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*Oy, dayne oygelech, vi di shwartse karschelech, oy, dayne lipelech, vi
rosene papir, un dayne fingerlech, vi tint un vi feyder.*

The Image of Jews in the Stories of Foreign Students

Summary: The article is devoted to the image of Jews and related topoi in the works of foreign students of the subject “Creative Writing” at the Faculty of Education of Palacký University in Olomouc. The research question asked was whether the Holocaust continues to appear in written works or whether new, contemporary topics are emerging. The analysis partially confirmed the research question. The topic of the Holocaust continues to appear, but topics related to the current state of Israel are also emerging.

Keywords: identity, creative writing, foreign students, image, stereotype, Holocaust, tradition

*OY, DAYNE OYGELECH, VI DI SHWARTSE KARSCHLECH, OY, DAYNE LIPELECH, VI ROSENE PAPIR, UN DAYNE
FINGERLECH, VI TINT UN VI FEYDER.* WIZERUNEK ŻYDÓW W OPOWIADANIACH ZAGRANICZNYCH

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest wizerunkowi Żyda i związanym z nim toposom w pracach zagranicznych studentów z przedmiotu „Kreatywne pisanie”, realizowanego na Wydziale Pedagogicznym Uniwersytetu Palackiego w Ołomuńcu. Postawiono pytanie badawcze, czy w pracach pisemnych nadal pojawia się temat holokaustu, czy też pojawiają się nowe, współczesne tematy. Analiza potwierdziła częściowo pytanie badawcze. Temat holokaustu nadal pojawia się, ale pojawiają się również tematy związane z obecnym państwem Izrael.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość, twórcze pisanie, studenci zagraniczni, obraz, stereotyp, holokaust, tradycja

*OY, DAYNE OYGELECH, VI DI SHWARTSE KARSCHLECH, OY, DAYNE LIPELECH, VI ROSENE PAPIR, UN DAYNE
FINGERLECH, VI TINT UN VI FEYDER.* ОБРАЗ ЕВРЕЕВ В РАССКАЗАХ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ

Аннотация: Статья посвящена образу еврея и топосам, связанным с этим образом, в работах иностранных студентов по предмету «Творческое письмо», который преподается на педагогическом факультете Университета Палацкого в Оломоуце. Был поставлен исследовательский вопрос, сохраняется ли в письменных работах тема Холокоста или появляются новые современные темы. Исследовательский вопрос был частично подтвержден анализом. Тема Холокоста сохраняется, но появляются и темы, связанные с современным государством Израиль.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, творческое письмо, иностранные студенты, образ, стереотип, холокост, традиции

Introduction

In 2024, a book entitled *Jewish Heroines* was published, written by a group of Swedish authors, including Joanna Rubin Dranger, Karin Brygger, and Anneli Rådestad. The book presents portraits of many brave women from different periods of Jewish history.¹ This recently published book aims to break down the established and repeatedly perpetuated, even stereotypical, image of Jews that stubbornly appears in literature, usually in the form of male heroes associated with either the Holocaust or the Ashkenazi tradition of the Galician *shtetl* in its full orthodox form. Let us recall, for example, the very popular works of Isaac Bashevis Singer, or other, multiple authors who have addressed the theme of the Holocaust from the post-war period to the present day, such as for example Czech authors like Ladislav Fuks, Viktor Fischl, Arnošt Lustig or Karol Efraim Sidon. As Milan Mašát has found, the persistence of stereotypical views of Jews in schools, at least in the Czech Republic is sometimes due to the fragmentation of the topic across multiple literary texts:

Students are presented with a text describing a specific phenomenon, but they do not yet have the necessary knowledge about World War II; the fragmentary inclusion of these texts does not lead to the presentation of the issue as a distinct literary theme with a definition of the development of its portrayal and the like. In our opinion, the solution could be to create a thematically oriented literary aid that would present examples from works in which the phenomenon occurs across all grades of secondary school. Teachers could use this collection of texts in literature classes as needed (project-based teaching, theme weeks, etc.).²

The book *Jewish Heroines* inspired us to ask this question in the didactic context of teaching creative writing to international

¹ Karin Brygger, Joanna Rubin Dranger, and Anneli Rådestad, *Judiska hjältinnor* (Natur & Kultur, 2024). Anna Štítková and Pavlína Šulcová, "Lidé často vnímají židovství jen skrz holokaust nebo Izrael, chceme to změnit, říkájí autorky knihy *Židovské hrdinky*" (2025), <https://www.heroine.cz/spolecnost/nekdy-je-hrdinstvi-jen-byt-sam-sebou-rikaji-o-knize-zidovske-hrdinky-jeji-autorky>. In the Czech context, Marcela Zoufalá's book has a similar intention, albeit with more regard to the current reality in Israel, cf. Marcela Zoufalá, *Judaismus a ženy v Izraeli* (Carolinum, 2012).

² Milan Mašát, "K implementaci tematiky šoa do výuky literární výchovy z pohledu učitelů," *Paidagogos* 1, no. 3 (2019): 35–61, <https://www.paidagogos.net/issues/2019/1/article.php?id=3>. Cf. also Milan Mašát, "K uplatnění tematiky šoa v literárních čítankách pro druhý stupeň základních škol," *Jazyk – literatura – komunikace* 5, no. 2 (2017): 68–78, <https://jlk.upol.cz/index.php/cislo-2-2017>. It should be noted that Milan Mašát has been long and systematically addressing the issue of the Shoah in Czech language teaching, particularly in Czech literature, in other studies that we have not drawn on at this time. We also explicitly referred to Milan Mašát and his findings from 2019, for example, in Eva Maria Hrdinová, Iva Dömischová, and Pavel Aleš, "My Blondie is sick, because I did something wrong... Once More on the Phenomenon of SHOAH in the Teaching of Creative Writing at the University," *Judaica Russica* 2, no. 11 (2023): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.31261/IR.2023.11.09>.

students studying at the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University. How can Jewish characters be portrayed in stories? What do they look like, how do they think? How do they act? "Eyes like black cherries, mouths like pink paper, and fingers like ink and pen," as the well-known Yiddish song goes. Our contribution aims to illustrate how students work with Jewish themes and material in Creative Writing classes and how they are able to describe their Jewish heroes. The heuristic goal is to present the topic of the Holocaust in the context of creative writing (our contribution continues the themes discussed in two previous articles by Hrdinová and Dömischová and Hrdinová, Dömischová, and Aleš).³ With regard to the image of Jews,⁴ I explicitly follow up on my previous article, where I conducted preliminary research to determine what are the associations connected with Jewish themes and Jewish personalities, specifically in relation to literary works. Now, based on the same literary texts, but also taking into account developments in the social and literary situation, I am asking this question again, with particular regard to the image of Jews and Judaism as seen by students themselves today.

Furthermore, this is a new group of students. In this context, I am aware of the low number; I worked with nine students only. This limit is determined by the number of foreign students who come to our university and enroll in the given subject. I, therefore, see my findings as more of a probe into a certain sample of today's young people and their opinions and creative expressions with regard to Jewish themes. I am also aware that my partial research may be followed by a more extensive research with greater informative value.

Theoretically, I draw upon both foreign (English-speaking and German-speaking due to our academic background and teaching intention) and Czech theorists of Creative Writing. With regard to stereotypes about Judaism in literature I draw further on works from Margit Frank⁵ and Paula Wojcik,⁶ who deal with stereotypes relating to Jews in literature.

Before proceeding with the analysis itself, let us briefly consider our concept of creative writing, which forms the basis of our

³ Eva Maria Hrdinová and Iva Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew – What Would I talk to Him/Her About? The Possibilities of Creative Writing and Post Shoah Literature in the Czech Language," *Judaica Russica* 1, no. 10 (2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.31261/IR.2023.11.09>; Hrdinová, Dömischová, and Aleš, "My Blondie," 1–15.

⁴ Cf. Hrdinová and Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew," 1–14.

⁵ Cf. Margit Frank, *Das Bild des Juden in der deutschen Literatur im Wandel der Zeitgeschichte. Studien zu jüdischen Gestalten und Namen in deutschsprachigen Romanen und Erzählungen, 1918–1945* (Burg Verlag, 1987).

⁶ Paula Wojcik, *Das Stereotyp als Metapher: zur Demontage des Antisemitismus in der Gegenwartsliteratur*, (Transcript, 2013), 59–65.

approach. Writing is an activity aimed at producing texts. It is one of the basic skills that a pupil achieves in the course of school education. However, school teaching is mainly devoted to practising the algorithms of writing—such stylistic formations that are necessary for everyday personal, administrative or professional communication: a letter, a report, an application, a description of a work procedure, etc. The development of an individual style is linked to the production of aestheticised expression. After its basics have been practised in secondary schools and colleges and at universities in the narrative or essay style, no more attention is paid to the development of individual style. The lack of proficiency in producing functionally adequate, satisfactory texts, which we find in a large proportion of university students, leads me to believe that much greater attention should be given to the development of creative skills and writing abilities at all the lower grades.⁷

This applies both to the mother tongue and, not least, to foreign languages, although attention is paid to smaller written formats to varying degrees in the teaching of English, for example.

As is well known, and as I have already mentioned this in my previous texts on this topic,⁸ in Creative Writing we distinguish two lines, artistic and didactic.⁹ While in the artistic line we educate future writers and the course is mainly led by an active writer, in the didactic line we try to promote the linguistic competence of the learner through creative writing, either in his/her mother tongue or in a foreign language. Other possible values that materialize are the promotion of the emotional component in the pupil, an increase in his/her self-confidence when working especially with a foreign language in the form of an actual artistic activity, and, last but not least, the so-called catharsis, the possibility to resolve inner problems and difficulties, for example.¹⁰ However, I do not

⁷ Zbyněk Fišer, *Tvůrčí psaní. Malá učebnice technik tvůrčího psaní* (Aleš Čeněk, 2002).

⁸ Hrdinová and Dömschová, "If I Met a Jew," 1–14; Hrdinová, Dömschová, and Aleš, "My Blondie," 1–15.

⁹ Fišer, *Tvůrčí psaní. Malá učebnice*; Kerri Smith, *Destrukční deník* (CooBo, 2002).

¹⁰ I am aware of other different ways of Creative Writing as they can be registered in the Czech environment of foreign language teaching, especially those practices that seem to connect academic and didactic directions and apply, for example, joint creative outputs on the level of the novel or more advanced poetic forms. I believe that this possibility is very well applicable to secondary schools or academic environments; after all, both Flajšar and Mareček (Jiří Flajšar, "Tvůrčí psaní v angličtině pro nerodilé mluvčí," in *Tvůrčí psaní – klíčová kompetence na vysoké škole*, ed. Zbyněk Fišer (Doplněk, 2005), 113–116; Zdeněk Mareček, "Tvůrčí psaní v angličtině pro nerodilé mluvčí," in Fišer (ed.), *Tvůrčí psaní*, 117–127) come from university environments. Similarly advanced poetic forms such as the sonnet are also mentioned by Zbyněk Fišer, who, however, comes from the environment of teaching the mother tongue, that is, Czech. Together with Comenius, however, we apply the principle of starting from a shorter and simpler form to a more complex form (Comenius, *Didactica magna*), with forms that can be applied in the environment of teaching English at secondary (or even primary) school. Many studies have been written about creative

address this last point in our interpretation, as it belongs to the field of art therapy.¹¹

I teach Creative Writing both in a one-semester course within the Master's programme and in the Compendia course for Erasmus students abroad. The scope of topics varies. While in the one-semester form a wider variety of techniques can be substituted (from letter, word, sentence to short story, haiku, acrostic or comics), in the course for Erasmus students we focus primarily on the short, paragraph-long story, on a theme inspired by intercultural reality or the literary text under discussion. I will then introduce some of the texts discussed. Our approach to teaching creative writing is a synthesis of the approaches of Dočekalová, Smith and Gjuričová in the sense that we want to encourage students' creativity and imagination.¹²

I am convinced that creative writing on the theme of Jewish culture has a lot to do with identity.¹³ It is precisely this identity that has to do with culture, history, but also with life situations, both past and present. It follows from the above that identity leads to integrity, that is, to a certain way of life.¹⁴ The established images of Jews, which are very often associated with and also transmitted in literary texts, have already been mentioned.

writing in foreign language teaching. In my paper, against this background, I would like to mention my own teaching activities. Cf also Ann J. Palmer, *Writing and Imagery – How to Deepen Your Creativity and Improve Your Writing* (Aber Books, 2010), republished (with Graham E. Larler) as *Writing and Imagery – How to Avoid Writer's Block (How to Become an Author)* (Aber Books, 2013); Markéta Dočekalová, *Tvůrčí psaní pro každého: Jak psát pro noviny a časopisy, jak vymyslet dobrý příběh, praktická cvičení* (Grada, 2006); Markéta Dočekalová, *Tvůrčí psaní pro každého 2: Naučte se vyprávět příběhy! Jak se píše povídka, novela a román, Praktická cvičení. 1* (Grada 2009); Alžběta Bublanová and Andrea Stelzerová, *Cvičebnice tvůrčího psaní* (Grada, 2021); Dorothea Brande, *Schriftsteller werden* (Autorenhaus, 2006); John Gardner, *On Becoming a Novelist* (W. W. Norton & Co, 1983); Fritz Gelsing, *Kreativschreiben. Handwerk und Techniken des Erzählens* (DuMont, 2004).

¹¹ Fišer, *Tvůrčí psaní* (2002); Šárka Gjuričová and Jiří Kubička, *Rodinná terapie: systemické a narativní přístupy* (Grada, 2009).

¹² Hrdinová and Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew," 1–14.

¹³ We base our approach on the following concept of identity: "Identität ist zu verstehen als das jeweilige Ergebnis der Auseinandersetzung des Subjekts mit seiner Geschichte, seinem Körper und seiner Lebenslage, auch mit den Bildern, die das soziale Umfeld von ihm hat. Identität im Sinne von Selbstdefinition oder Selbstverständnis muss von der objektivierenden Bedeutung des Begriffs unterschieden werden, wie er zum Beispiel bei Strafverfolgungsbehörden verwendet wird. Dort wird die Identität einer Person durch physische und soziale Erkennungsmerkmale bestimmt." [Identity can be understood as the result of the subject's engagement with their history, their body, and their life situation, as well as with the images that their social environment has of them. Identity in the sense of self-definition or self-understanding must be distinguished from the objectifying meaning of the term as used, for example, by law enforcement agencies. There, a person's identity is determined by physical and social identifying features.] Cf. Georg Auernheimer, "Identität," in *Socialnet Lexikon* (2022), <https://www.socialnet.de/lexikon/Identitaet>.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Jünemann, *Desatero pro Charitu. Křesťansko-etická orientace pro vytváření spravedlivých struktur organizace* (Vzdělávací institut pro charitní praxi o.p.s. ve spolupráci s Diecézní katolickou Charitou Hradec Králové, 2022).

This is then reflected on a multi-layered level in literature (cf. Noll,¹⁵ but also many before him; a detailed list exceeds the scope of this study). Well-established *topoi* are repeated: the Holocaust, Orthodox Jews in Poland,¹⁶ for example, and similarly well-established characters¹⁷: rabbis, teachers, but also merchants, doctors (for example by Franz Kafka or Egon Hostovský and Jewish workers, which is rather rare in the text corpus),¹⁸ as well as beautiful mysterious girls (Lustig, Fuks, Fischl, but also other authors like Kafka, or Gustav Meyrink), or young, torn men (cf. works from Kafka or Hostovský).¹⁹ The popularity of the topic²⁰ can then lead to a certain “oversaturation of stories.”²¹

Nevertheless, Milan Mašát is not alone in believing that the Holocaust is, so to speak, an eternal theme,²² a theme that will remain ever-present as a powerful warning in both the cultural memory of people and in the research and teaching practices of all of us who study or work with literature.

Irwin Martin Abrams, in his article Elie Wiesel—Nobel Lecture, says that the Shoah can be understood as a warning to “those who are ‘different’—whether black or white, Jew or Arab, Christian or Muslim – everyone whose orientation differs politically, philosophically, sexually”: [...] those who are “different”—blacks or whites, Jews, Arabs, Christians or Muslims—all those whose political, philosophical or sexual orientation differs.²³

In this context, several dilemmas arise: how to understand the character of the Jew—is it exclusively related to the past, and if it is conceived for the present, do we mean exclusively the inhabitants or citizens of Israel, or not? This raises a research question:²⁴ is it possible to abandon old *topoi* or enrich them with new ones? If so, then only gradually and always against the backdrop of tradition. I wanted to answer this question while working with students on the Jewish theme and in the context of Creative Writing (the reception may have been influenced by events in Gaza, but

¹⁵ Chaim Noll, “Das Bild vom Juden in der Literatur der DDR,” *OnLine Extra*, no. 120 (2010), <https://www.compass-infodienst.de/Chaim-Noll-Das-Bild-vom-Juden-in-der-Literatur-der-DDR.7656.0.html>.

¹⁶ Cf. Wojcik, *Das Stereotyp als Metapher*, 59–65.

¹⁷ Cf. Frank, *Das Bild* (1987).

¹⁸ They can be found in Jiří Weil’s novels.

¹⁹ The list of authors is again illustrative and stems from the anchoring in German and English studies and the reality of the Czech Republic.

²⁰ Cf., for example, German Romani literature on the Porajmos is only now being published, and the topic remains popular in German literature.

²¹ Hrdinová, Dömischová, and Aleš, “My Blondie,” 1–15, Mašát, “K implementaci,” 35–61.

²² Mašát, “K implementaci,” *ibidem*.

²³ Mašát, *ibidem*. See also Jeff Jacoby, “Forgetting the Holocaust,” *Israel: Aish HaTorah Literacy* (2017), <https://aish.com/forgetting-the-holocaust/>.

²⁴ Cf. Miroslav Chráška, *Metody pedagogického výzkumu: základy kvantitativního výzkumu* (Grada, 2007).

this was not explicitly addressed in my teaching, and there are no public or official pro-Palestinian activities by university students at the Faculty of Education in Olomouc).

Analysis

I worked with nine foreign students from the Erasmus program and other foreign programs (calendar year 2024). In terms of nationality, students from Spain predominated, with one student from China and one from Poland. The aim of the course was not only to practice creative writing skills, but above all to raise awareness of intercultural communication with regard to the Jewish diaspora, its culture, and literary wealth. Given that the students were tasked with familiarizing themselves with the cultural specifics of the Czech Republic, the emphasis was primarily on Jewish realities and literature that were or are typical of the Czech Republic. Inspired by English-speaking author Joseph Fasano and German-speaking educator Gabriele Zoltan,²⁵ we first had students write freely about any letter and word they chose that they associated with Jewish topics and culture, and then they had to create their own text featuring a Jewish character.

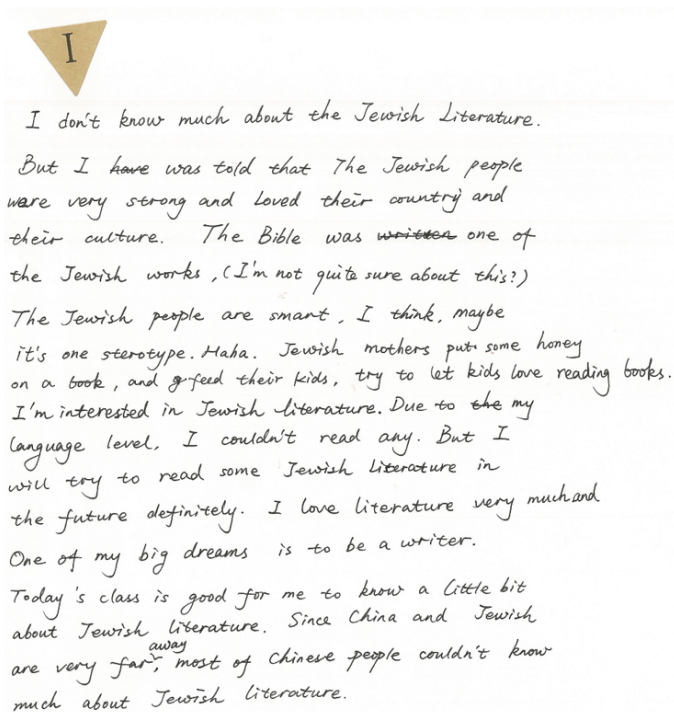
There was a total of eighteen tasks and there were nine students. The event took place during the summer semester 2024, a year's interval provides an opportunity for evaluation. Letter and word stickers were used for this purpose for the selected letters, words, and phrases, including the *letters J, I, L, B, J, R, A, W, M, T* (drawn at random) and words and famous phrases (deliberately neutral or positively connoted to eliminate the presupposition of Judaism/Jews being associated with sad and negative things): *live a good life, imagination, love, hope, walking on sunshine, the story of, unforgettable, milestones*. All the works were read aloud in class after completion and commented on. There was no evaluation of creative performance (due to the nature of the task: it was free writing, not a performance formally bound by verse, meter, or other structure, etc.);²⁶ instead, a discussion on the topic followed, both between teachers and students and within the group.

²⁵ Gabriele Zoltan and Birgit Fillafer, *Karibu: Vorkurs Der ideale Einstieg in den Schriftspracherwerb* (Westermann Schulbuchverlag, 2024). *Karibu* is a series of workbooks designed for teaching language through stories. The author is a teacher who works with children from immigrant families and has developed a method for teaching these children German from the first grade onwards through stories.

²⁶ Similarly, we did not focus specifically on correcting grammatical errors. It should be noted that the level in the group varied between A2 and C1.

Four selected student texts from the total number will now be presented. A commentary follows each text.

Text 1



I don't know much about the Jewish Literature. But I have been told that The Jewish people were very strong and loved their country and their culture. The Bible was ~~writes~~ one of the Jewish works, (I'm not quite sure about this?) The Jewish people are smart, I think, maybe it's one stereotype. Haha. Jewish mothers put some honey on a book, and feed their kids, try to let kids love reading books. I'm interested in Jewish literature. Due to ~~the~~ my language level, I couldn't read any. But I will try to read some Jewish literature in the future definitely. I love literature very much and One of my big dreams is to be a writer. Today's class is good for me to know a little bit about Jewish literature. Since China and Jewish are very far ^{away}, most of Chinese people couldn't know much about Jewish literature.

Surprisingly, the first text by a Chinese student does not only touch on the topic of Jews and Jewish realities or literature, as discussed in class, but also on her own dreams and wishes, specifically her desire to be a writer (note: similar reflections appear more often among foreign students in Creative Writing). The student admits to her own lack of knowledge about Jews and Jewish culture, which she attributes to the considerable geographical distance between China and Israel, and by extension Europe. Nevertheless, in my opinion, she presents essential facts, namely the relationship of Jews to education and books (the Bible, for example, is explicitly mentioned). Beyond the facts covered in class, the student mentions the custom of Jewish mothers smearing honey on books to make them more appealing to children. As a stereotype, albeit a positive one (with a smiley face), the student also mentions Jewish cleverness and education. We personally liked

the work not only because of its emphasis on education, but also because of the student's own openness (catharsis in Fišer's sense), as she shares her desire to write professionally and finds refuge in literature.

Words and Sentences

Text 2

live a good life

Jewish people seems very smart. They are only ^{few} 0.2% of Jewish people in the world, accounts for 0.2% totally. But they created many inventions, and got lots of Nobel prizes.

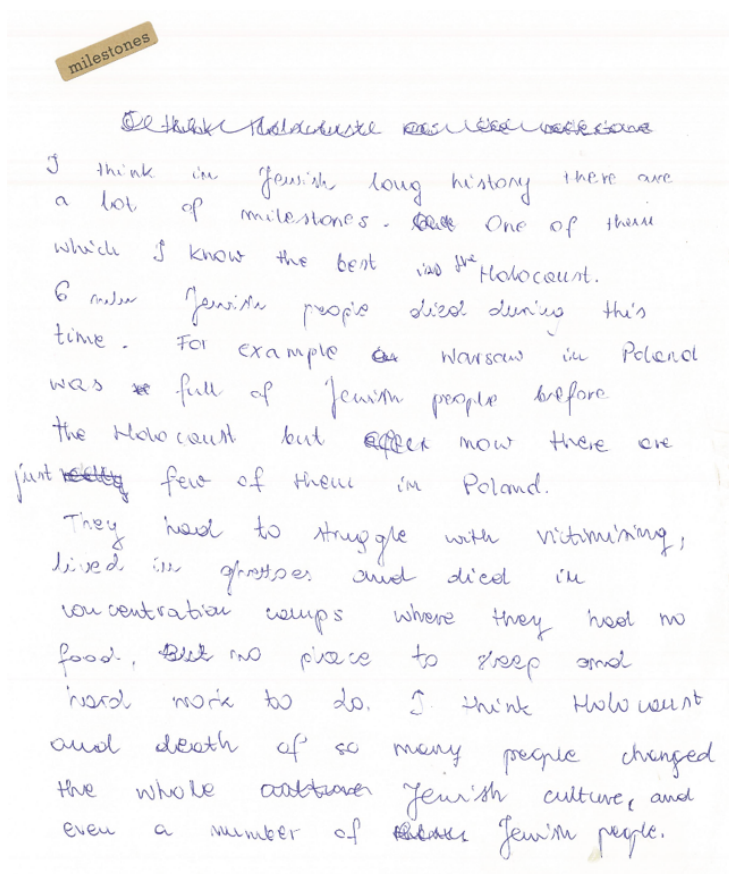
The reasons why Jewish people could achieve such high goals ~~is~~ that Jewish pay attention to their education. Jewish love reading books, around ^{average} 64 books a year, which ranks top 1. ^{one people reads} The teacher's position is higher than the king. The laws ^{show} ~~gives~~ respects to the teachers.

The Jewish nations love ~~into~~ innovation. ~~their innovation abilities~~

^{parents} Jews teach their children to put 'intelligence, education, imagination and enthusiasm' before 'material desire'. In this way, children can find a job and live a good life.

Text 2, from the set of words and phrases, also comes from the same student. I chose it deliberately because its content follows on from the previous text. In the text, the student again refers to education, specifically the high status of teachers. However, the word "rabbi" is not explicitly mentioned, even though the student (like the whole group) was familiar with this term from her lessons. I attribute this to the student's education in her home country, where this term may not have been used. Once again, the teacher's intelligence, erudition, and high status are mentioned, as are the education of children and literary awareness, similar to the previous text. According to the student, education not only enables the younger generation to live a good life, but also leads to an existential desire to broaden one's horizons and expands those horizons.

Text 3



Unlike the previous texts, Text 3 draws on the work of a Polish student who, as the subsequent discussion shows, was very well informed about Jewish culture, particularly the fate of Polish Jews. The student considers the Holocaust to be a significant milestone in Jewish culture, recalling the misery, hardship, suffering, and life in ghettos and concentration camps. When World War II ended, only a tiny fraction of the original large Jewish population in Poland²⁷ remained. The Holocaust remained a memento that not only changed the functioning of the Jewish community, but also left a deep mark on world history.

²⁷ Cf. Wojcik, *Das Stereotyp*, 59–65.

Text 4

love

Borderlife - Dorit Rabinman

I heard something about a book written by an Author from Israel that was censored because in this book there was the celebration of the Love between a guy from Palestine and a girl from Israel.

Talking about this kind of things in these times is very difficult because of all the conflicts between the two countries and all the hate that there is between them.

Despite this, some people are trying to fight against the situation. Dorit Rabinman is one of them.

Another thing ^{in Jerusalem} that came to my mind is the "flower thrower" of Banksy, painted by him on a wall in Israel to denounce the situation and the conflicts between the two countries. With this point the author want to tell people not to show hate, but to show Love.

In text number 4, a student from Spain recalls the current situation of people living in Israel and Palestine, specifically using the example of a literary work by contemporary author Dorit Rabinman, which deals with the love between an Israeli girl and a Palestinian boy. Love between two people from two hostile nations or families has been a problem since at least the time of Romeo and Juliet, winding its way like a proverbial red thread through literature. The discussion focused on the complex international situation and love against the backdrop of war and humanitarian disasters. The artwork *Flower Thrower* by street artist Banksy was also mentioned. I personally welcome this text, as it resonates with the introductory ideas of my study that literature related to Jewish themes does not have to reflect only old or older, albeit very serious, traditions or historical circumstances, but can also relate to serious contemporary historical circumstances.

Stories

As the final task of the lesson, we devoted ourselves to our own (on a page of A4 paper)²⁸ portrayal of a Jewish character, taking into account the theoretical knowledge previously discussed and the previous tasks already discussed. The final task, entitled *My Jewish character* represented the culmination of the analysis (Identity, Culture, Tradition, and Past—a return to the images that were discussed in the theoretical part). Most of the stories take place in the past and in a kind of timelessness, or, conversely, during World War II, and fewer in the present. Three major themes emerged, some accompanied by artwork. There were two reasons for this: either the student wanted to illustrate their story, or they couldn't remember the appropriate English vocabulary. The three recurring themes were as follows:

1. Musician—various instruments, once a girl was mentioned, who wants to learn to play the *shofar* (3 students).
2. Boy/girl on the run—alone, with family—World War II (4 students).
3. One middle-aged woman, living somewhere in Western Europe, German speaking, single, university lecturer, 40 years old, struggle between tradition and emancipation (the story deviates from the above, it was not thematized). Surprisingly similar to the short stories of Vlasta Rút Sidonová, whom we did not discuss in the class however²⁹ (1 student).

Although briefly explained, students confuse the difference between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, with the exception of Polish and Spanish students. However, the difference was not very noticeable in the texts. Even the story about a family fleeing a Polish *shtetl* focused on the experience of the journey rather than on Ashkenazi realities, as did the story set in Spain. The stories about musicians were set in different locations, while the story about a girl playing the shofar took place in a kind of timeless and unnamed city. The story about a university professor took place without any further specification, except for the addition that her native language was actually German.

²⁸ We chose pencils and paper both to give students the opportunity to be creative, for example by illustrating the story, and to prevent cheating with artificial intelligence when using laptops, tablets, or cell phones, ensuring that students write the assignments themselves.

²⁹ Hrdinová and Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew," 11. This story about a Jewish woman as a university lecturer came surprisingly also in previous years, see also p. 12.

Conclusions

The following was found: according to our students' written assignments, a Jewish figure can primarily be a teacher, whether religious or modern at the university level. He can also be a musician, but he can also hold other professions. According to our students, a Jew is someone who follows tradition and honors his father's faith. The differences and similarities between individual Jewish characters are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences and similarities between individual Jewish characters

<i>Practice of Jewish faith</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Features</i>
Yes	teacher	education
No	University lecturer (woman)	education
Yes	child	viability
Yes	musician	talent
Yes	musician (girl)	talent, viability

These key themes were repeated in the texts: four times God, Messiah, this makes circa 22% out of a total of 18 texts on Letters, words, and phrases, seven times tradition, this makes ca 38% (diverse elements of tradition: *Torah*, *shofar*, synagogue, *kippah*, songs, *Shabbat*, holidays, *Hanukkah*), persecution/Holocaust eight times, this makes ca 44%, twice mentioned little knowledge of the topic (once with reference to the distance between China and Europe), which makes ca 11%, twice proficiency in the topic with reference to domestic realities (once Poland, once Spain), which makes ca 11%, two times mention of the relationship between Jews and finance, including one explicit reference (see above) to the prejudice about stingy Jews, this is ca 11%, one mention of viability, this is ca 5%. In addition, during the discussion and outside of the percentage evaluation, there was a mention of Jewish names or biblical names that subsequently appeared in the stories, such as David (several times) or Rebecca or Rachel. *Kinnui*³⁰ were not mentioned so much in connection with typical surnames, but primarily with Hebrew first names. Alternatively, contemporary names that are neutral but have biblical origin

³⁰ *Kinnui* (Hebr. "nickname") is actually a code name for both God's names and secular names for the Biblical Hebrew names (e.g., Arne for Aharon).

were also mentioned.³¹ In addition to the percentage evaluation (given the rather sporadic occurrence in the texts), I also note mentions of artists with Jewish roots or ties to Israel, including not only Dorit Rabinyan and Banksy, who were mentioned in the texts, but also Franz Kafka. He is mentioned twice as an author, similarly to musicians Itzhak Perlman and David Oistrakh, who were mentioned once. In the subsequent discussion, Kafka was mentioned repeatedly, as were the authors discussed at the beginning of the lesson, such as Czech authors Jiří Weil and Egon Hostovský, who were previously unknown to the students.

For stories, the situation was as follows:

- one time University Lecturer, ca 11% from nine texts;
- three times Musician, ca 33%;
- four times Holocaust, ca 44%.

In absolute terms, out of all 27 texts, the Holocaust accounts for 12 texts, or ca 44%. It is clear that this topic is the strongest overall.

We also observe the recurrence of typical characters, such as teachers, but also the connection between Jews and property, their cleverness and intelligence,³² as well as an emphasis on piety and tradition.³³ On the contrary, Jewish appearance was not discussed at all,³⁴ except for one instance in a text about a university professor, where a student wrote that she was dark-haired, which we do not consider a relevant criterion.

It was found that the research question was not (fully) confirmed. Traditional images of Jewish existence continue to appear, which are also repeated in literary works (Frank). However, the sample is small, illustrative, and conditioned by local specifics. The students' knowledge often depended on their national history (Poland, Spain). Nevertheless, there were signs of innovation, a focus on the present day, and inspiration from contemporary Israeli literature.

Will the future really show a shift towards modern stories, which, as is the case with all major historical events, will logically push these further into the past? Or is the Holocaust such a powerful memento that it will remain timeless? For our students, the Holocaust remains the most powerful *topos* associated with Jews and Judaism, but there is also room for reflection on contemporary

³¹ Cf. Frank, *Das Bild*, 38, 39, 147. Frank uses the term for both first names and German-sounding, often composite surnames. Here, we should note that Frank's text has a different goal and uses a different method – it analyzes literary characters from existing works, not a collection of texts in the making.

³² Cf. Frank, 103, who discusses not only education but also stinginess.

³³ Frank, 8, 73, 150.

³⁴ Frank, 114.

literature and other topics, which were not apparent in previous years when I addressed the topic (cf. my earlier work). However, only time will tell to what extent the new topics will prevail over the old ones. Nevertheless, I believe that even now, when the number of Holocaust survivors is dwindling, it remains, as Mašát and Jacoby state,³⁵ an omnipresent and, so to speak, eternal theme. However, it is necessary to treat this topic appropriately so as not to cause oversaturation.³⁶ In our case, however, nothing of the sort happened, and the creative outputs led to a deep and interesting discussion among the students themselves. Nevertheless, we are left with open questions that are worth working on didactically.

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³⁵ Mašát, "K implementaci," 35–61. See also Jacoby, "Forgetting the Holocaust" (2017).

³⁶ Hrdinová, Dömschová, and Aleš, "My Blondie," 1–15.

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