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POLISH-JEWISH LITERATURE: NEW RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

1. OVERVIEWS AND FORECASTS

Over twenty-five years that have passed since the publication of the first post-war literary study works devoted to the literature of the broadly understood Polish-Jewish border create a sufficiently vast perspective to allow oneself for an overview of achievements in this respect and a reflection over the future development of such studies.

The very phenomenon, apparently problematic and not recognised by all researchers of Polish literature, with time has acquired citizenship rights and is regularly included in the descriptions of interwar literature. As a symbol of changes I have in mind I can use the characteristics placed by Czesław Miłosz in his *Wyprawa w Dwudziestolecie* [A Trip into the Interwar Period]. ‘In the interwar period [...] the literary society of Warsaw is to a large extent Jewish, both as regards the authors and the readers. This is also linked to another division, as those who while writing in Polish wished to remain Jewish accused their colleagues completely rejecting Jewishness of repudiation’¹. he wrote seemingly referring to the contemporary disputes between the circles of Polish-Jewish writers and assimilators.

The statement that Polish-Jewish literature studies can be nowadays performed not only in completely different institutional conditions, but also referring to other methodological tools (and paradigms) than at the time we started them is obvious, yet – as all the silently accepted assumptions and insufficiently loudly and frequently articulated truths – requires a reminder and a reflexion. Therefore, presently discussing the present status of literature studies, I would like to link retrospective and prospective elements:

1. not only to remind of the achievements, main fields of interests and fundamental positions,
2. but also to define the research perspective that nowadays stretches in front of us both in relation to the recent methodological re-orientation of literature studies, and the development of Polish studies of Jewish culture.

2. DESCRIPTIONS, MODELS, PARADIGMS

¹ Cz. Miłosz, *Wyprawa w Dwudziestolecie*, Kraków 2000, pp. 270-271. Miłosz read and reviewed in the 1990s the works devoted to Polish-Jewish literature.

The term Polish-Jewish literature is not a typological term, but a term from history of literature and historical-cultural studies. Contrary to what some seem to be thinking², the term was also not coined presently by researchers, but taken over from the 19th and 20th-century literary programmes and critical discourses, where it first appeared as a projecting term, while later as a term describing the creation of Jews in the Polish language.

The literature became the subject of more systematic studies in the 1980s. The approaches formulated at the time propose its various conceptualisations and refer to the literary material that significantly varies in the aspect of the range and origin. As a result – both the image of writer environments, and the outline of the territory of the Polish-Jewish literature – are only partially agreed nowadays. This principally refers to the selection and shape of the corpus of texts used as the starting point. I stress this fact as the very profile of the corpus clearly impacts on the understanding of the phenomenon itself and decides on its interpretation. There are, for example, significant differences between the approaches taking note of permanent institutional relations between literature and Jewish press in Polish – and therefore with the poly-system of contemporary Jewish culture – and those where literature is discussed as detached from such links. It is also not neutral whether Polish-Jewish literature is referred to its programmes and discussions thereof, or whether such programmes and discussions are disregarded, and whether its historical dynamics is described or whether it is treated as a static area that was not subject to historical trends. Interpretations are also determined by cultural experience and rooting of researchers: Jewish culture is a multi-language culture, while Polish culture is a one-language culture, which decides on the method of understanding the borderline phenomena, and principally on the understanding of the relations between language and identity.

Basically speaking, Polish works aim to deliver two fundamental tasks, taking as the target: first, to solidly fix the Polish-Jewish literature in the context of Polish literary life, and second, to differentiate it as an independent trend of Polish literature.

Notwithstanding any preliminary resolutions referred to above, Polish interpretations to a greater or lesser extent account for cultural-historical and socio-historical contexts using the tools worked out inter alia in the area of sociology of literary life. The Polish-Jewish border is therefore considered a Jewish literary school, Polish-Jewish literary circulation, and a circle of Polish-Jewish writers. As the text categories constituting differentiating factors for

² M. Dąbrowski, *Fantazmat żydowski w literaturze polskiej* [Jewish phantasm in the Polish literature], [in:] *Pisarze polsko-żydowscy XX wieku. Przybliżenia* [Polish-Jewish writers of the 20th century. An overview]. Ed. M. Dąbrowski, A. Molisak, Warszawa 2006.

the phenomenon, the following are introduced: record of Jewish experience, construction of the subject and the presented world, cultural codes, topics or thematic repertoire.

The earliest approach to the Polish-Jewish literature was a concept of Jewish school in Polish literature. Formulated by Jan Błoński, in his first outline from 1982, principally referred to post-war literature where the Jewish school or constellation proved the more pondering phenomenon that it was blooming, as Błoński wrote, 'at the cemetery' – referring to the absence of Jews after the Holocaust. Błoński's description did not only refer to the 19th-century romantic tradition of accentuating the role of regional ethnic schools building the stock of Polish literature, but also to contemporary American models (Jewish New York school). In the 1990s, the author slightly modified his concept, developing the analyses of the interwar situation and introducing – apart from socio-cultural issues and problems of assimilation and acculturation – the issues of literary record of Jewish experience. Polish-Jewish literature was read by him as representation of this experience, articulation of the subject's perspective of perceiving the grand rhythms of history and great social performances. The very category of the experience had individual and collective dimension, referring to individuals and the nation. It also referred to what 'seemed the most eminent, and therefore – the most universal'³, which was of religious, ethical, ideological nature, which related to Biblical tradition, but also to utopias and ideologies of modernity, to confrontation with totalitarianism and nihilism.

As a description of interwar literature, in turn, the concept of Polish-Jewish literary circulation was formulated. Polish-Jewish/ Jewish-Polish literature – as Władysław Panas claimed – 'is passed in the Jewish-Polish communication circulation, it owes its existence to it, and is identified within its framework and at its background. Both literature and the communication system constitute the fundamental context of Polish-Jewish and Jewish-Polish literature, although each of these factors does it slightly differently'⁴. The circulation did not reconstitute after the war, therefore Polish-Jewish literature is limited – as the researcher believed – to 'the phenomena formed in the interwar period'⁵.

Although at the heart of his project Panas placed the Polish-Jewish audience, surprisingly, he principally used the perspective of the Polish side: he treated Polish-Jewish

³ J. Błoński, *Świat jako Księga i komentarz* [The world as the Book and a comment], [in:] by the same author, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* [Poor Poles look at the ghetto], Kraków 1994, p. 141.

⁴ W. Panas, „Ja – polski poeta, hebrajski niemowa”. *Literatura polsko-żydowska i żydowsko-polska 1918-1939*, [‘Me-Polish poet, Hebrew numb’. Polish-Jewish and Jewish-Polish literature 1918-1939] [in:] by the same author, *Pismo i rana* [Writing and the wound], Lublin 1996, pp. 41-42.

⁵ W. Panas, „Ja – polski poeta, hebrajski niemowa”. *Literatura polsko-żydowska i żydowsko-polska 1918-1939*, [in:] by the same author, *Pismo i rana*, p. 41.

literature as a marginal phenomenon that was almost unnoticed in the 1930s, and also referred exclusively to the opinions of Polish criticism thereof. The perspective was also visible in exposition of what he believed to be the key experience of Jewish otherness/alienation/difference in such literature. As is known, otherness is a relative category. Jewish otherness therefore constitutes in relation to what is non-Jewish, in the area of contact, and the sense of being different is related to presence in the Polish world, whereas the vision of a Jew as the Other is the image taken over from Polish culture. According to Anna Landau-Czajka, when analysing the interwar situation, ‘Jews acquired a negative identity as ‘others’ so defined by people among whom they lived’⁶.

Literature of the interwar period was also described by the model of Polish-Jewish writer circle. This approach inscribed Polish-Jewish circles in the map of ideological-artistic literary life of the interwar period: national Jewish / Zionist authors were placed aside nationalist, liberal, folk, proletarian, or Catholic writers. The basis for setting the limits of literature and writer circles was historical and empirical: the decisive factor was the author’s relation to Jewish press in Polish⁷.

A different proposal of interpreting Polish-Jewish literature was formulated on the grounds of studies of contemporary Jewish culture in Poland. In the concept presented in the mid-1980s⁸ by Chone Shmeruk, Polish-Jewish literature – Jewish literature in Polish – formed part of contemporary poly-system of multi-language Jewish culture, and at the same time was closely related to Polish literature. The key to differentiate various literary areas for Shmeruk was the model of literary communication, and principally the nature of the readers. What is significant, Polish-Jewish literature was treated by him in a broader, supra-local perspective – as one of many contemporary Jewish literatures in European languages, and therefore also represented some supra-local models and development tendencies.

Paralelly to the socio-historical and cultural-historical perspective, since the beginning of the 1990s the research of the Polish-Jewish border formed the perspective of a multicultural or – as we would call it nowadays – transcultural analysis. It considered literature as an area where models, symbols and toposes from various cultural orders merge. As a separate trend in

⁶ A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech* [Son will be Lech], Warszawa 2006, p. 127.

⁷ E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska jako zjawisko kulturowe i artystyczne* [Interwar Polish-Jewish literature as a cultural and artistic phenomenon], Kraków 1992.

⁸ Ch. Shmeruk, *Hebrew - Yiddish – Polish. The Trilingual Jewish Culture*, [in:] *Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, Hanover and London 1989.

this area, soon the studies of religious tradition and Judean topics emerged, focused on discovering religious contexts that had previously not been perceived or identified as Jewish⁹.

The concepts reconstructed here in the most general outline and very simplified, can only be mutually agreed to a certain extent. (Attempts of this kind have already taken place – inter alia as regards linking the Polish and Jewish perspective in the description of the status of Polish-Jewish literature as literature of cultural border¹⁰). Let me, however, say straight forward that such agreement does not seem the most important for me today. What I consider more important and urgent is the development of a new perspective that would allow going beyond the previous research horizon in its various dimensions: sources, conceptualisation, and descriptions.

3. THE NEW RESEARCH HORIZON

I am convinced that this can be achieved by three closely related actions:

1. first – by expanding the sources: extending the presently known corpus of literary Polish-Jewish texts;
2. second – by extending historical dimension: namely covering the literature before 1918 with the study;
3. third – by extending the genre: namely going beyond the area of narrowly understood belles- lettres and beyond its model for elites¹¹.

I. New sources

The basis should be the new source studies. In my opinion, continuation of studies of Jewish press in Polish is of key importance, as both before 1918 and in the years 1918-1939 it was the central institution of Polish-Jewish literary life. We have new documentation works that are very valuable for a historian of literature, such as e.g. Alina Cała's bibliography of Polish-Jewish journals *Żydowskie periodyki i druki okazjonalne w języku polskim* [Jewish magazines and occasional prints in Polish] (2005), which registers (and briefly describes) the vast range of journals from the cultural border area: assimilatory, Zionist and integrationist.

Studies may be taken in various fields. First, the present status of our knowledge about interwar Polish-Jewish literature is based on the awareness of the most important journals and

⁹ W. Panas *Topika judejska* [The Juda topics], in: *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku* [Dictionary of the 20th-century Polish literature], ed. A. Brodzka, Warszawa 1992. S. Żurek, *Lotny trud półistnienia* [Volatile effort of semi-existence], Kraków 2000. S. Żurek, *Synowie księżycy* [Sons of the moon], Lublin 2005.

¹⁰ Cf. Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, *op. cit.*

¹¹ R. Nycz, *Literatura nowoczesna: cztery dyskursy* [Contemporary literature; four discourses], „Teksty Drugie” [Second Texts] 2002, no. 4.

weeklies of the period. In turn, the ephemeric and local press where outstanding Polish-Jewish authors wrote, is still not well researched.

Second, researchers have not yet focused their interest on the indeed noticed, but not yet listed, published and described forms such as short stories (including re-narrations of Talmudic, Midrash and folk motifs), novels published by chapters (of various nature - from popular romances to ambitious social novels and novels for the youth), reports, columns, and journalist proze.

Third, the studies should also cover Polish-Jewish drama. In the interwar period, but a few works were published as books, yet it is known that in the press at the time for example a Biblical drama was published¹², or very numerous works for children's theatres. Before 1918, Zionist dramas were published in magazines¹³.

II. Entry in the 19th century

Another step should be to historically expand the studies. The relatively best recognised literary area of the Polish-Jewish border is the literature from the interwar period. The terms of '>'Polish-Jewish literature' and 'Jewish-Polish literature' [...] would be applied to phenomena formed exclusively in the interwar period, particularly in the 1930s. Previously, only insignificant single attempts were made [...] Later, after the Holocaust, the phenomenon is scarce – the probably last bilingual writer Kalman Segal publishing in Poland may be considered an epigone. Another problem is for example the works of Ida Fink and other writers living in Israel¹⁴, Władysław Panas claimed.

I also took this position and formulated arguments to support it many times. (From the perspective of time, I may say that my opinions were largely influenced by adopting the arguments of Polish-Jewish writers who radically distanced themselves from the older Polish-Jewish works treated as a negative tradition.) Nowadays, however, I believe that such position means giving privilege to just one historical model of Polish-Jewish literature, privilege that would close us the way to understanding its other forms. Therefore, it seems right and justified to me nowadays to decisively cross the caesura of the year 1918. What is also an important circumstance here is the fact that in the studies of contemporary Jewish literatures in Europe - for example the German-Jewish or Russian-Jewish literature – such a radical

¹² J. Kleinberg, *Debora. Dramat biblijny w trzech aktach* [Deborah. A Biblical drama in three acts], „Okienko na świat” [A Window to the World] 1938, no. 11-12.

¹³ J. Lewkowicz, *Salomea Blumstein*, „Wschód” [The East]. D. Malz, *Doktor Mojżesz Blum*, „Rocznik Żydowski” [The Jewish Annual] 1902, pp. 64-106

¹⁴ W. Panas, „Ja – polski poeta, hebrajski niemowa”. *Literatura polsko-żydowska i żydowsko-polska 1918-1939*, [in:] by the same author, *Pismo i rana*, p. 41.

juxtaposition of older and newer literature does not exist¹⁵. For obvious reasons, in turn, a radical caesura is formed in the Polish-Jewish literature by the Holocaust.

We only have a preliminary recognition of the literature of the Polish-Jewish border from the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century. Certainly, this is a broader phenomenon that we could once think, and also much more than we have admitted so far linked to interwar literature - even only due to the fact that in the years 1918-1939 there were still authors active in magazines such as *Izraelita* or *Jedność*.

The material obtained in the non-systematic and ad hoc queries of the press published before 1918 makes me convinced that even having just this material, we must make at least a few corrections in our descriptions of Polish-Jewish literature.

1. First, the coinage of the term ‘Jewish-Polish’ literature must be moved further into the 19th century. It turns out that the term Polish-Israeli literature introduced in the 1860s was replaced with terms: Jewish-Polish / Polish-Jewish literature already in the early 1880s¹⁶. In 1881, Adolf Jakub Cohn wrote in *Izraelita*: ‘Jewish-Polish literature, namely the works by Jewish authors either about the Jews or wrote for the Jews in Polish [...] has begun developing and acquiring permanent foundations only recently. Although these are not grand things, one larger work, a few brochures and fifteen annals of our journal.... Yet they are there, they are an evidence of good will of the authors; they testify to the honest strive to get rid of otherness, to familiarise the speech and knowledge with images and terms previously unknown.’¹⁷.

What attracts attention here is:

1. the use of a broad understanding of literature, unlike the narrow belles-lettres in the 1860s; one may add that this was similar in the case of Nahum Sokołów who in the 1880s postulated the development of Jewish studies;
2. consideration of Jewish press in Polish (*Jutrzenka* (1861-1863) and *Izraelita* (established in 1864) as the key institution of this literature.

Cohn’s concept from the 1880s closely links the literary and social motivation. The starting point is here – on equal basis – the faith in cognitive and educational tasks and

¹⁵ V. Lvov-Rogachevsky, *A History of Russian-Jewish Literature*, Ann Arbor 1979., *Juden in der Deutschen Literatur*, Herausgegeben S. Moses, Frankfurt am Main 1986.

¹⁶ W. Panas (*Sacer: święty – przeklęty* [Sacer: sacred – cursed], in: by the same author *Pismo i rana*. Essays on Jewish problems in Polish literature, Lublin 1996, p.16) defines the use of the term by A. Kraushar: *Wspomnienia. Kartka z niedawnej przeszłości* [Memoirs. A chart from the recent past], [in:] *Książka jubileuszowa dla uczczenia pięćdziesięcioletniej działalności literackiej J. I. Kraszewskiego* [Jubilee Book to commemorate the 50th anniversary of literary work of J.I. Kraszewski], Warszawa 1880, p. 525. Cf. also A. Cała, E. Bauer: U N. Sokołowa,

¹⁷ A. J. Cohn, *Z powodu jednej książki* [Because of one book], *Izraelita* 1881, no. 25.

integrationistic vision of Polish-Jewish relations. If the role of literature is to be 'Enlightenment of broader circles of readers about unknown issues that are worthy of learning', if then 'The past of homeland, its geography and ethnography, description of customs of its inhabitants [...] is the most important of such subjects' (no. 26), therefore – Cohn argues – also the Jews, their religion, culture and everyday life should become a subject of Polish literature in the part formed by Polish-Jewish literature. 'The Jews have lived here for over eight centuries, throughout the time being faithful companions of autochthonic people, in good and bad times – undoubtedly constitute an integral part of the national society, and as such have the right to know them better... Such cognition is the more necessary as the Jews are not only unknown to their co-citizens, but still if also often familiarised by the others, what becomes known about their internal life and faith is largely wrongly interpreted and perceived with prejudices...' ¹⁸. – he writes.

Aware of the uncertain status of the literature in the readers' – Polish – perception, Cohn attempts: first, to struggle against its marginalisation and failure to mention¹⁹; second, to refute the claim that it will be a kind of 'spiritual ghetto', a testimony of persistent inclination of Jews to 'separate and alienate'.

The same line of defence against claims of separatism and the same line of evidencing that Polish-Jewish literature forms part of Polish literature was to continue in 1889, appealing to the Jewish intelligentsia to 'create the Polish-Jewish literature'²⁰: '[...] is [...] supporting the Polish-Jewish literature so harmless to the society as is the interest in the fate of individual fractions of such society. One and the other in order to perfect the whole deals with the components, therefore one and the other aims at the wealth of the whole'²¹.

The tasks set for literature were largely of apologetic nature: Polish-Jewish writers were to defend the Jews against unjustified accusations on the Polish part, to explain and describe the Jewish world, and finally to 'write memoirs of one's own youth'²². As a result, Cohn drafted then two trends of the Polish-Jewish prose: the trend of tendentious, assimilatory 'romances of reforms' and the 'historical-ethnographic trend' (as he wrote)

¹⁸ A. J. Cohn, *Z powodu jednej książki*, in *Izraelita* 1881, no. 26.

¹⁹ A sign of this tendency was for him the silence of Jewish-Polish literature in Piotra Chmielowski's *Zarys literatury polskiej ostatnich lat szesnastu* [An outline of Polish literature of the last 16 years], who excluded *Izraelita* from his interest as a 'religious instrument' and 'did not mention any work written by a Jew and dealing with Jewish issues' (no. 25).

²⁰ A. J. Cohn, *Jedna z tysięcy*, *Izraelita* 1889, no. 3.

²¹ A. J. Cohn, *Jedna z tysięcy*, *Izraelita* 1889, no. 3.

²² *Ibidem*.

represented – among others – by works based on the material of Jewish folklore and local legends²³.

2. Second, descriptions of ideologically differentiated Polish-Jewish literature appeared on the Polish side much earlier than we have thought. As an example, one may quote the statement by Andrzej Niemojewski (later author of *Dusza żydowska w zwierciadle Talmudu* [Jewish soul in the mirror of Talmud] from 1906, who noticed the emergence (I draw attention to the linking of national qualifications) of a new section of Polish literature, namely the ‘Jewish literature’. He included here the works of the assimilators (the works of Henryk Nussbaum), Zionists (*Safrus* edited by Jan Kirsztrot) and the first published then translations of Yiddish literature (translations of M. Rosenfeld’s poetry). ‘[...] a new section of Polish literature is Jewish literature, which seems to be growing each day. [...] Polish pen is grabbed not only by fans of assimilation, starting from polskie Hilary Nusbaum and ending with Bellarjusz, yet even the greatest opponents of such assimilation. Everyone feels that despite the slogans of Zionism, national difference, own language and own homeland overseas, there is an issue on site [...], therefore it must also be discussed on site in the language understandable to all citizens of this country. The range of tones is growing. The section of the literature deals not only with the Jew as the Jew, but also the Jew as a man’.²⁴ – he noticed.

Niemojewski’s comment – merging into one whole various ideological trends of Polish-Jewish literature of the early 20th century – undoubtedly documents a certain style of its perception that functioned on the Polish side before 1918²⁵. This may prove inspiring also nowadays, encouraging us to think about it not as about a uniform, homogenous phenomenon of a shorter historical range, but as a broader, yet internally varied area with various local, ideological and historical variants.

Certainly, the concept of Polish-Jewish literature as an institution of contemporary culture, an evolving institution – as conditioned by varying historical-cultural circumstances – would allow for a different description of the relation between various historical persons before 1939, and principally to shift the stress from what is then discontinuity and breach onto what is continuation, renewal and reprocessing.

²³ Cf. *Staw w lesie* [A pond in the forest], *Izraelita* 1873, no. 44.

²⁴ A. Niemojewski, *Nowy dział piśmiennictwa polskiego* [A new section of Polish literature], *Odrodzenie* 1906, no. 17.

²⁵ It was a phylo-Semite period in Niemojewski’s works, lasting until 1907 (short stories *Boruch*, *Epoka eunuchów*). Cf. D. Trzeźniowski, *Biografia ideowa polskiego inteligenta: od filo- do antysemityzmu* [Ideological biography of a Polish intelligentsia representative: from phylo- to anti-Semitism], [in:] ed. G. Borkowska, *Kwestia żydowska w XIX wieku. Spory o tożsamość Polaków* [The Jewish issue in the 19th century. Disputes about the identity of Poles], Warsaw 2004.

III. Beyond literature for the elites

The third step should be the expansion of the field of studies onto other genres. An inspiration here may be formed by cultural studies that eliminate the division between elitary and popular literature, and its instrumental and autonomous model²⁶. Rejection of such hierarchies and divisions will open the way to studies of such so far neglected areas as:

1. works for children and youth and – this is not a mistake – writings of children and youth
2. satire
3. journalist prose, political pamphlet, column, report
4. utility texts – including calendars and school extracts and textbooks.

Such a step seems the more important to me that so far when wishing to isolate the Polish-Jewish literature we often (too often – and I also speak about myself here) used the juxtaposition of elitary and popular literature, the highly artistic and secondary one. This has lead to various misunderstandings, and also often to depreciation of Polish-Jewish works.

Due to the short time I have, I shall go into detail only as regards one of the proposed new study areas – works for children and youth and writings of children and youth.

It is among others at the example of works for children and youth that one may trace the continuity and change of models for Polish-Jewish literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. The older of these models principally gives the works written in Polish addressed to Jewish children the function of the Jewish tradition medium, while the newer model is characterised with involvement in contemporary life and a visible national and ideological orientation. Both models coexist in the interwar period.

The works by children and youth, in turn, is one of the areas of interwar literature in which context we better understand such later phenomena as for example the children's records of the Holocaust. In the interwar period, the writing school of the youth were usually the environmental magazines edited by themselves or with their participation. It was such magazines which first published the works of both those who with time passed to the most serious journals of the Polish-Jewish circulation (such as M. Schlanger, J. Lipski, A. Rubinstein publishing in the Warsaw's *Tygodnik Młodych*, and later in *Nowy Głos, Nasz Przegląd* and *Opinia*), and those who became known as authors only after the Holocaust (for example Józef Hen and Józef Bau²⁷). The young and youngest writers were not only attracted

²⁶ Cf. A. Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, London 1991.

²⁷ Cf. *Okienko na świat* 1938, no. 6.

to poetry but also to prose, including the novel. The subjects also included contemporary Polish-Jewish relations and it is a certain paradox that it was in the prose of the youngest authors that in the interwar period we find the models of social Jewish novel that were less present in the prose of the adults²⁸. A broader theoretical justification for the study of this area of literature may be the views of Janusz Korczak, for whom the works of children were both one of the most important means of children's self-expression and self-reflection²⁹, and one of the most important sources for learning about the children's imagination and experience of the world.

As is known, cultural studies refer to many various analytical methods. As regards Polish-Jewish literature, two of these seem particularly promising: transcultural analysis and post-colonial perspective. I also chose them because they allow to interpret various texts of culture – from lyrical work to a text from a school textbook.

1. Transcultural analysis

Rooting in different traditions – and acting as a mediator between them – is an important differentiator of Polish-Jewish works. It is because of this feature that Polish-Jewish literature can be considered a kind of textual transcultural space³⁰. This is the nature of both 19th and 20th-century literature – from the works from the 1830s to the works from the 1930s. In the prose of Jakub Tugenholt (*Dumania Izraelity* [Meditations of an Israeli]) from the 1830s, personal testimony is linked with the form of Midrash and a lecture of contemporary history of Poland and Europe. In the 20th-century Zionist poetic declarations, there are echoes of Mickiewicz and Wyspiański, while Zionist 'Bildungsroman' repeats the patterns known from Żeromski's prose. Works written in the clear modernist stylistic manner develop traditional motifs of Jewish folklore, while Skamander style is linked to the reminiscences of Jewish social lyric of Abraham Rajzen.

2. Post-colonial perspective

Other tools are provided by post-colonial criticism in the variant proposed for Jewish studies by Susannah Heschel³¹. Heschel is interested in the border area of the Jewish culture in German (and the contemporary area of Jewish-American culture), and principally in the

²⁸ Cf. Rywa Madajska *Nie znamy ich* [We don't know them], *Okienko na świat* 1938-1939, ibidem: *Pożegnanie z golusem* by I. Kirszbaum.

²⁹ I'd like to thank Bożena Wojnowska, an expert in Korczak's philosophy, for drawing my attention to this context.

³⁰ I understand transculturation here according to Mary Louise Pratt as a process in the area of cultural contact, comprising selection and choice of such elements from the master culture which are included in the culture of the minority group: M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York 1992, p. 6.

³¹ S. Heschel *Jewish Studies as Counterhistory*, in: *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. D. Biale, Detroit 1998.

resounding 'Jewish voice' speaking to master narrative of the West – namely the Jewish counter-narration or counter-novel) with subversive and revisionist functions towards the traditions of the West. As I reminded, apologetic and revisionist tasks were set for Polish-Jewish literature in its 19th- and 20th-century programmes. In the 19th and 20th centuries, also a polemic trend can be isolated as regards the prevailing Polish notions of Judaism, Jews, Polish-Jewish relations, which can include the works of such various authors as Zygmunt Librowicz³², Roman Brandstaetter³³, or Henryk Grynberg.

CONCLUSION

I am convinced that a more comprehensive description of literary Polish-Jewish border – in its various historical, ideological and genre variants – may be effectuated principally owing to new source studies and orientation towards new analytical methods. The broadest framework for such a description may be formed nowadays by cultural studies that accentuate close relations of literature with the field of cultural practices and considering literary texts as cultural texts which 'have absorbed social values and contexts'³⁴.

³² Cf. Z. Librowicz, *Shylock. Studium w listach Żyda do chrześcijanki* [Shylock. A study in a Jew's letters to a Christian woman], Warsaw 1876.

³³ Heschel for example believed that Jewish-German intellectuals of the 19th century (scientists representing the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* orientation - Abraham Geiger, Heinrich Graetz, Leopold Zunz) formulated a position that was not only polemic towards Christian (negative or even full of hatred) 'construction of Judaism' (p. 102), but also a position setting the Hebrew Bible, Judaism and Rabbi literature at the heart of European culture. Their critical works are for her an example of resistance against the canon version of the West and the sanctified vision of its civilisational – Greek – sources, as well as a conscious challenge to the western cultural canon. This was also the orientation of the late works of Brandstaetter.

³⁴ M. P. Markowski, *Badania kulturowe* [Cultural studies], [in:] A. Burzyńska, M. P. Markowski, *Teorie literatury XX wieku. Podręcznik* [Theories of 20th-century literature. A textbook], Kraków 2006, p. 522.

