavoidably shapes the readers’ perception of the text. *Journey to Vaja* is an elegy to the world of Hungarian Jews demolished during WWII and the photos dramatically celebrate and commemorate this world, providing indelible testimony of its existence. As Roland Barthes claims in his seminal *Camera Lucida*:

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<sup>4</sup> It is a typical practice to print the inserts with photographs on glossy, coated paper which makes it possible to achieve a better quality of pictures. There are, however, instances (as in Kalman Naves’s case) when the photos are printed on the very same paper the whole book is and, thus, they are not distinguished clearly from the main body of the text at first sight.

Every photograph is a certificate of presence [...] Perhaps we have an invincible resistance to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of myth. The Photograph, for the first time, puts an end to this resistance: henceforth the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch. It is the advent of the Photograph—and not, as has been said, of the cinema—which divides the history of the world. (1981: 87–88)

Parallel to the photographic representations, Kalman Naves includes her own interpretations of the photos, the smiles, or solemn gazes presented in the pictures. But it is the very task of resisting the passing of time that governs her decision to include the images in the book. The photographs serve as a proof of the family's rich history, and testify to the existence of family members who were killed in the Holocaust, or who died in other circumstances. When narrating her story, Kalman Naves has to imagine the unknown or visualize the past. She also says: "I believe that the Vaja of my fantasies must have been based on these childhood trips..." (1996: 204) and she goes on to imagine what the trips with her father would have looked like. The pictures thus serve as anchors against the scenes she has to imagine for herself and the stories she has received from those who remained alive and who remember.

This methodically rendered family story is also a self-articulation of Kalman Naves's Jewish and Hungarian ancestry. The final section of the book, titled Epilogue: Circle of Stories, shows how Kalman Naves's father loses his acquired English due to dementia and illness. As a result of that, she decides to read the transcripts of her earlier recordings made in Hungarian to him to revisit Vaja and their past once again. In this way, the reader learns how she translated the family hi/story between languages and generations, the photos remaining the only 'untranslated' images in the book.

Furthermore, as a historian, Kalman Naves's quest for a truthful/reliable account is realized in the sections that follow the final episode of the story. She includes a glossary of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Hungarian terms she has used in the text, a list of endnotes, in which she frequently refers to historical sources (offering the numbers of Jews in Hungary, or legislation that concerned people of Jewish origins) as well as selected bibliography. The list of sources combines the personal accounts she heard from different members of the family ("family legends" 267) and multifarious written documents and books she refers to in her autobiography.

Although not presented specifically as a 'sequel,' Kalman Naves's 2003 *Shoshanna's Story. A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History* continues the family history narrated in *Journey to Vaja*. Despite the fact that the family stories overlap and the author refers to the WWII and the tragic fate of Hungarian Jews in the 1940s, this text is more a story of emigration to Canada. *Shoshanna's Story* is also a personal account of how Kalman Naves reclaims her Jewishness in Canada after years of indifference towards, or even rebellion against, that identity. The text suggests the coexistence of history and storytelling in its very title. It explores the fates of Hungarian Jews making their way to Canada while being at the same time a private story of a mother-daughter relationship shadowed by the history of the WWII Europe.<sup>5</sup> Kalman Naves also starts her narration with an 'Author's Note' in which she delineates her choice of spelling of certain Hungarian and Hebrew names and words. More

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on politics and history in *Shoshanna's Story* see Drewniak, D. 2015. "It's Our Shared Memories... The Stories We Tell...': Politics and Identity in Two Memoirs by Hungarian-Canadians." In: Kerstin W. Shands, Giulia Grillo Mikrut, Dipti R. Pattanaik, Karen Ferreira-Meyers (eds.). *Writing the Self Essays on Autobiography and Autofiction*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 93–102.

significantly, she openly declares that “[s]ome names have been changed to protect the privacy of members of my family, but *this is a true story*, based on interviews [...] and on secondary research” (2003: xi, emphasis mine). Again, as in the case of *Journey to Vaja*, what Kalman Naves wants to achieve in this book is the traditional, non-experimental rendition of her ‘true’ story. As an experienced historian and journalist, she is aware of the fact, that due to the scarcity of documents, pictures, and family members, she needs to fill in the gaps of the unknown with storytelling. Such imaginative additions do not invalidate the story, however. On the contrary, they offer emotional truth, equally essential to the understanding of one’s life story. This self-awareness is visible throughout the entire text, and near its end Kalman Naves declares:

I chafe under the burden of the stories I’ve been listening to all my life with a petulance that I know ill befits a mature adult. As if, were she able to keep quiet, it would go away somehow. The truth is that I have to recognize that the bony outline of Shoshanna stories is my bedrock. It is what I am built on. Willing it to disappear would be to risk disappearing myself.

In the end, is what Shoshanna has asked of me so terrible? She has made me into her audience, subjected me to a chain of words linked one to another. What I heard were anecdotes, attenuated memories—many I would rather have shut out—but still only stories.

Yet the stories weren’t stories when she lived them. They were real life, her life, demanding to be remembered. (Kalman Naves 2003: 261–62)

In this quotation, Kalman Naves explains the interrelation of stories and history and her approach to the interplay of these two modes of responding to the past.

*Shoshanna’s Story* includes a range of photographs of family and friends, with some information about the subjects and where the images were taken, organized in a single insert in the middle of the story. In addition, the cover presents five photographs of Kalman Naves’s family members with the central enlarged picture of Shoshanna with her infant daughter in her arms. The images, together with the captions offering names, dates and locations, demonstrate the way in which “[o]ur personal memories relate to our own larger stories—our ‘family frames’” (Eaglestone 2008: 76). In this way, the employment of photographs may be analyzed from a postmodernist perspective, since it coincides with convictions of the following type: “a veil of discreet obscuring settl[ed] over the past” (Naves 2003: 212). Moreover, the memories which Kalman Naves’s mother offers as family history, become “tales” with “subtexts” (213). According to Marianne Hirsch’s postmodern reading of family frames, “[p]hotographs offer a prism through which to study the postmodern space of cultural memory composed of leftovers, debris, single items that are left to be collected and assembled in many ways, to tell a variety of stories, from a variety of often competing perspectives” (2002: 13). In *Shoshanna’s Story* Kalman Naves notices that the same stories were told differently by her mother when she was the recipient and differently when her own daughters heard the same stories from their grandmother as she “censored herself in a way she didn’t when I was a child” (2003: 261). Notwithstanding such postmodernist elements for the author of the two autobiographies, a photo, although arranged conventionally, is not only a plain addition to the text but an anchor which “authenticates the reality of the past and provides a material connection to it” (Hirsch 2002: 6). Barthes alludes to such a realist perspective, the kind favored by Kalman Naves in her text:

The realists, of whom I am one and of whom I was already one when I asserted that the Photograph was an image without code—even if, obviously, certain codes do inflect our



reading of it—the realists do not take the photograph for a “copy” of reality, but for an emanation of *past reality: a magic*, not an art. To ask whether a photograph is analogical or coded is not a good means of analysis. The important thing is that the photograph poses an evidential force [...]. (Barthes 1981: 88–89, emphasis original)

Kalman Naves’s work is yet another example of a whole range of memoirs, autobiographies, and life narratives which are classified as non-fiction although they have all partially entered the domain of fictional writing where story intertwines with history as the title poignantly suggests. Both *Journey to Vaja* and *Shoshanna’s Story* offer an insight into the past, through narration, visuals, and photographs which become ‘emanations’ of the Jewish-Hungarian past.

The aforementioned experiments with life-writing within the Jewish-Canadian literary scene have, in a way, though of course not directly, led to the appearance of Bernice Eisenstein’s *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006), classified as a graphic novel and an illustrated memoir (Harris 2008: 129). Like the other texts examined here, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* belongs to the vast body of writing that exhibits what Hirsch calls the effect of ‘postmemory’ (2002). This refers to the transmission of the Holocaust, its traumatic experience and memory, onto the next generations of people who were not directly affected by it but identify with its results. Eaglestone even notices a certain characteristic that the literary texts approaching postmemory “are, in a way, exiled even from a fixed genre” (2008: 98). Eisenstein’s graphic memoir clearly demonstrates this generic ‘displacement,’ as the text is supplemented with black and white drawings of her family story. These do not serve as mere ‘additions’ to the text; rather, they are integral to the narration.<sup>6</sup>

In her memoir, Eisenstein encircles some drawings with a greyish rim, or blurs the whole picture. This adds the aspect of overshadowing or haunting to the illustrations. In *After Such Knowledge* Eva Hoffman also mentions the “shadows” of the past that the second generation inherits from the silenced stories of their parents, from the “half-heard information” (Hoffman 2005: 65). The postmemory generations, especially the children of survivors, are marked for life, even if they were born after WWII, as according to Hoffman: “The Shadow falls on our psyches too darkly still and it would be another kind of falseness to pretend it isn’t there” (2005: 128). In her book, Eisenstein declares that she experiences such an overshadowing in her life as well. This kind of haunting is expressed from the very beginning of the text when she presents a drawing of her parents, in the form of black silhouettes, and explains the idea of overshadowing through the following statement: “I have had to create their shadows for myself” (2006: 17). Eisenstein goes even further in her approach to being haunted by the shadows of the past, suggesting: “The crisp lines they drew had no answers until all that remained was my mother left behind and unmoored. Vague without definite anger. The Jewish version of *Catherine & Heathcliff...*” (Eisenstein 2006: 17). Therefore, it is, first of all, the absence and indefiniteness which she tries to discern. Secondly, however, she attempts to offer a distanced, and at times humorous, account of her family story.

Since Eisenstein frequently repeats phrases like “I am lost in memory” (19), “I do not remember” (62) or “there is nowhere for me to locate when or how I first became

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<sup>6</sup> For a more elaborate discussion on Eisenstein see Drewniak, D. 2015. “Addicted to the Holocaust—Bernice Eisenstein’s Ways of Coping with Troublesome Memories in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*.” *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 50 (2–3): 39–50. URL: <http://10.1515/stap-2015-0022>

aware of it [her parents' Holocaust past]. As a child. I had somehow absorbed it" (19–20), she also has to fill in the blanks of her postmemory which does not exhibit the full picture of the past. To demonstrate her uncertainty and lack of proofs, she draws these shadows, she blurs the images of her deceased family members (2006: 18) and she tries to get hold of any visual representation of the Holocaust (the photos from the camp or Miechow ghetto, for instance) in order to evoke her parents' painful experiences. Therefore, she clings to the story of a gold ring her mother found in the camp when she was employed in sorting out the victims' clothes. The mother survived the camp and left it with the ring hidden in the shoe. This item symbolizes for Eisenstein the whole legacy of the unknown victims of the Holocaust and, also, the legacy she inherits together with the ring.

Nonetheless, Eisenstein has had good contact with her parents and collected many stories of their stay in the Miechow ghetto and Plaszow concentration camp, as well as Auschwitz. Simultaneously, she has still felt the uncanny aspect of digging up for the stories from 'bad' times. Becoming an artist and drawing scenes, people, and images form a response to the haunting. The roots for the decision to draw and paint are traced back to the 'explosion' of TV and cinema which Eisenstein witnessed as a child. She looked for the visual renditions of the Holocaust stories everywhere: "from the start the Technicolor awakened my dream to become an artist [...] Afterwards, I asked my sister to show me how to draw a swastika [...] I feared that while creating this evil image we were entering forbidden territory and might unleash a hideous power we could neither comprehend or control" (Eisenstein 2006: 92). That is why, as Eisenstein explains, the drawings in the book are "connecting to my parents' past, darkening its shadow and adding resolution to mine" in order to express "the weight of the ghosts you carry" (92).

In her graphic memoir, Eisenstein ponders the question of haunting, experiencing being haunted and also her own haunting of the ghosts of the past in order to get to know more. She employs humour, seriousness, commemoration of loss and many other techniques to claim her parents' Holocaust as a part of her own experience. As a result, she confides:

I did not possess the particular magnetism that would draw my parents to me, the pull of their history was irresistible. I think in some way I have always been able to step into the presence of the absence. It is something that I have needed to do. But I have never found for myself the right distance from the time when their lives had been so damaged.

Without my family's knowledge or even their understanding, their past has shaped my loneliness and anger, and sculpted the meaning of loss and love. I have inherited the unbearable lightness of being a child of Holocaust survivors. Cursed and blessed. Black, white, and shadowed. (Eisenstein 2006: 167)

The graphic form of the text is a way of recreating the unspoken, the reading in between the lines of stories offered by her parents, her grandparents and their friends. What Eisenstein makes clear in her book is the absence which the child of the Holocaust survivors enters. It is the absence of the dead, the absence of the place of birth, the absence of memory, and her creative response is not only to dig for stories and to question her parents about their experiences; she also interrogates the adequacy of language itself, in a way that resonates with the Primo Levi quotation that provides the text's epigraph: "I fear that my language has become inadequate, that you need to speak a different language today" (epigraph page).

Eisenstein's book, through the integration of the text with pictures, visualizes postmemory even though the pictures do not always accompany the text. There are

moments when a particular sentence is paired with a picture which is not a mere reflection of the words next to it, thereby encouraging the reader to fill in the blanks. This is evident, for example, in the statements “There were no books or paintings lining the rooms in home where I grew up. My parents read the newspaper...” (Eisenstein 2006: 89) and “If only my parents had read books to me when I went to bed...” (Eisenstein 2006: 88), where the picture shows a little girl sitting on a pile of titles such as *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, *Poet Survivor Jew* and *After Such Knowledge* among others.

In terms of genre the book moves “back and forth between traditional graphic novel aesthetic [understood as a comic strip] and more of an illustrated book format” (Hajdu). It also literally goes ‘back and forth’ due to its rejection of linearity and its repetitive nature. The “fluidity of memory” (Hajdu) that the text tries to posit through its structure and statements such as “water and memory both share the same elusive nature” (Eisenstein 2006: 132) make it an example of creative rewriting of memories that, through the process of redrawing, allows Eisenstein to confront and cope with the legacy of Holocaust trauma.

This experimentation with autobiographical form, and the reconsideration of important figures for Holocaust studies such as Primo Levi, Hannah Arendt, Elie Wiesel, Bruno Schultz, and Charlotte Salomon (whose portraits are drawn by Eisenstein at the beginning of her graphic memoir), has led the author to the publication of another important book for Jewish-Canadian literature. *Correspondences* (2013) is a volume of drawings, painted by Eisenstein, and poetry, written by Anne Michaels, another significant Jewish-Canadian writer. This carefully edited text presents a collection of twenty six pictures ranging from portrayals of Paul Celan to Nelly Sachs (including Einstein, Mandelstam, Camus, and Sebald, among others) with Michaels’ poetry commemorating her father Isaish Michaels. This book shows the powerful aspect of cross-generic textual endeavors which resist traditional classifications and open up Jewish literary space to further experimentations.

The present analysis of selected examples of life narratives demonstrates the creative response to immigration and exile, experienced through memory and postmemory, offered by the children of Jewish immigrants written in non-Jewish languages. The medium of the English language (with not infrequent references to Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Hungarian and other tongues) does not invalidate the Jewish experience of migration which is the most important thematic layer in this kind of literature. The three authors discussed above, in the four cited texts, approach the task of writing their own and their families’ histories in different ways. Eva Hoffman’s *Lost in Translation* offers a narrative of her own immigration to North America which becomes an intimate story of growing up in a new language. Throughout the text, she gains her self-consciousness as a person and as a writer. Being a self-aware writer allows her to use the whole range of metatextual references which inform her development as a journalist and artist as well as her nostalgia for the lost homeland. In *Journey to Vaja. Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* and *Shoshanna’s Story. A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History* Elaine Kalman Naves includes a whole selection of maps, a family tree, photographs and sketches. The point of departure for her non-fictional narratives is her own attitude of a historian to this task. Building her stories of facts and documents, she, however, also evolves into a storyteller reconstructing a family history with the tools of both: a historian and a writer. The graphic memoir, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, is Bernice

Eisenstein's account of her family history as well as her own pursuit of her legacy as a child of Holocaust survivors infected with traumatic postmemory. Her employment of the graphic layer which plays an equally important role to the text, is the key factor in this book. Since it is not a traditional comic strip, Eisenstein subverts the conventions of a comic book, an illustrated novel and a graphic memoir, fusing certain elements of all of these into one text. The drawings and the textual layer of the book coexist and mutually influence one another.

Moreover, the attempt to write a 'truthful' history of the authors' families and their immigration experiences is revealed as a complex task in each case, as memory proves fallible and the processes of writing, drawing and interpreting always require an element of imaginative 'gap-filling.' Ultimately, the strategy which this essay has explored—namely, that of using paratextual and metatextual tools in Jewish-Canadian autobiographies—highlights the wider paradox of life-writing as being the anchor for factual data while also enabling the interrogation of historical 'facts.'

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**DAGMARA DREWNIK, CHANGING TRADITIONS IN NON-FICTIONAL JEWISH-CANADIAN WRITING—THE STUDY OF SELECTED TEXTS BY EVA HOFFMAN, ELAINE KALMAN NAVES AND BERNICE EISENSTEIN**

Recent years have witnessed a substantial growth of interest in various forms of non-fictional writing. Canadian literature has also abounded in a range of non-fictional texts. Among the different forms of such texts are memoirs and life narratives. This paper aims at tracing the changes within formal trends and tendencies in these narratives. Therefore, the article offers an examination of a selection of non-fictional texts from the perspective of paratextual elements such as photographs, maps, drawings, illustrations, ekphrasis and other graphic aspects as well as metatextual, self-conscious remarks on the process of writing included in the texts. The texts chosen for analysis are written by contemporary Canadian authors of Jewish origins (or authors identified with Canada and more broadly with North America as it is in Eva Hoffman's case). The authors of the chosen memoirs are all first or second generation immigrants whose experiences of migration, changing countries and cultures have shaped their identities formed through their own or inherited post/memories. Family histories combined with personal accounts can be found in all selected texts such as: Eva Hoffman's seminal *Lost in Translation* (1989) a text partly devoted to her Canadian experiences, Elaine Kalman Naves' *Journey to Vaja. Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (1996) and *Shoshanna's Story. A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History* (2003), as well as Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) which is one of the first graphic memoir in Canadian life writing. All of these texts were published in Canada within the last few decades (it needs to be noted that it is only Eva Hoffman's book that is available in Polish) and they all take up a discussion concerning the problem of immigrant identity and offer a range of paratextual and metatextual remarks whose appearance contributes to the inquiry into the contemporary developments in Jewish-Canadian life writing.

KEY WORDS: Canadian literature; American literature; Jewish-Canadian literature; non-fiction; life writing; memoir; autobiography; graphic memoir; photography in literature; Eva Hoffman; Elaine Kalman Naves; Bernice Eisenstein.

**ZMIANA TRADYCJI W ŻYDOWSKO-KANADYJSKIEJ LITERATURZE FAKTU — STUDIUM WYBRANYCH TEKSTÓW AUTORSTWA EVY HOFFMAN, ELAINE KALMAN NAVES I BERNICE EISENSTEIN**

W ostatnich latach obserwujemy znaczący wzrost liczby publikacji książkowych o charakterze autobiograficznym i niefikcyjnym. Literatura kanadyjska w języku angielskim także obfituje w tego typu wydawnictwa. W niniejszym artykule podjęta zostaje próba prześledzenia zmienia-

jących się trendów i tendencji formalnych w dokumentach pisarstwa osobistego. Celem tego szkicu jest analiza kilku wybranych przykładów tekstów niefikcyjnych pod kątem elementów paratekstualnych i metatekstualnych, takich jak zdjęcia, mapy, rysunki, ilustracje, a także ekfrazy i inne aspekty graficzne, jak również świadomie podejmowane autoanalizy dotyczące możliwości zapisu stanu faktycznego i „prawdziwych” historii rodzinnych. Do analizy zostały wybrane współczesne książki autorów pochodzenia żydowskiego, identyfikowanych z Kanadą i literaturą kanadyjską (czy szerzej północnoamerykańską — w przypadku Ewy Hoffman), w których element odkrywania czy dyskusji nad własną tożsamością żydowską jest istotną częścią dociekań. Wszystkie przykłady tekstów, włączonych do analizy, to dzieła emigrantów w pierwszym lub drugim pokoleniu, dla których doświadczenie emigracji, zmiany kraju, kultury i języka łączy się nierozzerwalnie z doświadczeniami (osobistymi lub odziedziczonymi) II wojny światowej i Holocaustu. W utworach tych głównym zadaniem autorskim jest próba spisania historii doświadczeń własnych lub odziedziczonych w postaci postpamięci doświadczeń poprzednich pokoleń. Omówione zostają: *Lost in Translation* (1989) Ewy Hoffman, *Journey to Vaja Reconstructing the World of a Hungarian-Jewish Family* (1996) i *Shoshanna's Story. A Mother, a Daughter, and the Shadows of History* (2003) autorstwa Elaine Kalman Naves oraz *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) — książka napisana i zilustrowana przez Bernice Eisenstein. Wszystkie te teksty zostały wydane w Kanadzie w ostatnich dekadach (w Polsce dostępne jest tylko tłumaczenie książki Hoffman) i wszystkie one podejmują dyskusję nad kwestiami tożsamości emigrantów, ale także, co wysuwa się na plan pierwszy w niniejszym studium, nad wyznacznikami formalnymi w pisarstwie autobiograficznym, będącym ważną częścią współczesnej literatury żydowsko-kanadyjskiej, tworzonej w języku angielskim.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: literatura kanadyjska; literatura amerykańska; literatura kanadyjsko-żydowska; literatura niefikcyjna; dokument osobisty; autobiografia; książka graficzna; fotografia w literaturze; Eva Hoffman; Elaine Kalman Naves; Bernice Eisenstein.