# Summary
# Imaging the Shoah: Holocaust Narratives in Polish Children's and Young Adult Literature of the 21st Century

In the dissertation, I analyse children's and youth literature works about the Shoah published in the 21st century, which I describe with a term 'Holocaust narratives'. The study covers books published between 2007 and 2020 – the first date is determined by the publication of the first book for youth dealing with the Holocaust theme, that is, Joanna Rudniańska's *Kotka Brygidy* [Brygida's Kitten], while the end date is determined by the end of the second decade of the 21st century. The main aim of the research is to determine how authors imagine or represent the Holocaust in books aimed at young readers. Identifying and analysing the narrative devices used in the verbal and visual texts, as well as the ways of creating peritextual elements, shows what kind of Holocaust images reach the audience of contemporary Polish children's and youth literature. To reach this aim, it was necessary to pose research questions that guide me in the analysis and interpretation of the corpus. The main research question is: how are the literary and visual images of protagonists, space and time (the three elements that create the fictional world) as well as peritexts that surround the main text constructed? On the one hand, therefore, I have limited the scope of the research to selected aspects of each category; on the other hand, I am extending the perspective usually used in literary studies focused on the main text in order to cover also the peritexts such as titles, cover illustrations, publishing notes or blurbs, i.e., elements that build the Holocaust narrative of the book, as – among other things – they create reader expectations of the work.

My method is based on three pillars. The first and most important are narratological tools particularly relevant to answering the question of how Holocaust narratives for children are created in 21st century Poland, including literary components such as characters, space, focalization, or beginning and ending formulas. The second is post-memory and how it influences the work and its creator, as well as how it is created in the text for young audiences and how it influences them is an important part of the theoretical framework that I build on narratological foundations. The third pillar, which develops further research perspectives, is the study of ideology in children's literature works, and how it expresses the point of view and beliefs of the author, illustrator, publisher, or institution.

In the first chapter, I analyse literary characters, both children and adults (Poles, Jews, and Germans), as well as animals and plants (sub-child characters). Starting from

the assumption of the mimetic nature of literary characters, I investigate issues such as identity, focalization, and agency related to the unequal relationship between children and adults. The chapter considers literary depictions of historical figures (Janusz Korczak, Irena Sendlerowa) and numerous but anonymised and dehumanised German soldiers. As I have shown, the authors address not only historical events but also issues related to national stereotypes and intolerance. Moreover, characters most often represent particular types: Poles are good and helpful, Jews are weak and lack agency, and Germans are evil and aggressive. As this chapter shows, focalization and agency of child, subchild, and adult characters seem to be crucial for narratological analyses.

In chapter two, I investigate the creation of space, including verbal and visual images of the ghetto, home, and hiding place. Of great importance is the ghetto wall, which serves as a barrier between the enclosed quarter and the so-called Aryan side. The world outside of the ghetto as depicted in the books includes prevalently two spaces: the urban space of the so-called Aryan side, which offers nothing but uncertainty to the protagonists, and the area of the extermination camp which appears the least frequently in the works taken into investigation. The analyses showed that the literary world is divided into two parts (the ghetto and the so-called Aryan side), and the transition between them is a crucial plot event. In spite of the fact that the ghetto was compared to hell, one may find there also the signs of topophilia (a house, a library) that offers security to the protagonists, although always apparent security, just as apparent is the taming of the ghetto space by the protagonists. Characters also adapt unfriendly spaces and places thanks to their imagination: its effects can be seen not only in the verbal text but also in the illustrations, including maps. Cartographic elements are also important in terms of building a relationship between the past and the present familiar to the viewer.

Chapter three is devoted to the time. First, I analyse the beginning and ending formulas of the work, then move on to consider the use of the time travel motif. The analysis carried out has shown that the formulas of the beginning introduce the reader to the literary world and carry an anti-war message. The ending formulas provide a final with which the viewer is left after reading: it is usually a happy ending, albeit a disturbed one. Indeed, often, alongside the structural closure, i.e., the resolution of the plot, there is a psychological aperture, when the characters manage to survive the Shoah, but their emotional situation is not stabilised, and they must face the trauma of the past for the rest of their lives. In addition, authors often take up the time motif in their works, also on a compositional level or when the time-travel motif is applied. These narrative choices serve to reassure the reader of an imminent happy ending and are therefore also important for the reading experience of the child reader.

Chapter four, devoted to peritexts such as titles, cover illustrations, publisher's notes, and endpapers, showed that these are just as important elements of the Holocaust narratives as the main text. In the elements analysed, the words 'Holocaust', 'Shoah' and 'Holocaust' are seldom mentioned – a preference is given to implicit terms, or a clear indication of the theme of the work is absent; therefore, the impression on the reader is to be made by the cover, which signals the content of the book, thus stimulating the reader's expectations and triggering preliminary interpretations. In the case of historical prose, the role of peritexts is highly important because they legitimate accuracy of the story (especially photographs, footnotes, and bibliography). Peritexts

are also a source of authorial and editorial intentions in which creators often directly address the reader.

In conclusion, I consider the observations and conclusions collected in the previous sections of the paper in the context of the ideologies of Holocaust narratives for children. I set selected aspects that draw the attention of researchers and critics in the context of perceptions and expectations of works for young audiences, as well as literary representations of the Holocaust.

The dissertation shows that Holocaust books for children and youth published in Poland in the 21st century are complex and often stand in opposition to what is commonly regarded as children's literature. Despite the short-lived presence of the topic in the field of Polish children's literature, a wide range of narrative devices can be identified, including introduction of children and adults, but also animals and plants, as protagonists and narrators. The variety of conventions, including solutions characteristic of fantasy literature, also indicate that Polish authors do not confine themselves to a single scheme, but rather seek new forms of expression to address a child audience about the Shoah. The peculiarity of the analysed works is evidenced by the fact that the authors rarely evoke and explain images using the Holocaust topology, more often focussing on the subjective view of the child protagonist, with a certain naivety reporting on the scenes seen and words heard. In doing so, the authors bring the text closer to the reader, whose knowledge of the Holocaust may be severely limited.