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## **LITERARY STUDIES, HISTORY AND POPULAR CULTURE – THE SPACES OF CONVERGENCE**

### **Abstract**

The aim of the article is to juxtapose literary studies, literature and history as neighboring branches of humanistic knowledge. The author compares the methodologies of history and literary studies in the field of narrativity, and, in accordance with Hayden White, comprehends history as a type of fiction, historio-graphia, and literary artifact. In this optics historiography and literary studies are diagnosed as forming a sisterhood relationship. When the opportunity arises it is shown that the idea of postmodern history is no novelty, since up until the decline of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century history and literary studies have not been opposite at all. Actually, the way of thinking about history as an (literary) art has a splendid tradition rooted in antiquity. In the scope of Braudel's history of the "longue durée" it is the model of history as a (hard) science separated from literary studies as an art and ideographical science that constitutes a methodological aberration. Comparative analysis leads to the conclusion, that both these "scientific" branches developed almost simultaneously (cf. feminism, gender, postcolonialism, posthumanism, animal studies). Moreover literary genres, such as the (post)modern historical novels, alternate histories or historical fantasy, opened the space of convergence between history and the literary, because of mutual fluctuation and the "parasiting" of ideas, topics and poetics. The participation of popular culture makes the history and literary studies more transgressive, widely open for contemporary forms of communication and more hearable. In this scope, the author presents historical game books, facebook's historical events, transmedia historical stories.

Key words: Literary studies, historio-graphia, popculture, (post)modern historical novels, alternate histories, historical fantasy, new forms of communication

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## Introduction

Literary and historical studies, ones of the most important and at the same time, neighboring branches of humanistic knowledge, have stayed in close and multilevel contacts from their origins. Their relations could be described as a sisterhood; therefore, it is no wonder that they went through stormy quarrels, hysterical separations and affectionate reunions... Nowadays, when thanks to deep and various changes in humanistic, both literary and historical studies became not even an inter- but a transdisciplinary, holistic science about the human being, it has become obvious that they could be closer than ever before. The narrative turn made historians understand<sup>1</sup> that history as the *rerum gestarum* is subjected to the same creational and interpretational principles as literature *stricto sensu*. As a result of focusing attention on the historical narration, “only the text (discourse, narration) remains as the subject of analysis, separated from outside-the-text reality, which is from its ontological and epistemological context. History in this scope became not the study of past reality, but the result of a literary, rhetorical act” (Topolski 1996: 84). No wonder that, Dominic La Capra suggested that the academic study of history be relocated to literary or philosophy faculties (La Capra 1985; Topolski 1996: 85). Obviously such opinion is extreme and rare<sup>2</sup> among historians, but it depicts well the leaning of history towards literature, ongoing for a long time.

Beginning with Roland Barthes and his famous manifesto announcing the universalism of the narrative (1966) – “international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes 1977: 79) or “is it fully legitimate to see a constant opposition between the discourses of poetry and of the novel, the fictional narrative and the historical narrative?” (Barthes 1981: 7). Modifications in the paradigm of history led to a modification in thinking about history – the narrative history. Linda Orr in her work about Michelet claimed categorically that history and literature could not be defined separately in the sense that the former has to

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<sup>1</sup> Methodologists of history stress the importance of raising historians' self-awareness. Meant are elementary points, such as the semantic range of basic historical concepts, which, according to Reinhart Koselleck's observation (Koselleck 2001; 2009) are inconstant and change their meaning, affecting the rules of historical ratiocination.

<sup>2</sup> Most historians, among others Jerzy Topolski, protect the scientific, empirical status of history. Of course, this attitude does not question the narrative nor the rhetorical character of historical works.

be understood as relating to facts, and the former as relating to fiction (Orr 1976). In turn, Arthur Danto claimed that ‘history tells stories’ (Danto 1965), while for Hayden White history is *historiography*, a verbal artifact, writing about history being “the kind of writing belonging to the class of artistic discourses” (White 2009: 80) because “the history is the land of fantasy” (White 2009: 37). Historical knowledge is constructed, thus belonging to the field of constructivism, and therefore it cannot be understood as totally alternative to literature and fiction. (White 2009: 12–13).

## **History and literature in the *longue durée* perspective – a perverse picture**

Of course, the narrativist historians did not want to question totally either the scientific status of history or its ability to draw apposite conclusions. Their aim was to direct attention to the humanistic, ideographic, and not nomothetic character of history. Both historical sources and historical narratives (*res gesta* and *rerum gestarum*, or following another terminology primary and secondary historical sources) have a narrative and thus a rhetorical, persuasive and construable character. The crucial goal of narrativist historians was to make historians see clearly the constructiveness of history, as opposed to the widely accepted, derived from the XIX<sup>th</sup> century positivism idea of history as a science equal to natural sciences. But even in XIX<sup>th</sup> century historians were aware that history resembled literature in many ways.

Leopold von Ranke, an adherent of the “scientific” approach to history and author of the famous formula that “history has to tell how it really was” (*„er bloss will sagen, wie es eigentlich gewesen“*) (Ranke 1874, as cited in: Grabski 2003: 473, cf. Heintel 1979; Koselleck 2001: 94) – wrote in 1831:

History is different from science insofar that it is simultaneously art. History is a science because it collects, finds and penetrates; it is art because it re-forms, representing what was found and recognized. (...) As a science history is related to philosophy, and as art it is connected to poetry. (...) History blends them in something else entirely, something exclusively specific of history. (Ranke 2003: 82–83).

Since Ranke emphasized the importance of details in historical research, Hans Robert Jauss saw him as the precursor of the microhistorical approach (Ranke 2003: 84, cf. Jauss 2003: 406–412) or even of the ethical

turn. The proof of Ranke's ethical and empathic attitude are the following words:

In the historical work not only the author's being and opinions are expressed; it is interesting for us rather because of the alien life contained therein. Many of what was described was lost, other things were not described at all – all this was touched by death; they did not die completely, their essence and being affect inasmuch as they are understood; the true death comes when memory dies. (Ranke 2003: 91–92).

The roots of the narrative turn in historiography apparently stick deeper in the historiographical soil than it is commonly believed. It is interesting that the famous formula “to tell how it really was” gets a slightly different meaning when quoted in its full context:

History was designated to judge the past and advise the present-day, for the benefit of future generations; this essay is not worthy of such high authority; it only wants to tell how it really was. (Ranke 1874, as cited in: Grabski 2003: 473).

This is how the German historian protests against the *historia magistra vitae topos*, advocating the singularity of events and timing of the past (history understood as a singular event or a universal relationship of dependences: Koselleck 2001: 87) as opposite to history (educational exemplum message: Koselleck 2001: 87). It is important to remember the concept that history and the singularity of events are not completely synonymic is due to Reinhard Koselleck. This significant concept shifting, causing a new understanding of the term “history” took place in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century. Since that time history has been not only the sum of all stories (*rerum gestarum*), but has also included rules of its own functioning and generating, constituting an undisputable entity in its singularity (history as historical process, *res gestae*). Thanks to the convergence of hitherto different concepts history became its own subject (*res gestae*) and object (*rerum gestarum*) (Koselleck 2001: 85–106; Koselleck 2009: 71–77). Perceiving the non-classical, or even ‘postmodern’ elements in Ranke's philosophy of history shed a new light on the essence of the narrative turn in history. It appears that the critique of Ranke by Hayden White or Franklin Ankersmit could be understood as a failed attempt to prevent unwanted methodological affiliations. It is based on hyperbolization and, according to Harold Bloom's “the anxiety of influence” theory, on demonization (Bloom 2002) of thoughts of fore-runners, in some ways even too similar to postmodern historian concepts, is made obvious by the intentional ‘mis-reading’ or ‘un-reading’ Ranke's,

fitting him totally into the paradigm of scientific and positivistic thinking about history, so as to make sure that there is no similarity to narrativist thought in the reception of his ideas (cf. Lemann 2008: 5–39). That in turn proves the importance of reading works of well-known historians individually and penetratingly, even if they seem to have a long established position in the academic world. In fact, postmodern historians recalled the old concept of perceiving history as connected with art, dating it back to antiquity. “*Historia est proxima poetis est quoddammodo carmen solutum*”, said Kwintilian (*Institutionis oratoriae*, lib. X, 31).

The exploration of connections between history and literature leads us to Aristotle, who saw history and poetry as separate insofar that “it is not the role of the poet to relate what happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. (...) The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen” (Aristotle: IX). His conclusion was that poetry was more philosophic and serious because “Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.” (Aristotle: IX). It’s tempting to think that the ensuing development of history as a science contradicted this distinction. When applying the Koselleck’s differentiation between history (*rerum gestarum*) and the historical process (*res gestae*) it becomes obvious that history was first focused on the general, exemplary, repetitive (history as a story, *rerum gestarum*) and afterwards on the undivided, integral and unrepeatable (history as the historical process, *res gestae*). The minuteness postulated in Ranke’s works was a way of making the chronicle description maximally scrupulous and detailed. The detail as such was not essential; its function consisted in concretization of political, factual history. It became an essential component of the historical narrative only with the upcoming of microhistory, one of the most important currents in unconventional historiography (Domańska 1996, 1999, 2006, Topolski 1996; 1998). A specific detail or a specific, unique, human being now became the subject of research and description thanks to its usefulness for reconstruction of a specific culture, symbolizing this culture through micro-descriptions. Geertz’s ‘thick description’ is applied to the “small” object of observation, thus uncovering deep hidden culture patterns. Invisible in the scope of classical, political history, the ordinary man returns to the history. It is possible because of the extension or change of the definition of historical source, now encompassing private, commercial, judicial and ecclesiastical documents, hitherto skipped. Jerzy Topolski, a high-valued Polish methodologist of history stated that “It is worth to practice history

just for simple fact of knowing that Béatrice de Planissoles really existed" (Topolski 1998: 155). Béatrice de Planissoles, a woman from the Middle Ages (the XII/XIII Centuries) was brought out from the darkness of oblivion by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and became the heroine (sic!) of his book *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* [1975]. Le Roy Ladurie belongs to the third generation of the French school of *Annales*, focused on social history and microhistory. From the Braudel's perspective of *longue durée* the scientific, positivistic paradigm created by Ranke et al. could be described as a methodological perversion.

For precision's sake it has to be reminded that until the late XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, history and literature were not divided. Until the XIX<sup>th</sup> century history was a part of literature (Culler 1998: 30) and "history was a type of oratorical discourse and the subject of rhetoric" (White 2009: 28). Even today the historical narrative is shown as a part of the literature of a specific period. It is obvious for instance in the prominent series *History of European's Literature* published from 1977 by PWN (cf. Topolski 1996: 5–6). The first history chair was founded in 1504 at the University of Mainz. The aim of the „*Lectura historiae*“ chair was reading writers of antiquity, because of their ability to give "moral lessons", and interpreting ethical ideas (history known as "*vitae magistra*"). Its head, Bernhard Schofferlin, in his translation of Titus Livy work (*Ab Urbe condita libri CXLII*) indicated profits from the study of the ancient writers and philosophers. The first chairs of history in the modern sense were founded in Germany at the decline of the Napoleon Bonaparte era, in Berlin in 1810 and later at the Sorbonne, in 1812. Sometime earlier, during the Enlightenment, (1737) the University of Göttingen was founded, which soon became famous as the "historical university", thanks to David Köhler, creator of „*Academia Historica*“, the first ever historical institute (Grabski 2003: 354–355). In XIX<sup>th</sup> century historians attached equal importance to historic credibility and to literary quality of their works, knowing perfectly that literary values were not contrary to historical one. Moreover, literary values guaranteed popularity, which in turn increased the range of the "historical reality effect". Jacob Burchardt, Leopold von Ranke, Karol Szajnocha, Jules Michelet, Christian Matthias and Theodor Mommsen, the laureate of literary Nobel Prize in 1902 are still read with pleasure, since their works are not only works of history, but also ones of literature,

All the more surprising is the opinion of a famous Polish historian, Marcin Kula, who stated while researching historical reportage as a kind of contemporary historiography that "history ought to be either scientific

(factual history) or interesting to read, *Tertium non datur*" (Kula 2011: 311), thus invalidating, at least to a certain extent, the great importance of the literary splendor of former historiography. It could be an effect of the progressing specialization of historians; as Kula himself said: "there are no historians any longer, there only exist specialists of specific periods" (Kula 2011: 311). Probably Kula is afraid that the scientific character of history would melt in the literary, belles-lettres elements. Fortunately there are historians more affirmatively perceiving the changes in their field. For instance, Andrzej Radomski, interpreting the works of Ryszard Kapuściński, sees the latter as a historian of contemporary times, although admitting of course that from the point of view of academic history his works "lack detailed analysis of sources, establishing facts, flicking through archives or critical historical apparatus" (cf. Radomski 2010: 82). It is symptomatic that Kula in his article quoted above also refers to Kapuściński, uncovering his own "ambivalent attitude to the referred issue (N.L: to the domination of the literary element in the historical reportage)" (Kula 2011: 311).

However, Marcin Kula reluctantly admitted that:

*The Szachinszach and The Emperor* contributed a lot to the understanding of the revolution phenomena even in the historians community. I'm afraid that the aforementioned reportages were more significant than our numerous works, often too monographic and scholarly to be suitable for reading or for generalization, a prerequisite of scientificity. (Kula 2011: 311)

It is however Andrzej Radomski, an adherent of opening of the university borders, who boldly asks the important question "On the other hand, why only the academic historiography is to have monopoly on historical knowledge?" (Radomski 2010: 82). The same issue was raised a few years earlier by Krzysztof Pomian: „It would be easy to don the academic robe and announce that only works of academic historians belong to history, whereas the other ones are mere journalism or literature, which allows to treat them indulgently or even contemptuously." (Pomian: 2006: 224).

The question of novelization of history, of the presence of literary elements in historical works and of a loss of monopoly on 'truth' is a subject of controversy among academic historians. Not for all of them it is easy to adapt to the dynamically changing rules of production/creation and distribution of knowledge. It shows that not everyone eagerly accepts either the necessity of negotiating their "vocabulary" with the world or the fact that that neither "dictionary" is the final one.

## **“The third way” – history willing to be literature**

Tertium est datur! Such historical bestsellers as Stalingrad by Anthony Beevor are an example of a third way, approaching the historical monograph to the poetic of reportage. This historian noticed that his popularity is the effect of: “the long tradition, whose father was Edward Gibbon. Afterwards, it had great heirs like Thomas Carlyle, Macaulay, Trevelyan. This is history understood as a story, a narrative. We, in England, have always believed that history is a part of literature. That there is a need for reconciling the academic lecture of history with a well told story allowing for good reading.” (Beevor, Stasiński 2009). It should also be reminded that Theodor Mommsen was the laureate of the Noble prize for literature! For Anthony Beevor history is a bestseller, and exactly that is the title of his interview. Marcin Kula, whose opinion was quoted above, mentioning the surname of Stalingrad’s author, paraphrased his words significantly: “Beevor stated, that history is not [bold by N. L.] a science but a bestseller.” (Kula 2010: 310). But those are not the exact words used by Beevor, and it is significant and to a certain degree alarming that for Kula the terms “science” and “bestseller”, which is “literature” are totally disjunctive. In such optics there is no possibility for the historical to be literary at the same time.

Contrarily to this hermetic opinion, nowadays even the status of “celebrity historian” has emerged. This term, in my opinion, is useful for understanding the position of Norman Davies as an exquisite historian, famous for his precision and very popular thanks to the literary values of his publications, such as: *The God’s Playground. A History Of Poland*, II vol; *Europe: A History*; *Rising ’44: The Battle for Warsaw*) or (for different reasons), the status of Jan Tomasz Gross. The latter is a controversial scholar/writer, who used scandal as a strategy of promotion and marketing (cf. Michałowski 2003: 80). It has to be honestly said that his works (*The Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Jedwabne*, Poland; *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*; *Golden Harvest*) are very well written and they are asking to be analyzed in the manner literary texts are. It seems that precisely the analysis of the narrative and persuasive strategy and of the rhetorical tools could be the best way of understanding and most of all neutralizing the Gross’ writing phenomena. Contrasting strictly academic ‘obese’ and detailed monographs with Gross’ works is not efficient in the discussion with an author of historical bestsellers. In the mediality era a historian who wants to be heard has to be (again) a good writer.



## **History and literary studies – methodological biographies, non-ideally parallel**

The phenomenon of convergence between history and literary studies is older than the term convergence. According to Henry Jenkins, it describes a new era of transition, where new media collide “by convergence I mean the flow of content across the multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that ménages to describe technological, industrial, cultural and social changes depending on who’s speaking and what they think they are talking about.” (Jenkins 2006: 2–3). Convergence is a permanent process, and therefore it seems that this term could be projected into the past so as to search its earlier forms and effects. Especially interesting is the relationship between history and literary studies and most of all phenomena which came into being or were intensified by functioning in the transmedia platform, i.e. in the reality of Web 2.0 and in the field of complicated fluctuations occurring throughout Internet and popular culture. The intention here is to indicate first the major points of convergence between history and literary studies as far as their methodological paradigms are concerned, happening basically without the participation of new media.

A lot of methodological paradigms developed parallel in history and literary studies. This in turn proves the necessity of a holistic view of humanistics irrespective of its particular branch. It seems that literary studies, and above all theory of literature are more ‘elastic’, adaptable to methodological changes than their more conservative ‘sister’ history. The reception of methodological innovations is parallel in history and in literary studies, but in the former it occurs more naturally, without strong resistance from the academic community.

Feminism and gender studies in literary studies developed parallel with the project of her-story in historical studies, both originating from the late sixties (cf. Ohrn 1995; Domańska 1994). It was the effect of the emancipation and of subversive objection to patriarchal historiography, therefore it was connected with social, political and academic changes. Women participating in this movement perceived classical historiography as the phallogocentric weeding out of women from history. Paraphrasing the famous words of Gayatri Spivak it could be said that women asked the question “could the woman speak (in history)?” Indeed, in traditional historical

sources, suitable for the political, factual history, women hardly ever appeared, thus proving the existence of “Great Silence”, mentioned by Mary Daly (Daly 1973, cf. Gajewska 2008: 28). It is striking that second wave feminism does not attach any importance to the classification of and division between humanistic scholarly disciplines, and it even returned to the old meaning of the term “literary” (including *rerum gestarum*). Feminist publishing houses, like Virago Press (established by Carmen Callil in 1973) published belle-letters as well as scientific historical monographs alike.

It is worth observing that feminism as a methodology encountered some obstacles while penetrating the academic community. Basically, in several countries (including Poland) it remained an “insurrection” project connected with subaltern studies. It is only today, when in Western scholarship women studies are a kind of played-out paradigm in which they start to find their way into academic consciousness. In the nineties, professor Anna Żarnowska founded the Women’s History Committee affiliated with PAN (Polish Academy of Sciences), and active till 2010. After the founder’s death prof. Jadwiga Hoff became its chairwoman. The Committee’s work resulted in an VIII volume series of “Woman and...”, presenting multiple aspects of women’s life in Poland in XIX<sup>th</sup> and XX<sup>th</sup> centuries (woman and society, politics, education, culture, work, marriage).

An example of interest in women’s history in contemporary scholarly life in Poland are scientific conferences organized by IPN (Institute of National Memory), such as “Women in the Social Resistance and Political Opposition in Poland (1944–1989) – comparative view and its second edition, taking place in September 2012: “Women at the crossroads: 1939–1989<sup>3</sup>. One should also mention the Internet project Historia Pol(s)ki (History of Poland(les)women), organized by Gender Studies, Warsaw Group and PAN (<http://historiapolki.genderstudies.pl/>). Each of those projects has a transdisciplinary character. Compared with the above, the achievements of feminist and gender researchers in literary studies are perfectly well known, and it is not necessary to quote their abundant bibliography.

Some methodological retardation could be also observed in the postcolonial reflection in historiography. The (Post)-colonial novel is notably earlier than the founding work of Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1973), and similarly postcolonial research in literary studies is prior to the historiographical

<sup>3</sup> I had the pleasure to participate in this conference and I could observe that IPN community members were reluctant towards this problem. They suggest that there exist much more “grave” issues to be discussed, like political opposition. However, the extent of the discussed issues demonstrated that women’s history in the PRL history is an important scientific problem but unfortunately neglected by some academics.

reflection about colonialism. Subaltern Studies Group was founded at the beginning of the eighties, its basic aim being the re-writing of India's history, according to signals coming from (post)colonial novels and the theory of literature. Nowadays, the natural fluctuation between postcolonial historiography and literary studies could be named precisely convergence. This part of the subject is extremely interesting, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. Microhistory is another current of historical research developed in connection with literary studies and art. The shifting of gravity center in philosophy of history from historical representation (dominating in the 80-ties) to memory studies (cf. Ankersmit 2004: 367–401; Saryusz-Wolska 2009, LeGoff 2007) and historical experience took place in mid-nineties. Microhistorical writing is still the most popular kind/genre of the unconventional historiography. "History afresh leans over the man" (Domańska 1999: 20) said Ewa Domańska and indeed, such history is more humane, respecting the human experience. Microhistorians describe small events of common days, days without the hot breath of history. They concentrate on the research of "small worlds": villages, small towns, streets, backyards and families, the simple life of their existence, which are worth remembering because of their otherness and uniqueness. Books like *The Great Cat's Massacre* (1984) by Robert Darnton, *Cheese and Worms* (1976) by Carlo Ginzburg or Montaillou: *Village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (1975) by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie have action, protagonists, dialogues, and a non-discreet narrator (the historians of "I": cf. Domańska 1999). It is obvious that this kind of historical writing owes a lot to belles-lettres. Those books are bestsellers, read not only by historians. An extremely interesting one is Simon Schama's *Dead Certainties* (1991). This historical work has no footnotes and the leading character gen. Wolfe is fictional. Schama's book is factually valuable, but the truth being spoken is more essential than literal. Schama, according to Aristotle's distinction, reached (with excellent results) poetical abilities, depicting events "that may have happened". The microhistorians' works show that it is possible to stay faithful to the requirements of "scientific" history, being at the same time a writer. Moreover, it is also possible to be a historian while choosing the artistic modus of writing, instead of the strictly academic one.

Sometimes the distinction between science and art is so vague that the book is hard to classify. This is the case of Peter Englund's writing. Books such as *The Beauty and Sorrow: An Intimate History of First World War* constantly meanders between historiographical work and belle-lettres, which is actually hardly surprising in the array of Geertz' blurred genres. In the introduction Englund states:

This is the book about First World War. This isn't a story about the War. You rather find the human not the facts, rather expressions, experiences and moods than war processes. My aim was reconstruction the worlds of feelings not the progress of fighting. (...) This is, in a sense a work of anti-history, an attempt to deconstruct this utterly epoch-making event into its smallest, most basic component – the individual, and his or her experiences. (Englund 2011: 7).

There is no doubt that Englund's book is much more easily readable than the monumental opus *The First World War* by Janusz Pajewski (1991). The former gives also a much deeper – because it is filtrated through specific humans existences – humanistic understanding of what happened during the four years of this total war.

Non-anthropocentric history (especially animal studies and post-humanism) is another current which has developed simultaneously in the field of historical research and theory of literature. Animal studies in history, among others the role of draught animals in the economic development of Europe; horses in the conquest of America; animal trials in the Middle Ages, have been undertaken since the second generation of Annales (cf. Darnton 1984). Nowadays the popularity of this kind of research is constantly growing, inter alia thanks to the mass-media and convergence era. The participation of animals in epoch-making events is discussed and their own 'history': horses (Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander the Great, the 'chestnut' mare own by Józef Piłsudski); birds (Capitoline geese who saved Rome), famous elephants (the notorious elephants serving in Hannibal's army, but also Salomon, a character of the extraordinary fact-based novel *The Elephant's Journey* by Jose Saramago, a Nobel prize in literature winner. Salomon was a wedding gift for archduke Maksymilian Habsburg (XVI<sup>th</sup> century) and it made a long journey from Lisbon to Vienna.); dogs (sheepdog Blondi belonging to Adolf Hitler, Łajka, the dog-astronaut). It seems that the radical shifting of perspective proposed by animal studies is in its literary aspect the effect of the "points of view" strategy, perfectly known in literary studies and initiating the "bizarre" perspective (cf. W. Szklowski). In literature the animal perspective has been known since antiquity, for instance in Apuleius of Madaura's *Metamorphoses* or the *Golden Ass*. Using this bizarre, original focalization enables extraordinary literary effects, and results in a strong empathy of the reader/spectator and his immersion in the literary world. That in turn makes the voice of the Other clearly hearable and creates the opportunity to show human matters with desirable detachment. Nowadays probably everyone knows the story of "Wojtek, soldier bear", a Syrian brown bear, "corporal Wojtek", adopted by soldiers of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Supply Com-

pany of the Polish II Corps, commanded by Gen. Anders. Wojtek served during the battle of Monte Cassino. The person who brought Wojtek to public attention, allowing him to speak (it could be seen that animal studies belong to the insurrectional, subaltern studies current in historiography) was Major Wiesław Antoni Lasocki, who wrote 3 books dedicated to the brave bear<sup>4</sup>. The first one was published in London in 1968 (*Wojtek spod Monte Cassino: opowieść o niezwykłym niedźwiedziu*). Mjr Lasocki is the precursor of animal history, a fact which has been often forgotten; in 1966 he wrote a book titled *Żołnierze i zwierzęta* [*Soldiers and Animals*]. Nota bene it is a contribution to the discussion about the nature of the scientific revolution and the tempo at which methodological 'innovations' spread as well as of the transformation of those 'innovations' into scientific paradigms. It is no wonder that in the convergence era this process has become faster. Wojtek's story owes its popularity precisely to documentary movies, a Polish production *Piwko dla niedźwiedzia*, 2008 [*Beer for a Bear*] by Maria Dłużewska, and *Wojtek, The Bear Who Went to War* [*O niedźwiedziu co poszedł na wojnę*], from 2010, directed by Will Hood and Adam Lavis in cooperation between TVP and BBC. The history of Anders' army combat trail seen from the bear's point of view is simply much more interesting! It is also noteworthy that Wojtek's brothers in arms, used to reaching for the heroic ethos in their war memoirs (and therefore to sad, melancholic tones, and according to White's tropology to the tragedy topos) smile while talking about their recollections about Wojtek and the soldier bear's adventures. Thus denying the stereotypical opinion that in times of war people do not have a right to joy. The story of Wojtek, soldier bear already has a comic strip version, available in 4 languages. It was created by pupils of Zespół Szkół Tekstylno-Handlowych in Żagań as part of the Etwinning projects [*Jak niedźwiedź Wojtek został polskim żołnierzem*, [http://www.zsth.home.pl/etwinning/nasz\\_komiks.html](http://www.zsth.home.pl/etwinning/nasz_komiks.html)]. The story of Wojtek is a typical example of a transmedia story (Jenkins 2007: 260). Similarly popular is the story of the rabbits who used to live in no-man's land near the Berlin Wall, *Królik po Berlińsku*, directed by Bartosz Konopka and Piotr Rosołowski [*Rabbit à la Berlin*, 2009].

Post-humane historiography i.e. one based on the category of abiekt (J. Kristeva's term) is another current developing slowly but consequently. This proposition is a part of non-classical, unconventional historiography, using "controversial scientific approaches, which are interesting because

<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, in the English wikipedia site, dedicated to Wojtek [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wojtek\\_\(soldier\\_bear\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wojtek_(soldier_bear))] mjr Lasocki's books are not even mentioned.

they are inspiring proposals rather than prepared models" (Domańska 2006: 77). This non- anthropocentric historiography discusses for instance cannibalism in extreme situations or scatological issues, because "historiography aestheticizes things culturally threatening, (abominable)." (Domańska 2006: 101). It is worth emphasizing that aestheticization, a standard, elementary procedure in literature, gives the historiography the opportunity to include difficult problems into its field of research.

A awkward which needs to be asked is: is aestheticization of abominable allowed only in the field of historiography and forbidden in the belles-lettres?

For Domańska, post-humane issues are of interest such as: the status of shadows on the walls in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulting from nuclear explosions, which in fact are humans remains, imprinted into stones or pavements; or the moral value of commemorating human beings by means of implantation of human DNA into trees; or else production of LifeGems, artificial diamonds made of cremated human corpses; those diamonds are prêt-à-porter! (cf. Domańska 2005). All those problems open the wide field of philosophical and ethical questions, which have actually been brought up by the belles-lettres (especially SF) for a very long time already.

### **"The third way", second version – literature willing to be history**

It is the literature, or, more precisely, the historical novel and its latter invariants, that provide the widest space of convergence with history. It is easy to discover and describe the spreading of trends or the reciprocal fields of comparative inspirations. Lately Hayden White proposed the term "historical prose" arguing that "in the effect of long studies I'm sure that historical writing is itself a literary genre." (White 2009: 17; Introduction dated July 28<sup>th</sup> 2008). In his essays/articles published in this book White often refers not only to belle-lettres connected with history (Latin-American prose: Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes; *Austerlitz* by W. G. Sebald, alternative history genre, for example *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth) but also to the movies, such as *JFK* by Oliver Stone. Stone's movies are for White a proof of mixing up historical and fictional elements. White's term "historical prose" could be juxtaposed with theoretical concepts like "historiographic meta-fiction" (Linda Hutcheon), palimpsest novel (Christine

Brooke-Rose) or “epic historiography” (Natalia Lemann). In the era of loss of monopoly on historic truth by academic historians and of democratization of the discourse about history, literature is able to be an art, speaking relevantly about historical facts, nature of historical process, epistemology, philosophy and methodology of history.

A few examples from my own research shall be pointed out<sup>5</sup>. Hanna Malewska, a writer and archivist working in Kórnik’s archive wrote *Listy staropolskie z epoki Wazów* (1959) [*The Old-Polish Letters from the Waza Epoch*] and *Panowie Leszczyńscy* [*The Leszczyński Gentlemen*] (cf. Lemann 2010: 217–233). The former is a historical work, a selection of epistolography with an afterword by Malewska, and the latter is a historical novel taking place during the Waza reign in Poland (1587–1668). The novel *Panowie Leszczyńscy* was widely commented upon by historians. Janusz Tazbir at first criticized the optimism in the evaluation of the political organization and state efficiency in the Waza era which in his opinion was immoderate. He also disapproved of Malewska’s idealism in the assessment of her protagonists’ motives, resulting in seeing many of them as political altruists. Later Tazbir changed his opinion and conceded that:

After almost 40 years since the first review of *Panowie Leszczyńscy* the review author’s evaluation of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century has changed and came close to the opinions expressed by Hanna Malewska in the commentary to *Listy staropolskie* and the novel [*Panowie Leszczyńscy*: N.L.]. Nowadays scholars evaluate the baroque era warmer and warmer, but no one wrote an anthology with a comparably discerning commentary. (Tazbir 2003)

Next in enumeration are the works of Jacek Bocheński (*Nazo the Poet*, 1970) and Christoph Ransmayr (*Die letzte Welt: The Last World*, 1988), who, although within different literary genres and independently of each other, both analyze the reasons of Ovid’s exile. It is noteworthy, that both writers came to conclusions which escaped the attention of professional, academic historians. The latter, afraid of accusations of methodological mistakes, have omitted Ovid’s literary works as historical sources. Only recently have historians used in their inquiries *Letters from Pontus* and *Regrets* (*Tristia*) with the same results as the aforementioned writers (cf. Lemann

<sup>5</sup> In such juxtaposition one has to mention Tedor Parnicki, a key writer tracing the influences between history, literary studies and literature. The limited size of this paper prevents a full analysis of Parnicki’s novels, since it is simply impossible to speak briefly about them. The omission of Parnicki’s works in this article is therefore a conscious academic choice. Therefore I refer anyone interested in my own studies about Parnicki to consider the following: (Lemann 2008: 39–71; Lemann 2012, Lemann 2012c).

2011: 129–148). Those examples prove that the contemporary historical novel, far from her Walter Scott- style cousin, has the power of outdistancing the research of professional historians. The major difference between such novels and academic historians' monographs consists in the choice of a different modus of writing; it has become obvious that the belles-lettres modus does not invalidate epistemological efficiency (cf. Lemann 2008). This is the right place to quote Aristotle's opinion that "The work of Herodotus<sup>6</sup> might be put into verse and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it." (Aristotle: IX).

It is commonly known that writers eagerly use the works of academic historians, but nowadays it is also possible that literary bestsellers provoke or "re-fresh" interest in specific historical works. *Nasza Klasa* [Our class] a drama by Tadeusz Słobodzianek was inspired by books such as those by Jan Tomasz Gross (Gross 2004), *My z Jedwabnego* (We, from Jedwabne, Poland 2004) by Anna Bikont or documentaries like *Miejsce urodzenia* [Place of Birth] by Łoziński, *Shtetl* by Marzyński and *Sąsiedzi* [The Neighbours] by Arnold (2001). Słobodzianek's drama "re-freshed" the interest in those texts of culture and made publicity for the work of IPN historians *Wokół Jedwabnego* [Around Jedwabne, 2002]. IPN historians notice that Słobodzianek in *Nasza klasa* omitted their research concerning the number of victims. The writer used Gross' statistics, instead of the IPN historians' ones. It is known that his drama provoked a public debate, which will probably be revived very soon, this time in connection with *Pokłosie* [Aftermath], a movie by Władysław Pasikowski. The postmodernist strategy of parasitizing or, speaking more elegantly, the formula of alegacy (Giséle Mathieu-Castellani) is reciprocal. Słobodzianek exploits the results of scholarly research as a support of his creation and as a way of being 'trendy' while historians gain publicity.

"Historians did their job, the movie makers, politicians, journalists, attorneys, judges, moralists did their job. And the cadavers are still unburied." (Neuger 2009: 104). Whereas the public debate about Jedwabne bored the society, Słobodzianek's drama was a new voice and gave the public discussion a new life. As Neaugar sustains "the word once set free does not want to return to the sphere of silence." (Neuger 2009: 104). This observation provokes the question if obtaining the literary prize Nike by Słobodzianek, is not the effect of the effort of reviving this discussion again.

<sup>6</sup> Notabene, the Stagirite chose his example rather unhappily, since *The History* of Herodotus is not a model either of methodological self-consciousness or of proper procedure of source criticism. The authority of Herodotus as a historian was already undermined in ancient times.



The same situation might be observed in the case of *W ciemności* [In the Darkness], a movie by Agnieszka Holland, which brought a wave of interest in the memories of Krysia Chiger, *Dziewczynka w zielonym sweterku* [The Girl in the Green Sweater] (Chiger 2011) and of *In the Sewers of Lvov: a Heroic Story of Survival from the Holocaust*, a historical work by Robert Marshall (Marshall 2011). Also the widely commented, controversial novel *The Kindly Ones* [Les Bienveillantes, 2006], provoked a media storm in Poland and all over the world (cf. Izdebska 2011: 209–231; Koronkiewicz 2008; Chwin 2008; Pięciak 2008). The debate engaged journalists, historians and writers. According to Littell's statement *The Kindly Ones* has had two major inspirations. The first one is a historical book by the aforementioned Antony Beevor, *The Stalingrad* – reading this book provoked an “irresistible vision of Maximilian Aue”, the second one is a photograph of a hanged, cadaver of young Russian girl, half naked and gnawed by the dogs (fragment of interview with Little published in the “*La Revue Littéraire*”, from maxaue.pl). The influence of this photograph should be interpreted in terms of semiofor (K. Pomian), that is to say a document mediating the past and constituting a specific prosthesis of memory, connecting the material and semiotic aspect (Pomian 2006: 143; cf. Ankersmit 2002: 55–83), whose emphasis may be found in the novel. Both Littell's inspirations demand deeper analysis. The limitations of this paper allow only for the short observation that between the style and rhetoric of *The Kindly Ones* and Beevor's *Stalingrad* numerous similarities adhering spaces might be observed, concerning the language and the way of analysing and depicting. The phenomenon of Little's novel results in the fact that, as Pierre Nora's said “On this level only a historian might understand such a phenomenon, not the publisher and not even the author.” (this expression was quoted by Littell in an interview given to “*Le Monde*”) [maxaue.pl]. Numerous historians took up the challenge of discussing Little's novel, and expressed contradictory opinions: “The publication of *The Kindly Ones* by Littell ended the narrative crisis of contemporary prose (...) The suffering of people victimized by history is more true and credible in fiction than in historical academic discourse.” (Michel Guénaitre, quote for: maxaue.pl). The overwhelming majority of debaters accused Little's novel of scatology and pornography of death. Here I would like to recall Domańska's assertion that “historiography aesthetized the abominable” (Domańska 2006: 101). *The Kindly Ones* cries for historical and literary analysis, as the very first sentence of the novel recalls not only Francois Villon's *The Great Testament* – in English translation: “oh my human brothers let me tell you how it happened”, in the French original “*Frères humains, laissez-moi vous raconter comment*

ça s'est passé". (cf. Étienne de Montety, "Le Figaro Littéraire", quote from maxaue.pl; Izdebska 2011: 209–231) but also the ironically paraphrased formula of scientific history by Ranke "to tell how it really was". Therefore, Littell's novel demands inspection in the aspect of ironical travesty of many historical methodological concepts, such as counter history (M. Foucault), of the danger of abusing the insurrection history project, of ironical "topsy turvy" trope of "epistemic privileges of the oppressed" (bell hooks) which is based on the assertion that executioners cannot have either their true history or the empathy of the reader. The last formulation sounds a little strange given the differences between classical historiography based on truth and the unconventional, non-classical one faithful to the category of sincerity. In the context of Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history it is interesting that Littell was ready to write *The Kindly Ones* only when he understood that it had to be based on the structure of *Oresteia* by Aeschylus [interview with the writer made by Florent Georgesco, published in «La Revue Littéraire» n°28, autumn 2006, quote from maxaue.pl]. Thus in a new entourage the old questions return – if the structure of the tragedy can justify the aestheticization of Holocaust and death? Littell's novel provokes questions fundamental for historical and literary studies, by the same token causing the raise of interest in the history of the Third Reich. The web site site, maxaue.pl, "encourages" the game. The reader, entering the site is obliged to choose one option: civilian or soldier. His next choice has to be answering a few basic questions ("breaking the code") about the Second World War's history. Now, how many persons give up the game and choose to enter the page as civilian? The exploitation of agon's mechanism widens the space of empathy with the major character of *The Kindly Ones*.

## **Literature and history in the arms of popular culture – the issue of transgression and audibility**

Nowadays it has become clear that even popular literary genres participate in the creation of historical consciousness. This phenomenon is evaluated in two ways, according to one's general approach to popular culture. There is a clash between the liberal attitude, represented among others by Richard Shusterman (Shusterman 1998), and the critical one. The "concern" (euphemistically speaking), or even fear is caused by the fact that alternate history and historical fantasy are important literary genres and have notable influences in the process of formation of historical knowledge and of the awakening of interest in history, not only for the young generation. It seems that

skepticism towards those genres is the aftermath of a wider phenomenon – the approach to education. The historical fantasy ‘label’ should not be an instant act of anathema, particularly that this “odium” is connected with ignorance about principles of the genre. Historical fantasy novels might be and often are splendidly historically based. The proof could be Andrzej Sapkowski’s series about *Hussite wars* (Sapkowski 2002; 2004; 2006), utilized by Czech historian Martin Čapský in his biography of Przemek from Opawa (Čapský 2005). The Czech scholar not only enumerated Sapkowski’s novels in his bibliography (in the separate section next to historical sources and academic monographs) but also provided chapters of his monograph with quotations (mottos) therefrom. This “small historical realism” (Pietrasik 2007, Sapkowski, Bereś 2005: 131) is supported by the poetics of the fantasy genre. Pietrasik’s term “small historical realism” is an allusion to a current in Polish prose from the first half of the sixties, depicting ordinary people’s everyday life. In Pietrasik’s opinion Sapkowski comes close to this poetics, describing the filth of the streets, or the physiological side of human existence. However, in this aspect it seems more proper to use the neologism “the scatological realism”. I therefore utilize Pietrasik’s term, but in a different context. I suggest that this term is an excellent proposition for describing the endeavors of Sapkowski and other historical fantasy writers to create the “(historical) reality effect”, as Roland Barthes put it (Barthes 1982). As a proposal the epithet “small” could be added as a form of distinction between the historical fantasy writers and historians. The fact that Sapkowski and other writers use historians’ research was proven in the case study dedicated to *Hussite Wars* cycle by Sapkowski (cf. Lemann 2008: 141–177).

Fantasy writers are interested in basing their literary creation on professional historians statements because in this way the authority of history (alegacy: Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani) supports the acting of the apocrypha strategy or, in other words, of the strategy of sub-creation (J. J. R. Tolkien) of magic into the flesh of commonly known historical events. It is very helpful to the process of the communication with the reader and of the strategy of lending credence. The reader acquainted with facts easier gives his approval for instance to the assertion that magic supported Wellington in winning the Waterloo battle (Clarke 2004) or that the participation of dragons was of great assistance to Napoleon Bonaparte’s adversaries (Temeraire series: Novik 2006). The readers are able to respect simultaneously principles of the game between factual history and fiction, because it is paradoxically encrypted in their “anticipation horizon” (W. Iser). Surprisingly for all skeptics the historical fantasy genre ‘label’ sharpens the vigilance and introduces the relational reading modus.

A very interesting example of the educational range of historical fantasy and of alternate history is the popularity of a novel by Seth Green, *Abraham Lincoln: The Vampires Hunter* (2010). Recently also a movie directed by Timur Bekmambetow was released (2012). It is easy to guess that in the novel the young future president is occupied with hunting vampires who had killed his mother. Surprisingly, or horribly (it is a free choice depending on the attitude towards popular culture) the novel is strongly fact-based. It is significant that the public relations officer of Lincoln's library and museum Dave Blanchett said, that he was very happy with both the novel and the movie, because "thanks to the movie the history of the president became of interest for the young generation" (Blanchett). In this optics, it is totally irrelevant that this more than popular novel came to existence thanks to the vampire boom of last years. It is a fact that historical fantasy and alternate history novels simply awake the interest in history in the youngsters, referring them to the real historical text and contributing to a better historical knowledge. Interesting examples of convergence of history, literature and popular culture might be observed in the field of creating "a fashion" for some historical events. This type of action engaged literature, history and of course, popular culture and mass media. When Swedish heavy metal band Sabbaton recorded the song *Forty to One* dedicated to the Wizna Battle from September 1939, interest in this historical event, called "Polish Thermopiles", exploded in the mass media and popular culture. Curiously enough, it is said that information about the Wizna battle was given to Sabbaton by a Polish fan. As a result, the battle became a trans-media story. Rafał Rowiński created the comic book *Wizna 1939 40:1*, as part of the promotion strategy of Sabbaton's clip. This comic may be downloaded from [www.wojskopolskie.pl](http://www.wojskopolskie.pl). As could be observed, in a case like this the most important issue is the publicity submitted by the media, still commonly seen as belonging to very popular culture. The myth about "Polish Thermopiles" was sustained, because the conclusion is a paraphrase of a famous epigram by Simonides of Ceos` "Stranger, send the news home to the people of Sparta that here we/ Are laid to rest: the commands they gave us have been obeyed" This epigram in the 40:1 comic reads: "Passer-by, tell in the country that we fought till the end, doing our duty." (Roskowiński 2008: 12). Public television in Poland participated in the promotion, of the song's 40:1 and also in the promotion of another Sabbaton's song, *Uprising*, dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising of '44. Both songs were broadcast in the main edition of the news on TVP1. The story of captain Raginis immediately became a media story and finally, after almost 70 years, the grave of the courageous defender was

found ... It is obvious that nowadays popular culture is of great support in the processes of building historical consciousness of society. The Wizna Battle and Capt. Raginis' story are very archetypical and heroic, and those are the reasons for the enormous interest therein. Public institutions eagerly use the popular culture media if they only see the opportunity of formation of the society's historical consciousness in the way they wish. Popular culture could be a splendid educational medium and a part of history policy agency. History policy relies on – according to the words by Marek Cichocki, one of the term's promoters – “strengthening the public discourse about history by various forms of its institutionalization.” It is (using words of Dariusz Gawin), “the instrument of affirmation of collective consciousness (above all about common past)” (Cichocki 2006: 11; Gawin 2006; cf. Cichocka A., Panecka A. 2005; Gawin 2009).

At the occasion of Sabbaton's song dedicated to the Wizna battle some popularity was gained by dr Tomasz Wesołowski, a historian researching the myth of Wizna for many years. Information went around that dr Wesołowski was working on a monograph dedicated to the Wizna battle (Wesołowski, Żmijewska 2009). Unfortunately, Wesołowski debunks the carefully cultivated myth and maybe this is the reason why his monograph has not been published yet.

The next literary genre of popular origin and with great educational potential is alternate history<sup>7</sup>, forcing the reader into relational reading. The reader has to compare the literary creation of alternate history with the factual historical events. The educational potential of this genre was appreciated by NCK [National Cultural Centre, Warsaw] by initiating the series *Zwrotnice Czasu* [Switching Points of Time] including a novel series and a website game for the readers/Internauts. They are invited to propose their own ending for alternate scenarios published on the website. NCK intentionally utilized the Internet as a space of communication and interaction with the user for the purpose of building eligible visions of the past. The Internet might be an important support for public education. The Facebook medium was used for the project *Henio* on Facebook, an example of “commemoration in web society” (Solska 2011). The author of this project was Paweł Brożek, a history student, employee of the cultural centre Lublin “brama grodzka-teatr NN”. On September, 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 he created a FB profile of the youngest Żytomirski family member, born in 1933, deceased in the Holocaust. The commemorative simulation of *Henio*'s profile was a great success. *Henio* was added to contact lists, he received

<sup>7</sup> I analyzed this genre in the following studies: Lemann 2011a; 2011b; 2012.

letters. It is a great example of positive utilization of Internet's educational potential in web society, relying on building bridges across generations and of a space of empathy allowed by micro historicity.

On the reverse of the official NCK's initiatives are grassroots initiatives democratizing the historical discourse. Such initiatives give the opportunity for undertaking debates about controversial historical issues, which in turn might lead to opening rooms for negotiations about history, and even for the restoration of deliberative democracy. A good example might be the [www.powstanie.pl](http://www.powstanie.pl) website, administrated by detractors of the Warsaw Uprising '44 myth whereit is possible to download monographs from (e.g. *Kulisy katastrofy powstania warszawskiego 1944. Wybrane publikacje i dokumenty, The Inside Story of the Disaster Warsaw Uprising '44 Selected Documents and Studies* 2009), presenting a different assessment of the Uprising. In order to ensure a dialogue, administrators of the website provided a full bibliography complete with links to apologetic studies.

Another extremely interesting idea concerning innovative historical education through the Internet are computer and board games. Also here convergence between history and literature may be observed. Unfortunately, it seems that history searching for innovative, unconventional media narration sometimes gets ambushed by "modernity". According to Jerzy Szeja, researcher and admirer of games, the games the great hope of Web 2.0 education (cf. Radomski 2010). As the game amateur, Szeja carefully avoids to mention such extravagances of too liberal an imagination as Dante's *Inferno*, a game condemned once by literature scholars and historians. In this game Dante departed on the third crusade (sic!), in the company of King Richard the Lion Heart, conquered Akka and moved on Jerusalem. All that, bagatelle, 200 years before *The Divine Comedy*! Colloquially speaking not every game which utilizes a historical or literary costume has educational potential...

The Museum of Warsaw Uprising also eagerly used games. Filip Małuński created the game *Mali Powstańcy* [*The Little Insurgents*], published by Egmont in cooperation with the Museum and Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego [Association of Polish Scouts]. The strategy of the game's promotion included a press conference in the Museum of Warsaw Uprising residence. The game's characters, little insurgents, had the task to transport dispatches across strategic points of the capital. The aim of game was to teach by way of entertaining, but unfortunately, it had disastrous reviews. It turned out that not only did it not teach about the Warsaw Uprising but it did not even encourage learning about the history of the Scouting Movement on one's own. Indeed, the game is playable and interactive, but suf-

fers from lack of immersion into the created world and of opportunity for empathic identification with characters. After the failure of the game in the Internet a counter proposal game book *Janek, historia małego powstańca*, [Janek, the history of Little Insurgent] was created, written by dr Maciej Słomczyński and Benjamin Muszyński ([www.masz-wybor.pl](http://www.masz-wybor.pl) cf. Machocka 2009). Słomczyński noticed that “playing Little Insurgents [published by Museum of Warsaw Uprising: N.L.] willingly or unwillingly we infantilize the events of the Warsaw Uprising. If we attempt to understand, evaluate and form the attitudes and not only to remember, it has to be asked if a board game is the proper tool.” (Słomczyński, Muszyński 2011: 5). The text of the game book *Janek, historia małego powstańca* is divided into numbered paragraphs and at the end of each paragraph the player makes a real choice, choosing alternate paths indicating the number of the following chapter. It is the player who decides how the story of Janek, little insurgent, develops – “you are at the same time reader, author and character”. The game book offers navigation in alternate directions described by the metaphor of “tree of links” (Machocka 2009: 168). The identification with the characters is made possible by the dynamical narration. Out of concern for probability and educational values the game’s creators provided a few “mines”. Reckless bravado decisions result in death or serious injury of the player, and therefore in his return to the beginning of the game. This should induce the player to find a better, more careful path. “Remember also, that you are allowed the comfort of undoing the time, although in the combat field many little heroes and heroines did not have such a chance” (Słomczyński, Muszyński 2011: 11). The game book is encrypted in the comparative spaces together with the achievements of the OuLiPo Group or with literary masterpieces of Julio Cortazar’s *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*) and Italo Calvino’s *Il castello dei destini incrociati* [*The Castle of Crossed Destinies*] and *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* [*If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*] or the wrongly underestimated *Die unendliche geschichte: Vor A bis Z* [*The Neverending Story*] by Michael Ende.

In the example of the game book *Janek, historia małego powstańca* it can be very well seen that the widest spaces of convergence are across the history, literary studies and literature which are made possible by the phenomenon of narration. History and literary studies both speak about humans, and let it be reminded that narration is like life itself. In life, although there are tempests, breaking offs and happy reunions, still the important things are family bonds. And I hope that this study might be proof of a long existing sisterhood between history and the literary, the two of them similar and perfectly fitting together.

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