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EXPLORING PAST IN LOOKING FOR IDENTITY. (META)HISTORY, FANTASY AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH NARRATIVES OF DOROTA TERAKOWSKA

The encounters with the past, in which the children and teenage protagonists of Dorota Terakowska's novels are 'entangled', are present in the structure of her works mainly at the level of the figurative language of metahistory in which the poetics of imagination and fantasy used by the writer as a literary convention play an important role and are deeply rooted in social and politic context of Poland (here: totalitarian system, dictatorship and social changes). Such a narrative strategy is evident mainly in three works of the writer: *The Witches' Daughter* (1991), *Loneliness of the Gods* (1998) and *Lord of the Lewaw* (1989). Terakowska's work, which is clearly a part of the convention of fantasy, represents a universal message of an existential and ethical nature, but above all, which is worth emphasizing, is also firmly rooted in Polish tradition and history. Strongly exposed in Terakowska's works is the element of poetics of space (including, for example, the ruins of palaces, as places of memory of the Polish romantic past, landscapes of romantic — wild and mysterious nature, or the motif of the Only Song — a symbol of national identity, also present in Polish romantic literature). The convention of space-time and the memory of the tragic past allows associations with important moments in the history of enslaved Poland (e.g. the romantic tradition of the 19th century), images of the enemy — the invader, the totalitarian system of communism, and models of figures of Polish national heroes fighting for freedom.

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Contemporary Polish literary creations of historical worlds of fantasy

The contemporary Polish historical novel for children and young adults is diverse in genre. Although it grows out of the traditional historical novel, its current shape seems to be a kind of “tension between literary biography, historical ‘facts’, ‘truth’ historical curiosities and fiction, [which] seems to be the source of the intra-textual and at the same time reading emotions of these hybrid often and syncretic in form novels of modernist character, involving plots and motifs inherent in works of travel-adventure, sensational-crime and historical fiction, reaching for fairy-tale plot structures and elements of fantasy” [Jonca 2020, 339, quoted after Skotnicka 2008, 406]. In contemporary Polish historical narratives for children and adolescents, one can also distinguish didactic and educational elements and play with conventions. However, the most fully literary forms of historical narration, it seems, occur at the level of fantasy. In this area of narrative, history and encounters with the past, troublesome cultural heritage and issues relating to politics, to everyday reality rooted in totalitarian systems, censorship and ideology [Arendt 1996], become a pretext for considering the present, and the expressive psychological portrait of the protagonist caught up in ethical dilemmas provokes discussions of an existential nature and issue of looking for identity.

As theory of identity both determines a reflexive attitude of the subject to oneself and exposes his or her attitude to others, especially when it regards an individual’s activity, often filtered through the prism of socio-cultural context, history, politics and past experiences [Watkins 2005]. Polish fantasy literature for children and adults has good traditions in this regard.

Maciej Parowski in an article with a very relevant title *Happy Rebellion and Bitter Victory (dreams and disappointments in the Polish modern fantasy in the last quarter-century)* notes about Janusz A. Zajdel — writer — precursor (forerunner) of sociological science fiction:

Although it has been 25 years since the death of Janusz A. Zajdel (1938–1985), talks about Polish fantasy will still start with him for many more years to come. He set civic and moral standards, renewed Polish fantasy, and masterfully described Polish history up until 1989. During the communist era his novels were read with joy and hope. Zajdel used literature to expose communism and accurately predict that this inhumane system was nearing its end. Barracks of space prisons attacked by corrosion (*Paradise, the World in orbit*); the villains’ servant gone crazy with remorse (*Complete Truth about Planet Xi*), electronic black-market money changer rooting around in

a country conquered by aliens discovers he is participating in a game of appearances that squanders human energy (*Limes inferior*) [Parowski 2012, 63].

It's worth to mention in this context of consideration the following Polish literary examples of speculative literature: children's fantasy texts [also known as "fairy tale fantasy", "contemporary fairy tale" (as described by Stanislaw Lem), or "fairy tale for adults"] that go beyond the perception level of a young reader: *Przygody Okruszka* [*The Adventures of the Little Crumb*] by Antoni Gawiński (1922), *Wiedźmin* (*Witcher*) by Andrzej Sapkowski (1990), *The Land of Colors* (*Kraina kolorów*) by Beata Ostrowicka (1999), the series of stories about Jan Wędrowycz (2002–2012; trans. John Traveler) by Andrzej Pilipiuk or *The Crowman* (*Wroniec*) by Jacek Dukaj (2009).

The specificity of these texts, rooted in historial discourse, which consists in discreet use of the elements of Polish culture and the role of the national tradition, can be analyzed as an allegory of the Polish nation's history and the role of national heritage — topics present in, among others, references to national myths (e.g. polemics with Romantic myths) or to popular legends and folk tales. They appear in, for example, a story collection by Andrzej Sapkowski titled *Sword of Destiny* (as a part of saga of Witcher), where one can find threads from legends about the basilisk, the Wawel dragon, or princess Wanda. Furthermore, Andrzej Pilipiuk's series about Jakub Wędrowycz shows a half-Polish, half-Ukrainian protagonist as grotesque and caricatural. The protagonist's red, drunken face, big nose, poor peasant clothes and a crumpled cap are universally recognizable by Polish readers, while it is a clear accumulation of negative attributes of Polishness (the latest book has a telling title of *Homo moonshinicus*).

Through a world of "national symbols", clear signs of national tradition and legacy, with stories which are rooted in a clear setting [Rybicka 2008; Sławiński 1978] and thanks to distinct traits of character, the work's meaning is given a universal character. Each of these texts (mentioned above) is open to a deeper existential reading when seen in a broader axiological context, which is reflected in another, alternative world marked by the presence of magic and ethical principles, such as righteousness, honesty, fairness, and friendship. In this case, the quest of young protagonists, who are going "through adventures" [Szymkowska-Ruszała 1985] have also a mission to save the world [Gemra, Rudolf 2006; Gemra 1997; Gemra 2001], trying to understand the identity of their nation, also turns into their "inner journey", acquires existential in-

terpretation, universal features and becomes a metaphor for everybody's destiny [Hunt 1987; Ross Val 2003; Sundmark 2014].

Also the category of time calls for broader interpretations as it assumes different meanings: apart from plot time (linear time of subsequent events), one can find also mythic time, biblical (religious) time, and historic time. After all, looking for one's identity means also drawing on the past (antiquity), history, and legacy of traditions. Past is often given shape through a hard-to-define feel of antiquity (e.g. in the Witcher saga or in Anna Brzezińska's *Saga o zbóju Twardokęsku* [trans. *The Saga of Twardokęsek the Bandit*]¹ the reader discovers the atmosphere of the Middle Ages thanks to a masterful stylization for the Old Polish language and clearly depicted characters of knights). Moreover, this antiquity is often achieved through the use of common props, such as clothes, descriptions of architecture and customs, as well as well through historiosophic references (e.g. in Gawiński's *The Adventures of the Little Crumb* one can find a clear reference to the Romantic vision of the history of the Polish nation, including the image of the graves of heroes).

Against the background of the historical texts with fantasy elements discussed above, Terakowska's work seems unique and has already taken a prominent place in the history of Polish fantasy. Her rich and literarily diverse oeuvre has already lived to see many monographic studies [Wolanin 2015; Bolińska 2013; Slany, Wądolny-Tatar 2021], articles referring to both genological issues (e.g. the subject of modern fairy tales or fantasy), as well as scientific explorations addressing issues of narrative strategies or fantasy as a literary convention, including, among others, the theory of alternative worlds [Wądolny-Tatar 2009; Filipowicz 2003; Ługowska 2007; Trębicki 2007].

An important role in scientific studies addressing the discussion of literary worlds created by Terakowska has so far been played by problems related to the psychology of characters, initiation, adolescence and maturation of "lost-in-reality" [Leszczynski 2010] literary heroes, and more broadly — ethical and existential issues and the internal transformation of protagonists [Heska-Kwaśniewicz 2004; Baluch 1996; Zajac 1996; Szcześniak 2004].

On the other hand, there are few studies on issues referring to the representation of the past or figures of memory in Terakowska's work, although this theme often returns in her novels [Krajewska 1992; Mikołajewski 2004; Zieliński 2009]. It even often becomes one of the most important elements responsible for the narrative strategy of the author's novels, at the same time influencing the construction of the image

of the protagonist, searching for his own identity and the meaning of life.

One of the research concepts that can be applied to Terakowska's writing can become metahistory, which in the sense of Hayden White, who analyzes works with historical themes, is only the authors' idea of historical truth. Each author (writing on history and addressing the discussion of past events), filtering the description of reality through his views and beliefs, thus subjects them to value and creates narratives of figures and imagery that show a distorted reality [Toynbee 1960; White 1974]. Ewa Domańska — an interpreter of Hayden White's works — states: "For White, history was more constructivist than empirical, it was more an art of interpretation than an explanation-oriented science; in his conception, tropes replaced models, interpretation replaced explanations, rhetorical play replaced the rules of logic..." [Domańska 2000, 12].

The poetics of historical writing developed by White, and within it: metahistory, historical fiction vs. the problem of truth, "tropology and tropes of history" and related to this "tropology" — an ironic approach to history, the figurativeness of the message, the category of time, history vs. myths, legends and fantasy, the importance of narrativity for the representation of reality — are also issues that may arise in the process of interpreting texts representative of the model intended for children and adolescents, exposing the memory of past and different aspects of tradition. This type of literary expression is also often characterized by fantasy, including the works of Dorota Terakowska [Skotnicka 1974; Skotnicka 1987; Skotnicka 2008]. In Terakowska's works, the representation of the past is an important point of reference, which in the reception of a young reader allows to highlight different strategies of literary narration. Images and signs of the past (including the past of Poland), symbolic traces of past history (related to the geographic-cultural and mental space of Slavic countries), figures of memory and its representations take the fullest shape in three works of the writer: *Lord of the Lewaw* (1989), *Daughter of the Witches* (1991) and *Loneliness of the Gods* (1998). In all three novels, the artistic dominant feature is the images of characters who cross the boundaries of time in search of their own identity.

The encounters with the past, in which the child and teenage protagonists appearing in the three novels mentioned above are entangled, become present in the structure of the novels mainly at the level of the figurative language of metahistory, in which the poetics of imagination and fantasy used by the writer as a literary convention play an important

role. Analyzing the above issues from the perspective of narratology, the most important elements shaping the ideas of the past and figures of memory in Terakowska's works include:

1. literary conceptualizations of the image of the protagonist entangled in the past and searching for his own identity ("illuminate" the behavior of the protagonist seeking answers to his questions, the memory of the past and the analysis of its traces provoke reflection on the present);
2. the poetics of space-time (Bakhtin's chronotope) and the "places of memory" associated with it [Nora 1984–1992].

The relationships that occur between these two elements of the construction of the depicted world provide a clear interpretive context for the search for deeper meanings of works. In such a type of literary expression, the division into real and fantastic worlds also turns out to be clear. The real story often becomes reality, and fiction — myth, legend, fantasy, magic and fairy tale [Dubowik 1999, 255–256; Clute, Grant 1997]².

Particularly relevant in the context of these considerations, therefore, may also become the comments of Stefania Wortman in the work *From folk tale to science fiction novel*. The researcher, highlighting the issues of the past, emphasized a kind of "realism" in the description of historical spaces, and tried to point out the counter-reality through the fairy tale:

...the fairy tale has its place in time, that despite the fantastic elements it comes out of reality and has a realistic and historical basis. The people portrayed their era and its problems in the fairy tale, and spelled their fears and dreams in the characters of fairies, witches and dwarves, selfie sticks and flying carpets. <...> The modern fairy tale, if it does not want to be just a parody of the folk tale, must have its own face: its own reality and its own fantasy [Wortman 1968, 130],

and added:

the fairy tale is a guide to the real world, it reveals to children the oddities of everyday surroundings and the past of the homeland [Wortman 1968, 130].

It seems that Terakowska's work, in which representations of the past appear, realizes Wortman's above findings on the relationship between history and reality — for the fantasy in the novels of the author of *Daughter of Witches* is rooted in clear allusions to historical and socio-political events referring to the history of Poland. Reality and history appear

in Terakowska's works on three levels of fantasy: 1. of a memoiristic nature crossed with the narrative strategy of returning to the past and searching for concrete traces of it (e.g., places of memory, inscribed in the history of Poland); 2. escapist fantasy woven, as it were, into the romantic vision of history and images of tragic heroes; and 3. fantasy using elements of didactics and parabola (with elements of "instructive history").

One of the most important plans for the reception of texts is the overlapping of layers of the real and magical worlds, for example, real and fairy tale characters appear in novels, while nature becomes the real background of events in the two works analyzed here (*Loneliness of the Gods* and *The Witch's Daughter*), and at the same time is magical, unusual and miraculous (here the natural world coexists with the world of fantasy in opposition to the level of actual materialized civilization), enhancing the clarity of images of the past.

Historical narrative in the face of the theory of "multiworlds" — Lord of the Lewaw

Dorota Terakowska's works, which were written in the 1980s³ (with a child protagonist and formally addressed to young readers) — writes Jolanta Ługowska — contain

numerous allusions to political reality, making it possible to read them as a kind of novel with a key, so the protagonists have to face the realities of the totalitarian system, to actively oppose satraps using unlimited power against their citizens [Ługowska 2006, 605].

Such works include *Lord of the Lewaw* (a work written in 1982, published in 1989) as an example of a text belonging to the category of *radical fantasy* [Deszcz-Tryhubczak 2016], set in socio-political contexts [Ługowska 2000].

Mark Williams in the context of the term of *radical fantasy* and ideology considers:

Politicized perspectives on fantasy theory frequently find themselves defending fantasy against a charge of escapism. I argue that this is a necessary consequence of evaluating fantasy literature on social grounds which reveals the cognitive potential of fantasy literature as a medium for ideological critique. What does "ideology" mean in this context? Ideology is generally conceived as being a sort of "inverted consciousness" of capitalist social relations. <...> The problem of escapism is bound to the idea of importing political critique into fantasy as a way of escaping from the structures of

ideology to pose questions to its dominance. The distinction between “escape” and “escapism” is important for theorizing the relationship of fantasy to the Real. It raises the question of how and to what extent it is possible to escape ideology through the expression of the imagination, and is central to utopian writing and the history of SF criticism... it is not solely the province of radicals but is tied to all attempts to defend the writing of fantasy on social grounds [Williams 2011, 10].

The protagonist of the story is a child protagonist in search of his identity (and his parents), a resident of an orphanage-Bartek. The boy through the corridor of time arrives at the mirror image of reality — the city of KRAKÓW, where the names are read backwards (Kraków — Wokark, the castle of Polish kings — Lewaw, Bartek — Ketrab); in Wokark live the Allians — people who are beautiful and good, but devoid of bad feelings. The theme of the book is freedom, enslavement and maintenance of a totalitarian system [Stevens 1995; Hollindale 1988]. The behavior of a dictatorship is related not only to the person of the tyrant ruler (in the novel this becomes the character of the Unknown), but also to the attitude of the society towards the government. In this case, submissive allegiance is the result of depriving the nation of its emotions: rebellion and anger. Under the pressure of manipulation of the “sympathetic old man,” the Allians fall into a web of matrices, mutual accusations and suspicions, as a result of which society is not only passive and incapable of fighting, but also divided, and only Bartek is able to unleash rebellion and win freedom for the nation.

The hero, exhorting Allians to fight, states, among other things:

But what surprises me most about your world is that you agree on everything. Tell me, Sages, why do the Allians not rebel? Why don't they give battle to the Arachnids? Why don't you come up with some way to scare them away from the city? <...> — You are awful! Cowardly! Servants! — shouted a boy full of indignation. — You bow insincerely to your executioner! <...> Every human being has anger and gentleness, hatred and love, the capacity for violence and for nobility. Anger and hatred can be turned to benefit people, not only against them. A person devoid of anger is an eternal slave. There is no progress without rebellion or freedom without anger. One will not change the world by sitting back... [Terakowska 2007, 102].

The most important element of narrative strategy in many of Terakowska's novels becomes the concept of alternative realities, parallel worlds or two-reality-mirroring (e.g., *Lord of the Lewaw*). Thus, the theory of possible worlds (multiworlds) can be an important structural

component of the world presented, influencing the proper reading of Terakowska's works and the creation of the meanings of individual texts. Only the confrontation of the two alternative worlds, their juxtaposition combined with the verification of the function of individual elements at the level of different layers of the literary work [Ingarden 1988; Garlej 2014] allows us to decode the metaphorization procedure of the work and name the hidden meanings (such as the meaning of traces of the past, the political meaning of the works or the coded ideology of the works). The poetics of the space of specific places in which the past is "rooted" will play an important role in this context.

Analyzing the theory of possible worlds in *The Lord of the Lewaw*, Katarzyna Wądolny-Tatar states:

The two cities [Krakow and Wokark — *D. M.*] serve to identify and establish the identity of the main character, and at the same time the dual urban space becomes an axiological space. It is valorized repeatedly by the narrator and literary characters. It becomes the terrain of psychological relations and even interpersonal games [Wądolny-Tatar 2009, 214–215].

The researcher also refers in her considerations to the important findings of Henryk Markiewicz, noting the literary theorist's exposition... of the coexistence of elements in the space of the world presented in a literary work and the relationships between them:

Juxtaposing different spatial creations occurring in the same literary work, we see... relations between them based either on the bond of adjacency (the occurrence of spaces next to each other), or on the bond of parallelism, understood broadly, not only as similarity, but also gradation and contrast [Markiewicz 1984, 138].

Paradoxically, therefore, the temporally "distant" world of the past can become the protagonist's "world of attachment", a meaningful (though mainly mental) space, which, thanks to the places of memory, traces of the past years, allows the protagonist to fill in the missing pieces of the "puzzle" of reality, explain the understatements, illuminate and "add" new meanings to the present life.

Historical narratives in the face of growing up and passing time (The Witches' Daughter and Loneliness of the Gods)

The Witches' Daughter (written in 1985–1988, published in 1991) on the level of references to the past has been called a novel about "growing up to power" [Krajewska 1992], "a novel with a past" [Mikolajewski

2004] and a story about “growing up to freedom” [Zieliński 2009]. The socio-political context and the romantic vision of history are concretized in the story in the figure of a teenage heroine carrying out a mission to save her nation (Luelle’s mission can also be considered in the context of the once enslaved Poland, absent from the map of Europe for 123 years (1795–1918).

In the structure of the plot system, the novel is dynamic, expressive, imaginative, maintained in the poetics of a sensation and adventure work, but in the deeper layers of the narrative it refers to the level of existential considerations and political and historical contexts.

The Witch’s Daughter, considered from the perspective of the attitude of the girl protagonist subjected to the process of initiation and inner metamorphosis, is also a work about maturation and the problems of discovering individual identity. Encounters with the past can be interpreted in *The Witches’ Daughter* on two levels. First of all, they appear as images of the past, which make themselves present in the story in a parabolic-didactic function, but they also take the shape of a political metaphor that addresses the issue of a conquered country trying to fight for freedom. The Great Kingdom, where the action of the novel takes place, is conquered by the black Urghs and enslaved. The images of the past can refer at this point of inquiry to the figure of oppressed Poland, and are also a clear attempt to show the power of tradition, the importance of romantic tradition and the will to fight, which is passed on to posterity in national songs (here: through the One Song — a mysterious prophecy, heralding the rebirth of the Great Kingdom), and shown in the novel through a clear allusion to the linking of “old with young years” — the folk “communal song”, “communal news”, sung in Konrad Wallenrod by Adam Mickiewicz (a Polish Romantic author) by the bard of pagan Lithuania, the bard — Wajdelota (Halban).

The heroine of *The Witches’ Daughter* is a girl with wheat-gold hair — Luelle, who can be considered a Slavic type. The prophecy says that Luelle’s origin and her true name will be known only when she reaches the age of 17. Luelle has a mission to save her oppressed nation — she is chosen to accomplish this task by the witches, who protect the royal family from ultimate destruction. The five witches, defenders of Luelle’s identity and protectors, impart their wisdom, knowledge and magical skills to the girl, and when one of them is murdered, she is replaced by a hermit who also teaches Luelle empathy and love for people. The witches want to raise the girl into a good ruler, they work in secret, successively and carefully, however, they also take into account the very process of Luelle’s maturation.

The novel is maintained in the poetics of contemporary fantasy [Clute, Grant 1997, 338–339; Mendlesohn, James 2009; Mendlesohn 2008], combines different narrative strategies and story types, and can refer both to Polish national myths (of romantic provenance), and to the Celtic legends, myths, and more broadly — stories similar genologically to fairy tales and legends. Luelle eventually becomes the Queen Woman after many difficult transitions and sacrifices. The portrait of the teenage protagonist is vivid — Luelle has her girlish needs and desires, has doubts, mental crises, is sometimes angry and wayward. She experiences various states of emotions, both positive and negative, such as desire, fear, hatred, gratitude, loyalty, pride or contempt. However, the power of longing for freedom is immense — it occurs in the narrative of the story in parallel with the process of maturation of the heroine (her psychological initiation), but does not always resonate with it. The very process of Luelle's initiation (search for one's own identity), considered here in the context of conscious acceptance of the great heritage of ancient traditions, reproduces the model of maturation representative of the type of characters such as Sir Lancelot or Sir Percival. Analyzed in this way, Terakowska's story refers to deeper philosophical considerations of an ethical and existential nature set in the dark worlds of Celtic fantasy. It also sits at the intersection of mythical and fairy-tale conventions with elements of parabola, and as such evokes the works of J.R.R. Tolkien (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings*) and Ursula Le Guin (e.g. *The Wizard of the Archipelago*). Building a picture of an ideal ruler, Terakowska considers what a leader's responsibility and commitment to the well-being of citizens might consist of. One of the factors that enriches the knowledge of the leader-master-mentor will surely become insight into the past, learning from the history of the nation and understanding the power of tradition.

Here is an excerpt from the novel, in which Luelle tames her friend, the sensitive and gentle Ajoka (the 18-year-old son of Urgha XIII, a descendant of the House of Invaders, an opponent of war and violence) with the history of his enslaved country. Wandering through the country, the couple arrives at the site of a symbol of the former power of the Great Kingdom (perhaps the Renaissance era — the “golden age” of Poland under the Jagiellonian dynasty) — a monumental-sized devastated temple:

The ruins of the former Holy Place made a remarkable impression on the boy. Luelle, too, whether she had succumbed to the boy's mood or had grown up enough to feel more and differently, although she had been here

twice before — for the first time she understood that this place not only had been, but was still a Holy Place; that some unusual mood of dignity, solemnity — and even horror — radiated from these ruins. Little remained of the walls of the stone temple, in places a fragment of the wall, then again only the very outline of the foundations. They stretched wide across and far along, but in one place the farther part of it was blocked by a steep, high rock, piled so high that it was difficult to see its top. In the middle of the ruins there were still traces of stone benches or their remains in places. Decorative plant or animal patterns carved with an engraver were still visible on some. A sizable section of the wide, steep staircase that must have led to the temple, towards its main gate, also survived [Terakowska 2014, 376].

The times of the former splendor of the Kingdom are also exposed in Terakowska's novel in the idyllic descriptions of the Arcadian landscape, the space of wild mountains where time has stopped and the flora and fauna have retained their freshness and naturalness from long ago, the territory where paradisiacal places have survived, where nature emanating happiness and love has not been “touched” by the evil of the Invaders. Here is a relevant passage illustrating the above thesis:

Luelle enjoyed this road. She could now show the stunned Ajok everything that was so familiar and close to her — and quite new to him. This was the most beautiful part of the former Grand Kingdom. Devoid of human habitation, and thus of the omnipresence of the Invaders, it gave the impression of a free country — a country from centuries ago. The closer the Mountains were, the more the boy's admiration grew. Their jagged majestic chain loomed menacingly on the horizon, but the boy was no longer afraid, seeing that the Witch and the Girl felt freer here than elsewhere. This was their true homeland, full of rich vegetation, birds and animals. Adotychost no one shot their bows, deprived them of life, threatened their existence and freedom. So they came reasonably close, watching the wanderers. The delighted boy watched whole herds of deer, mountain goats, hundreds of hares and wild rabbits, wolves and even individual bears. Birds sang more and more joyfully, as spring had already irretrievably triumphed over winter — and they paired up, looking for a nesting spot [Terakowska 2014, 374].

Terakowska's story conveys an existential message in a metaphorical way, and the parabola-tale here is only a costume that hides an instructive treatise relating to social life and the role of a nation's memory. One of the most interesting images in Terakowska's novel, in which the past clearly reaches the protagonist, triggering deeper reflection, is the vivid description of the ideal homeland, which Luelle putes while reading the Great Book (as a kind of Holy Book-memoirs about past).

The world of the Great Kingdom — as the Book proclaims — is prosperous, affluent, nourishing and happy, full of orchards yielding fruit and golden wheat fields. Once governed by sensible and wise rulers, promoting peace (King Luil XXIII even decides to abolish chivalry, and Luil XXIV, fighting violence — orders the destruction of all weapons), it also becomes the homeland of wise witches and great bards singing the One Song, passed down from generation to generation:

The Great Kingdom was the most beautiful and richest country, stretching across the southeastern areas of our world. It had several hundred lakes, countless huge, abyssal forests, magnificent and fertile agricultural lands, dozens of rich cities of extraordinary beauty — among which the grand capital of the Grand Kingdom, Arjana, with its two palaces, the famous Palace Square, and a vast royal garden, was particularly impressive. Nowhere did so many wise scholars live, so many talented artists, so many brave soldiers. And nowhere were there such a vast number of healthy and happy children as right here. Wisely cultivated fertile land yielded such crops that no one went hungry, while the king's capable Technicians came up with ever new improvements and inventions to make life and work easier for the residents [Terakowska 2014, 23–25].

Under the assumption that author is constructing a myth about Poland's past, as noted, history and fantasy thus intersect in Terakowska's work analyzed here on two levels: 1. a Great/Holy Book — memoir narrative based on the re-discovery of the past and the search for concrete traces of it (memorials), which are representations of the country's power; 2. fantasy using elements of parable.

The above thesis is also confirmed by the turns of heroine Luella's fate, fitting, as it were, into the category of Polish romantic emigrants, and may resemble romantic personal myth, reminiscent of the existence of tragic romantic protagonists, which “took over the legacy of heroic myths and heroic epics of Greco-Roman antiquity” [Janion, Żmigrodzka 1978, 185].

Heroes belonging to this group of characters, while constantly making choices, internal ethical dilemmas, uncertainty in decision-making, which is a great unknown as far as their future life is concerned, at the same time make constant attempts to follow a system of values and ideals to believe in [Górski 1991, 116].

Indeed, the life of the heroine, chosen to perform a specific task, is “arranged” into a tragic biography (perhaps even rooted in the philosophy of Polish messianism [Walicki 1970]), sacrificed, as it were, on the altar of history.

For the girl herself and her actions are subjected to the interference and intervention of fantastic beings (witches), and the fulfillment of the mission to save the nation becomes an ethical imperative — a moral imperative. The heroine has no choice, so she becomes a bit like a pawn in the game of history, without the possibility of disagreement with such a shape of her own fate.

In a sense, the figure of this character may also be considered through the historiosophical interpretation that characterizes Polish literature of the 19th century,

which developed under... the pressure of historical experience... Historical consciousness was one of the constitutive features of the nineteenth-century style of thinking... They became one of the basic categories of the deliberations of the time about man and society, which... referred... to such concepts and problems of historicism as... the beginning and development of history, determinism, freedom and necessity, the individual vs. the collective... Providence vs. history, the meaning of history. These categories, also applied to the history of Poland, its past, its decline and its future prospects, made it possible to reveal a clear historiosophical sense of the national struggles and sufferings of the time. For the reasons that gave special significance to the Polish experience of history in the Romantic era lay in the reality of the era [Janion, Żmigrodzka 1978, 15].

Exploring the deeper meanings in the writer's work, it can be said that in both of Terakowska's novels (in *The Lord of the Lewaw* and *The Witch's Daughter*), a kind of game with history is thus played by means of imagination — for on the one hand, one can perceive moments of specific actions of the protagonists — elements of human causality (*The Lord of the Lewaw*), and on the other — the submissiveness of the heroine (*The Witch's Daughter*). Both perspectives of viewing the protagonists complement each other and seem equally important.

Loneliness of the Gods (1998), on the other hand, is part of the area of references to texts situated between philosophical fantasy and parable of tradition and modernity (Civilization). The novel also refers to historiosophical discussions of a worldview nature, in which the key word becomes the crossing of boundaries (ethical, cultural, social, psychological), while the central place is occupied by questions of belief in ancient deities, love for one God and, more broadly, the issue of old and new religions [Wolanin 2011, 224–233; Otto 1993].

Among other things, the novel exposes images of the Slavic deity Svyatovid, evokes thoughts about the origins of Christianity in Poland (the new God of goodness replaces the old — cruel pagan gods), and

presents historical moments of the origin and development of civilization (e.g. the beginnings of the period of the construction of cities) and shows the existential significance of wandering and the essence of learning about other worlds [Baluch 2000]. In this context, *Loneliness of the Gods* also becomes a didactic story about the need to develop mutual tolerance between people of different religions, customs and cultures. Nevertheless, the most important part of the presented world seems to be the ethical dimension of the text and the category of time (e.g. the meaning of the passage of time, the issue of passing, duration or time of transition). From this perspective, the name of the main character (Jon in *The Road*) reveals its full meaning, and the final scene of finding the truth emphasizes his maturity and reveals his identity. The search for identity can also be found in the story through explicit evocations of cultural signs — the space of the forest, mountains, roads (e.g., the forest hides the village of the local community; Jon travels along a mysterious and symbolic road; Jon climbs to the top of the mountain, on which stands a defaced statue of Svyatovid), and the phenomenon of taboos that cannot be broken [Frazer 1969]. The metaphor of the River, a symbol of a mental barrier, but also a real border between two worlds that cannot be crossed, is also of great importance in uncovering the meaning of the work (the taboo of the River is broken only by Jon when he saves a drowning girl named Gaia, who later becomes his wife and the mother of his child). Because of this event, Jon begins to feel a stronger need to face the world “beyond the river.” The hero knows from the Priests that this is a region of omnipotent influence of the old god Svyatovid, who is now in a state of slow agony (Svyatovid, dying, is passing away to the past). The ethical liens and righteous moral behavior of the citizens in the community of the Tribe correspond to the “spirit guides”. Figures of “spiritual guides” (mentors, sages and masters) can be interpreted in the context of Jung’s theory of archetypes [Jung 1993], but also with reference to the theory of phantasms-artifacts of imagination [Martuszevska 1994], which was convincingly based on Polish romantic literary works, analyzed by an outstanding researcher of this era and philosopher — Maria Janion [Janion 2006].

On the other hand, the new reality brings new challenges related to, among other things, situations of confrontation of attitudes: the shamans of the old world compete for power with the new priests, and the image of building a civilization of cities, which is discovered by Jon, makes him aware of the inner need for change. The mysteries of the world (crossing forbidden borders, the despair of the old god Svyatovid, the construction of a new temple for the new god), discovered by the hero

through travel (at this point of consideration, the perspective of Polish romantic travel (also in terms of political emigration) also becomes an important interpretive context) [Kamionka-Straszakowa 1991] — help him understand the value of life, the universal truths about family happiness, the power of a father's love for his son and finding a compromise between tradition and modernity — called Civilization [Taylor 1996; Giddens 2010].

The discovery of the Romantics was a paradigmatic shift in the direction of travel: journeys into the depths, towards the center were privileged — journeys into the depths of one's own history and tradition, to the center of nationality, to the interior of one's own individual and collective consciousness and identity... In the sphere of ideological justification, this was connected, among other things, with the Romantic theory of nationhood and peoplehood. The character and mission of the nation were to be rooted and prefigured in the land, climate, landscape, cultural tradition and history. Hence the importance of knowing one's own country and its past for strengthening the national bond [Kamionka-Straszakowa 1991, 700]⁴.

Thus, encounters with the past acquire broader philosophical and existential meanings in the novel, and the traces of years past (gods, people, places) become ethically characterized spaces.

Fixed in the present, the memory of past times and the power of tradition is confronted with modernity, so it happens here and now, but it can also anticipate “tomorrow” and evoke the future. The “bonding” element of past and present years clearly becomes the category of time (eg. passing and passage of time) in philosophical reflection on life present in the “silence of the narrative” and in images showing the emotions of the characters (e.g., in situations of fear of change). The category of time, considered in the context of the novel also from a socio-historical perspective, becomes one of the forms of coordination of human life and makes it possible to discover the sequentiality of the events of his fate [Elias 2017].

“The Silence of Emotions” reflects the unique anthropological sensitivity of Terakowska's narrative — it is expressed not always in words, but in simple gestures and glances. Despite the domination of the narrative by linearity, the author also uses in the story the procedures of transfer in time (consisting, for example, in showing Jon in modern times, in which he is a surgeon and performs an operation to transplant a heart to a small boy) and on mental returns to the past exposed, for example, through the image of the dying Svyatovid — a symbol of the past years, a trace of the passage of time and passing. Dramatic scenes

of the slow agony of the Slavic deity become at the same time a clear key-word that strengthens the level of fantasy of the story. They are also a kind of bridge connecting the past with the present, a symbol of continuity and a spiritual glue of history:

The Old God took a long time to make a decision. Jon waited and waited, growing more and more impatient, feeling that time was running out — not here, in the circle where the Stone Roads converged and where He was stuck in the middle, but HERE. Here time was measured slowly, but THERE began to accelerate and Jon already knew it [Terakowska 2013, 131].

Representations of the past are also visible and recognizable in the visual images of Terakowska's narrative, including in the scene of the construction of the city, in the literary figures of a happy and secure family (Jon, Gaia and their son) or in the sensuality of the idyllic images of peaceful nature with which the people of the Tribe live in symbiosis. Here is a relevant exemplification:

The road to the city was shorter than it used to be, as the beaten track halved the difficulty of the journey. It used to be necessary to force one's way through the Forest, risking encounters with wild animals and evil men. But the City kept carving out patch after patch of the Forest, expanding — and then it wanted wide and safe roads to lead to it. So the Forest was cut down, the mighty, centuries-old trees were cleared, and the land ripped out of nature was paved with gravel and stones. Wood, moreover, was needed to build new houses, castles and temples. The city captured the imagination of the Bush Tribes, who cleared more tracts of the Forest, moving closer to it [Terakowska 2013, 190–191].

Nostalgic images of a happy past allow the characters to temporarily forget about the “happening” problems. Such a narrative strategy also allows the text to highlight issues of character psychology and problems of resilience of the human psyche. It also has an impact on the understanding, naming and taming of emotions, mainly those associated with the uncertainty of civilizational changes, the loss of fixed values, the ethical complexity of the world, loneliness and fear of the unknown, but above all, the identification of border situations as moments of experiencing oneself. Analyzing the individual and individual experience of axiological transformations (both in the case of Jon and his wife, the old shaman and the new Priests, the elder Isaac, who situates himself somewhere “BETWEEN” and the priest Ezra — representing the new world) in the story, one can perceive the universality of messages, experience

and ways of thinking about time and the imagery of time related to its duration and change [Hańderek 2004, 227; Krzysztofik 2013; Bartoszyński 1987].

Conclusion

In Terakowska's texts interpreted above, in addition to the conventions of fairy tale, philosophical tale or initiation novel, important principles characteristic of stories with socio-political themes (e.g., the road to power, the road to freedom, personal role models of the leader, opposition to the totalitarian system) and historical themes are also realized (e.g. the basic and clearly functionalized form of presentism with a focus on the specific values of an unspecified closer "epoch"-the "old era", the strategy of "familiarity and strangeness", the category of crossing borders — territorial and mental, the "private" theme exposed in Terakowska's works: the individual fate of the characters and their transformation) [Bartoszyński 1984]. Many of these issues can also relate to the socio-political contexts present in the history of Poland (the times of the partitions of Poland 1795–1918 and the enslavement of the nation, the national uprisings of the 19th century in 1830 and 1863, the period of communist dictatorship and underground struggle for freedom, images of heroes — leaders, having a mission to save the nation, also figures of romantic tragic heroes sacrificing themselves for the nation and dying for the homeland).

Following in the footsteps of White and using fantasy not only as a literary convention, but also as a narrative strategy and a tool for creating reality, the author neatly "invents" the past and "discovers" it to the readers, creating, thanks to her convincing narrative, including psychologically rich portraits of "questing heroes", coherent images of "imaginary" worlds, representative of past history and influencing the actions of the protagonists.

Moreover, in Terakowska's works, it seems,

it is the issue of narrativization (including storytelling) that will constitute "a certain metacode... through which transcultural content can be transmitted... and reality [becomes, *D. M.*] a pure... stream of events..." [Domanska 2000, 22–23].

In her fantasy historical narratives, Terakowska also uses elements of didactics and parabola (with elements of "teaching history"/"learning through the past"), existential history, and memory culture.

Therefore, it can be concluded, summing up the present considerations, that history and the past have a unique dimension and play a dominant role in the metamorphosis of the characters in Terakowska's works. Both the topos of the wandering of the characters growing up to adulthood, and the motif of the Only Song (*Daughter of the Witches*) linking tradition with the present, and the romantic images of the ruins of buildings from the past (which can symbolize the traces of prosperous former Poland) give the works an ambiguous symbolic dimension. They refer to an undefined past and tradition, which gives a deeper, metaphysical meaning to the actions the young heroes carry out in pursuit of their missions.

Notes

- ¹ See all the parts of saga: *Zbójecki gościniec* (1999); *Plewy na wietrze* (2006); *Żmijowa harfa* (2007); *Letni deszcz. Kielich* (2004); *Letni deszcz. Sztylet* (2009).
- ² In modern Polish literature, Teodor Parnicki played a significant role as a writer of historical-fantastic novels, initially treating fantasy “only to fill in the gaps that exist in the documents”, then, following the example of Juliusz Słowacki's historical mystical dramas, he showed further spiritual incarnations of historical figures (e.g. *The New Tale*). In addition to real historical events, Parnicki also portrays “potential history, treating on an equal footing facts that actually happened with those that could only happen... we read... various — sometimes contradictory — accounts of either historical figures or some allegorical figures, signifying, for example, particular types of novels...”, and the historical past and the fictionalized past appear in the text in parallel [Dubowik 1999, 255–256].
- ³ For example: *Lustro Pana Grymsa (Mr. Gryms' Mirror*, 1985; written in 1984); *Guma do żucia (Chewing Gum*, 1986); *Próba generalna (The Dress Rehearsal*, 1986); *Babci Brygidy szalona podróż po Krakowie (Granny Brygida's Crazy Journey through Krakow*, 1987; written in 1979); *Władca Lewawu (The Lord of the Lewaw*, 1989; written in 1982); *Córka czarownic (The Witches' Daughter*, 1991; written in 1985–1988; 1994 appeared in the list of IBBY).
- ⁴ “Such romantic national pilgrimages... were practiced by numerous writers and poets of the time: W. Pol, T. Lenartowicz, J. I. Kraszewski, R. Zmorski, W. Wolski, W. Syrokomla, S. Goszczyński, R. Berwiński, K. W. Wójcicki... and others” [Kamionka-Straszakowa 1991, 700].

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**ИССЛЕДУЯ ПРОШЛОЕ В ПОИСКАХ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ.
(МЕТА)ИСТОРИЯ, ФЭНТЕЗИ И ПОЛИТИКА В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ
ПОЛЬСКОЙ ПРОЗЕ ДОРОТЫ ТЕРАКОВСКОЙ ДЛЯ ДЕТЕЙ**

Встречи с прошлым, в котором «заблудились» дети и подростки, герои романов Дороты Тераковской, показаны в структуре ее произведений главным образом на уровне образного языка метаистории, в котором используется поэтика воображения и фантазии. Литературная конвенция играет важную роль и глубоко укоренена в социально-политическом контексте Польши (ее тоталитарная система, диктатура и социальные трансформации). Такая повествовательная стратегия проявляется преимущественно в трех произведениях писательницы: «Дочь ведьм» (1991), «Одиночество богов» (1998) и «Повелитель Левау» (1989). Произведения Тераковской, написанные в жанре фэнтези, представляют собой универсальное послание экзистенциального и этического характера, но прежде всего прочно укоренены в польской традиции и истории. Сильно выражены в творчестве Тераковской элементы традиционной поэтики польского пространства, включая, например, руины дворцов, как места памяти польского романтического прошлого, пейзажи романтически дикой и загадочной природы или мотив единственной «Песни о Вайделоте», символе национальной идентичности, присутствующий также в польской романтической литературе. Условность пространства-времени и память о трагическом прошлом предполагают ассоциации с важными периодами истории порабощенной Польши (например, романтическая традиция XIX в.), образами врага-оккупанта, тоталитарным коммунистическим режимом и фигурами польских национальных героев, борющихся за свободу.

Ключевые слова: фэнтези, исторический дискурс, культурная память, взросление, нарратология, Дорота Тераковская