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On the Need for *Narrations of the Shoah* in Contemporary Humanities A New Opening

ABSTRACT: The article aims at presenting the new formula of *Narrations of the Shoah*, Polish academic journal. The idea behind the journal is linked to the conviction that the Holocaust is the zero point of Polish culture and its conceptualisation, and broadly understood narrations are a necessary medium to recognise and depict complications resulting from this issue. This journal appears to be symptomatic of the state of research on the Shoah (and other genocides) in Poland; *Narrations of the Shoah* simultaneously probes and delineates the perspectives of its development. The formula of the journal responds to the challenges of contemporary humanities and fills the gap in Polish studies on the Shoah. *Narrations of the Shoah* is a *sui generis* laboratory of new methodologies, an interdisciplinary forum of cutting-edge ideas, but it also provides a continuation of the best practices of traditional philology and literary studies. Announced in the title of this article, the journal's new opening will primarily consist in broadening its field of interest to include such issues as narrations of genocides other than the Holocaust or the relation between Holocaust studies and ecocriticism, especially the notion of the Anthropocene.

KEYWORDS: Holocaust in Poland, Polish literature, research on the Shoah in Poland

The emphasis on narrative – on the telling as much as on what is being told – is here by design, for only by acknowledging it we can hope to understand how the past reaches most of us at all.¹

The quoted excerpt from Alvin H. Rosenfeld's book *The End of the Holocaust* (published in 2011) opened the first volume of the academic journal *Narrations of the Shoah*; we also put these words as a motto on the journal's website. They briefly and concisely state our intentions, set the direction of our reflection, and at the same time – as we are ready for constant self-revision and taking inspiration

¹ A.H. ROSENFELD: *The End of the Holocaust*. Bloomington 2011, p. 11.

from concepts that reorient existing thinking – they fit into the wide, open formula of research that we would like to promote.

To elucidate the new opening of *Narrations of the Shoah*, I will recapitulate the journal's history; I will present in detail the basic assumptions and profile of the journal, the first issue of which was published in 2015, but I will start with delineating briefly the academic and cultural context in which the periodical was created and which influenced some of the decisions made by its editorial board. First of all, the importance and dominance of historiographic Holocaust studies in Poland, which are a permanent reference point for literary or cultural studies, should be emphasised. Due to the subject matter, *Holocaust Studies and Materials*, the journal published for fifteen years by the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research affiliated with the Institute of Philosophy of the Polish Academy of Sciences, has been since the very beginning a kind of elder-sister periodical for *Narrations of the Shoah*. The journal also constitutes for us a model of pursuing high standards, both editorially and substantially, as it engages eminent experts on the subject, mainly historians, such as Dariusz Libionka, Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, Alina Skibińska, and Agnieszka Haska. The centre itself – by publishing academic monographs and editions of archival texts (most frequently diaries from the time of the Holocaust) – sets important directions for the development of Holocaust studies in Poland, and its members undertake problems that have not yet been elaborated upon and are often considered controversial. They try to describe the course of the Holocaust in Poland at all its stages as accurately as possible, hence the recent emphasis on its third phase. While the first phase involved confining Jews to ghettos, wreaking devastation on them by hunger, illnesses, and forced labour, and the second phase – murdering them in camps, the third phase covers the time after the liquidation of the ghettos, that is, the fate of Jews hiding mainly in the villages, tracked down and killed by both Germans and Poles. A milestone collective work has been devoted to these issues – *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* (Night without an end. Fates of Jews in selected counties of occupied Poland),² but it is probably not the final point of inquiry initiated by the need to revise Jan Tomasz Gross's diagnoses posed in *Neighbors* and his subsequent publications utilising historiographic methodologies, documents, and other archival materials. An innovative and bold reflection on the Holocaust develops simultaneously in anthropological and ethnographic studies (Alina Cała,³ Joanna Tokarska-Bakir,⁴

² B. ENGELKING, J. GRABOWSKI (eds.): *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*. Vol. 1–2. Warszawa 2018.

³ A. CAŁA: *Żyd – wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła*. Warszawa 2012.

⁴ J. TOKARSKA-BAKIR: *Legends of blood. Anthropology of the Holocaust in Poland*. Warszawa 2008; J. TOKARSKA-BAKIR: *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1946*. Wołowiec 2012; J. TOKARSKA-BAKIR: *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*. Warszawa 2018.

and Roma Sendyka⁵), political sciences (Piotr Forecki⁶), film studies (Katarzyna Mąka-Malatyńska⁷), theatre studies (Grzegorz Niziołek⁸), cultural studies (Jacek Małczyński⁹), and the field of art history (Luiza Nader,¹⁰ Piotr Słodkowski¹¹). The research of all the mentioned authors has turned out to be ground-breaking not only within the disciplines they represent, but also in the interdisciplinary perspective. They have shaped the specialised scientific debate, but they have also had a significant impact (including the situations when they have been rejected or their publication disregarded) on its social perception and on the sphere of public discussion; yet, above all, they themselves create the universe of the Holocaust narrative – in the broadest sense of this formula. However, at the same time, narratives about the Holocaust in a narrower sense – that is, cultural texts, in particular literary texts: fictional, non-fictional, and testimonies – were usually the first to tell stories later captured by professional discourses. Therefore, these narratives in relation to academically profiled analyses of specific phenomena have two functions: integrating, one which puts them in the context of experience, and catalysing, one which recognises them in advance and triggers them in a specific way.

However, Polish literary studies on the Holocaust only relatively recently have begun to take advantage of their potentially unique position resulting from the already outlined state of affairs, which stems from the consistent Polonisation of the Holocaust over many decades and blocking the development of research on it. Above all, in the official public historical discourse the singularity of the Jewish experience was questioned, and even equated with the fate of other Polish citizens. After the political transformation in 1989, the backlock of research seemed to have been cleared quickly, however, not without avoiding various neglects and dead ends of discourse, sometimes arduously finding the language of description, facing the superior tone recorded in Polish, the anti-Semitic clichés, victimisation habits, usually unnoticed by non-Jewish speakers of Polish, calques and ideas so integrated into the language that they are considered innocuous (however, this is a subject matter for a separate study). The early 2010s, so the

⁵ R. SENDYKA: "Nie-miejsca pamięci i ich nie-ludzkie pomniki." *Teksty Drugie* 2017, no. 2, pp. 86–109.

⁶ P. FORECKI: *Od Shoah do Strachu. Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych*. Poznań 2010; P. FORECKI: *Po Jedwabnem. Anatomia pamięci funkcjonalnej*. Warszawa 2018.

⁷ K. MĄKA-MALATYŃSKA: *Widok z tej strony. Przedstawienia Holocaustu w polskim kinie*. Poznań 2012.

⁸ G. NIZIOŁEK: *Polski teatr Zagłady*. Kraków 2013.

⁹ J. MAŁCZYŃSKI: *Krajobrazy Zagłady. Perspektywa historii środowiskowej*. Warszawa 2018.

¹⁰ L. NADER: *Afekt Strzeмиńskiego. „Teoria widzenia”, rysunki wojenne, „Pamięci przyjaciół – Żydów”*. Warszawa 2018.

¹¹ P. SADKOWSKI: *Modernizm żydowsko-polski. Henryk Streng/Marek Włodarski a historia sztuki*. Warszawa 2019.

period preceding the establishment of our journal, is for Polish research focused on the Holocaust a kind of a turning point determined by the works published at that time, in many cases bringing important literary history and problem summaries. One of them is the first volume of a synthetic study *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady (1939–1968)* (Polish literature on the Holocaust 1939–1968)¹² edited by Sławomir Buryła, Dorota Krawczyńska, and Jacek Leociak. It is the initial step of a large-scale project still awaiting continuation, which confirms that the need for recapitulation resulted primarily from the belief in the opulence of the elicited material that still required some ordering (all in all, in Polish literature there are probably the greatest number of texts devoted to the Holocaust). Important studies from that time also include the monograph by Bartłomiej Krupa *Opowiedzieć Zagładę. Polska proza i historiografia wobec Holocaustu (1987–2003)* (To tell the Holocaust. Polish prose and historiography of the Holocaust (1987–2003))¹³ and the monograph by Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany „*Все поэты жи́ды*“. *Antytotalitarne gesty poetyckie i kreacyjne wobec Zagłady oraz innych doświadczeń granicznych* (“Все поэты жи́ды.” Antitotalitarian poetic acts and acts of creativity towards the Holocaust and other borderline experiences),¹⁴ somewhat complementary when it comes to the genre classification of the material, as well as the book by Sylwia Karolak *Doświadczenie Zagłady w literaturze polskiej 1947–1991. Kanon, który nie powstał* (Experience of the Shoah in Polish literature 1947–1991. Canon which was not)¹⁵ (2014). Earlier, Aleksandra Ubertowska published the pioneering work *Świadectwo – trauma – głos. Literackie reprezentacje Holocaustu* (Testimony, trauma, voice. Literary representations of the Holocaust) (2007), in which, making use of the title categories, she interpreted representative “texts functioning as part of post-modern cultural formation.”¹⁶ Subsequent works by Aleksandra Ubertowska opened the discussion to gender studies (in her 2014 monograph *Holokaust. Auto(tanato)grafie* (Holocaust. Auto(thanato)ographies)¹⁷) and eco-critical contexts (a number of scattered articles on ecocide as a parallel disaster or derivative of the Holocaust¹⁸). I refer to these studies because as

¹² S. BURYŁA, D. KRAWCZYŃSKA, J. LEOCIĄK (eds.): *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady (1939–1968)*. Warszawa 2013.

¹³ B. KRUPA: *Opowiedzieć Zagładę. Polska proza i historiografia wobec Holocaustu (1987–2003)*. Kraków 2013.

¹⁴ K. KUCZYŃSKA-KOSCHANY: „*Все поэты жи́ды*“. *Antytotalitarne gesty poetyckie i kreacyjne wobec Zagłady oraz innych doświadczeń granicznych*. Poznań 2013.

¹⁵ S. KAROLAK: *Doświadczenie Zagłady w literaturze polskiej 1947–1991. Kanon, który nie powstał*. Poznań 2014.

¹⁶ A. UBERTOWSKA: *Świadectwo – trauma – głos. Literackie reprezentacje Holocaustu*. Kraków 2007, p. 10.

¹⁷ A. UBERTOWSKA: *Holokaust. Auto(tanato)grafie*. Warszawa 2014.

¹⁸ A. UBERTOWSKA: “‘Kamienie niepokoją się i stają się agresywne’. Holocaust w świetle ekokrytyki.” *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* 2015, no. 25, pp. 93–111; A. UBERTOWSKA: “Kraj-obraz po Zagładzie. Pastoralne dystopie i wizje ‘terracydu’.” *Teksty Drugie* 2017, no. 2, pp. 132–147.

problem summaries they fit into a tendency in literary scholarship on the Holocaust other than historical systematisation. I would include among these studies two monographs by Marta Tomczok (Cuber) (*Metonimie Zagłady. O polskiej prozie lat 1987–2012* (Metonymies of the extermination. On the Polish prose between 1987 and 2012)¹⁹ and *Czyja dzisiaj jest Zagłada? Retoryka – ideologia – popkultura* (Whose is the Holocaust today? Rhetoric, ideology, and pop culture)²⁰) and the work by Anna Mach *Świadkowie świadectw. Postpamięć zagłady w polskiej literaturze najnowszej* (Witnesses of testimonies. Postmemory of the Holocaust in Polish contemporary literature).²¹ For obvious reasons, collective monographs are situated at the intersection of these two plans; these include: *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady* (Polish literature towards the Holocaust),²² *Stosowność i forma. Jak opowiadać o Zagładzie?* (Decorum and form. How to tell the story of the Shoah?),²³ *Pamięć Shoah. Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki pamięci* (Memory of the Shoah. Cultural representations and commemorative practices),²⁴ *Ślady obecności* (Traces of presence),²⁵ *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i przedstawiania* (Shoah. Contemporary problems of understanding and representation),²⁶ *Ślady drugiej wojny światowej i Zagłady w najnowszej literaturze polskiej* (Traces of the Second World War and the Holocaust in contemporary Polish literature),²⁷ as well as thematic issues of journals, especially in *Teksty Drugie* (Second Texts) (among many others, No. 5 in 2004: Trauma unrepresented and No. 3 of 2017: An environmental history of the Holocaust) and *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* (Poznań Polish Studies. Literary Series) (No. 25: After the Holocaust. Post-catastrophic narratives). I enumerate all of these titles because their wording indicates the dominant directions of reflection, which focus on memory and representation, but remain worth to be extended onto other issues, and maybe even require a more radical reorientation of perspective. It is significant that also the first issue of *Narrations of the Shoah*

¹⁹ M. CUBER: *Metonimie Zagłady. O polskiej prozie lat 1987–2012*. Katowice 2013.

²⁰ M. TOMCZOK: *Czyja dzisiaj jest Zagłada? Retoryka – ideologia – popkultura*. Warszawa 2017.

²¹ A. MACH: *Świadkowie świadectw. Postpamięć zagłady w polskiej literaturze najnowszej*. Toruń 2016.

²² A. BRODZKA-WALD, J. LEOCIAK, D. KRAWCZYŃSKA (eds.): *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady*. Warszawa 2000.

²³ M. GŁOWIŃSKI, K. CHMIELEWSKA, K. MAKARUK, A. MOLISAK, T. ŻUKOWSKI (eds.): *Stosowność i forma. Jak opowiadać o Zagładzie?* Kraków 2005.

²⁴ A. ZEIDLER-JANISZEWSKA, T. MAJEWSKI, M. WÓJCIK (eds.): *Pamięć Shoah. Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki pamięci*. Łódź 2009.

²⁵ S. BURYŁA, A. MOLISAK (eds.): *Ślady obecności*. Kraków 2010.

²⁶ P. CZAPLIŃSKI, E. DOMAŃSKA (eds.): *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i przedstawiania*. Poznań 2009.

²⁷ B. SIENKIEWICZ, S. KAROLAK (eds.): *Ślady drugiej wojny światowej i Zagłady w najnowszej literaturze polskiej*. Poznań 2016.

resulted from the conviction that some kind of summary had to be made, which is why the thematic part was concerned with the canon of Holocaust literature. In this way, on the one hand we posed questions about these texts which determine the coordinates of various narrations of the Shoah, and on the other hand we wished to reflect on the very idea of the canon in this context, for instance, on the question whether it is additionally restricted by the category of appropriateness. By adopting this approach, we also wanted to establish a framework for a question – still open – about determinants of narratives that interest us, which force us to revise literary categories and taxonomies (starting with genealogical ones).

Undoubtedly, studies on the Holocaust create a sub-discipline or an inter-discipline in contemporary humanities (which more and more boldly invite and incorporate elements of sciences). Our journal was created in response to the growing interest in this area of research in Poland. Therefore, we decided it was high time to fill the glaring gap, namely, the lack of a scientific forum and methodological laboratory where researchers (both experienced and those still working on their doctoral dissertations) would be able to address directly more advanced problems and test the validity of their ideas. Moreover, all the articles would be peer reviewed by eminent experts on the subject with significant achievements in the field.

The scope of the journal contributors' interests is well explained by its title, which in this case – as clearly declarative and polemical to the concept of Berel Lang²⁸ – not only provides a broad literary perspective along with the set of text analysis tools to be used, but also is a lens through which the Holocaust's functioning in contemporary humanities and collective imagination should be observed. In our journal we primarily focus on various artistic aspects of narrativising (the) experience. However, since the boundary between establishing, verifying, and recording facts, on the one hand, and telling and fictionalising the story, on the other, is blurred or sometimes even conventionalised, we try to explore of these relationships and exploit the conceptual potential that awareness of these treatments brings. Assuming that narration is a basic, indispensable medium through which knowledge and information about the Holocaust are transmitted and constructed, we commit ourselves to observe closely and with due suspicion discourses and styles of writing about it. We deal with all practices of telling the story of the Holocaust such as mystifying seemingly objective messages, processing facts, producing meaning, and thus the place of the Holocaust narrative in the collective imagination and culture. The latter includes popular culture as well, and so in the second volume of the journal we wished to both emphasise the utility of the notion of the topos in this research field and provide

²⁸ B. LANG: "The Representation of Evil: Ethical Content as Literary Form." In: *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*. Chicago 1990, pp. 117–161.

a preliminary overview of figures and images typical of the literature and imaginary of the Shoah that are frequently used outside of this context. Notwithstanding the wide scope of the Holocaust narrative, we also ask questions about its limitations. These seem to be primarily of ethical nature: they may concern the problem of appropriateness, but also relate to existing taboos (thwarting the expression of some experiences); they also involve attitudes towards texts that mishandle the issue, not only obviously negativistic ones (in some approaches still requiring commentary), but also less obvious literary cases of counterfactual narratives and decontextualisation of the Holocaust in literature.

As it was declared by Paweł Wolski in the journal's first volume, the preposition "of" in the title *Narrations of the Shoah* takes on a significant meaning from our perspective²⁹ because we do not solely explore the narrative(s) from the Holocaust, since memory and postmemory aspects are equally important to us. Distinguishing these two varieties according to the chronological criterion, we assume that the former are inherently connected with that reality, they are things of the Holocaust as Bożena Shallcross understands this term,³⁰ whereas in the latter case – regardless of the identity and experience of authors – a certain distance is already involved (some caesuras could also be drawn within them anyway). Such a simple division indicates the importance of including Polish-language texts into the international framework of Holocaust literature, which we indeed practise in our journal, and which we particularly put forward in the fourth issue that is devoted to Israeli narratives.

Post-Holocaust narratives result from narratives on the Holocaust, not necessarily thematising the Jewish fate and experience, but permeated with awareness of the Holocaust and its effects in other dimensions.³¹ In the long term, they impose an ethical obligation to recognise and problematise the process of narrativising other disasters.

The foregoing question is related to another semantic aspect of the journal's English-language title – *Narrations of the Shoah*. It does not fully convey a certain ambiguity present in the Polish title *Narracje o Zagładzie*, which could also be translated as 'narrations of/about the Destruction.' Polish noun *Zagłada* written with capital *Z* is a literal translation of the Hebrew *Shoah*, in other foreign languages a noun reserved for the genocide of Jews, but at the same time *zagłada* starting with lowercase *z* and used with an attributive refers to other genocides, ecocides, or disasters. We signal in this way that we are interested in the process of "broadening the field of the Holocaust"³² taking place in contemporary

²⁹ P. WOLSKI: "Narracje o Zagładzie. Otwarcie." *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2015, no. 1, p. 12.

³⁰ B. SHALLCROSS: *Rzeczy i Zagłada*. Kraków 2012, pp. 14–21.

³¹ A. ARTWIŃSKA, P. CZAPLIŃSKI, A. MOLISAK, A. TIPPNER: "Po Zagładzie. Narracje post-katastroficzne w literaturze polskiej." *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literaturoznawcza* 2015, no. 25, pp. 9–18.

³² P. CZAPLIŃSKI: "Poszerzanie pola Zagłady." *Teksty Drugie* 2017, no. 2, pp. 7–16.

reflection and the effects (not always cognitively beneficial) of treating the Holocaust narratives as paradigmatic, thus potentially also depriving of autonomy stories of events that bear some elements of genocide yet happened in different circumstances.

Narrations of the Shoah is a journal affiliated with the University of Silesia in Katowice, but the editors thereof are young literary scholars from research centres across Poland: Warsaw, Łódź, and Szczecin. The annually published periodical will soon be published biannually; all the issues are monographic. What is significant, our outlook on what problems should be subjected to such a review have undergone an evolution, which I will elaborate on in a moment. Nevertheless, we also publish articles not related to the main theme, in addition to permanent journal parts, as for instance the interview of the issue (usually carried out with an outstanding expert, such as Michał Głowiński³³ or Bożena Shallcross³⁴). We also publish archival texts and translations, not necessarily from English, and finally, we regularly publish extensive, contextual discussions of the latest Polish and foreign academic books.

The title of the present article, in order to remain fully adequate to its content, would have to properly read: “*Narrations of the Shoah*, that is, on the need for narratives of the Shoah in contemporary humanities” – this apparent clumsy tautology fully reflects the idea of our journal. Even though it is a project undergoing constant evolution, we manage to consistently pursue the goals we established by revealing new areas of reflection. In the course of this pursuit, the introduction of the context of the Holocaust narrative opens up interpretative perspectives unrecognised thus far. It reveals the “long impact” of the Holocaust or allows to review some of the canonical interpretations and findings, which is achieved by reading existing narratives empathically yet critically, through the prism of emancipatory discourses.

I would like to summon up two issues of *Narrations of the Shoah* – the third issue from 2017 dedicated to the multifaceted accounts of the Holocaust and animal studies, and the fifth issue from 2019 on the strategies and stances in poetry (mainly Polish) towards the Holocaust. I want to present these two issues because their combined content best reflects the spectrum of our interests: volume three appears as the most innovative, and volume five is representative of the most traditional literary approaches.

The purpose of the journal’s third issue was to probe to what extent narratives on the Holocaust affect the language of animal narratives, and to what extent animal narratives change the current Shoah narrations, how they broaden

³³ “Pisanie jest ze swej natury niemoralne’. O narracji i Zagładzie z Michałem Głowińskim rozmawiają Marta Tomczok i Paweł Wolski.” *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2015, no. 1, pp. 141–163.

³⁴ “Powinności badaczek i badaczy poezji Holokaustu wiążą się z zadaniami poezji w ogóle’. Z Profesor Bożeną Shallcross o poezji i Zagładzie rozmawia Anita Jarzyna.” *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2019, no. 5, pp. 23–44.

and reorient interpretive scripts. It is significant that this issue was published shortly after the publication of two pioneering monographs in Polish literature studies: *Realizm ekologiczny* (Ecological realism) by Anna Barcz³⁵ and Piotr Krupiński's „Dlaczego gęsi krzyczały?”. *Zwierzęta i Zagłada w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku* (“Why did the geese shriek?” Animals and the Holocaust in Polish literature of the 20th and 21st centuries),³⁶ which led us to areas hitherto overlooked in research. It was important to us to clearly distinguish, on the basis of published articles, three broadly defined areas of scholarly investigation in which the directions of our interest intersect. First of all, it is the ecocritical discourse assuming the Holocaust as a reference point, which will be manifested by, among others, the seemingly commonplace analogy between the treatment of animals in industrial breeding and the fate of Jews, which, considered through the prism of multidimensional cultural, philosophical, and anthropological categories, prompts the rethinking of articulations regarding the human–animal opposition. This very issue is explored by Mirosław Loba, who refers to the thought of Elisabeth de Fontenay, a French scholar hardly mentioned in Polish research. She pays special attention to the category of the victim, analyses connotations of the notion of the “animal Holocaust,” and points to the validity of using it; simultaneously, she cautions against the risk of manipulating the comparisons, which might lead to the rhetoric of competition in suffering.³⁷ Secondly, the view from a non-anthropocentric perspective is given to the figurative, animal (not always depreciating) language of the Holocaust narrative, and this phenomenon has a connection with the cultural code constructed by the ideology of the Third Reich. This issue is undertaken by, among others, Monika Żółkoś in her discussion on the phenomenon of insecto-Semitism, that is, projecting stereotypical negative associations with insects upon Jews, characteristic of the language of propaganda.³⁸ Thirdly, there are separate representations of animal characters entangled in the story of the fate of Jews or simply experiencing their own war history, such as, for instance, the experiences of particular dogs shown in two short stories by Ida Fink, discussed in Bartłomiej Krupa's article, pointing to – sometimes accidental – interspecies solidarity as a prerequisite for survival of individual humans and non-humans dependent on one another.³⁹ The configuration of the issues outlined therein allows one to state that while animal studies

³⁵ A. BARCZ: *Realizm ekologiczny. Od ekokrytyki do zookrytyki w literaturze polskiej*. Katowice 2016.

³⁶ P. KRUPIŃSKI: „Dlaczego gęsi krzyczały?”. *Zwierzęta i Zagłada w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*. Warszawa 2016.

³⁷ M. LOBA: “Zagłada, ofiara i zwierzęta w myśli Elisabeth de Fontenay.” *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2017, no. 3, pp. 42–50.

³⁸ M. ŻÓŁKOŚ: “Insektosemityzm.” *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2017, no. 3, pp. 51–65.

³⁹ B. KRUPA: “Relacja człowiek-pies w opowiadaniach Idy Fink.” *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2017, no. 3, pp. 139–160.

in the methodological, conceptual, and discursive dimensions draw from studies on the Holocaust, the non-anthropocentric optics in the Holocaust studies creates the opportunity to go beyond the existing imaginarium, beyond fossilised ideas and formulas, so it prevents too obvious discursive closures.

The fifth issue (published in the second half of 2019) originated in the belief that research on poetry dealing with the experience of the Holocaust, unlike that on prose, is still insufficiently developed. The established canon of poetry seems to be too limited, as in fact it comes down to just a few names, and the interpretative framework yields stereotypical, simplifying opinions about the function of poetry, its struggles with expression, and predictable (not necessarily strictly literary) categories and subjects of loss, Jewish fate, end of the world. At the same time, it is indeed a kind of cliché to say that the Holocaust had an impact on the poetry written in the second half of the 20th century, even if the Shoah is not referred to directly or is merely alluded to, but still it remains an important context, which is reflected in the condition of the subject and language structure. Therefore, the problem of Holocaust poetry should be further analysed. While preparing the issue, we asked about the ideas for comprehensive studies; we anticipated article proposals containing some re-evaluating conceptualisations, and we were intrigued by the difference introduced by the medium of poetry, characterised by a high degree of distinctiveness, often being an alternative to narrative as such. However, the responses of researchers to such problems forced us to revise our initial assumptions. We were amazed that nobody decided to define the summary's coordinates (this would involve proposing a means of problematising the material and selection of topics, and posing fundamental, stable interpretative categories), nobody elucidated the characteristics of a particular trend or a selected research problem. Nevertheless, the interpretations of individual authorial idioms using, for example, the forensic perspective or the category of place of birth brought more revealing suggestions than expected. Ultimately, studies devoted to forgotten poets prevailed; it is important and symptomatic that most of these investigations concern women (among others, Erna Rosenstein, Lola Szereszewska, Rajzel Żychliński, Stefánia Mándy). Similarly, the contribution of avant-garde movements (like surrealism) to the Holocaust studies (often marginalised in by Polish researchers) was emphasised. The real revelation of the volume – confirming the weightiness of the part entitled “Documents” – was publishing for the first time, without any fragments redacted, the diary of Jerzy Kamil Weintraub, an outstanding young poet of Jewish origin who was hiding in Warsaw during the war outside the ghetto and died of a serious infection in September 1943.⁴⁰ His notes are not excessive, but they are an extraordinary document of the state of a person who has spent days locked up in difficult conditions; yet, Weintraub's notes are not merely an account

⁴⁰ J.K. WEINTRAUB: “Pamiętnik.” Ed. B. STĘPNIAK. *Narracje o Zagładzie* 2019, no. 5, pp. 318–358.

of his own situation, as they complement the dramatic existential reflection. In order to complete this characterisation, it seems necessary to emphasise that the issue dedicated to the poetry of the Holocaust, which deviated from the assumptions made at the beginning, allowed us to draw important conclusions about the method of profiling consecutive issues.

The ideas behind the next issues shall determine the trajectory of *Narrations of the Shoah's* development. The present issue is devoted to the accounts of other genocides and their relationships with representations of the Holocaust. Moreover, in the future issues we intend to put emphasis on the notion of the Holocaust in the Anthropocene along with Polish anti-Semitism and its various incarnations and opposition it prompts.

Studies on genocides in a comparative and cultural perspective still seem to function rather on the margins of Polish humanities. Recently, two valuable monographs have been published: by Lech Nijakowski (sociology)⁴¹ and by Arkadiusz Morawiec (literary studies),⁴² as well as an important book by Dorota Głowacka *Po tamtej stronie: świadectwo, efekt, wyobraźnia* (From the other side. Testimony, affect, imagination)⁴³ and a translation of Michael Rothberg's work *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*.⁴⁴ However, they cannot be expected to address such a complex problem exhaustively. In the current issue of our journal we encouraged the contributors to reflect in-depth on the subject, to assimilate lesser known approaches in the domestic context, and to work out their own proposals. We are especially interested in reflection on the description methodology and in answering the question whether the research should be embedded in the field of postcolonial and comparative studies, or rather discard all comparisons and make the Holocaust only a starting point for separate investigations. At the same time, we intend to draw attention to issues that have yet to be sufficiently developed; we publish case studies devoted to the representations of Nazi camps for Soviet prisoners of war, reports on the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in concentration camps, and articles intervening in narratives about the Romani genocide, or providing insights on how to understand the Rwandan genocide thanks to the inspirational reading of Jean Hatzfeld's reportages. Certainly, the current issue of the journal conceived of that way does not manage to fill the gap in research; however, this was not our intention. We rather wish to emphasise that publishing broadly understood genocide research will become an important element of our journal's mission.

⁴¹ L. NIJAKOWSKI: *Rozkosz zemsty. Socjologia historyczna mobilizacji ludobójczej*. Warszawa 2013.

⁴² A. MORAWIEC: *Literatura polska wobec ludobójstwa. Rekonesans*. Łódź 2018.

⁴³ D. GŁOWACKA: *Po tamtej stronie: świadectwo, efekt, wyobraźnia*. Warszawa 2016.

⁴⁴ M. ROTHBERG: *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford 2009.

The problem of the Holocaust in the Anthropocene is a kind of response to probably the most sensitive problems of humanities at the moment. We wish to reflect on the need to reposition the studies of the Holocaust in the face of the climatologists' forecast utilised by philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc. On the one hand, there are analogies between the Holocaust and the looming and upcoming ecological disaster, especially when thinking about Jean-Francoise Lyotard's claim that the Holocaust resembled an earthquake of such a magnitude that it destroyed all seismographs⁴⁵ and Claude Lanzmann's comparison of the Holocaust to a forest fire always causing climate change in a particular area.⁴⁶ It turns out that over seventy-five years after the Holocaust we find these metaphors to be more literal. Fires and earthquakes of the scope and magnitude which we have not known so far may become our reality in the near future, and we may be faced with the real and near perspective of the destruction of our own species. On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that the beginning of the Anthropocene is usually estimated to have been around 1945 and associated with the Great Acceleration (economic and therefore industrial),⁴⁷ although the Holocaust itself, primarily on the scale of local ecosystems, seems to be an important factor in this process. This directs our reflection towards research into the environmental history of the Holocaust, which documents the changes that have taken place in nature as a result of activities related to development in the technologies of mass killing.⁴⁸ From a literary (or, more broadly, cultural studies) perspective, there are interesting attempts to express autonomy, or reaction of inanimate and animate nature in response to acts of violence, as well as its relationships at organic level with human victims. We are going to search for an answer to the question whether Anthropocene conceptualisations can use the methodology of the Holocaust studies. In this context, we wish to consider the relationship between the rhetoric of today's diagnoses in the literature and the descriptive language of the Holocaust, we are interested in the shape of narrations (which could sometimes be called reports) about the end of the world, as well as stories and rescue interpretations (in the sense proposed by Ewa Domańska⁴⁹), exploring the vulnerability category, indicating interspecies solidarity. This experimental approach is consistent with our intention to put the Holocaust research in various configurations.

The question of the faces of Polish anti-Semitism is positioned in a different problem and discursive order – it is related to the aftermath of the publication of

⁴⁵ J.-F. LYOTARD: *Poróżnienie*. Trans. B. BANASIAK. Kraków 2010, p. 69.

⁴⁶ C. LANZMANN: "Der Ort und das Wort. Über 'Shoah'." Trans. S. BUCHENAU. In: U. BAER (ed.): „Niemand zeugt für den Zeugen”. *Erinnerungskultur nach dem Shoah*. Frankfurt a. Main 2000, p. 110. Cf. A. UBERTOWSKA: *Świadectwo – trauma – głos...*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ E. BIŃCZYK: *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu*. Warszawa 2018, pp. 86–93.

⁴⁸ J. MAŁCZYŃSKI: *Krajobrazy Zagłady...*

⁴⁹ E. DOMAŃSKA: "Historia ratownicza." *Teksty Drugie* 2014, no. 5, pp. 12–26.

Neighbors (Sąsiedzi) in Polish by Jan Tomasz Gross.⁵⁰ The discussion it provoked has not ended until this day, not solely due to the reaction of denial or affects it raised, but also because it has contributed to further multidirectional research. A few books on the subject should be mentioned here, that is, *Przemoc filosemicka? Nowe polskie narracje o Żydach po roku 2000* (Philo-Semitic violence? New Polish narratives about Jews after 2000) by Elżbieta Janicka and Tomasz Żukowski,⁵¹ and a collective monograph *Zagłada w „Medalionach” Zofii Nałkowskiej. Tekst i konteksty*⁵² (Holocaust in Medallions by Zofia Nałkowska. Text and contexts); what should also be mentioned are attempts to propose a new depiction of a bystander as a non-neutral participant of the Holocaust⁵³ and works devoted to the status of peasants in Polish culture, exposing anti-Semitism in the rural areas, but also compromising the tendency to attribute anti-Semitism strictly to the people inhabiting provincial rural areas.⁵⁴ The subject requires consolidation and completion, as well as consideration in both synchronous and diachronic perspectives. Among the less frequently undertaken problems there is language of the press, including this of literary criticism, which deserves a thorough examination with a particular emphasis on the inter-war press, especially local newspapers and magazines. We wish to contextualise this problem because we plan to focus on the sources and phenomenon of post-war Polish anti-Semitism without Jews, covert hostility, impersonating the suffering and experience of the Holocaust, hidden behind false or poorly understood empathy, in a superior attitude, in a tendency to usurp the suffering. In other words, we would like to know which stories support anti-Semitism and which ones disarm it.⁵⁵

As can be seen, we attempt to slightly modify the profile of the journal and shift our scientific interests towards cultural studies. We have decided to temporarily suspend our strictly literary thematic profile, but our intention is still to refine the traditional interpretation of the text, especially that in *Narrations of the Shoah* we have observed a clear decrease of its impact on the Holocaust studies. As far as possible, we try to counter the said tendency in Holocaust research because it blurs the specificity of the field. However, at the same time, we acknowledge the dangers of conceptual inbreeding. We are interested in

⁵⁰ J.T. GROSS: *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*. Sejny 2000.

⁵¹ E. JANICKA, T. ŻUKOWSKI: *Przemoc filosemicka? Nowe polskie narracje o Żydach po roku 2000*. Warszawa 2016.

⁵² T. ŻUKOWSKI (ed.): *Zagłada w „Medalionach” Zofii Nałkowskiej. Tekst i konteksty*. Warszawa 2016.

⁵³ *Teksty Drugie* 2018, no. 3: Ustanawianie świadka; M. HOPFINGER, T. ŻUKOWSKI (eds.): *Opowieść o niewinności. Kategoria świadka Zagłady w kulturze polskiej (1942–2015)*. Warszawa 2018; A. DAUKSZA, K. KOPROWSKA (eds.): *Świadek: jak się staje, czym jest?* Warszawa 2019.

⁵⁴ *Teksty Drugie* 2017, no. 6: Chłopskość; K. KOPROWSKA: *Postronni? Zagłada w relacjach chłopskich świadków*. Kraków 2018.

⁵⁵ M. TOMCZOK: *Czy Polacy i Żydzi nienawidzą się nawzajem? Literatura jako mediacja*. Łódź 2019, pp. 7–19.

attempts to derive the theory from narrative, while also looking for inspiration in the new discourses of humanities, especially given the fact that literary studies are well equipped to develop new languages of description.

To sum up, we believe that the upcoming issues of *Narrations of the Shoah* should take into consideration the future of the texts among which narratives on the Holocaust are situated. This will be based on the following: 1) archival texts that have not been edited so far; 2) inclusive interpretations of hitherto omitted, marginalised, or displaced subjects, situations, or events; 3) preposterous history – narratives on subsequent systems of violence, especially the narratives on the Anthropocene. Therefore, it can be concluded that the future of the humanities lies in the narratives on the Holocaust, in which the humanities can recognise the conditions of their development.

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O potrzebie „Narracji o Zagładzie” we współczesnej humanistyce Nowe otwarcie

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł poświęcony jest prezentacji nowej formuły rocznika „Narracje o Zagładzie”. Zamyśl periodyku wziął się z przekonania, że Holokaust jest punktem zero polskiej kultury i jej konceptualizacji, a szeroko rozumiane narracje stanowią niezbędne medium dla rozpoznania i przedstawienia komplikacji, jakie stąd wynikają. Nasz rocznik będący swego rodzaju projektem w toku, zdaje się symptomatyczny dla stanu studiów nad Zagładą (i innymi ludobójstwami) w Polsce, zarazem sonduje i wytycza perspektywy ich rozwoju. Formuła pisma ukonstytuowana przez konsekwentnie konstruowane numery monograficzne odpowiada na wyzwania

współczesnej humanistyki, wypełnia lukę w polskich badaniach nad Zagładą, ukierunkowanych dotąd przede wszystkim na studia historiograficzne. „Narracje o Zagładzie” stanowią swoiste laboratorium nowych metodologii, interdyscyplinarne forum nowatorskich koncepcji, a zarazem kontynuują najlepsze literaturoznawcze praktyki tradycyjnej filologii, w każdym numerze pisma publikowane są dokumenty archiwalne, redakcja dowartościowuje pogłębione interpretacje tekstów i zjawisk kultury. Anonsowane w tytule artykułu nowe otwarcie w czasopiśmie polegać będzie przede wszystkim na rozszerzeniu pola zainteresowań o takie zagadnienia jak narracje dotyczące ludobójstw innych niż Holokaust czy powiązania studiów nad Zagładą ze studiami ekokrytycznymi, zwłaszcza problematyką antropocenu.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Zagłada w Polsce, literatura polska, polskie studia nad Zagładą

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