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AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH TO REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This special issue of *Literatura Ludowa* is a contribution to the sustained effort in children's literature studies to explore cultural representations of childhood as a construct resulting from a nexus of "politics, rhetoric, and human institutions" (Flynn 1997: 144). To give a recent example of such work, the contributions to the latest issue of *International Research in Children's Literature*, titled " 'Possible' and 'Impossible' Children", propose new approaches to investigating transcultural experiences of actual children and images of fictional childhoods in Canada, India, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. As Cheryl Cowdy and Alison Halsall emphasize in the editorial to the issue, scholars in our field inevitably talk about children and childhoods regardless of how anxious they have felt about such ventures since Jacqueline Rose's claim about the "'impossibility' of literature to represent or to speak to or for 'the child'" (Cowdy and Halsall 2018: v-vi).

Another most recent instance of such research is Vanessa Joosen's *Adulthood in Children's Literature* (2018). Joosen proposes a radical approach to representations of childhood by focusing on real and fictional adulthoods in children's literature as closely related to constructions of childhood. Joosen points out that "[f]or a field of research that is so preoccupied with age, the narrative construction of adulthood is surprisingly little explored in children's literature studies" (5). However, as she shows in her monograph, it is indeed worthwhile to search for answers to the following questions:

What about the adults who are not *hidden* [as suggested by Perry Nodelman (2008)] in children's books, but who are staged in plain sight, as characters rather than creators and mediators? How do authors and illustrators construct their phase in life in children's books, and what do they withhold from their juvenile audience? Do they present adulthoods as being distinct from childhood, and if so, how? Or do they rather stress what adults and children have in common? [...] And what does the construction of adulthood in children's books imply for its dual audience? (7)

Addressing these questions, Joosen shows how adulthood is performed by adult characters and analyses metareflections about this phase of life conveyed in children's texts. Joosen's study successfully proves that children's literature is a powerful source of messages promoting age norms and potentially affecting how we act our own age and how we see others' performance of their age (12).

Although Joosen does not refer to this concept, her study is an example of the decentering of childhood, a notion developed by Spyros Spyrou in the field of childhood studies as helpful in examining relational processes which shape both childhood and adulthood as entangled with one another and with the world at large (Spyrou 2017: 433-434): As Spyrou accounts for this connectivity, "[c]hildren's lives like those of adults are highly mediated and in that sense neither unique nor authentic if by this we mean different and apart" (435). Moreover, as Leena Alanen argues, childhood and adulthood are continually reproduced by intergenerational practices between children and adults (Alanen 2009: 161), which involves a complex power dynamics. It also means that

children's and adults' agencies are "assembled, distributed and networked" (Spyrou 2018: 117). In view of aetionormativity (Nikolajeva 2009) as the key force defining children's texts, a focus on intergenerational relationality as a framework for children's literature studies promises the emergence of new exciting and productive approaches to literary texts and children's culture more broadly. I agree with Joosen that "concepts of the child and the adult that stress their otherness [...] risk obscuring the fact that adulthood [just as childhood, for that matter] itself is a segmented phase of the life course [...]" and that "the otherness between childhood and adulthood is temporary [...]" (10). As I argue elsewhere, readings centered on cross-age bonds show that children's texts present a continuum of child-adult relations, including connections between age-others who share common values, interests, mutual care and responsibility. Consequently, "[c]hildren's literature could [...] serve as a cultural practice addressing the need for the intensification of effective intergenerational affiliations, which are increasingly urgent in the face of the global aging of populations, changes in family structure, transnational family separation, the emergence of a new precariat class, and political trends pitting younger and older generations against each other" (Deszcz-Tryhubczak 2018)¹.

Recognizing both the value of thinking intergenerationally and the need to reconceptualize children and adults as "interdependent beings in intergenerational relations that matter" (Spyrou 2018: 176), the essays in this special issue focus on children's literature vis-à-vis the complexities of inter-age bonds between children and adults. The opening essay, by Katarzyna Smyczyńska, examines Peter Sis' *Tibet Through the Red Box* (1998) and the Polish edition of Uri Orlev's *Granny Knits* (2009) as artistic forms of intergenerational and personal remembering. As Smyczyńska argues, while in the latter narrative childhood and adulthood merge, the former exemplifies a nostalgic return to one's past without forming a stable connection with it. The challenge of preserving the memory of childhood is also addressed in Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams's reflective essay on her "abandoned", or maybe still open, project aimed at translating *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972), a collection of short stories for children by Oodgeroo Noonuccal, an Australian Aboriginal writer also known as Kath Walker. As Kwapisz Williams recounts problems she encountered when trying to obtain the permission to carry out the project from Walker's relatives, she also ponders on her growing understanding of the Aboriginal author's intensive efforts to share her stories about Indigenous childhoods to educate all children, including those living in later times and other cultures. As she concludes, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* itself constitutes an act of intergenerational solidarity across cultures.

The two other essays, by Maciej Wróblewski and Anna Bugajska, provide a counterpoint to approaches proposed by Smyczyńska and Kwapisz Williams. Wróblewski points to a symbolic "betrayal of childhood", that is, the instrumental use of representations of children and childhood in critiques of various disturbing phenomena around us. Wróblewski's readings of selected contemporary Polish children's books about war, the Holocaust and the Martial Law in Poland show that these texts do not do justice to children's experiences but give priority to adults' predicaments. Wróblewski sees this betrayal of childhood as a result of psychological, pedagogical and sociological discourses. Bugajska's essay introduces the issue of intergenerational relations with the youth of the future. Bugajska discusses representations of intergenerational relations in selected YA dystopias depicting posthuman and transhuman worlds. As she argues, most

¹ For a broader discussion of these issues, see also Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Jaques (forthcoming, 2019).

of these texts express serious doubts about the possibility of a harmonious coexistence between younger and older generations in immortal societies.

This special issue also includes three reviews of scholarly publications on childhood and literature: Mateusz Świetlicki provides a critical overview of Roni Natov's *The Courage to Imagine: The Child Hero in Children's Literature* (2018). Sylwia Kamińska-Maciąg comments on Świetlicki's 2016 study of the masculinist discourse in the works of Serhiy Viktorovych Zhadan, *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami? Męskość jako projekt w prozie Serhija Żadana*. Alicja Ungeheuer-Gołąb discusses *Dwugłos o prozie fantastycznej dla młodych odbiorców* (2017), edited by Weronika Kostecka and Maciej Skowera.

I wish to thank all of the contributors to the special issue for their hard work and patience. I would also like to thank the reviewers for their assistance and suggestions. I am also most grateful to *Literatura Ludowa* general editor Jolanta Ługowska and editorial secretary Sabina Świłała for their trust, encouragement, and advice. I especially appreciate Sabina's commitment to take care of all the technicalities involved in preparing this special issue.

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**CONFESSION AND CAMOUFLAGE: BIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY IN VISUAL NARRATIVES
BY PETER SIS, URI ORLEV AND MARTA IGNERSKA**

The visual narratives I am going to analyse are both portrayals of biographical memory. *Tibet Through the Red Box* (1998)¹, written and illustrated by Peter Sis, and *Babcia robi na drutach (Granny Knits)*, written by Uri Orlev and illustrated by Marta Ignerska, revive the past of a particular community or an ethnic group. *Tibet Through the Red Box* documents the memories of the narrator who as a child witnessed political oppression in his native Czechoslovakia and learned about similar oppression from his father's stories about Tibet; *Granny Knits* reconstructs metaphorically the biographical memory of the writer who as a child learned about his Jewish identity. Orlev not only had to confront the consequences of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda during the Second World War, but also witnessed the consequences of anti-Jewish sentiments among his compatriots. Marta Ignerska², who is a generation younger than Orlev, masterfully translates the crucial aspects of his humanistic vision into her illustrations.

Both Sis and Orlev have more openly dealt with the turbulent history of their native countries in other works. Sis is the author of the autobiographical visual narrative *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* (2007), where he recollects his childhood and adolescence in communist Czechoslovakia. Orlev, a Holocaust survivor, is well known for his prose for children and young adults in which he revives war memories. His two works which were translated into Polish (*Biegnij chłopcze, biegnij (Run, Boy, Run)* (2013), based on the war memories of the ghetto survivor Yoran Friedman, and *Wyspa na ulicy Ptasiej (The Island on Bird Street)* (1981), partly inspired by the author's memories from the Warsaw ghetto) reflect a child's experience of the war and anti-Semitism.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the artists undertake this emotional return in their works is that they are migrants in a real, physical sense. Sis is a Czech, born in 1949, who spent his childhood in Prague and as an adult migrated from Czechoslovakia to the USA. Polish-born Orlev (Jerzy Henryk Orłowski) in his teenage years had to leave German-occupied Poland and has since then lived in Israel. Strikingly, the artists decided to give their memories a literary form only as mature individuals – both were approaching their fiftieth birthdays when *Tibet Through the Red Box* and *Granny Knits* were first published.

Kaja Kaźmierska explains that the idea of the return is connected with the emotional engagement in one's own past which she terms, following Anselm Strauss, biographical work (Kaźmierska 2008: 25, 29)³. Biographical work means an effort to interpret one's own biographical experience in relation to one's own identity, one's projections of oneself, behaviours, and undertaken (or not undertaken) activities. The point of biographical work is to maintain a sense of coherent identity, but the task can be more intense for individuals who have gone through difficult, unexpected situations, which force them to radically redefine their identity (29). Biographical memory

¹ The book was distinguished as a Caldecott Honor Book in 1999.

² I discuss the Polish 2009 edition of the book, which was first published in Hebrew in 1981 and illustrated by Ora Eitan. The Polish illustrator of *Granny Knits*, Marta Ignerska, was awarded the 2009 Special Mention by the Polish section of IBBY for this work.

³ This paragraph briefly summarises Kaja Kaźmierska's argument. The quotation is my translation.

involves doing biographical work, during which individual experience undergoes continuous reinterpretation. The memory “not only refers to images of the past and courses of events stored in our thoughts, but it is always a version of them, conditioned both by the individual life course and the wider socio-cultural context” (Każmierska 2008: 90).

Sis' book points to the importance of revisioning biographical memory yet, somewhat surprisingly, retains the idea of strict caesurae within one's own biography. The narrator emphasises the formative role of his father's stories in his own life, but the juxtaposition of the father's diaries and the son's artistic vision of his childhood memories in fact is not dialogical in character – they remain two separate storylines, placed in different sections of the book. Examining the content of the father's secret box initiates the act of re-memorying; still, the son's story is conveyed in the form of retrospective narrative, in which the narrator muses over his childhood from the adult perspective. We can see intergenerational connectivity on the level of the plot, in the declared emotional bond between the son and the father, but not in the narrator's understanding of the self. Whereas the underlying force behind Sis' story is nostalgia, which becomes a lens through which he recalls his own (lost and missed) childhood, Orlev's story is not explicitly autobiographical, although the biographical context perhaps becomes more prominent owing to Ignerska's illustrations. Orlev, unlike Sis, not merely empathises with but really reconnects with his childhood self in *Granny Knits*, as for him it is an indispensable element of telling the traumatic story. The tale about the discrimination of knitted children camouflages the trauma of persecution and exile and reveals the political mechanisms which trigger moral corruption.

Although the narratives appear to belong to the “children's literature” category, in both cases it may be difficult to define the addressee with confidence. The child audience is naturally associated with renowned children's books publishers – Frances Foster Books, which published Sis' book in the USA and Wytwórnia, which published *Granny Knits* in Poland. The elements of fantasy, magic, adventure and the strong presence of the child heroes potentially make both books perfectly appealing to young and very young readers. Sis points to the holistic character of biography – but we can easily distinguish between the narrator's “now” and “then”; the emotional return to childhood instigated by the mysterious content of the secret box is definitely temporary and by no means entirely immersive. Even the book's narrative structure suggests the symbolic “entrance” and “exit” from the (distant, magic, almost unreal) past and from reminiscing. Despite the presence of certain visual motifs which could be associated with child audience, I argue that it is the adult (and nostalgically oriented) readers who will recognise themselves most naturally as the potential addressees of *Tibet Through the Red Box*.

In Orlev and Ignerska's work all the elements of the verbal and visual narration signal the emotional identification with the child self. It is the child's perspective that becomes the narrative norm and the basis of ethical judgement, and it is evident that “childlike” is by no means seen as a chronologically remote category. The form of Orlev's story uses familiar elements from children's genres: it contains rhymes and diminutive forms and has an emotional and expressive character. As a story about knitted children, set in an imaginary universe, it can also bring to mind the fantasy genre. Perhaps that is why it is often automatically assumed that *Granny Knits* is first and foremost a children's text, a universal story about otherness, a tale that teaches a moral. Camouflaging the dramatic socio-political theme in a childlike convention is a result of Orlev's inclusive thinking about biography and his artistic response to the

reality which he found abnormal. For Orlev, who returns to the theme of anti-Semitism in his literary works for young readers, the identification with his child self is an ethical necessity – the only possible way to articulate the truth about both personal and collective experience honestly. *Granny Knits* is a children's story but, when read by older readers equipped in historical knowledge, it changes its character as the narrative's biographical context eventually leaks out.

Trying to answer the question posed by Åse Marie Ommundsen and many other researchers, “who are these picturebooks for?”⁴, I would (tentatively) suggest that *Tibet Through the Red Box* might not really be a children's book or a book with a dual address (although it could be of interest to young readers), whereas in *Granny Knits* the dual address (as defined by Barbara Wall) is undoubtedly discernible. This means, among other things, that the book enables fruitful “kinship readings” proposed by Marah Gubar as a model of reading children's literature which acknowledges the differences between children's and adults' lived experience, yet emphasises “the existence of shared experiences, of considerable magnitude, between adult and child” (Beauvais 2017: 270). Clémentine Beauvais explains that Gubar does not deny the existence of (ontological or constructed) difference between children's and adults' agency; rather, she asserts that children and adults are “separated by differences of degree, not of kind” (Gubar qtd. in Beauvais 2017: 268). Gubar's argument about age difference is linked to her general approach to reading children's literature, which assumes the possibility of shared emotions and intergenerational understanding (2017: 268). *Granny Knits* is evidence that Orlev and Ignerska share the assumption about the ethically engaging potential of literature and art beyond the borders of age.

Adult nostalgia in a children's book format: *Tibet Through the Red Box*

Tibet Through the Red Box opens with a scene when the adult narrator returns to Prague, a city where he was brought up, and starts reading his father's old diaries and letters from a time when he was drafted into the army film unit and sent to China to teach filmmaking. Opening the secret box and reading the partly forgotten stories reawakens the narrator's childhood memories⁵. Incorporating fragments of his father's travelogue into the plot, Sis translates his own and his father's memories into a story told via words and images, telling us about the time-resistant value of the stories once told to him by his father.

In different editions of the book the design of the dustjacket is the first signal of the adventurous character of the journey. In one case, the dustjacket epitomises the magic of Tibet through the crimson imagery and the opulence of symbols which we can later find in one of the openings. In another, the half-transparent parchment-like dust cover has a more subdued character, partly revealing and partly covering the

⁴ Åse Marie Ommundsen's study analyses contemporary Scandinavian picturebooks which blur or erase boundaries between children's and adult literature. See Å. M. Ommundsen (2015). “Who Are These Picturebooks For? Controversial Picturebooks and the Question of Audience” In: J. Evans (ed.), *Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks: Creative and Critical Responses to Visual Texts* (pp. 71-93). London & New York: Routledge.

⁵ I situate Sis' book within the narrative framework of nostalgia, but I discuss it at least partly outside the context of children's literature. In his insightful book *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*, Perry Nodelman suggests that children's fiction is often a product of adult nostalgia. He explains that “the nostalgia that leads adults to attempt to replicate something simple and finished in the context of the complex present inevitably brings with it the marks of its origin, and it imports present complexities into the very texts that represent an attempt to escape them” (237). Sis' book is a special case, however, because nostalgia is not only the driving force behind the book, but also its explicit theme.

hardcover's image of a labyrinth with an unidentified building surrounded by mountain peaks. It is additionally imprinted with the barely seen, chaotically arranged accumulation of visual signs – pieces of handwriting and drawings. It is an adventure that may impress, and even overwhelm, the reader due to the abundance of imagery, colour, and text.

In her analysis of *Tibet Through the Red Box*, Roni Natov points to the complex structure of the book and indicates the presence of the multiple points of view in the narration: that of the adult Peter, that of Peter the adult recalling his child self, and the father's perspective included in his diary, his letters, and in the collection of objects stored in the secret box (2018: 177). Natov emphasises that this strategy also reflects the way memory works; in her interpretation of the meanings of *Tibet Through the Red Box* “time is represented as multi-chronological – unconscious, subconscious, and conscious time, each with the fitting chronology – moments emerging through the various stories Peter uncovers in the red box” (178).

Memory is represented visually as a vast repository, where similar motifs reappear in different openings, still recognisable, yet transformed. The father's Prague office is depicted in five different openings, one shown realistically, while the others imbued with one dominant colour, transformed in the narrator's imagination into the mysterious world from his father's stories. But although Natov argues in relation to the multiplicity of the stories that “it is hard to distinguish which part belongs to which stage of his life, as they are remembered by Peter as a child, when the stories took place and solidified” (2018: 178), the book's repetitive structure allows the readers to easily identify both the narrator and the approximate time in which the narration takes place. Similarly, it is possible to recognise those aspects of the narration in which the gap between the child and the adult selves is made clear. Even though the idea of a psychological return to one's own childhood is convincingly portrayed, there is a palpable sense of the temporariness of this “adventure”, just as there is the sense of the adult narrator and the adult self dominating the narration. The narrative contains elements of confession which concerns the child's sense of shame and awkwardness, but these fragments are always narrated in the past tense, punctured by phrases: “As a child I had a recurrent dream...” and “It was a rare colour in the landlocked country of my childhood”.

Some realistic aspects of the journey through Tibet are depicted in the father's diaries, but such detail in the son's account appears only in the form of passing remarks, whereas the visual translation tends to focus on the magical aspects that were relevant to him during his childhood. The son's vision of Tibet seems to remain constrained by what the artist envisions as “childlike optics”, populated with mandala-like motifs, labyrinths, and magical figures. The adult Peter mentions the fact of Tibet's occupation, and marks it symbolically via the presence of miniature trucks, tanks and planes in the final openings, but in most of the illustrations Tibet emerges in its somewhat orientalised version, as a mystical land which is symbolically placed within the domain of storytelling rather than politics and history.

There is the obvious discrepancy between the verbal narration in the openings, where Peter the adult recollects and comments on his father's stories in a more matter-of-fact manner, and the emotionally charged imagery blended into these passages representing his longing as a child, coincided chronologically with the verbal account about the father's experience. Time passes differently for the child – the narrator makes it clear that the father's absence in the emotional sense lasted much longer than the actual chronological absence. The first-person account begins rather dramatically:

“Christmases came and went. I could not remember him clearly any more”, but in the closing opening the adult narrator revises the subjectivity of his childhood perception: “Did he get lost for fourteen months or was it longer?”. The political context, perhaps not that meaningful to the narrator's child self, is only hinted at visually by his mature self. As a result of re-memorying⁶, the adult narrator revises his biography, and the text locates the childhood in a wider perspective. The visual account focuses on the magical and emotional aspects of re-memorying, whereas in his verbal account the narrator sketches the socio-political context of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and points out its impact on his own and his father's biography.

The narrative as a whole can be seen as a testimony of love and commitment, and as a way of preserving the memory which may become endangered with the passing time. Sis pays tribute to his father (curiously enough, the mother's presence is marked only in the form of a silent figure captured in the imaginary photographs), making his stories public and conferring spiritual value upon them. It is not a coincidence that the book ends with a quote from Vladimir Nabokov's work – a powerful comment on the value of individual testimony. In the sections where the adult Peter provides his own account of his father's memories, he does it with thoughtfulness and consideration. There is a sense of empathy for the father's experience, a sense of meticulousness of the report, which shows how much the son cares for the memory to be sustained. The beauty of Tibet is reflected in the several wordless doublespreads, which serve as visual invitations to contemplate the image and appreciate the moment before moving on. The adult Peter realises that Western mentality which takes rational explanations of events for granted does not provide universal answers about the complexity of human existence: he openly acknowledges his father's spiritual transformation in Potala as a kind of mystical occurrence. The recurrent visual motif of the labyrinth reminds us that once we reach our destination, we will never return unchanged.

Tibet Through the Red Box is, however, primarily a nostalgic account⁷, where the adult-child border is delineated clearly, where childhood seems to be defined through the optics of a keyhole through which one peeps into one's past with sentiment, recalling the sense of magic that Tibet stories provided. The book's final opening features two silhouettes of the son and the father walking off together, their past selves

⁶ I borrow the term from Alison Waller's study “Re-memorying: A New Phenomenological Methodology in Children's Literature Studies” (2017), a chapter from *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature* (pp. 136-149), where she applies it to the act of re-reading children's literature by adults and comparing the experience with their memory of reading as children. Waller writes: “The term “re-memorying” signals my interest in *remembering* as an act rather than *memory* as a cognitive faculty or a repository, and the methodological importance of this distinction.” (2017: 144). I use the term somewhat differently, in the context of Sis' book, in which the narrator reads the written version of the stories first heard in childhood and re-constructs his biographical memory as a consequence.

⁷ Nostalgia is a complex term, whose meanings have been changing with time, as Robert Hemmings shows in his analysis of children's classics. One of the eminent scholars he mentions is Svetlana Boym, the Jewish émigré from the former Soviet Union, who explored the theme in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Boym sees modern nostalgia as “a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history.” (Boym qtd. in Hemmings, p. 77). Another aspect of nostalgia that reverberates in Sis' narrative is what Hemmings, following Jean Starobinski's theory, calls “a function of the imagination, steeped in temporal and spatial longing”, adding that “the illusive object of that longing is childhood” (p. 55). See Hemmings, R. “A Taste of Nostalgia: Children's Books from the Golden Age – Carroll, Grahame, and Milne.” *Children's Literature*, Vol. 35 (2007). pp. 54-79.

depicted symbolically in the form of their shadows. The image portrays time as linear, where the past is definitely a closed stage. This linearity is also visible in the peritext, in the biographical note and the photo that features the author, his father, and his son.

The adult narrator conveys his sense of nostalgia more or less explicitly in many other elements of the narrative. His awareness of the transience of life, the irreversibility of time, the irretrievability of loss, is metaphorically expressed through his reconstruction of the history of Tibet – a land which no longer exists in the form Sis' father experienced it. There is a sense of the past being closed, and the sense of the magic being lost. Although the visual narrative relies on the lavish use of the mandala motif, it remains an organizing device rather than the one which adds new layers to the story. While it may initially seem otherwise, the metaphysical meanings of Tibetan mandalas and labyrinths⁸ are not part of the book's philosophical message. Similarly, the hybridical character of the visual and verbal narrations in the book indicated by Natov (2018: 175) is only apparent. At first glance, the blurred background in the illustrations, images interspersing or bleeding into the text, the returns of characteristic visual symbols may create the impression that the visual space is a layered palimpsest, and that it visually defines the work of the mind and memory. But it is not a palimpsest, only a kaleidoscope, in which the elements mix and reappear. The organising principle of the book is a somewhat rigid structure, which allows the readers to navigate effortlessly between the father's and the son's accounts. There is no incentive to uncover the potential hidden layers, but rather to drift from page to page and follow the pattern of the two regularly juxtaposed stories.

In *Tibet Through the Red Box*, the narrator's childhood belongs definitively to his biographical past – it is frozen and immobilised in the verbal sections, which clearly indicate that the past is irretrievable, and in some elements of the visual narration: in the miniature medallion-shaped flashback scenes that capture moments from Peter's childhood, in the silent images that resemble conventional family photographs, and in the ghostlike figures that haunt the narrator in the father's empty office. The narrator admits in the final passage: "It is a Tibet I have never been to, and it may be a Tibet that never really existed – a faraway place I first knew as a young child when my father was lost there." This fictionality of "Tibet" (which even the narrator typewrites in between inverted commas) is evident throughout the whole visual narrative, which portrays it by means of a fairy-tale-like convention, magical, beautiful, yet inscrutable. The endpaper emphasises connections between Peter and his father, as well as those between East and West, portraying metaphorically the arbitrariness of geographical and age distance – but the narrative as a whole relegates Tibet and childhood to the sphere of myth and magic, turning the book into an inherently nostalgic story.

Camouflage as an ethical choice in *Granny Knits*

Writing about the Holocaust memorials, James E. Young treats books, museums, and monuments as sites of memory, calling them "memorial texts". He warns though that many memorial texts "remember events according to the hue of national ideals, the cast of political dicta" (1993: Preface viii). *Granny Knits* can be called a memorial text, but in a very different sense. Orlev's work can be studied from different perspectives, among which there is the politically steered collective memory and the silence that long enshrouded the theme of the Holocaust and Polish anti-Semitism in post-war Poland.

⁸ See "Mandala". *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images* (2010). Editor-in-chief: A. Ronnberg. Editor: K. Martin. Koln: Taschen.

Kaźmierska reports in her book the active processes of collective forgetting that took place after the war, tendencies which she calls a form of no-memory, oblivion, or unremembering (2008: 111, 130-138). In her thorough discussion on the collective memory of the Holocaust in Poland, Kaźmierska writes about the gradual decolonisation of the memory (a term she borrows from Pierre Nora), which would, however, take place only decades after the war (81).

Testimonies are particularly important as a form of preserving memory mainly because, as Kaźmierska observes, it may be difficult today to build common space for biographical memory when generational experiences are so different, while the rooting of experience in a particular moment in time and in particular space makes it at least partly untranslatable (2008: 91). *Granny Knits* may be perceived as a form of artistic testimony although Orlev relies on the strategy of narrative disguise: the story, whose form alludes to that of fairy tales, nursery rhymes, or folk songs and tales, and is often taken for a children's story⁹, camouflages his biographical experience of the Jewish boy persecuted by the Nazis during the Second World War and the evil consequences of anti-Semitism when it becomes an official ideology¹⁰. The essential meanings of the story were perfectly captured and highlighted by Ignerska in the Polish edition of the book. Childlike aesthetics and childlike narrative convention – where “childlike” is far from naive – are treated by both the author and the illustrator as a universal language, and the only adequate language to articulate the protest against any form of institutionalised racism.

Orlev seems to never have abandoned his childhood and his native land emotionally. Born in Poland, brought up as a Catholic by his nanny, Jerzy Henryk Orłowski had Jewish parents who were not religious, and he only learnt that he was a Jew when he was four or five. He was still a boy when the Second World War started. Before he migrated to Israel, he survived the ghetto and the concentration camp. In an interview for Polish Radio One Orlev admits that even if he wanted to, he could not remove his childhood from his heart. He declares himself a Polish patriot, but also says that he feels betrayed by his homeland (“Izraelski pisarz...”). This ambivalence is certainly visible in his art, where hope is not abandoned, yet the dramatic motif of the futile protest against institutionalised evil dominates the narration. In his memoirs, where he writes about the love for the Polish language and the books read during childhood, Orlev mentions two books which were formative texts for him, as they taught him that curiosity about the world helps people survive (2012: 9). Curiosity is another driving force behind *Granny Knits*, manifested by both the author and the illustrator not only in their willingness to experiment with the form, but also in their attitude, where irony hidden behind childlike astonishment prevails over despair.

The fact that the narrator's child self is very much alive and integrated with his adult self is evident in *Granny Knits* and confirmed by the artist's words, where he

⁹ Even the author of the Afterword in the book *Książki mojego dzieciństwa* perceives differently Orlev's war novels, where the war context is more explicit, and *Granny Knits*, which she describes as a little book for very young children, “a lighthearted book which has a serious theme – lack of tolerance as an essence of social relations” (p. 37). She continues her comment about *Granny Knits*: “deprived of a happy ending, the little fairy-tale prepares children for life in the adult world” (2012: 37), as if implying that the book's merits are mainly didactic, while the addressee is unquestionably very young. See A. Nasalska in Orlev, U. (2012). *Książki mojego dzieciństwa (1931-1945)*. Lublin: UMCS.

¹⁰ My thanks go to Magdalena Sikorska for pointing out the role of 1968 anti-Semitic campaign in communist Poland as an interpretive context for *Granny Knits*.

explains why he is unable to write about the war from a perspective of an adult¹¹. As Orlev memorably puts it: “Nie potrafię o tym, co działo się w czasie wojny pisać, czy opowiadać inaczej niż z perspektywy dziecka. Nie mogę mówić o tym, jak dorosły człowiek, bo po prostu się tego boję. Mogę o tym myśleć tylko tak, jak pamiętam, jako dziecko”¹². Orlev's comment about the nature of his writing can be seen as a form of testimony, but it is primarily his ethical credo, which firmly renounces hate towards oppressors despite the experienced or witnessed trauma. He is also motivated by honesty towards his readers: “A jak mam opowiadać, skoro w takim języku widziałem getto, wojnę, obóz koncentracyjny, Niemców, Zagładę? Byłbym nieuczciwy, gdybym pisał o wszystkim, czego dowiedziałem się jako dorosły. Wiedza nabyta nie jest moją. Byłem wtedy dzieckiem. To wszystko”¹³.

The declared identification with the child perspective is visible in all the aspects of the verbal narration. Rhymes and rhythm, dynamism, diminutive forms, emotionality, perhaps a sense of stylistic roughness – straightforward style, colloquial register, the uneven number of syllables – are naturally associated with childlike forms and with popular ways of addressing children¹⁴. But the eloquent phrasing and the bitter irony perhaps associated more easily with adult writing and adult audience are conveyed within the same story. In the Polish version, the grandmother explains to the school officials that there are “hand-knitted” children as well as “skin” children. Turning them into categories that rhyme in Polish and showing them as parallel, not only defamiliarises the “skin” category, but also ironically exposes the absurdity of a thinking based on racism or, more specifically, anti-Semitism. Similarly, in the Polish translation, the writer's ironic attitude towards the communist officials is conveyed via their own words. In the English translation it is phrased differently, but the ironic subtext is also detectable, when the teachers say: “Children made of wool?/ In our very own school?”. At the mayor's office Granny hears: “In any self-respecting land,/ Knitted children must be banned!”. Even if we assume that the youngest readers may be oblivious to the ironical overtones in the story, the “childlike” and “adultlike” elements are integrated in the text so effectively that its essence remains communicative to readers of different ages.

Similarly, the injustice with which Granny has to deal is conveyed through the focalised perspective – the emotionally loaded, lavish use of question marks and exclamation marks: “Surely this was illegality?/ What a stupid municipality!/ Needles

¹¹ For Diana Gittins, childhood is “invariably filtered through memory. [...] Early memories can be affected by later images, narratives and experiences.” See D. Gittins. “The historical construction of childhood”. In: M. J. Kehily (ed.), *An Introduction to Childhood Studies: Second Edition* (2009). Open University Press (p. 36). But Orlev's point is not to reconstruct the memory of his childhood in the story, but to use the convention of a children's story and his own childhood memory as a narrative frame which allows him to tell the story about traumatic events he witnessed in his adult life.

¹² “I am not able to write or speak about what happened during the war in a way that would not be a child's perspective. I cannot talk about this like a grown-up man as I simply fear it. I can only think about it the way I remember it as a child.” (my translation). “Nie mogę znaleźć w sobie nienawiści”. *Polityka*. 04.07.2011.

¹³ “How am I supposed to talk about this, if this is the language in which I saw the ghetto, the war, the concentration camp, the Germans, the Holocaust? I would be dishonest if I wrote about everything I would learn later, as an adult. The knowledge acquired (later) is not my own. I was a child then. This is all” (my translation). “Najlepsze czasy były w getcie”. *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Duży Format. 30.06.2011.

¹⁴ Communication accommodation theory explains that the sense of solidarity and the need to strengthen the bonds between individuals who belong to different age groups results in stylistic and lexical “convergence”, which “occurs when we make our speech and communication patterns more like that of our partners, and it is typical of many cooperative interpersonal encounters” (Williams, Nussbaum 2001: 11-12).

clicked and clicked at length./ Using wool of double strength./ Granny knitted a helicopter./ To meet the president, nothing would stop her!” It is impossible to confidently decide whether this is the child's or the adult's reaction – these narrative choices reflect a joint perspective of Granny, the concerned storyteller, and any human being who is ready to react when faced with evil and injustice. But the emotionality of the account and the unconditional trust in the sense of the spontaneously undertaken action is often associated with children's way of thinking, which demonstrates where the narrator's loyalties lie.

Granny's struggle with the system and her decision to unravel her whole knitted universe is a metaphor whose dramatic senses should be clear to any thoughtful reader, even though *Granny Knits* portrays the unbearable as a temporary state, and its ending signals a possibility of a more optimistic future. In the interviews quoted above Orlev speaks that he is motivated by fear, but I am convinced that he is first and foremost motivated by his compassion for the oppressed. The tale, with its profoundly disturbing climax, in a sense may be for contemporary readers what Greek tragedies could have been for the Athenians. Martha C. Nussbaum sees these works in the context of their potential of being “a contested place of moral struggle, a place in which virtue might possibly in some cases prevail over the caprices of amoral power, and in which, even if it does not prevail, virtue may still shine through for its own sake” (Nussbaum, 2001: xxxvii).

In her insightful analysis of ancient tragedies, Nussbaum points out that in Euripides' *Hecuba* and his other plays the good characters often die young, as “[t]o live on in times of extremity like those to which Euripides is repeatedly drawn is, very likely, to make contact with betrayal itself. But the encounter with betrayal brings a risk of defilement: the risk of ceasing to look at the world with the child's free and generous looks; of ceasing, in the Euripidean way, to be good” (Nussbaum 2001: 419). The knitted children cannot be spared, but Orlev lets us hope that at some point they will be resurrected, that their annihilation, although necessary in these circumstances, is only temporary. It is in this ethically motivated sense that *Granny Knits* is an encrypted message, an artistic camouflage behind which there lurks the drama of the 1968 events in Poland. Identification with the childlike perspective and the motif of the reversibility of death in *Granny Knits* is a metaphorical, ethically underpinned way of communicating the truth about the mechanisms of anti-Semitism.

Marta Ignerska's illustrations perfectly capture the sense of Orlev's humanistic vision, turning the book published by Wytwórnia into a visual narrative which could be called a picturebook. Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna quite rightly attributes the characteristic features of Ignerska's art to her inspiration with the noncamera aesthetics of Julian Antoniszczak's animation (2014: par. 11). In *Granny Knits*, this inspiration is not reduced to the formal aspects. Ignerska captures and reworks artistically both the playfulness of Antoniszczak's style and the essence of his ethical engagement. Known as Antonisz, the artist was a Polish experimental filmmaker who used a noncamera technique for his avant-garde films, and although many of his productions were addressed to children, it is clear that they always involved a social and ethical commentary, and often satirised the oppressive reality of communist Poland. Humour, but also the visual style in which naivety and grotesque go hand in hand, was in fact

a way to show the caricatured portrayal of the world in which Antonisz had to live, a remedy for the difficult reality he had to cope with¹⁵.

The sense of materiality, the roughness of the imagery, and the fact that it was scratched directly on film tape may be the artist's articulation of his struggle with the oppressive system in which absurd was the norm. Antonisz's art camouflages a profound ethical manifesto behind the roughness of the style and behind the laughter induced by his parody animations. His classic animation "How a Sausage Dog Works", created only three years after the 1968 political crisis, is a humanistic protest against violence in any form; through the seemingly absurd convention the artist epitomises the drama: the easiness with which (fragile) life is destroyed by thoughtlessness, ignorance, and contempt for the other. A similar chaos and roughness is the distinctive feature of Ignerska's art in *Granny Knits* and, not coincidentally, her ethical concerns reflected in her visual style are commensurate with those of Orlev and Antonisz.

In Ignerska's visual answer to the text in *Granny Knits*, we see simplified shapes, chaotically spread drops of paint, irregular lines, all of which are inter pictorial allusions to Antonisz's animations. This simplicity is, however, only apparent: in fact, the style and the material tools are carefully selected for the purpose of the narration. It is not only the shape and the colour palette, but also the choice of artistic tool, that defines the characters. The knitted children and the grandma are drawn in pencil, sketched via the multiplicity of delicate spiral shapes imitating wool, and surrounded by flashy, vibrant, warm hues of crayon and paint, whereas the teachers and the council members are drawn in charcoal and ballpoint, where black and red dominate. Their blank facial expressions and their body language also illustrate metaphorically, and ironically, the mentality of the representatives of the communist state apparatus.

Ignerska's art in *Granny Knits* continuously erases the border between the "childlike" and the "adultlike"; the only borders the artist depicts vividly are those bred by opportunism, prejudice and rigid minds. The "knitted" children bring to mind the softness of the wool, but they are also astute and solid; there is a sense of freedom, spontaneity and extravagance in the visual aberrations such as eyeballs falling out (an effect characteristic for Antonisz's art) and blatantly shown bottoms. The grandmother also integrates "childlike" and "adultlike" (as well as "feminine" and "masculine") elements: she is wrinkled and grey-haired, and although her jewellery is old-fashioned, she wears a girly flowery skirt and trainers. Her role of a caring guardian and determined defender of the children is evident, but she can also be facetious and easygoing.

The "wooliness" of the elements that make up Granny and her grandchildren's microcosm brings out the significance of the feminine skill of knitting, which is shown as a natural gift that enables Granny (an elderly woman, deprived socially and

¹⁵ The words of Antonisz's daughter probably best encapsulate the artist's everyday functioning and his creative spirit that transformed the mundane into the extraordinary for his family. Sabina Antoniszczak thus remembers her father: "[t]he fact that he coped in that reality does not mean he accepted it or thought of it as rational. He had a unique understanding of what really is normal, a kind of profound awareness of what normal life should be like" (Antoniszczak, S. 2010, my translation). The roughness of his visual style and the childlike aesthetics could have been, just like in Orlev's case, a strategy of survival and an ethical choice. The abundance of colour and grotesque shapes in his animations, as well as the accompanying voiceover – voices of children or those of untrained adults who have difficulty in reading out the artist's verbal commentary – create an effect of defamiliarisation and ironic distance, perhaps in an act of rebellion against the official, smooth-tongued discourse of propaganda. Just as Orlev adopts a style that accommodates elements of the carnivalesque, so Ignerska, following Antonisz, relies on the principle of laughter and symbolically disrupts established hierarchies.

materially) to create a world independent from the absurdities of the prevailing social order. This private space functions in the illustrations as a kind of alternative reality, which in fact depicts an authentic vision of the world, where all the elements are interconnected and where human and non-human agents are made from the same matter. In contrast, the illustrations ironically defamiliarise public space which stands for the so-called "normal world". Its representatives, school and council officials, are depicted either as dehumanised automatons or as uniform figures, epitomised through the visual metonymies of grotesquely protruding bellies and bottoms.

Ignerska relies on what seems to be childlike aesthetics and childlike audaciousness, portraying the children and their world through a universal ethical optics, which erases age boundaries, thus making Orlev's vision even more intense. While not depriving the story of its terrifying aspects, she always sympathises with the oppressed. Instead, she emphasises visually the absurdity of a social order where injustice and prejudice are institutionally sanctioned. The poignancy of the drawings – the black hostility and the sharp edges of the mayor's office, the caricatured portraits of the administration, the inferno alluded to through the colour and shape of the destroyed mass of living matter – is one such vivid element. The other is the convoluted presence of the socio-political context of the story, communicated via a number of visual allusions which may direct some readers to the theme of the expulsion of the Holocaust survivors from communist Poland.

Such reading is solidified by the dominance of white and blue on the cover, which can be associated with the colours of Israel's flag, whereas the palm tree in the area surrounded by the guards can bring to mind the context of the ghetto. The enormous beautifully blooming tree knitted by Granny may be a meaningful echo of the ritual of planting trees by *aliji*, the Jews coming to Israel – a symbol of the longed-for rootedness (Kazmierska 2008: 176). The ending of the story tentatively expresses hope for peaceful life in the future; the final lines say: "If the people are caring and kind/And knitted kids they won't mind/Then Granny won't fret and there she'll sit/And need I tell you? Knit and knit and knit...". The hope for rebirth is also implied visually by the abundance of the yellow colour in the finale, which may again be associated with Israel as the new home for the Jews.

Ignerska vividly portrays the world of inhumane institutions by means of an aesthetics which through its grotesque elements and viscosity reflect both a child's and any human being's emotions and even somatic sensations in the confrontation with hostility and its consequences. She thoroughly identifies herself with the perspective of the victims, depicting visually the machine-like mentality of the oppressors imprinted on their bodies, and the literally destructive power of words, hateful propaganda. The captions that repeat and symbolically sanction some of the prejudiced reactions of the officials inserted by Ignerska into the illustrations bring to mind Zygmunt Bauman's central idea in his fundamental work *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1991). Bauman explains that the Holocaust was not the necessity in the modern civilisation, but it turned out to be its possibility. What increased the possibility, according to Bauman, was the prevalence of instrumental rationality and the existence of bureaucratic institutions which privileged efficiency over morality. Despite the short time that had passed since the ending of the Second World War, the state apparatus in communist Poland would not hesitate to reawaken anti-Semitic sentiment for political purposes. *Granny Knits* speaks evocatively about the mechanisms of moral degradation responsible for human tragedy and yet insists on the possibility of recovery and rebirth.

Conclusion

Sis and Orlev choose different strategies in their representation of biographical memory. The narrative form of confession in *Tibet Through the Red Box* is never meant to be entirely “realistic”; the narrator comments on his own subjective experience of time and on the subjectivity of his father's account. The subjectivity of memory is validated – Sis emphasises its fragmentariness and its evolution in time. What also matters for him is the act of passing on individual memory as a form of symbolic heritage and a mark of identity. The story starts and ends in the “now”, which remains the dominant perspective through which the past is assessed; the past – and the narrator's child self – remain locked in the office, in the box. In *Tibet Through the Red Box*, the perspective of the adult narrator reminiscing about his own past and trying to deal with his biographical memory is conveyed via the adventurous and visually attractive convention which disguises a rather nostalgic vision of childhood.

Granny Knits, a camouflaged account of what happens in a world which institutionalises inhumane ideologies, endorses an ethical perspective that valorizes childlike vulnerability and trustful openness; for the writer it is the only acceptable stance, even if it entails the risk of being harmed. Nussbaum identifies a very similar ideal in Euripides' ethical vision: “[t]his willingness to embrace something that *is* in the world and subject to its risks is, in fact, the virtue of the Euripidean child, whose love is directed at the world itself, including its dangers” (2001: 420). The commitment to childlike values inscribed in the narrative voice is for Orlev the most appropriate ethical response to a world whose moral integrity is in jeopardy. In Ignerska's illustrations, the apparent naivety of the form disguises irony and humanistic protest, which exposes the rules of the system that has turned absurdity to a norm. The visual and verbal form of the narrative is the artists' ethical choice – because the only sane and humane reaction to the grotesquely distorted reality is childlike astonishment. Perhaps the identification with the childlike in *Granny Knits* is also the reason why a sense of agency prevails over a sense of despair. Orlev's text and Ignerska's illustrations remain in a truly dialogical relationship, both articulating through their form and content *Granny Knits'* humanistic credo.

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KATARZYNA SMYCZYŃSKA

**CONFESSION AND CAMOUFLAGE: BIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY IN VISUAL NARRATIVES
BY PETER SIS, URI ORLEV AND MARTA IGNERSKA**

In my article, I argue that Peter Sis' *Tibet Through the Red Box* (1998) and the Polish edition of Uri Orlev's *Granny Knits* (first published in Hebrew in 1981) illustrated by Marta Ignerska (2009) represent two different forms of intergenerational remembering. The visual narratives in question are artistic portrayals of the narrators' biographical memory, and in some sense it is possible to view both works as narratives in which intergenerational connectivity is an integral aspect of the story. However, in each book the symbolic return to childhood has a different character. In Orlev and Ignerska's book, the rigidly delineated categories of "childhood" and "adulthood" are not really applicable, as they merge on every possible level – in their formal, expressive, and philosophical aspects. In Sis' narrative, the (visual) language may resemble conventions associated with children's literature, but it is primarily an element of the book's nostalgic message, not a signal of the narrator's authentic and permanent connection with his child self.



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**“WHILE MY NAME IS REMEMBERED, I TEACH”:
OODGEROO NOONUCCAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL STORYTELLING FOR CHILDREN**

Introduction

Translating an Indigenous Australian text is inevitably a great cross-cultural challenge, even if the text is originally written in English. Oodgeroo Noonuccal's *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, a collection of 27 short stories for children, written in plain, easily accessible English, is no exception. In order to be prepared I participated in several cultural awareness trainings, talked to scholars, activists, consulted Indigenous lawyers, researchers and custodians, and read. I formulated a project and scrupulously described it on several pages, sent it to one of the *Stradbroke Dreamtime* copy-rights owners, Noonuccal's grand-daughter, Petrina Walker, and hoped for her approval or, at least, interest. Living on the Stradbroke Island, within Moreton Bay in the Australian state of Queensland, Petrina Walker turned out to be inaccessible. After my numerous phone calls, some unanswered and some with broken connection, she advised me to contact her father who was at that time “doing business” in Canberra. I felt both disappointed that she might have not shared my excitement about yet another translation of her grandmother's writing, and thrilled about this unexpected opportunity to meet Denis Walker. I was yet unaware that my project, though it had always revolved around one text, had already started to transform: from a relatively straightforward translation task with clear aims and a specified deadline, to a much more complex cultural encounter and cross-cultural relationship building with complex framework and unspecified time frame. I met Bejam Kunmunara Jarlow Nunukel Kabool, also known as Denis Walker, an Australian activist and the son of an Indigenous poet and activist Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal, born Kathleen Jean Mary Ruska and also known as Kath Walker, to discuss the project of translating his mother's stories for children from English into Polish. He seemed surprised, yet intrigued, though the sense of urgency in his voice could have been only my interpolation.

We met at the Tent Embassy, which still, since its establishment in 1972, provides space for campaigns for social justice and land rights of Indigenous peoples, and a home to many activists determined to stand for the political rights of Aboriginal Australians. Several bigger and smaller tents were pitched on the lawn in front of the Old Parliament and had this semi-permanent look about them, most likely provoked by my awareness of all these years of their presence there, rather than any actual signs of permanence. The big sign “Sovereignty” was stretched over the lawn, drawing attention to this permanent temporality, a sense of estrangement and struggle, but also self-determination and unity. A campfire was on, which, in the context of the total fire ban in the region at that time, seemed to imply privilege and ownership. People of different ethnicity and age started to gather around the fire for a storytelling session – the Frontier Wars Story Camp that runs each years throughout the week proceeding Anzac Day and educates about the wars of white settlement in Australia.

I entered the biggest tent, the residency of Elders. Inside several people were doing their own things, eating, reading, talking, undistracted by my presence. Bejam was waiting for me. He asked for a project description, but only glanced over it, being more interested in whether I had read Frantz Fanon and were aware of the Gweagle clan shields held in the collection of the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and

Anthropology. He made sure I had not started any work on translation and suggested looking for money first “because you cannot do it properly without funds”, he explained.

The meeting was brief. Bejam was rushed to join the Frontier Wars Story Camp, while a nice young man who introduced himself as an “administrative help”, advised that they “need a few days” to think about my project. He gave me his contact details “in case Uncle Denis doesn’t call,” and also reassured me that they would still be around, “How long? Until we get what we want, several months maybe”, he concluded.

Bejam did call and, indeed, texted me on numerous occasions, providing me with a kind of an overview of very many things he was dealing with at the time. We met a number of times. My friendly and welcoming hosts were well prepared for the second meeting and they invited others to join us: elders, activists, a journalist and all those whose opinion they held in high regard. We sat in a big circle and talked about many things: the situation of Indigenous peoples in Australia, racial discrimination, education, Stradbroke Island, songs and dance, about Poland and the European Union but not really much about the text which was the purpose of my visit. In a rather philological manner I was mulishly coming back to the text, while they were patiently returning to all other different threads of our discussion, as if implying that the text is least important in my meticulously planned project.

It was during our second meeting that I started to understand my awkward and dubious position I myself defined in the project description under the term “literary anthropology”. Yet, Bejam’s generosity with time and stories, openness and willingness to talk encouraged me to persist in what started to shape as an increasingly ambiguous and challenging venture. He wanted to develop what he called a general “module” for tribal people to use in the cases like mine, he wanted the project to be big and meaningful, and to bring change. He drafted several goals and requirements without which, in his view, the project could not run. These included “dancing, gestalt and sovereignty,” and the funds without which we could not “do things properly” (Kabool 2016). Our consecutive meetings, though exceptionally interesting and enlightening, did not advance my project much. In my view then Bejam seemed distracted, as if looking for something different to bring into our conversation: we talked about Europe, wars, the Holocaust, social justice, drug addiction and the Bible, but not much about the text.

These were fascinating meetings, but the project stalled. I did not have funds to bring dancers from Stradbroke Island to Canberra, as Bejam requested, but also, and more importantly, I did not understand their role in my literary translation. Neither could I comprehend the link between this little project of Polish translation and the issue of sovereignty Bejam was so firmly focused on. I was confused. I was told I need to be patient and wait. And so I did.

Bejam passed away on 4 December 2017. My little project was never “officially” approved, although in some ways it was, I think, already underway since the very first meeting at the Tent Embassy. At Bejam’s funeral his sons read their grandmother’s poem dedicated to him, “Son of mine”. This is what made me think about my translation differently, or rather wonder what such a cross-cultural translation project should or could be like. What are the ways of rendering and translating difference responsibly and with due sensitivity and sensibility? And what if these are children, in Australia and beyond, who are the active participants and recipients of such an endeavour? In the course of my research, questions like these multiplied, making me increasingly convinced that “an ‘apt’ response to Indigenous writing” (Freeman 2010) cannot be achieved by only learning the text and following protocols. It is necessary

also to make connections, build relationships, learn other ways of being, both spiritual and practical, and often share your own experience in the process.

I start this article by introducing the poem “Son of mine”, from the first collection of Kath Walker’s verses, which provoked me to reflect on the abandoned translation project and approach *Stradbroke Dreamtime* from a different angle. A presentation of the poem from Walker’s first collection might not seem relevant here, as one reader pointed out. However, I see the poem as an important departure point for engaging with Walker’s later work differently than I had initially envisioned. It encouraged me to read *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in the context of Walker’s pedagogical efforts and reflect on her idea of reconciliation as well as on our responsibility and ability to participate in cross-cultural communication. I introduce Walker as an activist and a poet – the two roles that provided a meaningful context to her later work focused predominantly on children. I move on to discuss Walker’s engagement with children at Moongabla, Stradbroke Island, and her first prose book, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972). I read Walker’s work as intergenerational, inclusive and transformative, and reflect on her ultimate goal of sharing her stories to educate all the children. I propose to read the text as, in itself, a form of translation of difference – translation between generations and cultures, and an act of solidarity between generations *and* cultures. In the context of Indigenous Australia, the concept of solidarity is often associated with reconciliation.¹ I explore this nexus arguing that *Stradbroke Dreamtime* reflects Walker’s strategy for reconciliation which includes empowering children through storytelling. Yet, I also acknowledge the challenges communication between cultures poses, particularly misinterpretations and misrepresentations resulting from insensitive editing and publishing.

I use the names “Kath Walker” to refer to the poet’s early writing and activism, and “Oodgeroo Noonuccal” to speak of her later work after she moved back to Stradbroke Island and changed her name. I do not refrain from using a subjective “I”, as I do not want to make any claims of objectivity. I want to emphasize that this is my personal and evolving understanding of Noonuccal’s work, shaped by my developing knowledge of Indigenous cultures in Australia, meetings with Indigenous Australians, contemplating Bejam’s mission and death, and the experience of bringing up my own cross-cultural children who are developing their own understanding of Australian culture and history, satisfying their own thirst for stories as well as the need for tolerance and empathy.

“Son of mine”

The poem “Son of mine”, dedicated to Denis Walker (Bejam), appeared in the collection *We are Going* published in 1964 under the name Kath Walker. It was the first book of poems to be published by an Australian Aboriginal, as James Devaney explains in the Foreword to the volume. Denis was thirteen then, and Walker was concerned

¹ In Australia the concept of reconciliation refers to the process of and commitment to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia by building positive relationships between them, challenging discrimination, overcoming divisions and inequalities and advocating constitutional and legislative reforms. The *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act* 1991 officially commenced the process of reconciliation that since then has become an important theme of Australian political and public life. Pratt (2005) points out different ways reconciliation is defined and understood: as the recognition of Indigenous-specific rights, a greater sense of national unity, improvements in Indigenous social and economic wellbeing, or improved awareness of Indigenous history, culture and heritage (2005: 158).

about the ongoing and new challenges young generation of Aboriginal Australians had to face. The speaker – the mother and an educator, is encouraging her son and other young Aboriginal Australians, and indeed all young Australians, to focus on reconciliation, which is the only way towards a better future with the “lives of black and white entwined”. To do this, however, they must be aware of the difficult past and black history of Australia. And so the speaker informs the reader that she will *not* be talking “of heartbreak, of hatred blind. (...) of crimes that shame mankind, of brutal deeds and wrongs maligned, of rape and murder”, making it clear that to be forgiven wrongs must be acknowledged first.

The poem’s foremost goal is to serve as a salutary lesson, rather than evoke an aesthetic experience. Through conveying acts of atrocious racist behaviour, expressing sadness and anger, it evokes intense emotions, provokes and motivates into action. Yet, with its short verse, simple rhyme and rhythmic pattern, the poem can also be read as a lullaby, the expression of care, a universal language mothers use to communicate with their children, convey cultural knowledge and instruct. These are the poem’s two characteristics, being a call for action and a gesture of care, that define Walker’s work, which with time increasingly focused on children. When read at the funeral of Walker’s son by his sons, the poem became a declaration of generational and tribal solidarity or, to use Knudsen’s words, a symbol of “an ancient Aboriginal practice of storytelling: where one voice (story) ends another one takes over” (1994: 110). In the context of Walker’s cross-cultural ambitions and strong determination to teach, this solidarity can perhaps be read also as a pronouncement of global social responsibility.

Often criticised for creating “bad verse (...) jingles, clichés” (qtd. Allen 2017), “verse [which] is not poetry in any true sense,” with no “serious commitment to formal tightness” (Taylor 1967), and displaying “technical weakness” (Shoemaker 1994: 183), Walker has been more often associated with social protest and activism than literature. Hatherell sees Walker’s poetry, with its traditional forms and simple rhyme schemes, as a somewhat awkward presence in Australian mainstream literature (2012: 5). In response to numerous dismissive reactions to her poetry, Mudrooroo coined the term “poetemics” to “separate social verses such as she wrote from the more ‘serious’ business of poetics” (Mudrooroo 1994: 58). Indeed, both writing and activism occupied Walker entirely: her poems inspired Aboriginal advancement movements, while her action for civil rights informed her writing. Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and activists appreciated her simple verse and getting the message across to those who do not read poetry (Mudrooroo 1994: 60), and stressed her ability to avoid the danger of “thinking white” (Knudsen 1994: 111). Many white critics, on the other hand, saw Walker’s work as not “Aboriginal” enough, or not “obviously Aboriginal” (Hodge 1994: 67; Shoemaker 1994: 182), or classified her poems under a vague but practical category of protest writing.

While there has been a lot of discussion focused on Walker’s poetry, criticism and defence of her poetic style as well as “important political act[s]” (Knudsen 1994: 117), her role of an educationist – though always acknowledged and commended – has been as if secondary, subordinate to her political activism or even derivative of her poetry. Mudrooroo recalls that during his long friendship with Walker, she “never once described herself as a poet.” Instead, she would often call herself an educationalist whose “job was to educate both white and black” (1994: 57). This clear and unpretentious message which has been, however, overshadowed by discussions of poetry and literariness, on the one hand, and activism and protest, on the other. Mudrooroo, for example, focuses on a broader polemic on values, accessibility and

urgency of Walker's poetry.² James Devaney, in his Foreword to her first collection of poems – where he memorably called her “the poet of her people” to indicate her dedication to speak for those who lack awareness, courage or voice – concentrated on her place in and contribution to literature, and more significantly, “our national literature” (Walker 1964: 6). While Walker's place in Australian literature is unquestionable, and while “the breakthrough of an Aboriginal voice into print was in itself an outstanding achievement” (Knudsen 1994: 110), it is her storytelling for and engagement with children as a strategy for reconciliation that I find particularly interesting.

The poet of her people

Kath Walker started attending meetings of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in 1958 and soon became very committed to fighting racial discrimination and oppressive legislations. When at the 1962 annual conference of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement in Adelaide she read her “Aboriginal Charter of Rights”, she wanted to speak with the voice that had not been heard before, that would unite the wider Australian community beyond racial, social and cultural divisions.

The year 1964, when Kath Walker wrote the poem “Son of mine”, was the time of intense political activism in Australia. Protests were indeed held around the world, and Indigenous Australians were inspired and encouraged by American Black activists. Indigenous Australians as well as white liberals supporting the Aboriginal movement protested against the lasting oppressive legislation still regulating the lives of Indigenous people, the Protection Act regimes, church-run missions and government reserves. They protested against the White Australia policy, still held up by some to regulate ethnic composition of Australia, and the assimilation discourse which implied – as Peter Coleman summed up and Donald Horne repeated in his acclaimed book *The Lucky Country* (1964) – “absorption and that means extinction” (Coleman 1962: 8). In this context, Walker's work did not need any justification or rationalisation, nor did her readers need “to justify or explain how they were reading her” (Hodge 1994: 63). Walker's active political engagement embraced all possible ways in which she could advance Aboriginal civil and land rights: writing poems, speeches and letters, marching and teaching, embracing Aboriginals as her own people who needed both to grief and hope, and considering whites “as capable of shame and self-correction” (Hodge 1994: 75). She wanted to empower both “black and white” (“Son of mine”).

Walker's political engagement, together with the efforts of many Aboriginal and white activists involved, led to the “citizenship” referendum held in 1967, which resulted in two amendments to the Australian constitution and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders being included in the national census and granted full civil rights. This was a tremendous success which facilitated and encouraged further work against racial discrimination: now Walker and other activists, as Duncan observes, “had a major educational program in front of them” (1994: 138). It included negotiating the ways of understanding and approaching Aboriginal advancement with parliamentarians and government officials, but also educating Aboriginal people of their own tasks and

² Mudrooroo, also known as Colin Johnson, Mudrooroo Narogin and Mudrooroo Nyoongah, is a prominent author and activist who significantly contributed to debate on the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Australia and on the role of literature within Australian race relations. However, his own identity and public identification as an Indigenous Australian was questioned, which caused public debate on Aboriginality and authenticity. Following this controversy, Mudrooroo withdrew from public life in Australia.

responsibilities (see Duncan 135-8). Children gradually became the main target of Walker's efforts although it was clear from the first collection of poems she published that it is children that she believed would bring change.

In the 1970s, the prominent role of Walker as a writer with international reputation, vehement activist and a dedicated teacher was unquestionable. She travelled around the world, lectured for large crowds, was regularly interviewed for television and radio, and wrote. Her achievements were recognized in Australia with honorary doctorates from four universities, and her efforts commended by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. She was not, however, pleased with how things were progressing, and perhaps unsure whether her approach to reconciliation is understood and shared. Neither was she happy with the attitude of some young Aboriginal Australians and the lack of a strong unified voice she was advocating for since the 1960s. Cochrane reports that Walker felt offended when considered too old to do her service for the Tribal Council (1994: 84) and devastated to see young Aborigines, including her son Denis, advocating violence as a solution to social inequality. In 1972 Denis Walker made his stance clear saying that "if you haven't got a gun, you have nothing. We're not going to get what we want by standing here and talking." (qtd. "Aborigines seeking black power" 1972). The same year, as if in response to her son, Walker published her first prose book of stories for children, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. While it was the urgency of the moment and the clarity of the message that governed the poems such as "Son of mine", in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* she concentrated on continuity, developing intergenerational connections, inter-relatedness of past and present, cross-cultural links, and building rapport between the speaker and young readers.

Walker wrote *Stradbroke Dreamtime* after moving to her birthplace, Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) two years earlier. There, she focused predominantly on working with children – they became her "whole life now. Of course, the future is with them" (qtd. Hatherell 2012:4). She continued to be politically engaged, but mostly with, as Hatherell puts it, "the causes that defined the period", such as opposition to uranium mining (2012: 4). She was back to nature, devoted herself to painting, writing and children. In protest against the 1988 celebration of the bicentenary of the arrival of the British First Fleet at Sydney³ Walker returned the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) which she had been awarded in the 1970s for her service to community and which she now perceived as a disgrace. To make her statement stronger, she changed her name to a Noonuccal tribal name reflecting her ancestral connections as well as her mission of a storyteller and educator – Oodgeroo, meaning paperbark tree.

The educationalist

Although *The Australian* announced that she "has withdrawn from public life to her birthplace" (qtd. Cochrane 85), Oodgeroo Noonuccal's mission was far from being completed. She had yet another project she strived to realise and, in some ways, all her previous activities and engagements led to it – to develop a cultural and educational centre for children.

When asked by Margaret Read Lauer, an American scholar visiting Moongbala, why it was so important for her to work with children, Noonuccal answered: "because children are the ones who will create the change. (...) Children don't have racist

³ Although the Hawke Government refused to fund events that might have been seen as unacceptable by the Indigenous community, celebration of what many considered an invasion did take place. A protest of more than 40,000 people was staged in Sydney and numerous demonstrations were held throughout Australia.

attitudes unless they're taught by adults" (qtd. Cochrane 1994, 100-1). She kept reiterating this message at various occasions. In an interview with Bruce Dickson at the opening of the exhibition of her paintings she reiterated that "change will come with the young people anyway and I'm sick of talking to mentally constipated adults" (qtd. Dickson).

Noonuccal's enthusiasm and empathy for children was certainly nothing new; she expressed her concern for children in her first published collection of poems, particularly the poem dedicated to her son. Cochrane writes that Noonuccal's ambition was "to gain a better world for her sons, and also for her grandchildren", and so her dedication to fighting for civil rights, better health care and education was strongly and personally motivated. Yet, as her work shows, Noonuccal was apprehensive about all the children. Perhaps it reflects the Aboriginal world view and law she referred to, saying "think first of your tribe", even before *your* children (Noonuccal 1993), or her unshaken confidence that only broad, inclusive education and solidarity can bring a change for the better. Recalling her visit to one of the high schools in Sydney's western suburbs, Duncan observes that Kath Walker had "an empathy with students that was unique" and the ability to "tailor her remarks to suit the needs of her audience to make each student feel that the remarks were addressed to them alone" (1994: 139).

Noonuccal's educational strategy embraced both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and aimed to "broaden horizons for all people" (qtd. Dickson). She ends the first collection of verse with a "Song of Hope" for "children's children" and "the glad tomorrow" when no "colour shame us" (1964: 40). Cochrane further explains that Noonuccal's "concern for children was not sentimental", that she believed children "had potential as agents of change, provided they received the appropriate message from the adult world" (1994: 61). This message is captured in many Noonuccal's poems and stories in which she calls for mutual respect, understanding and adopting new approaches while still upholding "sacred myths", as she wrote in the poem "Integration – Yes!" from her second collection *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966).

To nurture this potential for change, Noonuccal aimed to purchase five acres of her family's land in Stradbroke Island which she called Moongalba (Sitting-Down Place) and build a permanent centre that would include museum, library, art gallery, open-air theatre and park (Hatherell, 2012: 4). Her claims were, however, contested and the request rejected, but she was allowed to lease the land on which she built a temporary shelter, a gunyah, which she later replaced with a caravan, and gradually erected sheds and temporary structures for activities with children.

While the buildings were constructed to provide space for educational activities such as painting, drawing, craft and theatre (Cochrane 1994: 91-93), Noonuccal's teaching was much broader and embraced, what she called, "Aboriginal way of life" (qtd. Dickson). She reflected that

when the children come to Moongalba I teach them the same as I teach my own grandchildren. I teach them how to pick up shellfish and how to look for them. I teach them how to fish and to crab. I teach them what's good to eat in the bush and what isn't, and I teach them how to cook underground (qtd. Cochrane 93).

Yet, Noonuccal also presented her educationalist approach and philosophy from a different perspective. When asked what her work with children who visited the centre at Moongalba looked like, she replied "there is no point in trying to do things for young people ... when young people come there they do it themselves. (...) I do nothing at Moongalba but welcome them in. They do their own thing there" (qtd. Dickson). Encouraging children to roam the island, like she did as a child, observe and discover

nature like she did, or inspect artefacts she brought from her travels around the world, and learn *from* and *about* each other, she expressed trust and confidence in children's inquisitive, unbiased and fair-minded nature. Learning freely about the island and each other was a significant element of the whole educational experience at Moongalba, the lesson that could facilitate, as Noonuccal believed, the overcoming of the biggest barriers of all – "lack of communication, lack of tolerance, and lack of understanding" (qtd. Dickson). She was confident that such simple activities as interacting with each other and talking to one another could make Australia a truly multicultural society (*The First Born*). In fact, one of the first essential lessons at Moongalba was that the most important person on Stradbroke Island is "a fellow man" (qtd. Hatherell 2012).

Noonuccal's work in Moongalba, which I see as an act and a lesson of solidarity and a strategy for reconciliation, was focused on teaching black children about their rich cultural heritage, and white children about Aboriginal way of life and respect for nature. Teaching Indigenous children about their ancestry was essential for Noonuccal, as it is the lack of knowledge and the sense of identity that she saw as most hurtful; she recalled that "often it was the first time in their lives they heard and saw something of the rich culture of their heritage" (qtd. Cochrane 96). At the same time, she urged Aboriginal Australians to teach non-Aboriginal Australians of the Australia's rich heritage and horrific past, "so that they can be our allies" (qtd. Craven 123), ensuring that all children were treated with respect and were told the history they deserve to know.

Non-Aboriginal children were also welcomed at Moongalba; Cochrane sees Noonuccal's educational work as building "bridges between her people and the children of white invaders" (158). Still, it is important to emphasise that Noonuccal's approach to cross-cultural relations was more nuanced. She often acknowledged that many white Australians are committed to supporting social rights and justice for black Australians, and stressed that children do not have racist attitudes, but discover numerous similarities and connections between each other, if given an opportunity. In one of the interviews she argued that "it is this lack of a balanced view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that feeds an ill-informed understanding of Aboriginal Australia, which compels others to continue to want to 'do things to and for us' rather than with 'us'" (Gooda 2012). So it is not only building bridges that her work aimed to achieve but also changing the narrative on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Apart from what seem to have been leisurely cultural activities, Noonuccal devised ambitious and practical learning programs for her young visitors at Moongalba. One of such sophisticated educational programs aimed at Indigenous students, as Hatherell reports relying on a collection of Moongbala archive at the University of Queensland Library, featured "sessions on college, career search, black literature, study skills, pottery/macramé, and assertiveness training" (2012: 4). Noonuccal's educational project seemed promising. Children were coming to Moongalba from around Australia and from overseas, as school trips and with families, from poor suburbs of Sydney as well as elite private schools. Cochrane reports that between 1972 and 1977 more than eight thousand children visited Moongalba, and in 1993 the number of visitors increased to thirty thousand children (1994: 153). Noonuccal not only welcomed children at Moongbala, but also visited schools, helped to develop curricula for trainee teachers and design teachers' handbooks, engaged with tertiary students of Anthropology and Black Studies, writers, artist and educators (see Cochrane 1994: 93, 153).

Noonuccal's teaching through her writing was ongoing. Her first collection of poems, *We are Going* (1964), was followed by two more volumes of poems: *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966) and *My People* (1970), sold in seven and eight thousand copies, respectively. Her collections of poems brought her fame in Australia and abroad, yet her work with children superseded her earlier poetic ambitions and short stories for children substituted her politicised poems and speeches. Following the 1967 referendum, books for children rethinking representation of Indigenous Australians started to appear, and Noonuccal's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was among the first ones. It was followed by her other stories for children, such as *Father Sky and Mother Earth* (1981), *Australians Legends and Landscapes* (1990) or *Australia's Unwritten History* (1992).

The storyteller

Noonuccal wrote *Stradbroke Dreamtime* upon her return to her childhood home at Minjerribah, the North Stradbroke Island, which has been home for many years to the Noonuccal people. Brewster observes that this publication marks a second phase of Noonuccal's writing (1994: 92) during which she produced mainly prose and short stories for children. While Brewster discusses the traditional role of a storyteller particularly in the context of Noonuccal's "protest poems" and their "enunciative voice" (1994: 93), I would like to emphasise the importance of Noonuccal's storytelling in the context of her later prose and stories for children. They convey traditional values of storytelling such as passing on knowledge, providing guidance as well as entertainment and allowing space for one's own interpretations and thus participation.

As a spokeswoman and people's poet, Noonuccal created straightforward, often unadorned writing which she herself described as "sloganistic, civil rightish, plain and simple" (1975) as well as "somewhat angry and bitter" (1966: 4). Her stories for children, though also aimed at educating and inspiring, invite transformative experience on the part of the reader in a different way. Personal experiences, emotionally compelling descriptions of events and imagery, allow children to better remember the story and easier relate to one another and form relationships. In the process of this research I came closer to understanding Indigenous Australians' diverse relationship with the past, knowledge and, most distinctly, with land, and how this relationship sets "the tone for the relationship between people" (Graham qtd. Heiss 2003: 33). The stories are short and uncomplicated, capture attention with vivid details, and invite young readers to engage with the characters emotionally. The urgency and abruptness evident in the poems is replaced here with personal reflection on the past and a sense of continuity and belonging. While Brewster sees Noonuccal's storytelling as assuming "the form almost exclusively of a chronicles of legends" (97), I propose to approach her storytelling as active engagement with the past, a strategy disclosing contemporaneity of the past and its meaning for the present and future, and a means for developing cross-cultural communication.

The first part of the book, "Stories from Stradbroke", is autobiographical; it describes everyday life and memorable events from Noonuccal's childhood. The second part, "Stories from the Old and new Dreamtime", includes stories she knew from her childhood and those she created herself in the form of traditional tribal stories. Noonuccal prioritizes personal voice and reading of the past that serves the purpose of providing instruction, but also allows for subjectivity informed by the present. The speaking subject of the first part of the book, an Aboriginal child, captures innocence and joyfulness in her stories, but also recalls important lessons such as a punishment for killing a Kookaburra in an accident provoked by anger (Kill to Eat) or parental

discipline that followed such an irresponsible behaviour (Shark). She recalls her emotions of shame and regret, and reluctant acceptance of punishment. She describes traditional community rules, for example, how to hunt and “gather enough crabs to feed the tribe, and no more” (Going Crabbing), and the memory of the taste of traditional Aboriginal food (Dugong Coming), but also presents her childish yet genuine objection to some of the practices. She recalls she disliked getting up at the dawn to look for mud-crabs with her father and siblings (Going Crabbing), or helping her siblings carry dead birds or bandicoots they had hunted (Family Council). This sincere objection fosters empathy, builds trust and shows the speaker to be a child other children could easily identify with.

Telling stories of not being a good hunter, but rather a day dreamer (Family Council), of getting seasick in spite of “[t]hree generations of sailors’ blood in her veins”, of not being able to understand the sea “as Dad did”, or of being “weak and sentimental” in spite of her father’s attempts to bring up children tough (Going Crabbing) is an open confession and an important expression of solidarity with those who think they do not understand or, worse, do not belong. It shows a diversity of practices and behaviours within a culture which is always fluid and transforming following both group and individual experiences. It also conjures the image of experiences that are potentially familiar to children of Western cultures, and provoke emotions that resonate with many. Noonuccal tells her stories often focusing on experiences many children could identify with, for example, of how at school she would be dreaming of the world outside (The Left-hander), or how she would cheat to resolve a difficult situation with teachers at school (Repeat Exercise). There are stories of little mishaps and silliness, comical moments many children would find amusing, such as walking off with a ladder leaving her father trapped in a water tank high above the ground (The Tank), or falling into the sea while trying to stay neat and tidy before the weekly picture show (Not Our Day).

The autobiographical part of the book includes narratives that disclose common experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, prevalent at that time, such as the punishment for being left-handed or leaving one’s desk without permission (The Left-hander), and reprimands for being a bad writer (Repeat Exercise). Describing feelings such as shame, embarrassment or anger invokes the sense of commonality of experiences and solidarity against school injustice as a child could see it. Yet, the writer also provides an insight into the reality of being an Aboriginal child in Australia of the 1930s, when doctors would attend white people only (Mumma’s Pet), when meagre white man’s rations were hardly enough to survive (Kill to Eat), and when Aborigines had to help themselves by searching through “the white man’s rubbish dumps” (Kill to Eat). Such personal accounts of hardship and discrimination are emotionally stimulating and invite emphatic response on which understanding of diverse ways of being and differing experiences can be developed.

Although in her recollections Noonuccal indicates that many things have changed, some for better and some for worse, there is no clear opposition between what is traditional and modern. Talking about “traditional” values and rules she does not conjure the image of old, lifeless and static culture, but refers to practices meaningful for modern and Western lives. Noonuccal introduces rich heritage in a light-hearted way, through ingenuous and comical stories like the one about the Noonuccal’s totem – a carpet snake which her family kept as a pet, which was hated by her mother for eating their chickens, but stayed unthreatened as a blood brother of her father. Assuming a childlike perspective, the narrator expresses her connection with the totem animal, not

as a spiritual emblem, but as an untired listener of the stories she used to tell while sitting in lavatory (Carpet Snake). The story about the pet snake, while amusing and childish, introduces the context of rich spiritual life, displays relationships and responsibilities within Aboriginal family, great respect for nature and unceasing amazement over it.

The connection to nature, expressed in continuous admiration or bewilderment, is the narrative thread running through all the *Stradbroke Dreamtime* stories. While the narrator boldly states that she hated early morning “crabbing”, she adds “there is something unfailingly and breathtakingly beautiful about a sunrise – and this was especially true of a sunrise over Stradbroke Island” (Going Crabbing). This rapport with nature, which transgresses cultural differences and racial divisions, seems to be a clear and dominant message of Noonuccal’s stories, implying not unchanging and sheltered life outside civilization, but a shared reality and responsibility.

Against the personal and family stories Noonuccal sets the second part of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. These are tribal stories which she knew from her childhood and those which she created based on her knowledge of her people and the land. She called these stories “legends”, although other Australian writers and storytellers would rather call them “dreamtime stories” or myths. She explains elsewhere that although the word “Alcheringa” was translated by Europeans into English as “Dreamtime” – and so the stories are described as “Dreamtime stories” – she prefers to use the word legend (Noonuccal 1992). Perhaps it is the interplay of historical account and imagination that she found so engaging and useful about legends, or their common presence and connotations in various cultures. And so, allowing for a sense of uncertainty and symbolism, but also commonality and familiarity, Noonuccal reshapes the stories she tells, adapts them, emphasising the significance of these accounts with all due seriousness and genuine significance: they “record our past, teach us how to behave, how to read the land, how to reject evil and uphold good” (1992: 4).

Recalling the experience of visiting Stradbroke Island and listening to Noonuccal’s stories, Attebery recounts that through reshaping, reconfiguring and repurposing traditional Noonuccal stories she made them a part of cross-cultural exchange (2014: 10). Attebery identifies this new purpose of the stories as entertaining and educating visitors “who might then spread the word that her people had neither vanished nor lost their way in the modern world” (2014: 10). Acknowledging Noonuccal’s understanding of the past and myth as a source of resistance, pride and power, Attebery called her “a myth bearer” and a “negotiator between two worlds” (2014: 11, 10), which are, however, continuously evolving through interaction with one another.

Indeed, both Noonuccal’s childhood stories and the legends seem to have a double function. On the one hand, they teach Indigenous children about their rich cultural heritage, instruct how to behave and how to interact with the environment they live in, make them feel proud, motivated and hopeful. Although the stories are rendered in autobiographical form and offer a personal account of the past, they convey “communal narratives” and “spiritual connections to land and kin” (Moreton-Robinson 2000), teach responsibilities that rest with young Australians towards the land and its people and thus nurture a sense of belonging and unity. On the other hand, these are the stories for all the children – descendants of colonizers, migrants and overseas visitors, who do not share the common past or heritage, but who might have – as Noonuccal saw it – the common future. Noonuccal’s uncomplicated and straightforward standard English makes the stories accessible to all English-speaking children. Moreover, in the

way she tells the stories she acknowledges the fact that the Indigenous world is often not known to European and Indigenous children alike, that European concepts defining reality are more familiar to all children and young adults growing in Australia of 1970s and 1980s.

Stradbroke Dreamtime highlights intergenerational links, connections between the ancestral and the everyday, it encourages positive self-concepts, the feeling of belonging and unity in the context of evolving and transforming culture, but it also employs analogy to bridge gaps between the familiar and unfamiliar, de-mythicizes the past and, perhaps, difference. Thus I read *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as the author's efforts to communicate her own Aboriginality to the world and contemporary Aboriginality as a living culture, an attempt to translate between cultures, and an act of solidarity with the view of reconciliation.

There are, however, serious and legitimate doubts about how to respond to the voice influenced by white editing and publishing practices. To be published in Australia in the 1970s, Aboriginal narratives had to be standardised, Anglicised or "gubbarised" (Langford Ginibi, qtd. Heiss 2003: 29) by editors to appeal to non-Indigenous readers. Noonuccal's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* – as we know from the studies which compared the published text with the manuscript (Jones 2004) – certainly was. Heiss explains that Aboriginal English or Aboriginalisation of the English language often "needs to be translated to aid understanding by non-Aboriginal audiences" (2003: 28). While not everybody agrees with the label "Aboriginal English" (see, for example, Kenny Laughton qtd. Heiss 2003: 29), it is a well-evidenced fact that it was impossible in the past to have Aboriginal text published in its original form without rewriting or "correcting" it, and sifting it "through white filters" (*Protocols...* 2007: 19). Such a process not only eradicates distinctive features of Aboriginal voices such as vocabulary, style, tone and discourse, but also distorts the message and deprives Indigenous writers of having control over their stories.

Jeniffer Jones, in her article "Deemed Unsuitable for Children: The Editing of Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime*" (2004) provides a disturbing commentary on how *Stradbroke Dreamtime* "was adjusted during editorial preparations to accommodate white notions of Aboriginality" (2004: 5). She argues that not only language of the original was significantly altered by reducing colloquial and local voices, swearing and dynamism, and promoting the "Queen's English" (2004: 9-13), but also that "stereotypes of Aboriginal primitivism subvert Oodgeroo's portrayal of contemporary Aboriginality" (2004: 5). As a result, the book failed, in her opinion, to present accurate Indigenous world-view. Jones insists that the author's work was depoliticized, the past mythicized and detached from the present, the representations of Aboriginality considered inappropriate were replaced, and sections criticising white racist behaviour removed (2004) together with "Aboriginal perspectives on land, spirituality and contemporary Aboriginal culture" (2009: 6). Additionally, as Jones reports, the editor made a decision to separate two genres originally mixed by Noonuccal: autobiography and legends, disturbing the expression of continuity intended in the manuscript. This first edition included black and white illustrations made "in style" by Denis Schapel to accompany each story.

Overall, in her meticulous study of the manuscript and the first publication Jones identified 1219 changes introduced by the editor.⁴ In her opinion, the changes soften the

⁴ In her later publication, Jones mentions 3700 changes to the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (2009).

narrative by removing both the experiences of racism that would embarrass white reader and language that conveys perspectives, behaviours and relationships deemed unsuitable for children. Using the example of one of the autobiographical stories, Mumma's Pet, Jones explains that the manuscript is "much more realistic; it manages to hold spite, vengeance and experiences of discrimination in dynamic tension with the happy family situation also described" (2004: 13). The changes make the text more palatable for white readers and more suitable for children or infantilized and, as a result, the book's radical potential is lost. Categorised as children's literature, the book becomes more marketable "because of the large educational market" (Heiss 2003: 40).

The editor of the first edition (published with Angus and Robertson), Ker Wilson, recalls that Noonuccal "made some remarks about how her manuscripts had been changed, which is always sad for an editor because she did have the opportunity [to object] at the time" (qtd. Jones 2004: 6). Only seven years later the author publicly expressed her disappointment with the publication (Jones 2004: 5), perhaps to the surprise of many readers. Yet, given the power imbalance between white editors and Aboriginal writers at the time, it is not surprising that Noonuccal did not defend her position and did not insist on retaining the manuscript in its original form. Moreover, Jones argues that *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was written at a "personal low point in her [Noonuccal's] life, making her text uncharacteristically vulnerable to editorial amendment" (2009: 207). Over a decade after the publication of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, during the first conference of Aboriginal writers held in Perth in 1983, Indigenous writers "demanded 'community control' over the means of production of their own writing" (Freeman 2010). Now, over four decades later, the Indigenous literature market is greatly transformed and cultural protocols developed,⁵ but Indigenous Australian writers are still concerned about their ownership and control over their works. How *Stradbroke Dreamtime* might be different if it were published today can only be speculated.

Stradbroke Dreamtime was republished many times. As far as I know, the last edition was revised by Jones and published in 2006 by Vulgar Press. According to the edition details, it restores Noonuccal's text and "offers it to a new generation" (*Stradbroke Dreamtime* 2006, *Trove*). Unfortunately, the edition is unavailable.⁶ Yet, its very existence potentially undermines the idea of translating the first edition Noonuccal was not happy with. A close comparison of the versions together with a careful examination of the manuscript seems to be the right way to resume the translation project. Yet, whether this would be the "apt" response, I cannot be certain; after all, Bejam never suggested consulting a different edition of his mother's work. What interests me is how differently readers with a limited cultural competence would interpret the *restored* text and how this difference would be rendered in a different language. In such a process of multiple translations, responding "aptly" to the text, that is, "as the ideal appropriate reader would" (Thomas McCormack qtd. Freeman 2010), presents a whole new challenge for a cross-cultural storytelling.

⁵ For example, *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian writing* (2007) or *Guidelines for the ethical publishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and research from those communities* (2015).

⁶ *Trove*, an electronic platform launched by the National Library of Australia in 2008 to bring together content from various libraries and repositories, mentioned 24 editions of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, including the one from 2006, yet does not identify any library in which this edition can be located.

Conclusion

In the Forward to her second volume of poetry, *The Dawn is at Hand*, Noonuccal explained that she was well aware that her poetic success “was not due to any greatness” in her “simple verse, but to the fact that it was the work of an Aboriginal”, a kind of “succès curiosité” (1966: 4). Yet, there must have been other reasons for unceasing interest in Noonuccal’s work. In 2016 *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was selected one of the ten top children’s book that “awake the imagination”, as reported by the National Indigenous Television (Booth 2016). It was also the first book of Indigenous literature translated into a European language other than English (Haag 2009). Interestingly, this first translation was a translation into Polish published in 1977. While the text reads well, I am concerned that it might not be as close a representation of Noonuccal’s voice as possible.⁷ The title itself, *Senne widziadla* [Night Phantasms], implies a rather loose interpretation of the original. Forty years later I hoped to involve Indigenous people in the process of translation, recreation and retelling of Noonuccal’s children stories yet again.

While my abandoned project saved the text from potential misinterpretation, misrepresentation, oversimplification, unintentional stereotyping and further editorial impact, it has also prevented Noonuccal’s message from travelling, being read, enacted and shared. Maybe it would be the best outcome. After all, classified as “folklore” and reviewed by anthropologists (Jones 2001: 190), *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is considered to be “framed and impinged upon by neo-colonial attitudes” (Jones 2004: 8). Besides, once “tampered with by non-Aboriginal people” the writing, as McGuinness insists, “ceases to be Aboriginal” (McGuinness and Walker 1985: 44).⁸ And while there is little control on publicly released works, particularly on the way they are received and embraced, “using knowledge as part of the general spread of ideas is a concept that often sits at odds with Indigenous notions of holding and disseminating knowledge” (*Protocols...* 2007). At the same time, interpretations of this protocol seem to vary. Commenting on his children’s stories *Booyooburra: A Story of the Wakka Murri* (1993), Lionel Fogarty observes that “with a little bit of information or a little tiny bit of a story from back then, you can bring it into the reality of today”, bring “truth to the children’s minds” (qtd. Heiss 2003: 40). I believe these were also Noonuccal’s hopes, intentions and efforts and they should not be neglected even if the full potential of the manuscript cannot be achieved. Reflecting on these challenges is one of the steps in a long process of learning, listening and building relationships I just commenced with my “abandoned” project.

Roberta Sykes recalls Noonuccal’s words of encouragement to continue with the book Sykes was working on and not to refrain from mentioning Noonuccal’s name after her death. Traditionally in Aboriginal culture referring to a deceased person by name is to be avoided as a mark of respect and to ensure that the spirit is not kept in this world (see, e.g., *Sad News, Sorry Business* 2015; McGrath and Phillips 2008). Noonuccal was not concerned about this culturally significant practice and made it clear saying:

⁷ I examine the existing Polish translation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in a separate article.

⁸ It is debated what constitutes Aboriginal writing; “Apart from style and language Heiss mentions the message of the work as an “obvious identifier” of Aboriginal writing (2003: 38), while Alexis Wright – its drive to challenge “white concepts, values and ways of describing events, places [and] people.” (2007: 81).

When I die, I want people to shout my name. (...). All my life I've been teaching, teaching, and I'm going to keep right on teaching beyond the grave. (...) Help me to keep teaching. While my name is remembered, I teach. (qtd. Sykes 39-40).

Would she tell me the same? Intrigued by her approach and prompted by my unfinished project I chose to reflect on the work of Noonuccal as an activist and a poet, and, particularly, on her engagement with children, to better understand the aim of her storytelling as well as our ability to participate in cross-cultural communication, and respond "aptly" to the text. I read *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, as intergenerational, inclusive and transformative project, a translation in itself, and suggest that, although it might be considered to have failed to present a true Indigenous voice, it reflects Noonuccal's approach to reconciliation seen as an act of solidarity between generations and cultures and facilitated by storytelling. As such, it invites young readers to reach across cultural boundaries (cf. O'Connor 2006), to communicate, share and empathize, and promotes a sense of solidarity among the young readers. Seen this way, it should be disseminated, explored and translated allowing other young readers to feel empowered by its messages. While I share Noonuccal's hope that "Change will come with the young people anyway..." (qtd. Dickson), I also support her view that we should "keep right on teaching beyond the grave", in spite of complexities of meaning and cultural inferences we may encounter on our way in translating difference.

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“WHILE MY NAME IS REMEMBERED, I TEACH”: OODGEROO NOONUCCAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL STORYTELLING FOR CHILDREN

Focusing on *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972), the first prose book of an Australian Indigenous poet, activist and educationalist, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (also known as Kath Walker), I reflect on questions which arise around cross-cultural communication and translation. Prompted by the unfinished project aimed at translating *Stradbroke Dreamtime* into Polish, I deliberate on challenges to respond appropriately to Australian Indigenous writing, particularly if it is influenced by white editing and publishing practices which often privilege Eurocentric views. Situating *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in the broader context of Noonuccal's life, political activism and pedagogical efforts, I read her work as an intergenerational, inclusive and transformative project, and an act of solidarity between generations and cultures. In the context of Indigenous Australia, the concept of solidarity is often associated with reconciliation. I explore this nexus, arguing that *Stradbroke Dreamtime* reflects Walker's strategy for reconciliation which includes empowering children through storytelling.

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THE BETRAYAL OF CHILDHOOD IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

The relationship between childhood and adulthood in the socio-cultural perspective has been a frequent focus in contemporary social studies (Kehily, 2008). Also, some scholars representing humanities have initiated a spirited discussion about images of both the child and childhood recorded in literary works. For instance, Peter Hunt (Hunt, 2008) argues that depictions of childhood a few YA novels result from a “writerly manipulation” which sometimes was directed against adults. Instead, Grzegorz Leszczyński (Leszczyński, 2012) claims that the trickster figure present in quite a few children’s novels suggests new patterns of the relationships between a child and an adult. Generally speaking, the diversity of childhood constructs developed by both by artists and scientists indicates the presence of an interesting “fracturing” inside the heart of the relationship between a child and adult today. In my article, I focus on the relationship between a child and an adult in socio-cultural perspective in order to demonstrate how the representations of childhood are used by Polish authors of children’s literature in critical descriptions of war and other forms of violence. At first, I relate to the crucial moment in the European history in which there appeared a discourse of senility and youthfulness. Next, I present the main consequences of the “production” and “distribution” of images of childhood in pop culture. In the last part of my discussion, I analyse novels by Joanna Rudniańska, Jacek Dukaj, Grzegorz Gortat and Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogała, who, in their works about the Holocaust, the martial law in Poland and the war in Syria, create the world in which young characters possess certain features characteristic of adults. My analysis reveals the sources of betrayal of childhood which appears in these novels like a sublime sign reflecting primarily fantasies of adults about children. I argue that this sign does not correspond to real childhood, but enables writers to construct multifunctional phantoms of the child and childhood which become useful tools in socio-cultural “games” played by adults.

Senility and youthfulness

In the 17th century, at the dawn of modern civilization, childhood became an essential phenomenon which enabled the bourgeoisie to build the social and capitalist order (Giddens 1990). According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the most prominent representative of thinkers focusing on childhood at that time, culture is created by capable intellect and the demand of the heart. In other words, a man who desires “the state of nature” or harmony should strive to resolve the crucial problem between the individual and the community. Therefore, Rousseau’s man tries to establish an internal cohesion in order to create a rational dimension for his own existence (Baczko 2009). Moreover, a pattern of “the state of nature”, in other words a moral code, is a crucial element of the empowerment process, which in Rousseau’s thought links philosophy with a psychological state. This is a condition of a mental hesitation between recollection and dream. Recollection relates to something that does not exist, but a man can sense it as something lost; whereas, a dream includes a longing capable of finding sustainable aspirations. Rousseau’s idea of the moral code consists of the elements producing a particular tension as a result of an internal conflict and a feeling of strangeness (Rousseau 2003).

The rationalization process is important because it makes it possible to mitigate this psychological “struggle”, which is an inextricable part of the social reality of the

modern civilization. Hence, in this context, the intellectual process of discovering or inventing childhood enhances the creation of a social framework of a “storytelling” about a child as a valid member of the modern community (Ariès 1995). It is very interesting that childhood emerged in philosophical discourse when Comte de Buffon, a famous French scientist, published his *Histoire Naturelle* (1749) and dedicated the ninth chapter of his work to both death and senility (Bois 1989). Buffon’s explanations of the decay of the old body (between 35 and 40 years old) had legal and social ramifications. First of all, there was an increasing number of works focused on the length of human life. Also, the registration of old people began during the second part of the 18th century. For instance, Augustin-Martin Lottin collected in his *L’Almanach de la Vieillesse* (1761-1770) approximately 2,000 100-year-old men (Bois 1989). While the findings of Lottin’s “research”, which encompassed the period since the Old Testament times, mixed sociological facts with mythological figures and events, they initiated reflection about the significance of old age in human life in Western science. Moreover, a few demographers from different European countries (e.g. William Derham, Abraham de Moivre, Pehr Wilhelm Wargentin, Jean-Baptiste Moheau) examined the structure of their communities and collected data essential to analyse the age pyramid.

I argue that childhood was discovered or invented jointly with senility in the Enlightenment in order to enable modern society to be better managed by authorities. Both the first and the last period of human life absorb material and non-material resources to protect the sustainable development of the dynamic structure of modern society. Furthermore, the economic system of the Western countries was turning to capitalism during the 18th century and it was consequently necessary to appoint precisely the pivotal borders in human life measured by work efficiency in the capitalist system. Youthfulness and senility in modern society probably became a new pattern of the traditional topos of *puer senex*, which dates back to classical antiquity (Curtius 1997). Yet, in the new circumstances (capitalism, neo-liberalism), the relationships between youth and maturity, child and adult, young people and old people, are based on competitiveness, economic differences, the protection of private property, and the building of state autonomy by the formation of capital (Giddens 1990). One of the crucial elements worth enhancing as supportive of the co-existence of child and adult in capitalism is confidence. Erik Erikson argues:

But, to repeat this in more dogmatic form, just as there is a basic affinity of the problem of basic trust to the institution of religion, the problem of autonomy is reflected in the basic political and legal organization and that of initiative in the economic order. Similarly, industry is related to technology; identity to social stratification; intimacy to relationship patterns; generativity to education, art, and science; and integrity, finally, to philosophy. The study of society must concern itself with the relationship of these institutions to each other, and with the ascent and the decline of institutions as organizations (Erikson 1977: 251).

Nowadays the trust between child and adult is undermined by pop culture even though such public institutions as school, courts or Child Protective Service strive to support the current “moral code” or public order (Gittins 1998). Nonetheless, it is a very tough and complex situation because the new media have produced and distributed innumerable images of childhood which mostly do not relate to the world of real children.

The simulacrum of childhood

The education process, literature, music, theatre, cinema, television, and new media have offered best ways to develop a sense of trust between the young generation

and adults, with the latter receiving “parental” tools to manage childhood. Furthermore, the modern civilization has produced plenty of images or signs imitating children’s experience although these representations do not demonstrate the actual world of children. Abundant also in literature, these signs do not indicate “the paths” for the reader (young and adult) towards an authentic childhood. Artistic and intellectual visions of youthfulness spread by common means of communication include mainly the simulacrum of childhood. Of course, most ancient artistic paintings and sculptures depicting childhood contained some surplus of the idealization of children, but the power of their interaction with the audience was limited. In addition, pop culture has had a predominant influence on the process of creating social connections among members of modern/postmodern societies. Thus, the child and the adult have become particular “players” in socio-cultural “games” whose rules are based on the mechanism of the capitalist system. However, the recent heritage determining social, cultural, and psychological relationships between the young and the adult generations is being replaced not only by new patterns of behaviours or attitudes, but also by a novel hierarchy of cultural values. Fiske argues:

Culture [...] is a constant succession of social practices; it is therefore inherently political, it is centrally involved in the distribution and possible redistribution of various forms of social power. Popular culture is made by various formations of subordinated and disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that disempowers them. It is therefore contradictory and conflictual to its core. The resources – television, records, clothes, video games, language – carry the interests of the economically and ideologically dominant [...]. But hegemonic power is necessary, or even possible, only because of resistance, so these resources must also carry contradictory lines of force that are taken up and activated differently by people situated differently within a social system (Fiske 2011: 2).

According to Neil Postman, the author of the famous book *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982), distinctions between childhood and adulthood have become blurred because both children and adults participate in the global circulation of the entertainment market. Postman claims that resistance against aggressive media (e.g. television) which are promoting cultural patterns dedicated to the adult-child is difficult. Therefore, the exposure of children to media is still increasing and the authorities have not been willing to “monitor carefully what they [children] are exposed to” (Postman 1982: 152). Arguably, both children and adults have been co-creating and consequently co-consuming diverse pop cultural products for a few decades. However, television and new media reveal mainly recent cultural practices, connected with the increasing significance of the household and, first of all, privacy or intimacy in everyday life already in 19th century (Giddens 1992).

Today we are inundated with multimedia images of children and childhood. These images are managed by adults although cyberspace (e.g. social media, YouTube, fan fiction, blogs) have encouraged young people to participate in socio-cultural activity. It can be a result of the new media literacy among the younger generation and their gaining advantage over adults. Even so, the phenomenon of unique (real) childhood has been engulfed by the accelerated production of various representations of the child for the public space. Childhood has been replaced by the image of childhood, at first photography and next motion pictures¹. And thus has started a long epoch of adults’

¹ The “protection” idea of the child against motion pictures appeared within three decades since the first public cinema festival prepared by August and Luis Lumière (1895). See the twelve-volumes publication *Motion Pictures and Youth. The Payne Fund Studies* (1933) and N. Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*, London 2012.

search for their lost, magnificent or horrible childhood. The films showing a child on the large screen (e.g. *The Kid* with young actor Jackie Coogan or *Stand Up and Cheer!* with young actress Shirley Temple) and children's literature, with which authors try to capture an essence of the world of childhood intimacy better and better (e.g. Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, James Matthew Barrie, Alan Alexander Milne, Tove Jansson, Janusz Korczak, Kornel Makuszyński, Jan Brzechwa), create very persuasively "polished" (artificial) childlike worlds. I claim that it was the first step toward the betrayal of childhood constructed as an inspiring and attractive phenomenon referring to the socio-cultural issues of the contemporary Western world. Meanwhile, modern childhood disseminated in different pieces of art, but also psychological (Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget) and pedagogical discourses (Édouard Claparède, Maria Montessori, Célestin Freinet, Janusz Korczak) has become an essential element of our communication. For instance, artists of the international avant-garde movement (e.g. German Expressionists or Italian Futurists) utilised an "innocent eye" in order to refresh the language of art. And thus, a naive and childish attitude in the perception of the world enabled artists to identify precisely social, cultural, and political issues of modern societies. Furthermore, the development of the education system in the Western world changed the idea of vulnerable childhood into a problem relevant in the public space. A varied pattern of childhood was recorded in pieces of art during the 20th century, which resulted in generating a substantial heritage of this period. I suppose that including the scintillating reflections or rethinking of an imaginary world of childhood has been determining the relationship between child and adult since World War 2. It could be concluded that the media are the main source of dynamic transformations of the child's position in our daily life. Adults create a simulacrum of young people through literature, theatre, cinema, and computer games and therefore they substitute "real" childhood with a sign of childhood "which holds that nothing exists" (Baudrillard 1994: 12). Nonetheless, childhood in different dimensions of contemporary life is still a major challenge for adults. Goodenough argues:

The various and universal quest to construct secret space is considered by Edward O. Wilson a "fundamental trait of human nature" of "ultimate value to survival". Although architects, city planners, sociologists, and urban historians research adult behaviours in public and private spaces, much less is known about how children explore the outdoors, make imaginary friends, or find havens from violence. What causes them to gravitate to certain locales in quest of comfort, excitement, self-awareness, or beauty and avoid other areas? Conceptions of childhood past, present, and future have been organized around such issues as innocence and deviance, safety and abuse, contemporary "kinderkultur" or the "disappearance" of childhood. But understanding how collective experience, animism, or a child's sense of injustice yield empowerment or liberation, in what D. W. Winnicott calls "transitional spaces" is a far more complex endeavour (Goodenough 2003: 3).

It could be possible that the children's and adults' hemispheres still penetrate each other and thus the recent boundary dividing and ordering our daily life was dissolved into a homogenous (pop culture) space. It is obvious that contemporary children's literature enables us to emphasise both the moral and the entertaining dimensions of the "messages" being sent to young readers. It is hard not to agree with Maria Nikolajeva's claim that children's literature was established by adults and contains adulthood references. The ramifications of this "tough possessing" vary, but researches still deliberate over the signification of the general term "children's literature". Contemporary art has been substantially shaped by changes resulting from the active participation of young generations in culture. Therefore, according to Nikolajeva, the nearest future of children's literature can inspire academic discussions about pivotal terms in humanities: "Adult

authors ostensibly write children's books from wider experience, larger vocabulary, higher cognitive capacity – biological and psychological facts hard to dismiss. Yet maybe the term children's literature will one day be reserved for literature *by* children, just as children's culture today includes children's own stories, drawings, and play" (Nikolajeva 2009: 23).

This is only one aspect of the phenomenon under discussion because the images of a fuzzy childhood can be utilised to formulate the patterns of the discipline of reality – attitudes, behaviours, and skills. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the fanciful worlds dedicated to children as a result of a complex socio-cultural process which started almost 200 years ago. The pictures of the child have been absorbing diverse strategies of communication between adults and young people, extending from a strictness attitude to children to a non-strictness one. Nonetheless, the heritage of the adult predominant "voices" creating children's literacy discourses still endures nowadays, too.

Young figures in a "maturity" world

As a result of the rapid changes taking place in contemporary society, triggered by the pop cultural mechanism, childhood is becoming one of the useful objects necessary to indicate current problems, e.g. discrimination, violence, and poverty. Notwithstanding all positive consequences of this strategy, a massive implementation of images of children is the next step towards the betrayal of childhood. This phenomenon quite visibly emerges in the latest Polish children's literature of the last decade, whose subject matter refers to events from both recent and distant European history. A young character placed in the middle of the war or another conflict situation is converted to someone whose appearance is still childlike although he or she often behaves like an adult or is presented as a heroic child.

For instance, the theme of the short novel *Moje cudowne dzieciństwo w Aleppo* (2017) (Eng. *My wonderful childhood in Aleppo*) by Grzegorz Gortat is the horrible experiences children and adults caused by the present war in Syria. The main character, teenage Jasmin, with her parents and brothers, Tarik and Nabil, takes part in the war horror as a witness and victim of the war atrocities. The writer's strong condemnation of the war in Syria is very persuasive because the essential words contained in this book were uttered by the vulnerable young girl. The reader witnesses Tarik's death through Jasmin's eyes: "I saw that Tarik slowed down; crouched down despite the warning. I saw his inclined small back. Suddenly, there was a roar and a cloud of a dirt covered him. It was not dense, it fell down rapidly and yet I was trying to argue with myself for a moment that it was a good sign." (Gortat 2017: 66) Gortat's novel depicts mainly Jasmin's internal and intimate world reflecting the horror of the Syrian war. Her reflections, feelings, and attitudes to the real world and other people, for instance neighbours uncle Husajn, who cooperates with the troops of strange "soldiers", parents and friends are marked by a mature awareness which includes only few elements of childhood. Even though Gortat's young character spends her free time in the playground and is also taught by the academic Safik from time to time, she still behaves like a mature person. Jasmin's vulnerable appearance is utilised as an argument against the war. In other words, an interesting and thrilling description of the madness of the contemporary war in Syria is created by the selected cultural images of childhood although not from a child's perspective. According to Ludwik Bandura, who in 1947 conducted an empirical study on impact of World War 2 on the condition of Polish children, in reality the atrocity of war rapidly destroys children's hearts and minds (Bandura 2004). Hence, Gortat's

reliance on a pure childlike innocent character (e.g. Jasmin, Tarik, Nabil) to analyse the evil of war is merely a phantom belonging to an adult's imagination.

Jasmin, her brothers, and friends look like children and their behaviours include the typical features of a child. It is the author's strategy that enables the mitigation of the cruelty of the war. Nonetheless, Gortat utilises a really "strong" image of childhood in order to reveal the roots of evil. Yet this phenomenon of childhood does not exist in the Aleppo Syria. Goodness and evil, as well as truth and lie, penetrate into both children's and adults' hearts and minds, but only the adult can resist evil more effectively. It is not a mistake on the part of the writer, but a result of a general literary creativeness which has been emerging over the last few decades in public discourse including children's literature. In opposition to popular children's books, a few sophisticated children's texts portray young characters as nobly "responsible" for the metaphorical evil (contemporary fairy tales, fantasy, science fiction) or different kinds of abnormal behaviours (realistic forms). The vision of well-behaved and brave children, as well as funny pictures of "brats" who cause confusion among adults, delivers a false message about young people and contemporary patterns of childhood. Stereotypical representations of the child and childhood are shaped by two simultaneous phenomena. The first is a result of a strong desire to improve and refresh relevant relationships by active members of society. The second phenomenon is anchored in a "dreaming adulthood" which searches its own childhood times for enviable simulacra of childhood. Therefore, personal elements and pieces of intimacy are mixed with the public flows of the images of childhood. A good example of this process is Jacek Dukaj's contemporary fairy tale or fantasy *Wroniec* (Dukaj 2009), the plot of which consists of both historical elements referring to the period of the martial law in Poland (from 13 December 1981 to 22 July 1983) and the intimate memories of the author, who was a seven-year-old-boy at that time (Sterczewski 2010).

Adaś, the main character of this novel, has to struggle with the antagonist *Wroniec*, whose name was coined from the official abbreviation of *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego* (the Military Council for National Salvation – WRON), a major administrative body during the martial law. The world in Dukaj's novel was built with a few transformed real events and elements which were an integral component of the daily life during the martial law in Poland. In the first part of the story, Adaś loses his whole family: his father, mother, grandmother, and sister are probably kidnaped by *Wroniec*. The vulnerable boy is alone in a horrible world in which troops of police oppress citizens and also Adaś. But suddenly, a neighbor, Pan Beton (Mr Concrete), helps Adaś and protects him in the subsequent parts of the plot. Although, *Wroniec*'s power extends very quickly and rapidly engulfs and enslaves the minds of the city dwellers, some people organize a movement of resistance in which Adaś participates as a child witness.

Dukaj utilises a child figure in his novel in order to depict the less tragic aspect of Polish history. Of course, the fairy tale genre mitigates the actual events which happened during the martial law. Moreover, the metaphorical elements of the presented world, first of all the spatial form filled by the strange vehicles (e.g. Machine-Producing-Greyness) and figures (e.g. Mr Beton, *Wroniec*), become an appropriate background for the child character looking for his kidnapped family. In addition, this ghastly story seems to take place in the child's mind or imagination and could be a result of Adaś's real illness. We know his grandmother takes his temperature at the beginning of the book. In the final scenes, the child wakes up in the early morning, but he still has a runny nose and a sore throat.

Dukaj's description and analysis of the martial law in an ethical context were motivated by the stereotypical child's nightmares. The picture of childhood in *Wroniec*, as well as the child's feelings, dreams, and behaviours, has taken the form of an intellectual "tool" essential for adults to tell their own stories.

The motto from Lewis Carroll's novel initiated this work. Indeed, Dukaj's fairy tale has a lot to do with *Alice in Wonderland*. At first, there is plenty of Carroll's language invention, not only formative, which is one of highlights of *Wroniec*. Even the humorous rhymes switch on in the story. Secondly, and importantly, like Alice, Adaś wants to grasp, by all means, a sense of the adult world in order to reveal the rules which govern it. The fact that he desires to regain his family is just a plot motivation. In fact – no longer Adaś, but Dukaj – wants to regain the past (Nowacki 2010)².

The elements of childhood and children's understanding of the world are filtered in Gortat's and Dukaj's novels by the adult desires and aims. The authors omit experiences of young people in their novels because they wanted to gain a functional or efficient picture of childhood. Focusing on the details of a particular environment, they present the war and violence mechanism.

Another Polish author, Joanna Rudniańska, goes back to the World War 2 in her short novel *XY* (2012). Her young characters witness the Holocaust tragedy although the author uses representation of a child in order to analyse evil of the war less frequently than Gortat and Dukaj (Wróblewski 2017). The novels about the Shoah include certain elements of the documentary form (e.g. diary, memories, letter), which enables the author to demonstrate children's tragedy caused by the death of their parents, neighbours and other people. The young twins from *XY* experience evil because violence and death in their world are ubiquitous. Their qualities and personalities resemble more those of an adult than of a child. Their tranquillity and serenity help them to live through the war nightmare. The girls bravely suffer a long separation in order to fortunately meet in the final scene of the novel. Rudniańska's young characters do not lose any human characteristics although the twins have experienced the death of their whole family. The child figure from another novel about the Holocaust, *Bezsennosc Jutki* (2012) (Eng. *The Sleeplessness of Jutka*) by Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala, also escapes from Łódź ghetto thanks to the sacrifice of several people. For the author, Jutka is a little witness to a poignant tragedy of the Jews. Nonetheless, she gets through from the death zone to the living zone with aunt Ester and then starts to consider her future optimistically. The twins from Rudniańska's *XY* and the girl from Combrzyńska-Nogala's *Bezsennosc Jutki* are presented as heroic characters able to passively resist evil and also remain innocent children. The new rules of literary fiction enable the authors to create the characters of children out of the fragments of both imagined childhood and adulthood, childishness and maturity.

Conclusion

Children's literature presenting a child trapped in evil worlds, for instance the war in Syria, the Holocaust and the martial law in Poland, enable writers to construct a new pattern of young characters who include the elements of both childhood and adulthood. The maturity accompanying childlikeness co-creates a framework for the characters of

² „Rzecz otwiera motto z Lewisa Carrolla. I rzeczywiście z *Przygodami Alicji w Krainie Czarów* baśń Dukaja ma wiele wspólnego. Po pierwsze, pełno tu Carrollowskiej inwencji językowej, nie tylko słotwórczej, co jest jedną z atrakcji *Wronca*. W opowieść wcinają się nawet dowcipne rymowanki. Po drugie i ważniejsze, Adaś niczym Alicja za wszelką cenę chce się połączyć w tajemniczym świecie dorosłych, oczywiście po to, żeby wykryć rządzące nim prawa. To, że chce odzyskać rodzinę, jest tylko motywacją fabularną. Tak naprawdę – już nie Adaś, lecz Dukaj – chce odzyskać przeszłość”. My translation.

contemporary children's literature. As can be expected, problems of today demand childlike witnesses who are suspended between tender age and maturity. Therefore, through these figures the authors can comment on varied forms of evil in the present world. Moreover, the different signs of transformed childhoods enhance the crucial content of the messages referring to the postmodern community rather than to the coherent and traditional picture of childhood. Furthermore, the betrayal of childhood is also an inevitable result of socio-cultural processes, which demands yet new incentives for the sustainable development of young people who nowadays very rapidly start puberty and abandon their childhood.

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THE BETRAYAL OF CHILDHOOD IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

In my article, I focus on the relationship between a child and adult in socio-cultural perspective in order to demonstrate how the representations of childhood are used by Polish authors of children's literature in critical descriptions of war and other forms of violence. At first, I relate to the crucial moment in the European history in which there appeared a discourse of senility and youthfulness. Next, I present the main consequences of the "production" and "distribution" of images of childhood in pop culture. In the last part of my discussion, I analyse novels by Joanna Rudniańska, Jacek Dukaj, Grzegorz Gortat and Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala, who, in their works about the Holocaust, the martial law in Poland and the war in Syria create the world in which young characters possess certain features belonging to the adult. My analyses demonstrate the sources of betrayal of childhood which appears in these novels like a sublime sign reflecting primarily adults' fantasies about the child. As I show, this sign contains very few real issues referring to contemporary childhood.



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TOMORROW'S KIN: INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AFTER THE GENOME

I am not fundamentally one with the Earth, its people, or its multitudes of life;
I do not view myself as a beholden spawn or child of the universe.
I am alone and distinct.
(Istvan, *The Transhumanist Wager*)

Introduction

In her recent publications, Donna Haraway attempts to conceptualize the posthuman¹ – or, as she calls it, chthuluized – future and repetitively uses the phrase “making kin,” which underlines the intimate character of the bond connecting today’s “parents” with future “children”. The very same word – “kin” – appears in the first volume of Nancy Kress’s trilogy, published in 2017, in relation to the possible contact with extra-terrestrials. It is apparent that in both speculative fiction and speculative philosophy the cognitive category of familial relationship with the unknown is promoted via an easy catchphrase imbued with implied etymologically-backed optimism as to the shared nature, enabling solidarity and defying dystopian technophobic and ecoskeptical scenarios.

And yet, the frameworks proposed by the ideologies driving the technological progress, extolled by the hopeful OTHER IS BROTHER categorization, seem to defyutopian solidarity. The epigraph from Istvan’s belligerent novel (69) encapsulates the transhuman ideal of individual autonomy. Although the word “child” is frequently a label slapped on the enhanced posterity (to mention Moravec’s *Mind’s Children*, 1988), their emancipation from their creators leaves little room for bonding. Lilley (2013: 14) reminds us that Kurzweil has openly preached the disconnection of the posthuman from the human (*The Singularity Is Near*, 2005), and Labreque (2014) and Roduit (2016) take this disconnection for granted, voicing concerns over intergenerational relationships and solidarity. As succinctly put by McKibben (2003, qtd. in Lilley 2013: 37): “the first enhanced child will ‘see a gap between himself and human history’ (64) and ‘[h]e’ll be marooned forever on his own small island, as will all who follow him.’ (65)”.

Creating ALife does not usually equal “making kin,” and doubts arise if the kinship based on shared nature is not undermined by tampering with the genome with the use of such tools as CRISPR-Cas9, by Teilhardian raising bots and rivers to the level of personhood, or by communicating with animals (Zoolingua) and meditating upon the internal life of rocks (the object-oriented ontology framework). This is why, in fact, we are “staying with the trouble”. The profound question if solidarity – intergenerational solidarity included – is a solely human privilege, still needs consideration. One of the facets of this question is the viability of the rhetoric adopted by the posthuman theorists:

¹Transhumanism and posthumanism are often used interchangeably, as their areas of interest largely overlap, although the foundational mindsets of both of them are diverse. In the following pages, posthumanism will be understood as an umbrella term for many concepts that arise in connection with the technological and scientific advancements (e.g. cloning, chimeras, but also androgyny, prosthetic body or protean personality). It entails the general question of what it means to be human (as posed by Francis Fukuyama in his seminal *Our Posthuman Future*, 2002). Transhumanism would be seen as a philosophy promoting breaching the boundaries of the “natural” in search of perfection and immortality. (More 2013: 21, Waters 2006: 50)

poising the weighty doubt on the shared nature scales, we arrive at a disturbed balance disabling valid judgements as to the choice of words, because the ALife status as human progeny is debatable. It seems, though, that posthuman beings are inevitably imagined as children in the speculative discourse, from *Frankenstein* to *Battlestar Galactica*. The images of vengeful Cylons and addled “rewounds” become foundational memes for the discussion of intergenerational solidarity between human and posthuman.

I would like to explore the prolific output of young adult science fiction of the recent years and see how popular writers -- Neal Shusterman, Bernard Beckett, Dan Wells and James Patterson--attempt to tackle the complexity of the existential questions limned above. Despite being marketed at young adult audiences, they reach out far beyond the traditionally perceived age boundaries², shaping the future attitudes of mass audiences and revealing the literary resonance with the present bioethical issues. I am especially interested in three areas that appear as exigent both in fiction and in the overarching discussion of the fate of family in the posthuman world. The most basic dimension to consider is the genetic continuity and its possible influence on the formation of intergenerational relations. For the discussion of this dimension, I am going to refer back to Dawkins’s influential “selfish gene” theory. Another area which is subject to heated debate is the existence of subjective continuity, i.e. the common “human” nature or soul, shared by humanity and altered/enhanced humanity (such as hybrids, chimeras, clones etc.). The philosophers that most famously contest the existence of such continuity are Hans Jonas, Francis Fukuyama and Jürgen Habermas. Finally, the newest cycle by Neal Shusterman, *The Arc of a Scythe* (2016-), unavoidably brings to attention postgenerationality in a fully transhuman world where death has been abolished. It builds upon such social issues as alternative models of family and overpopulation/depopulation debate. In this way the discussion of the intergenerational solidarity with the posthuman will be placed within three main perspectives – biological, psychic and social – which should yield a fairly representative overview of the problems and invite further research.

Biological Continuity

The “transgenerational moral imperative” (Gardner 2003: 212-213 qtd. in Douglas 2013: 129), invoked by the proponents of human enhancement, is a challenge thrown in the imaginary face of the “fickle tinkerer” – evolution (Buchanan 2011: 29), one of the chief forces transhumanism fights against. While they accept the idea of progression over time and embrace the notion of Darwinian “survival of the fittest,” they wish to seize control over the process or even to attain the highest possible rung in the evolutionary ladder. According to Gardner’s imperative, the ethical side of the debate is as well as settled: we have a moral obligation to enhance the life of future generations. If we withhold any good from our children, we, as a species, cannot talk about solidarity.

Obviously, such an approach generates multiple objections, not the least of which is the problem of agency of future children, doomed to become “puppet people” of the interests geared by parental investment. Richard Dawkins’s “selfish gene” theory (1976) emphasizes the egoistic, instinctual nature of parental care. The motivation to reproduce stems, according to Dawkins, from the drive to perpetuate ourselves. Seemingly, then, it would provide supportive arguments for the “transgenerational moral imperative” – *le souci d’autrui* would in fact equal *le souci de soi*. This is the foundation for the confidence with which many transhumanists, notably James Hughes, dismiss the possibility of

²In compliance with Rose’s “impossibility of children’s fiction” principle (1984) and 2015 Nielsen’s report on young adult literature readership (80% of YA literature readers are over 25).

inflicting harm on the coming generations: “Few parents intend to make their children less intelligent or less capable of autonomy and communication. If anything, parents’ choices will generally expand children’s ability to communicate, make decisions, and control their own lives...” (2004: 149, in Lilley 2013: 1). However, the selfish basis of this fully materialistic framework sets the limits for the intergenerational solidarity and makes fairly clear that any tampering with the genome would instantaneously destroy the basis for any accord or unity. Of course, we can imagine reverse solidarity, obligating the enhanced children to elevate the parents, but it is not seriously considered within the forward-thinking futurism, which ignores the issue of postgenerationality, as will be discussed below.

The tug of war between genetic “altruism” and “selfishness” largely shapes the interactions of humans and posthumans portrayed in juvenile science-fiction. The most forward treatment of the topic comes from James Patterson, whose multi-volume *Maximum Ride* cycle (2005-15) is hinged upon the idea of creating recombinants: the children subjected to germline engineering to transform them into Avians (a merger with the avian DNA) and Erasers (human-lupine hybrids). The main heroine, Maximum, is cheated into thinking that her mother is Dr Janssen, the Director of Itex, a global company that has embarked on a transhuman mission to save the Earth by depopulation and enhancing the remaining people. This device enables the author to simulate an actual intergenerational conflict. In the confrontation that comes in volume three, *Saving the World and Other Extreme Sports*, the poignant issues of solidarity are brought to the forefront, as Max faces the realization that humanity created posthumans not as an actual improvement on humanity, but as test subjects, objectified from their inception.

“I’m making the ultimate sacrifice to create a new world. I gave my only child to the cause”.

“That’s not the ultimate sacrifice!” I said, outraged. “Giving yourself would be the ultimate! Giving me up is like the second-to-ultimate! See the difference?” ...

She turned away and sat at her desk. “I blame Jeb for letting you be such a smart aleck”.

I stared at her. “I blame you for altering my DNA! I mean, I have wings, lady! What were you thinking?”

“I was thinking that the world’s population is destroying itself,” she said in a steely tone I recognized. (I have one just like it.) “I was thinking that someone had to stand up and take drastic action before this entire planet is incapable of supporting human life. Yes, you’re my daughter, but you’re still just part of the big picture, part of the equation. I was thinking I’d do anything to make sure the human race survives. Even if it seems awful in the short term. In future history books, I’ll be heralded as the savior of humanity” (Patterson 2008: 282-283).

What transpires from the above exchange is that transhumanist thought calls for the reformulation of altruism in the face of rendering natural evolution null.³ Selfishness in the transhuman context acquires a whole new dimension in comparison to the Darwinian theories, which assume the replacement of one generation with another. Transhumanism, which actively seeks to abolish death, challenges the egoistic-altruistic relation embedded in the “selfish gene” theory: the perpetuation of oneself may not need to require any investment in the offspring.

Despite his visible enthusiasm for enhancement practices (e.g. the portrayal of the dog Total), Patterson’s answer to the posthuman solidarity conundrum is deeply bioconservative. It is later revealed that in fact Max’s real mother is Dr. Martinez, with whom the girl feels immediate connection. The solidarity with humanity professed by Dr

³ This is currently a subject of great interest both practical and theoretical, v. M. Hauskeller, *Moral Enhancement* (2018); S. Matthew Liao, *Moral Brains* (2016); J. Hughes’s Cyborg Buddha project; J. Savulescu, *Unfit for the Future* (2012), as well as of research on non-invasive brain stimulation.

Janssen, which makes genetic experimentation imperative, works to the exclusion of both groups: unenhanced humans and enhanced Avians, and so she is cast as a villain of the story. As observable in the whole cycle, and rather expected, the solidarity forms mostly on the basis of genetic similarity. Besides the alienation of the hybrids from the unenhanced human population, there exists deadly rivalry between Erasers and Avians, to the degree of fratricide. Both “species” are vying for the attention of Jeb Batchelder, an ambiguous father-figure, and are modified to fight with each other in a cruel survival game. Jeb can be blamed for the tragedy of Max and her brother, Ari, as well as for many other atrocities within the cycle – he objectifies his own children and is duly punished.

The motif of genetic continuity and interdependency is also the fulcrum of Dan Wells’s *Partials* sequence (2012-14). The ParaGen company is tasked with the creation of supersoldiers, BioSynths (Partials), extremely efficient thanks to multiple enhancements and, most importantly, the link, a pheromone-based communication system styled after animal world. By transmitting their feelings and observations, it forms a semi-telepathic connection, which allows them to work in sync.

Despite being genetically different, Partials tried to overcome their initial purpose as live weapons and fit into the human society. The discrimination they faced from those who created them led to a disastrous war and destroyed any possibility of building solidarity. Notwithstanding “humane” conditions of work, they were impoverished, ghettoized and denied the right to upward mobility and their posthuman pursuit of happiness, which led to their rebellion. As Samm, one of the Biosynth protagonists, underlines:

“We hated you,” he said. “I hated you”. He turned his head to catch her eye. “But I didn’t want genocide. None of us did”.

“Somebody did,” said Kira. Her voice was thick with held-back tears.

“And you lost every connection to the past,” said Samm. “I know exactly how you feel”.

“No, you don’t,” Kira hissed. “You say whatever you want, but don’t you dare say that. We lost our world, we lost our future, we lost our families —”

“Your parents were taken from you,” said Samm simply. “We killed ours when we killed you. Whatever pain you feel, you don’t have that guilt stacked on top of it” (Wells 2014: 3585-3597).

Thus, both the genetic divide between Partials and humans and the sense of connection among Partials themselves are shown as a fundamental gap making posthuman communication neigh impossible, and as enforcing species solidarity rather than encouraging the inter-species one. However, these “natural” tendencies clash with ironic conflicts, introduced by the author. For instance, a new type of BioSynth, Kira, is brought up with human children in a human society, which underscores the intergenerational conflict overwritten on the human-posthuman relations. On a more global scale, only by parabiosis can both races evade imminent and horrible death: humans are dying of RM-infection, a biological weapon used during the Partial War, and BioSynths rot alive when they get past their expiration date. The mutual dependency, slyly imprinted in the genetic makeup of the supersoldiers, requires both races⁴ to live in close proximity to be able to breathe in one another’s pheromones and thus neutralize the deadly Failsafes of the scientific design.

Overall, the above-mentioned juvenile science-fictional texts seem to perpetuate the belief that seizing control of the evolutionary process, which entails and thwarting

⁴ Wells actually perceives the human/posthuman relation as a problem of race that generates similar problems, subject to similar metaphorization and – implicitly – to the same critical approaches that are used in the study of race issues. (e.g. Wells 2014: 19502-19503).

natural selection is going against the grain of the communal interest. The conviction that intergenerational solidarity is gene-dependent prevails and results in alarmist imaginations of tampering with the genome. The strained, to say the least, relations with biological parents lead to the death of the makers and to the indelible patricidal sign stigmatizing the lives of their progeny.

Subjective Continuity

As could be noticed in the previous section, the biological continuity is not a prerequisite to form a bond conditioning intergenerational solidarity. Granted, Max is appalled to find out that Jeb Batchelder allowed his own children to be modified, but she is not so much horrified by the very genetic difference as by the apparent lack of parental instinct, which should be biologically programmed. Similarly, in the *Partials* sequence, Kira's pursuit of her father, Armin Dhurvasula, ends up with the discovery of a scheming Blood Man, "gene-modded" to the degree of losing all connection to either humans or Partials. He was a scientist who initially designed the supersoldiers, but his plan to build aeuropsychian world according to the ethics of biologically enforced cooperation failed. His diagnosis as to the reasons of the failure is surprising: "It was human nature that made it impossible, human and Partial" (Wells 2014: 19496).

Armin's behaviour upholds the argument about the shared nature between the human and the genetically-modified superhuman. However, it also brings up other aspects for discussion. First, the fact that Armin transforms into the Blood Man may be the result of his crossing the line when enhancing himself and losing what Fukuyama called "factor X," the inherent, elusive quality that defines humanity – and, as it appears, Partials. He preaches:

"Human and Partial will be no more ... There will only be one species, one perfect species. I've done it before. I've unlocked the human genome and arranged it in perfect order, like notes in a symphony. ... You," he said, "my daughter, built on the model of my own DNA, polished and refined through countless drafts until I had eliminated all trace of flaw or imperfection" (Wells 2014: 19528-19533).

In the end Kira does not accept Armin as her father: he turned into a homicidal monster, altered enough for her to seek connection with her adoptive mother, humans and Partials rather than with her biological progenitor and biotechnological creator.

The debate over the shared nature of humans and posthumans is passionate, becoming a fault line between ethicists considering the problems of human enhancement. The 1979 publication of Hans Jonas's *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* enjoined the powerful heuristic of fear and precautionary principle when it comes to the introduction of new technologies, firmly based on the belief in anthropocentric chosenness and uniqueness of human beings. In this view, people's inherent nature entails special dignity they enjoy among other beings in the world, and thus it is to be protected at all costs. The very word "nature" suggests the purity from enhancement and lack of control over this unidentified spiritual-corporeal quality which might be damaged by modifying any part of the body. The contemporary contestation of the anthropocentric paradigm necessitates, though, the redefinition of the notion of human nature and rethinking the possibilities of forming the bonds of solidarity on the basis of shared subjective qualities.

This shared subjectivity⁵ problem is boldly faced by Neal Shusterman in his *Unwind Dystology* (2007-15). The basis for his dystopian version of the future is the

⁵ Subjectivity here encompasses identity, memory, emotionality, soul.

institutionalized exchange of body parts between different people, which results in problems occasioned by the phenomenon of muscle memory⁶ and body image issues. The creation of a fully “rebound” Camus Comprix, a prototype of a superhuman made of choicest parts, raises multiple questions as to his derivativeness and the lack of individual identity. Although Cam partakes both in human genetic makeup as well as in some parts of subjectivity, he is not recognized as a continuation and legitimate progeny of mankind; rather, he is seen as a product and/or a Frankenstein⁷. This reflects the stance of ethicists like Habermas (2003), who – concerned especially with PGD and germline engineering – point out the unavoidable objectification of post-people as goods pre-designed for consumption. The questions of reporters at a disastrous press conference – “Do you dream their dreams? Do you feel their unwinding’s? Is he even alive?” (Shusterman 2013: 143) – testify to the confusion as to the approach we should take towards the ALife.

Shusterman deftly walks the wire hovering between according human nature to the posthuman being (as in: “I am more than the parts I’m made of!” and “I’m a hundred percent organic. Human... I’ll continue to grow as a human being” (Shusterman 2013: 144, 142).) and pointing to the uniqueness of Cam in the boy’s confession in a Catholic church.

“Why are you here, son?”

“Because I’m afraid. I’m afraid that I might not... be...”

“Your presence here proves you exist”.

“But as what? I need you to tell me that I’m not a spoon! That I’m not a teapot!”

“You make no sense. Please, there are people waiting”.

“No! This is important! I need you to tell me... I need to know... if I qualify as a human being”...

“I confess that I am humbled by your question. How can I speak to whether or not you carry a divine spark?”

“A simple yes or no will do”.

“No one on earth can answer that question, Mr. Comprix—and you should run from anyone who claims they can” (Shusterman 2014: 217-218).

Shusterman finishes his *Dystology* on an optimistic note, praising collective values and emphasizing the reunification on the individual, family and social levels. His tentative glance into the possibility of the actual posthuman subjective Otherness is fleeting; and the words of the priest are to be read rather as criticism of institutionalized religion than the affirmation of the incomprehensible. In the end Cam joins the human society and has a human girlfriend, which seems proof enough that he is considered by the author as “human”, and that his humanity is perceived as a positive value, effacing and sacrificing his otherness to enable solidarity – apparently defunct if one is not absorbed into the sameness of the community.

Nonetheless, human nature is sometimes portrayed in juvenile fiction as a disease, as in Beckett’s *Genesis*. In the posthuman society the individuals displaying a human spark are singled out and killed, on the principle stated by cyborg Art before he killed human Adam: “You were right, Adam...We are different. And difference is all that matters” (Beckett 2006: 177). The maintenance of this subjective discrepancy, conditioning the individuation and survival of species, requires severing the bonds with

⁶ Muscle memory phenomenon involves the involuntary acquisition of certain behaviours or skills possessed by the donor. In Shusterman’s dystopia the brain transplants result not only in knowledge and IQ acquisition, but also in inherited conditions (CyFy’s kleptomania).

⁷In accordance with the understanding of the name in the common parlance, and the use in Shusterman’s book.

the “parents” which, in extreme cases, leads to patricide – a frequent solution of the posthuman solidarity problem in YA dystopias. Yet again, the (post) anthropofagic scenario ends with an emetic gesture, proper for pubertal initiations. However, the pubertal pattern is coupled with the one taken from the heroic rites of passage: the posthuman children are digested and transformed within the belly of an anthropocentric monster, but on their way to be spat out, they cut their way through, replaying the killing of Uranus and displaying no solidarity whatsoever with their human tormentor.

Evidently, the complexities of subjectivity leave even less room for the intergenerational solidarity than the grounds of genetic makeup. The eupsychian visions of Shusterman, e.g. the rewinding of Cam, are counterbalanced and destabilized by transhuman individualism and patricidal emplotments of Wells and Beckett. It follows from the common contemporary belief in *psyche* being *soma*-dependent, which finds expression in the fear of breaking even the biological continuity. At the same time it professes a very transhuman tenet of the corruption of humanity, subscribing to the modern gnosis (Herrick 2003: 250-251).

Postgenerationality

It needs to be remarked that the posthuman characters that I presented in the previous sections envision the speculative or emergent models of reproduction, which are bound to redefine the conceptualization of family and generation. The Avians and most Erasers are – quite conservatively – carried by human mothers, and are genetically modified from their inception. The Biosynths are grown in vats. Art is built in a lab. Cam is pieced together from body parts harvested from others. Although the relationship with their “more human” parents reflects the struggles of ephebophobic society and is saturated with violence, it is still a relationship of succession and struggle for survival. In his newest *Arc of a Scythe* series, Shusterman builds upon transhuman immortalism, painting the picture of the utopian society no longer bound by the stiff categorizations of age and liberated from deadly effects of transience. In the world governed by A.I., the Thunderhead, people may choose their biological age at will, and it is fully subject to their individual flights of fancy: age can be reversed or pushed forward multiple times. Death is non-existent thanks to the constant surveillance and care of the A.I., and advanced nanotechnology. This variation on morphological freedom, which could be called aeterological⁸ freedom, creates an unprecedented situation of mingled⁹ generations.

The society Shusterman imagines reflects the problems of today’s extended families and alternative family models. People remarry multiple times at various age, creating ambiguous relations, visible in the cases of Rowan, Greyson and Tyger. All of them experience parental neglect and indifference. It is best encapsulated by Rowan’s observation that they are “lettuce-kids”: “sandwiched somewhere in the middle of large families... I got a couple of brothers that are meat, a few sisters that are cheese and tomatoes, so I guess I’m the lettuce” (Shusterman 2016: 18). Their being “alone together” (Turkle 2011) pushes them to such behaviours as developing relationship with the A.I. or to splatting (multiple suicide attempts). The destruction of traditionally-conceived bonds between generations, which immortality apparently entails, seems to force humans to seek solidarity with other beings.

⁸From Latin *aevum* (age, generation, time), which obviously entails the abolition of history.

⁹After Serres’ “mingled bodies”.

Immortal posthuman subjectivity differs from the one of Mortal Age, which is underlined multiple times especially in the first volume. Scythe Curie, one of the people charged with “gleaning” a statistical quota of people to avoid overpopulation, writes in her journal:

We are not the same beings we once were.

Consider our inability to grasp literature and most entertainment from the mortal age. To us, the things that stirred mortal human emotions are incomprehensible. Only stories of love pass through our post-mortal filter, yet even then, we are baffled by the intensity of longing and loss that threatens those mortal tales of love.

We could blame it on our emo-nanites limiting our despair, but it runs far deeper than that. Mortals fantasized that love was eternal and its loss unimaginable. Now we know neither is true. Love remained mortal, while we became eternal. Only scythes can equalize that, but everyone knows the chance of being gleaned in this, or even the next millennium is so low as to be ignored.

We are not the same beings we once were.

So then, if we are no longer human, what are we? (Shusterman 2016: 110)

As can be seen, the society has been enhanced not only physically, but also according to the precepts of emotional and moral enhancement, propagated e.g. by John Hughes, Julian Savulescu, David Pearce and S. Matthew Liao. The mood adjustment and the praise for empathy, together with “sustainability” of feelings and the abolition of extremes, such as love and pain, result in a perfect fictional society. Solidarity, liberated from the genetic and subjective bonds, which in a way force people into evolutionarily designed alliances, is still present, albeit on different plateaus (e.g. the master-apprentice relation). The intergenerational solidarity with vestiges of familial imagination is visible in people’s relations with the A.I.: an extremely individualized society praising limitless freedom, with no responsibility for the world, accepts the mercy of the paternalistic Thunderhead.

This type of utopianism is severely criticized by Brent Waters, a Christian ethicist. In his “Flesh Made Data: The Posthuman Project in the Light of Incarnation” (2014), he states:

If one is endeavoring to live for as long as possible, and perhaps for forever, then future generations are not only unnecessary, but may prove to be another external constraint imposed on the will or, even worse, unwanted competition.

This disdain for generational interdependency discloses both the lynchpin of the posthuman project and the reason why it is a perilous enterprise (297).

Shusterman in *The Arc of a Scythe* shows awareness of the influence of radical human enhancement on generationality, and yet, in accordance with his techno-friendly attitude (Biedenharn 2016, Shusterman 2018: 510, 528), shows the drawbacks of his utopia – controlled depopulation, the collapse of legal and linguistic structures for the description of extended relations, individual identity crises – as unavoidable dark lining of the silver singularitarian cloud, inherent in and conditioning any utopian project (v. L.T. Sargent’s critical utopia). The contingency of generationality with the view to contemporary struggle to abolish ageing paints a vivid question mark by the notion of intergenerationality and solidarity between different age groups.

Conclusions

The evidence from the speculative examples denies the possibility of human-posthuman solidarity, at least one envisioned within intergenerational framework, running along Jonas's precautionary principle and introducing a dystopian dissonance in the utopian projects of harmonious solidarity. While the analyzed texts reinforce the ideas of the selfish gene theory, the problem of human subjectivity is not so transparent. The posthuman seems to be always subsumed under the notion of "human" and validated by it. The issue of postgenerationality is raised only by Shusterman, perhaps due to the experimental character of immortalist research. Building real solidarity between generations that are biologically and subjectively different seems inconceivable. The enhancement philosophy is fundamentally egoistical, which leads to forming alliances only between those who partake in the sameness of the majority, and to the butchering of those who do not fit in. In fact, even the optimistic vision of us-topia, edified on the scaffolding of the communal spirit between I and the Other (as in the *Unwind Dystology*), ends up in Atwoodian ustopia (Frank 2013: 152): both utopia and dystopia, wherein the relationship is ever troubled.

This trouble partially stems from the fact that the analyzed narratives and their assorted ideologies and philosophies are heavily dependent on the socio-cultural systems that produced them and on the literary tradition they derive from. "Tomorrow's kin" is inscribed into the ready-made categories designed for the racial and ethnic Other, as well as encapsulate religious and postcolonial dilemmas. The presentation of the posthumans as children, "unsouled" pagans, animal cyborgs, mixed-race people, etc., does limit and direct the discussion of intergenerational solidarity to the varieties of justice and rights accorded to these groups. What is more, the proposed solutions are still the ones of white Western Christians, which brings about a necessary slant: "these Western habits of epistemological immodesty and ethical hubris, referring to the superimposing of one's own definition of benevolence (or love) on others (including future children) who may have different ideas in different context" (Kim 2014: 107). The lack of the answers to the questions arising in connection with the imminent results of technological advancements leaves one with multiple issues to consider. The notion of intergenerational solidarity for the posthuman era and the possibility of aetiological freedom are perhaps those most troubling and salient. At the same time, the imaginative categories and language used in fiction to deal with them bare the inherent biases inscribed in the discussion of otherness. The humanicidal scenarios appear as a valid danger which should prompt humanity to look for the ways of possible ways of forming bonds with "tomorrow's kin".

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**ANNA BUGAJSKA****TOMORROW'S KIN: INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AFTER THE**

One of the issues that emerges with regard to radical human enhancement is the destruction of the intergenerational connections. It is variously envisioned in science fiction, and we can speak of many possible plateaus on which the human continuity, which entails solidarity, can be contested. Contemporary young adult dystopias, such as Shusterman's *Unwind Dystology* (2007-15) and *The Arc of a Scythe* (2016-) cycles, Beckett's *Genesis* (2010), Patterson's *Maximum Ride* (2005-15) or Wells's *Partialis* (2009-14), very often conjoin the intergenerational issues typical of juvenile fiction with bioethical concerns in the posthuman and transhuman world. I look at the speculative futures of intergenerational solidarity from the point of view of the biological continuity, the subjective continuity and postgenerationality in an immortal society. In the majority of cases it may be observed how the child-adulthood dichotomy, with the superimposed adult normativity prejudice, threatens the coexistence of trans- and posthumans with their "parents," leading to the redefinition of altruism in the wake of the homicidal A-Life apocalypse. The relatively broad spectrum of the cases and perspectives I have selected yields a fairly comprehensive picture of contemporary projections of intergenerational solidarity "after the genome" (Herrick 2013).



**ODWAGA DO FANTAZJOWANIA – RECENZJA
KSIĄŻKI RONI NATOV**

Roni Natov, *The Courage to Imagine: The Child Hero in Children's Literature*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London 2018, ss. 216.

W maju 2018 roku na jednym z portali społecznościowych zmartwiony rodzic udostępnił zdjęcie szkolnego opowiadania o Madzi i magicznych zwierzętach autorstwa prawie dziesięcioletniego Natana wraz z komentarzem nauczycielki, która tekst przekreśliła, prosząc o napisanie go ponownie, tym razem „po ludzku”. Zachowanie polonistki spotkało się z krytyką kilku tysięcy internautów, podczas gdy zdolności do puszczenia wodzy fantazji chłopca zyskały ich uznanie, o czym świadczy choćby komentarz pisarki Sylwii Chutnik: „chciałabym umieć tak pisać”. Przywołana sytuacja pokazuje, że edukacja szkolna potrafi ograniczać dziecięcą wyobraźnię, jednakże dowodząc też, że fantazja jest naturalna i niezrównana. Jej nieograniczony potencjał stanowi temat przewodni wydanej na początku 2018 roku książki Roni Natov pt. *The Courage to Imagine: Children's Literature and the Child Hero*. (pol. *Odwaga do fantazjowania: Literatura dziecięca i dziecięcy bohater*). Opublikowana w serii „Perspectives on Children's Literature” wydawnictwa Bloomsbury Publishing, pozycja ta stanowi interesujące i zwięzłe kompendium wiedzy na temat wyobraźni i postaci dziecka-marzyciela w literaturze dla dzieci i młodzieży. Choć szeroki dobór tekstów może początkowo dziwić, lektura całości udowadnia, że nie jest przypadkowy, a wieloletnie doświadczenie dydaktyczne pomogło Natov, uznanej amerykańskiej nauczycielce

akademickiej (Brooklyn College, Nowy Jork, USA), wypracować przystępny styl, sytuujący książkę poza wąskim dyskursem naukowym.

W przeciwieństwie do wielu publikacji akademickich z długim, teoretycznym wprowadzeniem, w otwierającym *The Courage to Imagine* krótkim wstępie badaczka zwięźle tłumaczy dobór heterogenicznych tekstów przedstawiających dzieci z różnych kultur i środowisk. Natov wyjaśnia też znaczenie tytułowej wyobraźni, stwierdzając: „Wyobraźnia i kreatywna ekspresja mogą pomóc dzieciom radzić sobie z impulsami i mocnymi uczuciami, pełnią rolę testu trudnych emocji oraz oferują miejsce do ich wypróbowania i przetrzymania. Pozwalają zrozumieć to, co może być przytłaczające” (s. 4)¹. Do kwestii tych badaczka powraca w równie oszczędnym epilogu, dzięki czemu lektura zyskuje charakter przejrzystej kompozycji zamkniętej.

Pierwsze trzy z ośmiu rozdziałów są krótkie i dotyczą konkretnych zagadnień. Pierwszy z nich, zatytułowany *Landscapes of Childhood* (pol. *Pejzaże dzieciństwa*), składa się z dwóch podrozdziałów: *Pastoral: Forest, sky, river* (pol. *Pastoral: las, niebo, rzeka*) oraz *Interior landscapes: Private spaces* (pol. *Wewnętrzne pejzaże: przestrzenie prywatne*). Natov nakreśla w nim tło dla swych dalszych rozważań, pokazując istotną rolę natury – głównie lasu i przestrzeni wiejskich – w różnych wariantach klasycznych baśni, takich jak *Jaś i Małgosia*, *Czerwony Kapturek* czy *Królowna Śnieżka*. Drugi rozdział, zatytułowany *The Construction of Creative Child* (pol. *Konstrukcja kreatywnego dziecka*), poświęcony jest omówieniu postaci kreatywnego dziecka. Badaczka wskazuje w nim na

¹ „The imagination and creative expression can help children process impulses and strong feelings; it serves as a rehearsal for difficult

emotions, offers a place to try them out and also to store them. It provides a way of making sense of what may feel overwhelming” (4).

ewolucję rozumienia figury dziecka, począwszy od *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762) Jeana-Jacquesa Rousseau, przez *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (1960) Philippe'a Ariès, po *Designing the Creative Child* (2013) Amy Ogaty. Natov zwraca jednak uwagę, że kreatywność i wyobraźnia stanowią naturalny i nieodłączny atrybut dzieciństwa. W rozdziale *The Freedom to Imagine: Childhood Creativity and Socialization in the Work of William Steig* (pol. *Wolność fantazjowania: dziecięca kreatywność i socjalizacja w twórczości Williama Steiga*) autorka skupia się na książkach autora *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (1969), dowodząc, że w swej twórczości, a szczególnie w *Dominic* (1984) i *Abel's Island* (1976), pokazuje on nieograniczony potencjał dziecięcej wyobraźni.

Kolejne rozdziały są obszerniejsze i mają charakter międzyobszarowy. Czwarty, zatytułowany *Imagining Difference and Diversity* (pol. *Wyobrażając różnicę i różnorodność*), składa się z trzech podrozdziałów. Tytułowa różnorodność rozumiana jest tu w kategoriach klasy, płci i różnic kulturowych. W *The picture book and life story* (pol. *Książka obrazkowa i historia życia*) Natov nakreśla problematykę autobiografii w książkach obrazkowych, zwracając uwagę, że współcześni autorzy są bardziej eksperymentalni, gdyż cechuje ich bachtinowski dialogizm i przekraczanie binarnych norm. W *Difference and the spectacles: Owen and Mzee* (pol. *Różnica i gantunki: Owen i Mzee*) badaczka skupia się na wydanej w 2006 roku książce poświęconej małemu hipopotamowi uratowanemu z tsunami i jego przyjaźni ze 130-letnim żółwiem. Trzeci i najobszerniejszy podrozdział, zatytułowany *The young adult novel: Representing the cultural "other"* (pol. *Powieść dla młodych dorosłych: reprezentując kulturowego „innego”*), amerykańska literaturoznawczyni poświęca procesowi konstrukcji obcego w anglojęzycznej literaturze dla nastolatków i młodzieży. Natov najpierw opiera się na kanonicznych książkach poruszających odmienne spojrzenie na tożsamość i różnorodność etniczną w Stanach Zjednoczonych: *American Born Chinese*

Gene'a Luena Yanga i *The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* Shermana Alexie. Następnie przechodzi do analizy innych głosów mniejszości w powieści *A Wish After Midnight* Zetty Elliott (kolonializm i kwestia rasy) i bestsellerowej powieści graficznej *Fun Home* Alison Bechdel (tematyka LGBTQ).

Najciekawszą część pracy stanowi rozdział piąty, poświęcony szerokokorozumianej traumie i kwestii strachu. W trzech podrozdziałach Natov zwięźle omawia rolę literatury w procesie radzenia sobie z traumą. W podrozdziale *Bearing witness* (pol. *Dając świadectwo*) stwierdza, że dla dzieci dotkniętych traumą czytanie o radzeniu sobie z nią przez bohaterów literackich może dać nadzieję na uporanie się z rzeczywistym urazem (58). Badaczka zwraca też uwagę na znaczenie sztuki i kreatywności w tym procesie, po czym przechodzi do omawiania konkretnych wymiarów traumy w literaturze dla dzieci i młodzieży. W podrozdziale *The role of nature in healing from sexual trauma* (pol. *Rola natury w radzeniu sobie z traumą seksualną*) autorka wraca do tematyki poruszonej w rozdziale pierwszym, tym razem omawiając rolę natury w procesie radzenia sobie z traumą będącą skutkiem molestowania seksualnego w powieści graficznej Bryana Talbota *The Tale of One Bad Rat* (1994) i powieści Laurie Hale Anderson *Speak* (1999). Natov podkreśla, że w obu utworach natura, literatura i sztuka pozwalają młodym ofiarom znaleźć odwagę do radzenia sobie z traumą. *The Trauma of death, the ultimate loss* (pol. *Trauma śmierci, ostatecznej utraty*) poświęcono natomiast traumie spowodowanej śmiercią i utratą bliskich w *The Graveyard Book* (2008) Neila Gaimana i *A Monster Calls* (2011) Patricia Nessa, dwóch bardzo różnych książkach dla starszych dzieci, które łączą wątki tanatologiczne. Następnie amerykańska badaczka wychodzi poza ramy indywidualnej traumy w podrozdziale *Contextualizing: Beyond individual trauma* (pol. *Kontekstualizując: ponad indywidualną traumą*), gdzie porusza takie kwestie, jak kultura znęcania się (*bullying*), rasizm czy przemoc domowa, zwracając uwagę zarówno na konstrukcję ofiary (na

przykładzie *The Goats* Brock Cole z 1987 r.), jak i oprawcy (*The Elizabeth Stories* Isabel Huggan z 1984 r.). Warto jednak podkreślić, że cały rozdział pozostawia pewien niedosyt, gdyż omawiany materiał zasługuje na bardziej szczegółową analizę. Co więcej, mimo odniesień do tekstów Michaela Rothberga czy Jenny Edkins, czytelnik może dostrzec braki teoretyczne i bardzo luźne podejście do samej koncepcji traumy.

Po najbardziej problematycznej części książki amerykańska badaczka przechodzi do opisu nowych bohaterów i wizji nowego dzieciństwa. Kolejny rozdział otwiera przegląd postaci dzieci z powszechnie znanych tekstów (takich jak te autorstwa Lewisa Carrolla i Marka Twaina), które w swoim czasie zaproponowały nowe spojrzenie na literackie reprezentacje dzieciństwa (Alicja i Huck). Następnie Natov przechodzi do analizy klasycznych już książek z kilku różnych kręgów kulturowych. Rozpoczynając od porównania Matyldy Roalda Dahla i Pippi Astrid Lindgren, w podrozdziale *Girl Power: Pippi and Matilda*, Natov pokazuje rolę dziewczynki jako aktywnej bohaterki łamiącej stereotypy. Następnie w *Children's way of knowing: Louise Erdrich's historical fiction for children* (pol. *Dziecięce sposoby dowiadywania się: historyczna proza dla dzieci Louise Erdrich*) przechodzi do historycznej prozy dla dzieci autorstwa Louise Erdrich, pokazując, że jej opowieści w sposób uniwersalny mogą pokazać dzieciom, jak zaakceptować poczucie smutku, strachu i beznadziei. Z kolei w *The child writer: My name is Mina* (pol. *Dziecięcy pisarz: Nazywam się Mina*), na przykładzie wydanej w 2000 roku powieści Davida Almonda, Natov pokazuje zmagania z wyobraźnią i moc kreatywności tytułowej Myny. Polskiego czytelnika może szczególnie zainteresować fakt, że w podrozdziale *Challenging political and social institutions: King Matt and Totto-Chan* (pol. *Wyzywając instytucje polityczne i społeczne: Król Maciuś i Totto-Chan*) autorka zestawia *Króla Maciusia I* (1922) Janusza Korczaka z *Totto-Chan* (1979-1980) Tsutsuko Kuroyanagi i pokazuje literackie obrazy sposobów kwestionowania przez

dzieci instytucji społecznych i politycznych. W dalszych częściach rozdziału szóstego autorka porusza kwestię społeczności pełniących rolę bohatera w *Nappy Hair* (1997) Carolivii Herron, *The People Could Fly* (1985) Virginii Hamilton i *Brothers in Hope* (2005) Mary Williams. Natov pokazuje, że społeczny heroizm może stanowić wartą uwagi alternatywę dla narracji o wyjątkowym dziecku.

Dwa ostatnie rozdziały mają charakter monograficzny. W przedostatnim, zatytułowanym *Imagine Empathy: Kate DiCamillo's The Tale of Despereaux and The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (pol. *Wyobrażając sobie empatię: Opowieść o Despereaux i Cudowna podróż Edwarda Tulane* autorstwa Kate DiCamillo), autorka skupia się na potencjale literatury w uczeniu dzieci o empatii. Ostatni rozdział, zatytułowany *New Ways of Imagining the Picture Book: States of Mind States of feeling* (pol. *Nowe sposoby wyobrażania książki obrazkowej: Stany, umysłu, stany uczuć*), to próba zwięzłego przedstawienia problematyki zawartej w postmodernistycznych książkach obrazkowych na przykładzie surrealistycznej twórczości Shauna Tana, Briana Selznicka i Petera Sisa. Natov zwraca uwagę na relację tekstu i ilustracji oraz na potencjał samej warstwy wizualnej książek. Trudno jednak nie odnieść wrażenia, że podobnie jak w przypadku problematyki zawartej w rozdziale o traumie, ta dotycząca książek obrazkowych zasługuje na bardziej szczegółową analizę.

Podsumowując, najnowsza książka Roni Natov bez wątpienia stanowi ciekawe i warte uwagi uzupełnienie literaturoznawczego dyskursu nad literaturą dziecięcą i młodzieżową. Choć amerykańska badaczka nie poświęca wiele miejsca przywoływaniu teorii, daje jednak mniej wprawionemu czytelnikowi wskazówki, czy też – powołując się na tytuł książki – odwagę do samodzielnego poszerzania wiedzy na poruszone przez nią tematy. Warto też podkreślić, że dzięki przystępnemu językowi i doborowi zarówno popularnych, jak i tych mniej znanych przykładów, *The Courage to*

Imagine może funkcjonować zarówno jako podręcznik akademicki, jak i lektura dla rodziców czy pasjonatów.

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**„MĘŻNYCH MĘŻCZYZN CZEKA DŁUGIE ŻYCIE...” – DYSKURS MASKULINISTYCZNY
A WSPÓŁCZESNA PROZA UKRAIŃSKA**

Mateusz Świetlicki, *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami? Męskość jako projekt w prozie Serhija Żadana*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2016, ss. 180.

Opublikowana przez Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego monografia Mateusza Świetlickiego pod tytułem: *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami? Męskość jako projekt w prozie Serhija Żadana* (2016) to kompetentna i wiarygodna próba interpretacji twórczości pisarza z punktu widzenia badań genderowych i maskulinistycznych. Dzieła Serhija Żadana, jednego z najbardziej znanych współczesnych poetów i prozaików ukraińskich, nasycone są aktualnością i kontrowersją. Narzędzie ich eksplikacji, wybrane przez autora monografii, to metoda wciąż słabo rozwinięta na gruncie badań literaturoznawczych w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej. W tym kontekście książka Świetlickiego odnosi się nie tylko do obserwacji historyczno-literackich, ale posiada również wymiar socjokulturowy.

Sięgnięcie przez czytelnika po prozę Żadana wydaje się być dziś warunkiem koniecznym na drodze do poznania współczesnej literatury ukraińskiej. Pisarz, uhonorowany w 2015 roku Nagrodą Literacką Europy Środkowej „Angelus”, poruszając tematy narodowościowo ważne, bezsprzecznie zasłużył sobie na miano głosu współczesnej Ukrainy. Wychodząc poza ramy stereotypowych dla swojej społeczności prezentacji wątków fabularnych oraz kończąc z niesprawdzającą się w „nowych czasach” konserwatywną tradycją, Żadan pozyskał sobie grono fanów nie tylko na rodzimej Ukrainie – jego książki przetłumaczono na szesnaście języków, w tym język polski. Nie dziwi zatem fakt, że po dzieła pisarza sięgnęli również badacze literatury. Zjawisko to, po krótkim objaśnieniu

celowości pracy *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami?*, jak i po esencjonalnym przedstawieniu sylwetki autora badanych dzieł, opisuje Świetlicki w otwierającym jego rozprawę *Wstępie* (s. 9-22). Zauważa, że uwaga poświęcona Żadanowi przez literaturoznawców skupia się przede wszystkim na tematyce urbanistycznej oraz zagadnieniach pamięci, tożsamości i traumy. Wspomina również o kilku innych, współczesnych analizach dzieł twórcy *Mezopotamii*, poświęconych elementom popkulturowym, muzyce czy problemom globalizacji. Jednak trudno nie zgodzić się z autorem, odnotowującym lukę w badaniach dedykowanych egzegezie prozy charkowskiego pisarza, iż brak pośród nich analiz z punktu widzenia dyskursu płciowości i seksualności. Owo puste miejsce badacz swoją książką umiejętnie wypełnia.

Ciekawym wydaje się, że kluczowemu dla rozprawy pojęciu *męskości* oraz zdefiniowaniu idei badań maskulinistycznych (*Men's studies*) Świetlicki poświęca cały rozdział I (*Men & masculinities studies. Przegląd stanu badań*, s. 23-48) swojej monografii. Zabieg ten bezsprzecznie pomoże czytelnikowi zagłębić się w skomplikowaną problematykę tego zagadnienia, a tym samym lepiej zrozumieć badaną przez autora książkę prozę. Po pierwsze, w kilku podrozdziałach, doprecyzowuje powyższą tematykę, definiując *męskość* jako swoiste połączenie pierwiastka biologicznego (*sex*) i społeczno-kulturowego (*gender*). Kolejne strony poświęca przedstawieniu rozbudowanego stanu badań nad *męskością* z punktu widzenia różnych nauk. Pojawia się tu psychoanaliza i podstawowe względem pojmowania płci stanowiska Zygmunta Freuda, Alfreda Adlera, Carla Gustawa Junga, Erika Eriksona oraz Jacquesa Lacana. Co ciekawe, Świetlicki krytycznie odnosi się w tym miejscu tylko do założeń ostatniego w kolejności francuskiego filozofa. Podejście

antropologiczne i socjologiczne do badanego tematu przywołuje tu wspomnienie przedwojennych koncepcji pedagogiki Mathildy Vaering oraz, między innymi, polskiego antropologa Bronisława Malinowskiego.

Historyczne podejście do tematu nie jest w tym wypadku działaniem nieuzasadnionym. Rozwój koncepcji badań nad *męskością* autor monografii sytuuje w latach 50-tych i 60-tych XX wieku, czyli w okresie, w którym odnotowuje się również kształtowanie feminizmu oraz krytyki ugruntowanego systemu patriarchalnego. Przywołane przez Świetlickiego nazwiska i perspektywy niewątpliwie przyczyniły się do sposobu pojmowania płci oraz badań nad nią we współczesnym świecie nauki i kultury. Interesującymi jawią się tu również podrozdziały dotyczące zarówno teorii Jacquesa Derridy i Michela Foucaulta (relacje wiedzy, władzy, normy i dyskursu) oraz nawiązujące do kwestii performatywności (odgrywania społecznie zakodowanych aktów), jak i znaczenie *queer studies* dla rozumienia roli płci indywidualnej tożsamości.

Badacz nie ukrywa przed czytelnikiem anglo-amerykańskiego rodowodu studiów nad *męskością* – wnikliwa analiza ruchów mężczyzn na terenie USA pozwoliła autorowi zaprezentować bogatą ofertę tekstów naukowych, a nawet propozycję przedmiotów związanych z *men's studies* wprowadzonych na uczelniach wyższych w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Świetlicki w rzetelny sposób kreśli stan współczesnych założeń w podjętym temacie, przedstawia koncepcje najważniejszych – w swoim odczuciu – socjologów, ale nie ucieka od prezentacji zmian w postrzeganiu *męskości* wśród nie-naukowego społeczeństwa (daje tu przykład chociażby zmian pożądaných wzorców *męskości* we współczesnej kinematografii). Ciekawie opisuje również różne społeczno-kulturowe wzorce *męskości*, uzależnione nie tylko od trendów globalizacyjnych, ale w równym stopniu od kwestii takich, jak rasa, klasa, wiek i seksualność (przy czym ostatni czynnik autor nazywa jednym z najczęściej poruszanych tematów w kontekście *męskości*). Zabieg ten pozwala

Świetlickiemu na dostrzeżenie nie tylko różnic, ale i braków w badaniach teoretycznych na terenie Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej. Słusznie podkreśla fakt ogromnego, przede wszystkim względem kultury za oceanem, dysonansu w spojrzeniu na teorię *męskości* w pracach naukowych w tej części świata, który to rzecz jasna zagadnienia całkiem nie wyklucza. Autor przytacza godne uwagi pozycje z dziedziny nauk społecznych, powstałe nie tylko w rodzimej Polsce, ale również na terenie Rosji, czy najważniejszej tu pod względem wybranej lektury – Ukrainie.

Podsumowując tę część pracy, można pokusić się o stwierdzenie, że poprzez podjęcie się kompleksowego zarysowania teorii badań maskulistycznych, nie tylko w wymiarze historycznym, ale również geograficznym i socjologicznym, Autor rozprawy tworzy interdyscyplinarny kontekst dla wybranej przez siebie metodologii oraz poglądów. Zanim badacz przechodzi jednak do interpretacji zachowań konkretnych męskich bohaterów z prozy Żadana (rozdział II, „*Mężnych mężczyzn czeka długie życie...*” *Transformacja ukraińskiej męskości hegemonalnej w prozie Serhija Żadana*, s. 49-111), pozwala on sobie jeszcze na uzupełnienie części teoretycznej o opis kondycji oraz podłoża ukraińskiego modelu *męskości* (również *kobiecości*). Świetlicki podkreśla w tym miejscu czynniki wpływające na poczucie „ukraińskiej tożsamości narodowej” (s. 49): sowiecką ideologię, ukraińską historię kolonializmu i totalitaryzmu, upadek komunizmu oraz zachodzące zmiany systemowe. Dobrym zabiegiem wydaje się tu przytoczenie kilku faktów historyczno-społecznych, podkreślenie istoty tak zwanej polityki płciowej w ZSRR, określenie formy radzieckiej *męskości* (badacz wspomina tu między innymi słynny model *homo sovieticus*), oraz eksplikacja roli płci po upadku Związku Radzieckiego. Tak zarysowane tło dla badań nad *męskością* w Europie Wschodniej pozwala autorowi określić stan faktyczny modelu *męskości* na Ukrainie od lat dziewięćdziesiątych ubiegłego wieku po dzień dzisiejszy.

Wnikliwego czytelnika zainteresuje tu przede wszystkim zwrot ku tradycyjnym

wartościom narodowościowym (postać kozaka jako apoteoza męstwa i bohaterstwa, fascynacja walecznymi bohaterami narodowymi), mający swój punkt kulminacyjny – jak pisze Świetlicki – w trakcie Euromajdanu na przełomie 2013 i 2014 roku. Wydarzenia te doprecyzowały według autora monografii obraz współczesnego ukraińskiego mężczyzny. Badacz niezwykle celnie posługuje się tu aspektami wyodrębnionymi przez psychologów Roberta Brannona i Deborah David: mężczyzna nie powinien być zniewieściały, powinien posiadać status i władzę, powinien ukrywać emocje i zachowywać spokój w sytuacjach kryzysowych, okazywać innym przemoc i podejmować ryzyko. To właśnie taka percepcja definiuje postrzeganie przez autora rozprawy głównych bohaterów powieści *Żadana* – młodych, urodzonych w latach 70-tych XX wieku, Ukraińców.

Ujęta w tytule książki hipoteza Świetlickiego, zakładająca traktowanie *męskości* jako projektu, obiektu stawania się, dążenia pomiędzy jakimiś punktami, znajduje swoje odzwierciedlenie w usytuowaniu prozy Żadana w szeregu powieści *coming-of-age* oraz *Bildungsroman*. Najważniejszym wydaje się być tu jednak fakt, że – jak podkreśla badacz – proces „dorastania do bycia mężczyzną” w prozie Żadana zakończyć może się tylko w wypadku utworzenia nowego modelu męskości, odmiennego od tego reprezentowanego przez pokolenie „radzieckich” ojców bohaterów. Swoją egzegezę rozpoczyna Świetlicki od przykładu młodych bohaterów powieści *Depeche Mode* (2004), których bunt dorastania badacz przypisuje reakcji na obecny w tle rozpad Związku Radzieckiego, wynikającej z niego zmiany roli mężczyzny w życiu rodziny, traumatycznych wspomnieniach o ojcach, chęci zmienienia swojej przyszłości. W powieści *Anarchy in the UKR* (2005) podkreśla znów żadanowskie wspomnienie z dzieciństwa związane ze wzorcem, jakim dla bohatera powinien być, a jakim nie jest, ojciec. *Woroszyłowgrad* (2010) staje się dla badacza okazją dla poruszenia problematyki ucieczki mężczyzn przed dorastaniem

i syndromu wiecznego chłopca, a dokładnie zerwania z tego typu zachowaniem.

Dalej Świetlicki podejmuje się objaśnienia na podstawie wybranej lektury aspektów przemocy oraz ukrywania emocji przez bohaterów prozy Żadana. Autor rozprawy zarysowuje wstępnie proveniencje aktów przemocy mężczyzn (nie tylko względem kobiet) na podstawie różnych nauk i koncepcji. Zabieg ten stanowi ciekawy sposób ukazania celowości stosowania przemocy przez bohaterów wybranych powieści, a szerzej również zobrazowania wielopłaszczyznowości przejawiania się jej w dziełach – przemoc związana z pobytem w wojsku, agresja milicji względem słabszych od siebie, zachowania mężczyzn związane ze sportem. Ostatniemu aspektowi badacz poświęca kolejny podrozdział, podkreślając fascynację Europy Wschodniej piłką nożną – sportem w tej części świata, jak celnie zauważa autor, homosocjalnym, czyli całkowicie pozbawionym uczestnictwa kobiet. Sport w przytaczanych opowiadaniach jest, podług Świetlickiego, czymś na kształt „ceremonii odgrywania męskości” (s. 94), a nawet jej źródłem – tu podaje autor przykład powieści *Woroszyłowgrad*.

Kolejnym aspektem, motywującym interpretację zachowań bohaterów, staje się dla Świetlickiego dążenie do rozwoju *męskości* w znaczeniu zaprzeczenia „bycia zniewieściałym”, co w efekcie autor łączy ze „strachem o bycie posądzonym o homoseksualizm” (używa w tym kontekście również pojęcia „homohisteria”, s. 101). Taka perspektywa pozwala badaczowi na spojrzenie na stan ukraińskiej homofobii (tu podaje ciekawe badania socjologiczne, s. 102-104) oraz na sposób przedstawienia tego zjawiska w prozie Żadana, co – jak słusznie zauważa Świetlicki – samo w sobie stanowi dobry przykład zmian zachodzących w tendencyjności tematów poruszanych w literaturze ukraińskiej ostatnich lat.

Książka *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami?* jest interesującym obrazem projektu *męskości* w wybranej literaturze również ze względu na tematykę obraną przez autora w rozdziale III („A kiedy dojdzie do wojny

*między płciami, kto wówczas pozostanie...?” Relacje między mężczyznami a kobietami w prozie Serhija Żadana, s. 112-147). Prezentuje w nim bowiem postaci kobiece, pojawiające się na kartach żadanowskich opowieści. Opisując rolę obecnych tam matek, kochanek, podlotków, prostytutek i lesbijek, Świetlicki podkreśla faktycznie obecny w lekturze mizoginizm, głęboko zakorzeniony w ukraińskiej kulturze. Uprzedmiotowanie kobiet jawi się tym aspektem socjokulturowym, z którym męskim bohaterom najtrudniej jest zerwać. W ten sposób autorowi rozprawy udaje się pokazać wielowymiarowość i wieloznaczność procesu zmian zachodzących w pojmowaniu *męskości* i roli płci kulturowej na Ukrainie – z jednej strony obserwujemy bunt i przełom w stosunku do skostniałych wzorców poradzieckich, z drugiej zaś jeszcze pełne stereotypów zachowania młodych mężczyzn, należących do „nowego pokolenia”.*

Należy stwierdzić, że książka Mateusza Świetlickiego stanowi w zakreślonej tematyce niewątpliwe literaturoznawcze *novum*. Potraktowanie pojęcia *męskość* jako projektu oraz przyłożenie go w charakterze wykładni dla interpretacji bohaterów powieści poczytnego współcześnie pisarza ukraińskiego uznać należy nie tylko za nowatorstwo, a również i odwagę. Autor podejmuje się bowiem ukazania nowej reprezentacji tożsamości zbiorowej w kraju, gdzie nowoczesne podejście do badań maskulinistycznych i genderowych wciąż walczy o swoje miejsce pośród klasycznych badań naukowych. Cennym walorem książki jest również jej przejrzystość i czytelność. Uzupełniające twórcze interpretacje i objaśnienia poruszanych kwestii historyczno-społeczno-kulturowych pozwolą nawet niezaznajomionemu z metodologiczną terminologią czytelnikowi zagłębić się w świat męskich bohaterów prozy Serhija Żadana.

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**DWUGŁOS O PROZIE FANTASTYCZNEJ DLA
MŁODYCH ODBIORCÓW. RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI
WERONIKI KOSTECKIEJ I MACIEJA SKO-
WERY PT. W KRĘGU BAŚNI I FANTASTYKI.
STUDIA O LITERATURZE DZIECIĘCEJ I MŁO-
DZIEŻOWEJ**

Weronika KostECKa, Maciej Skowera,
*W kręgu baśni i fantastyki. Studia o literatu-
rze dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, Wydawnictwo
SBP, Warszawa 2017, ss. 256.

Recenzowana publikacja ukazała się jako kolejny tom w serii wydawniczej Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich – *Literatura dla dzieci. Studia*. Tym razem autorzy – Weronika KostECKa i Maciej Skowera podjęli się opisu wybranych pozycji z kręgu fantastyki i baśni, tworząc współautorską monografię. Przyjęła ona formę szczególnego rodzaju „dwugłosu” warszawskich badaczy. Zapisane przez nich refleksje raz się dopełniają, innym razem brzmią wspólnie lub „odbrzmiewają” w odmiennych kierunkach. Wśród tytułów, którym poświęcono odrębne studia, znalazły się takie utwory, jak: *Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza* Bolesława Leśmiana, *Kajtuś Czarodziej* Janusza Korczaka, *The Wishing Tree* Williama Faulknera, *Kopciuszek* Charles’a Perraulta, *Księga rzeczy utraconych* Johna Connelly’ego, *Labirynt Fauna* Guillermo del Toro, *Momo* Michaela Endego, *Czarnoksiężnik ze Szmaragdowego Grodu* Lymana Franka Bauma, tetralogia Gregory’ego Maguire’a, *Omega* Marcina Szczygielskiego, cykl o Harrym Potterze Joanne Kathleen Rowling, *Igrzyska śmierci* Suzanne Collins. Autorzy dokonali więc wyboru tekstów słynnych, ale słabo obecnych w polskiej myśli literaturoznawczej, które stały się tu źródłem interesujących przemyśleń. Wyszli od znanej tezy mówiącej, że baśń jest

pierwszym „alfabetem kultury” i podstawą dla dalszych doświadczeń kulturowych (Bettelheim, 1985), i rozciągnęli tę myśl na fantastykę w ogóle. Założyli, że konwencje typowe dla literatury fantastycznej pozwalają opowiedzieć o mechanizmach społecznych, relacjach międzyludzkich, czy problemach politycznych.

Wybór baśni i fantastyki jest jak najbardziej uzasadniony. Obecnie są to gatunki cieszące się ogromną popularnością wśród czytelników dziecięcych i młodzieżowych, mające istotne znaczenie we wspieraniu rozwoju emocjonalnego i psychicznego człowieka¹. Konwencja prozy fantastycznej pozwala na włączanie do utworów trudnych zjawisk egzystencji człowieka. Nie tylko przybliżają je czytelnikom, ale też je tłumaczą i osławiają. Autorzy monografii odwołują się do klasyfikacji baśni Violetty Wróblewskiej (Wróblewska, 2003), co pozwoliło im umieścić w tomie zarówno utwory opracowane przez Jacoba i Wilhelma Grimmów czy Charles’a Perraulta, jak i nowoczesne baśnie literackie Hansa Christiana Andersena, Haliny Górskiej czy Hermana Hessego. Powieści fantastyczne objęte naszym traktatem potraktowano w sposób ogólny, nie próbując klasyfikować ich w odmiany. Badacze zdają sobie jednak sprawę z ich różnorodności i nie podejmują tego wątku, najpewniej z uwagi na jego szeroki zakres i literaturoznawcze nachylenie poszukiwań badawczych. Próby definiowania poszczególnych odmian prowadziłyby do innego charakteru eksploracji, tym bardziej że dotąd nie stworzono wyczerpującej klasyfikacji

¹ W drugiej połowie XX wieku rozwinął się silnie nurt biblioterapii wskazujący na ważne znaczenie literatury fantastycznej w utrzymywaniu zdrowia psychicznego człowieka,

reprezentowany głównie przez psychologów (Clarissę Pinkolę Estés, Doris Brett, w Polsce Marię Molicką i in.).

literatury fantastycznej dla młodych odbiorców. Z jednej strony nieco brakuje więc tego typu rozważań, z drugiej – wybór autorów jest zrozumiały. Monografię poświęcono zatem interpretacjom i analizom skupionym na relacjach między tekstami kultury oraz na związkach między utworami poddanymi badaniom a rzeczywistością społeczno-kulturową.

Monografia składa się z 12. artykułów zebranych w 4. częściach, zachowujących porządek chronologiczny – od tradycyjnej baśni (*U źródeł fantazji*), poprzez utwory ważne, ale nieco zapomniane i rzadko obecne w obiegu czytelnickim (*(Nie)zapomniane lektury*), po teksty inspirowane klasyką (*Inspiracje i kontynuacje*) oraz pozycje współczesne nawiązujące do popkultury i (po)nowoczesności (*W stronę współczesności*). Taki układ porządkuje podjęte tu zadania badawcze, a także pokazuje szeroką przestrzeń funkcjonowania literatury fantastycznej i baśni.

Prezentowane w tomie artykuły (poza *Co się stało z macochą?*...) były publikowane w monografiach zbiorowych i czasopiśmie, które ukazały się w latach 2009–2016. Zebrane razem, tworzą interesującą całość, nie tylko pokazując spektrum zagadnień związanych z literaturą, ale także przedstawiając obszar zjawisk kulturowych, które towarzyszą rozwojowi odmian prozy fantastycznej dla młodych. Podejmują, a zarazem rozwijają istniejące w literaturze dziecięcej wątki wędrówki, walki, tajemnicy, bezpiecznego i niebezpiecznego miejsca oraz zabawy (Ungeheuer-Gołąb, 2009), w tym karnawalizacji, przedstawiając je w prozie fantastycznej dla młodych, baśniach, arcydziełach literatury dziecięcej.

W części pierwszej zebrano artykuły korespondujące z tematyką fantastyki baśniowej. Literaturą podmiotową uczyniono *Przygodę Sindbada żeglarza* Bolesława Leśmiana i *Kajtusia Czarodzieja* Janusza Korczaka, którym poświęcono odrębne teksty. Artykuł zamykający rozdział porusza kwestię melichności w baśniach.

Zdaniem Weroniki Kosteckiej postać Sindbada stworzona przez Leśmiana ekspozuje emocje związane z potrzebą przygody

i podróży. Chodzi tu zapewne o typ wędrówki dla wędrowania i przygody dla przeżywania wrażeń. Dzieje się tak, gdy bohaterowi nie przyświeca żaden nadrzędny, ustalony wcześniej cel, a wędrówka staje się celem samym w sobie. W tekście nawiązano do prac Joanny Papuzińskiej, Jolanty Ługowskiej, Anny Czabanowskiej-Wróbel, które zauważają ów „bezinteresowny” charakter kreacji Leśmiana (Ługowska 1988; Papuzińska, 1989; Czabanowska-Wróbel, 1996). W swej analizie autorka sięga do teorii psychoanalizy. Próbuje rozwikłać przypadki, które spotykają głównego bohatera, odnosi się do znaczeń symbolicznych, co zwykle się udaje, gdy mowa o świecie baśni. Ponadto tłem teoretycznym rozważań jest tekst Georga Simmela, dzięki któremu bardziej wyraźne staje się rozumienie metafory przygody na przykładzie przypadków Sindbada (Simmel 2006). Studium ukazuje istotę Leśmianowskiej baśni zgodnej z młodopolską filozofią gatunku, w której aspekt życia i baśni są ze sobą niepodzielnie związane.

W artykule pt. *(Anty)baśń Korczakowska* zauważa się w pewnej mierze kontynuację wątku podjętego w tekście poprzedzającym, dotyczącego obrazu gatunku. Dotyka on bowiem rozważań nad klasyfikacją gatunkową powieści Korczaka. Autorka odnosi się do przemyśleń J. Ługowskiej, R. Waksmundy, V. Wróblewskiej, Z. Barana i konfrontuje swoje poglądy z koncepcjami wymienionych badaczy. Za najbliższą własnej tezie uznaje definicję Barana, który określa *Kajtusia Czarodzieja* „baśniową opowieścią” (Baran 2006: 50; Kostecka 2017a: 35). Następnie poszukuje baśniowych składników utworu, poczynając od kategorii cudowności poprzez teorię Włodzimierza Proppa, na psychoanalitycznych wątkach Brunona Bettelheima skończywszy. Od rozważań związanych z baśnią jako gatunkiem autorka przechodzi do zjawisk narracyjnych, odnosząc się do najistotniejszych wartości zawartych w myśli pedagogicznej Korczaka i do psychoanalizy Bettelheima. Dociera do znanej już w badaniach nad literaturą dziecięcą konkluzji (Cieślowski, 1985; Papuzińska 1988), że „narrator, aby być wiarygodnym, musiał zbliżyć się do

umysłowości dziecięcej” Kostecka, 2017a: 41). Ów aspekt jest tu potrzebny, by wyka-
zać dydaktyczny wymiar dzieła, w którym
Kajtuś przechodzi swoistą metamorfozę,
weryfikując swój dotychczasowy światopo-
gląd.

Muzyka w baśni to motyw, który
rzadko bywa przedmiotem opisu badaczy.
Tym bardziej, zamieszczone na końcu tej
części studium Kosteckiej zaciekawia. Wy-
brane do omówienia utwory należą do sze-
rokiego spektrum baśni – od tekstów ludo-
wych po najbardziej współczesne. Badaczka
znajduje w nich obrazy literackie, w których
muzyka staje się tożsama z magią, tajem-
nicą, niewiadomym albo w których łączy się
ona z transcendencją, sacrum, niewyjaśnio-
nymi wymiarami bytu. Przegląd egzemplów
jest imponujący, choć mógłby być uzupeł-
niony o pokrewne w związku z motywem
pieśni opowiadanie pt. *Piosenka Włóczykija*
Tove Jansson.

W części drugiej, noszącej tytuł
(*Nie)zapomniane lektury*, autorzy odnieśli
się do tekstów przeoczonych, mało utrwalo-
nych w powszechnym odbiorze i krytyce li-
teratury oraz do utworów wyrazistych, nie-
jednokrotnie uznawanych za arcydzieła, jak
Momo Endego.

Tekst Macieja Skowery, omawiający
związki między twórczością Howarda Phil-
lipsa Lovecrafta i Johna Bellairsa wkracza
w zagadnienia mało znane polskiej krytyce
i badaniom literatury dziecięcej. Nieco braku-
je tu wprowadzenia do tematu i nakreśle-
nia choćby ogólnego tła dla twórczości
wspomnianych pisarzy. Autor stara się udo-
wodnić istnienie intelektualnego dialogu
między Bellairsem i Stricklandem a twór-
czością Lovecrafta. Wychwytuje w ich
utworach podobne wątki, bohaterów i rekwi-
zyty, tworząc logiczny wywód na temat ist-
niejącego między nimi pokrewieństwa. Re-
fleksję kończy wywiedziona z pracy Kata-
riny Slany idea dotycząca „ludyczności
grozy” (Slany, 2016), do której autor przy-
wiązuje się nieco zbyt szybko, nie zostawia-
jąc miejsca na własne, może równie ciekawe
rozwiązania. Warto też się zastanowić, czy

rzeczywiście odczucie ulgi jest tożsame, jak
napisano, z karnawalizacją.

W kolejnym studium omówiono je-
dyny adresowany do dzieci utwór Williama
Faulknera pt. *The Wishing Tree*, nieprzetłu-
maczony na język polski. Skowera wspo-
mina o chętnie przybieranym przez twórcę
kostiumie gawędziarza. Pisarz opowiadał
bowiem z zamiłowaniem zaprzyjaźnionym
dzieciom o mrozących krew w żyłach zda-
rzeniach. Autor artykułu odkrywa przed pol-
skimi czytelnikami nieznane oblicze amery-
kańskiego pisarza oraz przybliża ów mało
popularny w Polsce utwór dla dzieci. Jak
czytamy, z publikacją *The Wishing Tree*
wiąże się tajemnica. Okazuje się bowiem, że
historia była napisana w kilku wariantach,
innym dla każdego z kilku dziecięcych czy-
telników, którym autor podarował utwór.
Nikt z obdarowanych nie zdawał sobie
sprawy z istnienia różnic w tekstach. Jak za
Louisem Danielem Brodskim zauważył Sko-
wera, książka należy do kategorii utworów
dla dzieci pisanych przez uznanych twórców
literatury dla dorosłych (E.E. Cummings,
A. Huxley, J. Joyce, A. Miller). Adresowana
jest do konkretnego dziecka. Taką zindywi-
dualizowaną narracją posługiwali się głów-
nie pedagodzy, gdy jakąś pedagogiczną ideę
chcieli zaszczerpić w życie wychowanka
(w Polsce K. Hoffmanowa, S. Jachowicz),
jednak gdy przekaz tworzył wybitny artysta,
zwykle efekt jego pracy był bardzo interesu-
jącym zjawiskiem literackim. Dorobek
sławnych dzisiaj pisarzy dla dorosłych za-
wiera przykłady takiej twórczości, a utwory,
które wyszły spod mistrzowskiego pióra, są
zwykle bardziej intymne niż teksty dydak-
tyczne, mają walor artystyczny i często są je-
dynymi tekstami napisanymi przez znanego
twórcę dla dziecka.

W interpretacji utworu Skowera wyko-
rzystał zjawisko karnawalizacji (Czernow
2012), w którą jego zdaniem bardzo dobrze
wpisuje się utwór Faulknera. Zebrane pod
szyldem karnawalizacji przedziwne przy-
padki bohaterów, konwencja snu, epizod
ucztowania, język, a w końcu wprowadzenie
postaci św. Franciszka są dowodem na to, że
pisarz chciał choć w części przedstawić sferę

„niedoroslą” jako śmieszna, dziwną, fantastyczną i należącą do świata, który kultura nazywa karnawalem. Zapewne tak właśnie było, choć brakuje tu nieco konkluzji związanej z dziecięcością jako kategorią estetyczną. Nieopublikowanie utworu za życia autora, zmiany w tekście dedykowane konkretnemu odbiorcy i zastosowane środki artystyczne prowadzą ku zdeterminowaniu aktu powstawania lektury przez ówczesną sytuację dziecka w kulturze i społeczeństwie, kiedy dzieci traktowane było jako człowiek i szanowane głównie ze względu na swą naiwność i – w pojmowaniu dorosłych – ułomność. Wyraźne są bowiem w utworze odniesienia do pomysłów Lewisa Carrolla i innych, którzy umieszczając najmłodszych w świecie fantastyki i purnonsensu, chcieli „poradzić sobie” z mądrością dzieciństwa. Wydaje się, że w artykule nie udowodniono jednak tytułowej tezy o antybaśni. Wskazano jedynie taką możliwość, ukazując wątki dydaktyczne, moralizatorskie i autotematyczne. Warto dodać, że w okresie Młodej Polski i dwudziestolecia międzywojennego łączenie dydaktycznych motywów z rudymentami baśni było dość popularne w polskiej literaturze dla dzieci (*Gucio zaczarowany* Zofii Urbanowskiej, *Niezwykłe przygody Duszka Dziędiłnika* Ewy Szelburg-Zarembiny, *Kajtuś Czardziej* Janusza Korczaka).

Kolejny artykuł w tej części to interesujące studium Weroniki Kosteckiej na temat książki Michaela Ende pt. *Momo* (*Krótką historią czasu. Kulturowe i filozoficzne konteksty „Momo” Michaela Ende*). Utwór przedstawiono tu z perspektywy powtórnego czytania w wieku dorosłym. Odbiór w okresie dzieciństwa (w wieku 6 lat) stanowi wspomnieniową kalkę, na której nabudowana jest filozoficzna i kulturowa koncepcja interpretacji. Powieść, której głównym tematem jest czas, wymusza taki kierunek rozważań, prowadząc myśl badaczki ku koncepcjom C. S. Levisa, Jorge Luisa Borgesa, Stephena Hawkinga, Arona Guriewicza. Powtórne czytanie włącza element upływającego czasu. Podążając swobodnie przez świat stworzony przez Ende, Kostecka stara się rozwikłać

znaczenie występujących w powieści postaci oraz wskazać nadrzędny sens utworu, jaki w większości będzie zrozumiały jedynie dla czytelników dojrzałych.

W tych trzech tekstach ujętych w drugiej części autorzy podjęli próbę przypomnienia utworów zapomnianych/niezapomnianych, poruszając kwestie interpretacji, analizy i subiektywnego odbioru.

Rozdział trzeci – *Inspiracje i kontynuacje* zawiera artykuły podejmujące próbę opisu tekstów powstałych z inspiracji dziełami kultowymi. Ów trend zauważalny jest w piśmiennictwie od początku XX wieku, gdy atrakcyjne fabuły stawały się matrycą dla kolejnych tekstów literackich, dzieł malarskich, teatralnych, filmowych, w końcu również fotograficznych. Nie chodzi tu o przeniesienie w inny system znaków, lecz o wykorzystanie utworu jako natchnienia do powstania zupełnie nowego dzieła, które nie jest adaptacją, ale jak pisze Kostecka, reinterpretacją utworu podstawowego (Kostecka 2014). Szczególną uwagę cieszą się tu obok fabuł postaci z baśni, które wyznaczają swego rodzaju wzorce zachowań w kulturze. Jedną z nich jest Kopciuszek. Skowera, biorąc na warsztat baśń w tłumaczeniu Zofii Beszczyńskiej z oprawą graficzną Roberta Innocentiego, skoncentrował swą uwagę na ilustracjach. Można na nich bowiem zauważyć, obok klasycznej już fabuły, historię macochy, której zły charakter Innocenti połączył z chorobą alkoholową. Interpretacja Skowery jest interesująca, gdyż pomysł ilustratora tłumaczy nie jako wykorzystanie słabości kobiety dla wzmocnienia wątku dydaktycznego, ale próbę uzmysłowienia odbiorcy jej dramatu. Jego zdaniem Innocenti, tworząc w tle fabuły drugą opowieść, zwraca uwagę na stan psychiczny bohaterki – poczucie samotności i smutek wynikający z życiowej porażki (głupie córki, nieobecny mąż). Jak trafnie zauważa badacz, tego typu zabieg ilustratorski powoduje modyfikację w przekazie rdzennej opowieści i mieści się w strategii intertekstualnej gry z tradycją w baśni postmodernistycznej, o której wspomina Kostecka (Kostecka 2014: 247). Badacz uzmysławia, że eksponowanie postaci macochy powoduje, iż błędnie obraz

główniej bohaterki, a tradycyjna baśń z dychotomiczną konstrukcją ulega przekształceniu w obraz rzeczywistego życia, które nie jest tak klarowne.

W tej części książki Skowera podejmuje temat światów pozostających w sprzeczności z arkadyjską krainą dzieciństwa reprezentowaną przez Narnię, Nibylandię czy Oz. Jak twierdzi, twórcy literatury dla dorosłych polemizują z tego typu szczęśliwymi przestrzeniami i tworzą rzeczywistość pełną grozy, która wywołuje u bohaterów uczucie niepokoju i trwogi. Badacz omawia dwa różne teksty kultury – powieść (*Księga rzeczy utraconych* Johna Connolly'ego) i film (*Labirynt Fauna* w reżyserii Guillermo del Toro), posługując się koncepcją abiektu Julii Kristewej. Taka metodologia stwarza możliwość poczynienia odniesień do baśniowych światów literatury dziecięcej. W analizie skonfrontowano dzieciństwo arkadyjskie z dzieciństwem mrocznym i nieszczęśliwym. Skowera zwraca uwagę na istniejące w obydwu utworach abiekty, czyli przeciwieństwa podmiotów i przedmiotów, które mają wymiar pozytywny. Wszelkie obrzydliwości, postaci reprezentujące okrucieństwo, miejsca ogarnięte zepsuciem i destrukcją są zdaniem autora artykułu odwróceniem zjawisk arkadyjskich albo uzupełnieniem niedopowiedzeń, które występują w baśni. Autor ogranicza swój wywód do „przedstawienia sytuacji” poprzez wybór i opis konkretnych zjawisk. Szkoda, że mało miejsca poświęcono na próbę określenia funkcji, jakie mogłyby pełnić przedstawienia tego typu w odbiorze, tym bardziej że koncepcja Kristewej ma swe korzenie w psychoanalizie.

Książka, która stała się doskonałą inspiracją dla kolejnych twórców, to kanoniczna lektura amerykańskich dzieci o czarnoksiężniku z krainy Oz. Maciej Skowera zwraca uwagę na jej niebagatelne znaczenie w kulturze amerykańskiej oraz przedstawia tytuły utworów powstałych w wyniku prowadzenia intertekstualnych gier z tą lekturą (*The Wicked Years* Gregory'ego Maguire'a). Badacz nawiązuje do Gérarda Genette'a i uznaje, że tak zbudowany tekst ma

charakter palimpsestowy dzięki różnorodnym nawiązaniom do podstawowej fabuły (Genette, 2014). Skowera zajął się głównie omówieniem obrazu krainy Oz, poszukując w cytowanych utworach jej prawdziwego charakteru – arkadii dzieciństwa lub rzeczywistości dorosłych. Śledząc dzieje czarodziejskiej krainy, autor studium dowodzi, że jest ona tylko pozornie arkadyjska i „szmaragdowa”. W rzeczywistości symbolizuje jedną z wielu konstrukcji ukazywanych w literaturze mieszczańskiego społeczeństwa. Dorota – mała dziewczynka porwana przez trąbę powietrzną staje się tylko narzędziem w rękach dorosłych. Jest nieświadoma roli, jaką pełni w procesie zmieniania krainy Oz, w przeciwieństwie do bohaterki Maguire'a, która poznaje otaczający ją fałsz świata. Skowera na koniec dochodzi do smutnego wniosku, że zderzenie tych dwóch utworów w konsekwencji zaprzecza istnieniu krainy dzieciństwa: „Zawsze mamy do czynienia tylko z imperium dorosłych” – pisze (Skowera, 2017). Poniekąd jest to bardzo często prawda także w szerszym ujęciu, gdy poddaje się analizie inne jeszcze utwory dla młodych.

Ostatni rozdział, noszący tytuł *W stronę współczesności*, to obszar analiz utworów najnowszych. Jednym z nich jest *Omega* Marcina Szczygielskiego, powieść, którą Weronika Kostecka analizuje w kontekście tzw. zwrotu przestrzennego i *place studies*. Konstrukcja przestrzeni w prozie Szczygielskiego jest rzeczywistość bardzo mocnym składnikiem świata przedstawionego. Cyberprzestrzeń, w której porusza się główna bohaterka, stwarza nieograniczone możliwości przekształceń, pociąga i straszy, zmieniając co chwila charakter kolejnych miejsc. Jak słusznie zauważa badaczka, takie ujęcie powoduje, że narracja jest tu niejako kształtowana przez wirtualną przestrzeń, co stanowi swego rodzaju eksperyment literacki. Przestrzeń ma więc wpływ na fabułę i postać bohaterki. Autorka stara się pokazać w swoim studium wszelkie istniejące w związku z tym faktem zjawiska kształtujące świat utworu. W analizie odwołuje się do przemyśleń na temat przestrzeni

działa prezentowanych przez Henryka Markiewiczza, Michela Foucaulta, Martę Olszewską, Małgorzatę Dymnicką,

Kolejny artykuł napisany przez M. Skowerę dotyczy cyklu o Harrym Potterze J. K. Rowling i powieści *Igrzyska śmierci* Suzanne Collins, które omawiane są w kontekście kultury popularnej i przemocy. Autor zdecydował się na dość odważne konfrontowanie zjawisk kulturowo-politycznych nawiązujących do fabuł obu serii. Nie myli się, gdy podkreśla, że tego typu utwory z racji „zaszufladkowania” ich do obszarów kultury popularnej i dziecięco-młodzieżowej są niedoceniane, mimo ich ważnej roli w procesach społeczno-politycznych. Ich oddziaływanie na czytelników objawia się choćby w podejmowaniu społecznych akcji inspirowanych ideami zawartymi w wymienionych utworach. Mają one na celu walkę ze złem świata rzeczywistego wyrażającym się w łamaniu praw człowieka.

Tom zamyka tekst W. Kosteckiej pt. *Śmiech błazeński w literaturze i kulturze popularnej dla dzieci*. Tytuł czytany po lekturze Skowerę tworzy szczególny rodzaj ironicznej refleksji, bo zestawienie to ujawnia, że obok spraw tak ważnych, jak wywoływanie poruszenia wśród odbiorców, literatura dziecięca potrafi też doskonale wyśmiewać bolączki świata dorosłych. Autorka artykułu nawiązuje do tezy Jerzego Cieślakowskiego na temat zabawowej funkcji dzieciństwa i literatury dziecięcej. Zauważa, że błazenada jako „wielka zabawa”, a jednocześnie określenie antropologicznej sytuacji dziecka stanowi jeden z typowych i współcześnie dominujących nurtów twórczości dla dzieci. Rzeczywiście, „błazeński śmiech”, jak określa to zjawisko Kostecka, towarzyszy wielu fabułom, jednak obecnie coraz częściej pojawiają się też opowieści o ważnych problemach dzieciństwa, które wymuszają postawę refleksyjną. Należy się jednak zgodzić z autorką, że strategia absurdu, nonsensu, żartu jest w literaturze dziecięcej od lat silnie obecna. W artykule wymieniono imiona postaci literackich oraz filmowych, które zaludniają świat „wielkiej zabawy” zamienionej na zabawę błazeńską. W istocie wiele z nich to „komiczne karykatury rozmaitych

ludzkich «typów»” (Kostecka 2017b: 232). Wątpliwości budzą jednak niektóre egzempla przytaczane przez badaczkę jako świadectwa błazenady. Ustawianie w jednej pozycji dziecka błazeńskiego z dzieckiem ciekawskim czy porównywanie zachowania czterolatka wynikającego z jego rozwoju z zachowaniem sześciolatka, który świadomie przeinacza schematy rzeczywistości, należałoby poddać wnikliwszej ocenie. Może warto byłoby jeszcze raz zastanowić się nad źródłem tego określenia czy wrócić do definicji roli „błazna”, w którego śmiechu zwykle pobrzmiewa nuta ironii. Autorka wprawdzie sugeruje, że błazeńskie postawy literackich bohaterów dziecięcych są zawsze wizją dorosłych twórców, jednak na koniec napomyka o konieczności ustalenia ram dla „autentycznego», «naturalnego» śmiechu błazeńskiego” (Kostecka 2017b: 245). Wydaje się więc, że te granice na gruncie teoretycznym nie są jeszcze w pełni ustalone.

Podsumowując, należy podkreślić, że autorzy zachowują dyskurs naukowy na wysokim poziomie. Posługują się naukowym, a jednocześnie jasnym stylem, prawdopodobnie zrozumiałym i dla tych czytelników, którzy nie są biegli w badaniach literackich. Praca stanowi interesujący przykład współczesnego, świeżego spojrzenia na prozę fantastyczną dla dzieci i młodzieży, tym samym wypełnia lukę w badaniach literackich tego obszaru piśmiennictwa. Artykuły zawarte w opracowaniu, choć publikowane w pracach zbiorowych i czasopismach, zebrane w jednym tomie, tworzą interesujące studium na temat ważnych pozycji lekturowych dzieci, młodzieży i jak piszą autorzy, „młodych dorosłych”.

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