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Anna Sanecka

ORCID: 0000-0003-3876-2660

University of Lower Silesia

## The Role of Memory and Stories in Shaping a Child's Identity and Axiological Education. Pedagogical Reflections on the Theatre Performance: *Stories from Oblivion*

### KEYWORDS

story, mythology,  
memory, forgetting,  
performance,  
identity

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to present the theatrical performance for children entitled *Stories from Oblivion* as a tool for shaping the cultural identity of a child and introducing the youngest audience to the subject of memory as an ethical category. In the research, the analysis of the content of the play is used and interpreted in the context of the philosophical considerations of Paul Ricoeur concerning stories, time, memory and forgetting. Particular parts of the article concern the pedagogical role of memory, Slavic mythology, stories as a narrative genre, memory and forgetting and their social consequences, identity and its shaping, and the educational values of the presented performance. Based on P. Ricoeur's opinion on stories, memory and forgetting, as well as on B. Milerki's pedagogical views, it is concluded that the content of the analyzed performance and the way it deals with the above-mentioned subjects can be an example of upbringing for memory and recognizing a story as a significant educational tool in the process of identity formation.

Our hypothesis is equal to ... considering a narrative as a time guardian...  
Paul Ricoeur (2008c: 347)

Ultimately, the obligation to remember things as an imperative of justice is included  
in the collection of moral issues...  
Paul Ricoeur (2006: 121)

Joanna Cukras-Stelagowska writes:

Memory should be our source of identity if we speak both about individual memory and social memory. Perhaps it is pedagogy that should focus on emphasizing the value of social remembering and reminding (...). This is because pedagogy poses questions concerning values, norms and cultural heritage. (...) It is important to build a sense of the community of memory, and historical awareness is a necessary element of modern identity. (Cukras-Stelagowska 2016: 8)

This statement is important in the context of the performance of *Stories from Oblivion* because the plot of the play focuses on the attempt to preserve mythology as an important element of social reality and cultural identity. Memory and narrative participate in creating a person's cultural identity and influence his/her moral upbringing. Remembering, oblivion, forgetting, as well as narrative are related to time. Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the "temporal nature of human experience" and of the story as a narrative work when he says: "The world presented in each narrative work is always a temporal world (...). Time becomes human to the degree to which it is articulated in a narrative manner, and a story is meaningful to the degree to which it outlines a temporal experience" (2008a: 17). Also, Ricoeur explains that "between telling a story and the temporal nature of human experience there is a correlation that is not purely accidental, but seems to be necessary from the transcultural point of view" (2008a: 83). Since Ricoeur pays much attention to notions such as story, time and memory, in this article, *Stories from Oblivion* will be discussed from the point of view of his ideas. Such an analysis will also present the role of a story in shaping the recipient's identity and influencing his/her ethical attitudes and readiness for future actions.

## *Stories from Oblivion* as a play about the role of remembering and forgetting

The Poznański Teatr Animacji (Poznań Theatre of Animation) presents the plot of the story in the following manner:

Actors appear on stage and ... slowly weave their tales of the powerful Planetniks, crazy forest witch doctors – Babas, cunning and dangerous Jędzas or the awe-inspiring, mysterious Bezkost. However, Kłobuk, a quiet, forest spirit, whose presence always means disaster, appears at the beginning of the legend. From that moment on, everything goes wrong, legends, rather than appear in words and whispers, come alive! (Poznański Teatr Animacji n.d.a)

Kłobuk fulfils a wish of one of the actors, and Planetnik falls to the ground. He is so weak that he cannot return to the sky. Thus, the actors ask a Baba for help. She cannot help them, though, but she gives some advice to the characters: she tells them to find eggs from a black hen and milk from a black cow. These eggs and milk are to protect Planetnik against being forgotten. Also, they are to help him return to the sky. Therefore, the characters look for the eggs and milk. While doing so, they (and the spectators) meet other characters from Slavic mythology: they have to “try not to be fooled by a mean hag, fight Bezkost, and ... save Planetnik, without whom our weather would not exist!” (Poznański Teatr Animacji n.d.a). Planetnik, who is getting weaker and weaker, gradually disappearing from the stage, may remind the viewers about death. That would be compliant with the idea of Ricoeur, who said that “death means ... absence in history” – falling into oblivion.

As we can see, memory and forgetting are the crucial issues presented in the play. It makes it possible for us to refer to Ricoeur’s opinion on the “unreal status of a fictional temporal experience” according to which “unreal characters have unreal experience of time. (...) The time of a fictional narrative is free from the conditions that require referring it again to the time of the universe” (2008c: 182). In the *Stories*, the characters finally save Planetnik from being forgotten (this is a fictional temporal experience); in the reality outside the stage, Planetnik and other characters fell into oblivion.

## Slavic mythology

The performance of *Stories from Oblivion* was created on the basis of the *Bestiariusz słowiański [Slavic Beast Book]* by Paweł Zych and Witold Vargas, who write:

While studying Polish fairy tales, stories and legends, we have ... the impression that our ancestors loved incredible narratives. In the dark, by the fire made by shepherds, in a smoke-filled peasant’s cottage, or in a wooden manor house, people loved telling strange and mysterious stories (...). Let us trace the tales of our ancestors – myths full of Slavic magic, which is so rare in contemporary Polish culture. (Zych, Vargas 2018: 5)

Thus, stories are indicated as an element of our Polish, Slavic (pre)history and (pre) identity.

At the beginning of the play, after singing an old Slavic song, one of the actors – the narrator – asks the audience a question: “Do you know this song? This is one of many mysterious and forgotten songs of old times”. Contrary to Greek mythology, the song performed by the actors is unknown to the modern audience, just like other stories included in the *Bestiariusz* about “dwarves, water-elves and water-nymphs”. Greek mythology and its knowledge specify our place in the circle of European culture. In this European culture, however, we also exist with our Slavic traditions and heritage, and – as shown by the play – we do not really know this heritage. Interestingly, old Slavic mythology has not been analyzed by a Slav but by a Brazilian living in the Netherlands: Duda Paiva. And we have to bear in mind that remembering (and forgetting) our cultural roots determines our present identity, both the individual and the collective one.

### Story and similar notions: myth, legend, fairy tale

It is easy to note that, in the case of the play in question, the term ‘story’ gains a double meaning. On the one hand, it is the title of the performance, and, on the other, it is a narrative work, i.e. a work that presents some events in a temporal order (Sławiński 1989: 303). The *Stories* mentioned in the title are, from the point of view of the theory of literature, a play, i.e. a literary work to be staged, based on the stories about “dwarves, water-elves and water-nymphs” included in the *Bestiariusz słowiański*. Thus, on the one hand, *Stories from Oblivion* are not a story if we understand a story as a narrative with “not very clear morphological assumptions”, defined as a “narrative written in prose, the volume of which is larger than that of a short story and smaller than that of a novel”, characterized by a single-thread plot, chronological arrangement of events, free structure, the occurrence of episodic situations and a personal narrator (Sławiński 1989: 329-330). On the other hand, the play in question includes the above-mentioned features of a story (narrative qualities and chronology), although its literary sources refer to other, similar literary forms such as a myth, a legend or a fairy tale. While analyzing a magical fairy tale, Władimir Propp mentioned its features that are also typical of a story, declaring that the “overarching genre is a story and narrative in general” (2000: 37). Thus, “songs are sung, tales are told, so they are not for reading but for listening to” (Propp 2000: 76). Accordingly, stories are told (and listened to). This is because a story is also – more colloquially – a narrative being told, which often refers to the past. Perhaps this historical perspective, this reference to the past, is what makes a ‘story’ different from a ‘narrative’, which has more modern connotations. While presenting the origin of a fairy tale, Propp wrote that a “fairy tale was not born as a ready-made literary genre. It is derived from a myth, reaching religious

and cultural life with its roots” (2000: 77). Propp believed that the essence of myths consists in ascribing a higher reality and religious-magical meaning to them as sacred stories (2000: 45). Maciej Czeremski writes:

Propp has shown that a magical fairy tale is, in its essence, a derivative of mythical-ritual motifs typical of those [tribal – A. S.] communities. Such motifs are ... an expression of the specific way the tribes perceive reality. (...) Magical fairy tales are a relic of old religious systems. They constitute the collection of “sacred stories” distorted by time and related to the old way of interpreting reality. (Czeremski 2011: xxvii-xxviii)

Ricoeur presents an interesting definition of a story: “a story is what Aristotle names *mythos*, i.e. an arrangement of events” (2008a: 60). This understanding is close to the colloquial perception of a story. Also, it adequately describes the title of the Poznań performance that presents a series of events. Such a feature approach is typical of narrative forms close to children – fairy tales, legends, and stories – which they follow because they are interested in what happens next. Research that includes the configuration of time in a fictional story (a fairy tale, an epic poem, a tragedy, a comedy, a novel [Ricoeur 2008b: 11]) leads to the following conclusion:

The right to use the term ‘a story’ to denote a kind of a literary work – in proper contexts, with full respect of the specific difference between the diegetic and dramatic type – is based ... on the very selection of the notion mimesis of action as a key category (...). *Mythos*, from which our idea of creating a plot is derived, is a category of the same scope as mimesis of action. Such selection results in the fact that the differentiation between the diegetic and dramatic model moves to the background...; that is why examples of a well-thought-out plot can be taken both from Homer and from Sophocles. (Ricoeur 2008b: 241-242)

Based on the above-mentioned postulates by Ricoeur, we may assume that *Stories from Oblivion* are an example of a story with a “well-thought-out” plot.

## Remembering, forgetting, oblivion and their social results

Remembering is mainly associated with the past, not the present or future. However, Bogusław Milerski says that social memory “not only ... communicates the past. Rather, it is a social group’s key to perceive its present and future” (2016: 34-35). He also enumerates three aspects of remembering: 1) social approval and determining what is memorized; 2) subjective linking and giving meaning to particular events in the mind; and 3) social interference with creating those subjective wholes, concluding that “such an approach results in the necessity to critically analyze memory as

the modern process of creating meaningful wholes – meanings that make the past, as well as ... present and future times, meaningful” (2016: 56). It seems that this is the approach of the creators of *Stories from Oblivion*, as they made the future of the Earth and climate depend on remembering Płanetnik as an element of the past: of old Slavic mythology. Such an approach to memory, which is oriented at the future, is also postulated by Jacques Le Goff: “Memory, which is the source of history that makes circles, struggles to save the past only in the service of the present and future” (2015: 157). Looking at *Stories* from the perspective of the future, we can see that – as expressed by Ricoeur – in our perception, “the future reflects the past within one retrospective point of view of history” (2006: 508). The way we perceive our Slavic pre-identity depends on our present identity – on who we are (individually and socially) now. According to Milerski:

The historical approach is ... crucial for understanding oneself and the world. (...) Social memory reinterprets the past and, at the same time, it refers to the present and future. Such memory determines the way we understand not only what used to be, but also what is and will be (...). It is determined by the ideology of a given social group. Such an ideology refers to the ways of dealing with modern times and their idea concerning their own future. (Milerski 2016: 54-55)

This leads to the problem of forgetting and the selective nature of memory: to select “not only what we remember but also what we forget” (Milerski 2016: 57). The old Slav Płanetnik is gradually covered with black elements of the stage set – the darkness of oblivion. He falls into them deeper and deeper. This is a clear reference to Ricoeur’s idea of the ‘depth of oblivion’: “On the existential level, oblivion introduces something that resembles a limitless abyss expressed in the metaphor of a vertical depth” (2006: 549).

Referring to selective memory and to the lack of attachment to certain elements of the past, Ricoeur emphasizes the important issue of valuing time: “the idea of progress is not limited to indicating the apriori superiority of the future ... over the past. The idea of being new ... means, as a minimum, a depreciation of the earlier time marked by the past, and, as a maximum, negation that boils down to breaking up” (2006: 407). Perhaps it is such depreciation and such breaking up that are the reasons why today’s audience does not know the songs or characters presented in *Stories from Oblivion*.

## Identity and its shaping<sup>1</sup>

Le Goff specifies the relationship between memory and identity in the following manner: “Memory is the basic element of what has recently been named individual or collective memory. Looking for identity ... is one of the basic actions of contemporary individuals and societies” (2015: 155). However, he consistently applies the future-oriented approach to memory, and he indicates the future as one of the sources of identity: “Just like the past, the future attracts today’s people ... who are searching for their own roots and identity. The future fascinates them like never before” (2015: 63). This is not the only contradiction we face where memory and identity shaping meet: forgetting is an element of identity, too. What we keep in memory (not necessarily intentionally) and what we remove from memory influences us as individuals and members of a society. Also, Ricoeur connects forgetting with responsibility:

(...) as an active form, forgetting involves the same kind of responsibility as that which is ascribed to acts of negligence, ignorance, omission, and carelessness in all situations in which we failed to act – when, after something already happened, we became clearly and honestly aware of the fact that we should have and could have known something ..., that we should have and could have acted. (Ricoeur 2006: 591)

Perhaps, after watching *Stories from Oblivion*, we will utter or just think about the questions why Slavic mythology (contrary to the Greek one) fell into oblivion, and whether we feel responsible for this. Why did the creators of the Teatr Animacji reach for this topic in the second decade of the 21st century? Was it related to the inflow of Ukrainians who are also Slavs and with whom we can share this mythology, creating our Slavic identity?

In the year in which *Stories* was performed for the first time, Jerzy Nikitorowicz postulated introducing “a humanist course at schools named «Our Heritage» aimed at making students gain an awareness of the past and directing them towards a future in the protection of local and world heritage” (2016: 15). Maintaining and passing over cultural heritage, emotionally important values, symbols, and institutions around which a group is integrated is very important from the social point of view.

<sup>1</sup> Jerzy Nikitorowicz defines identity as follows: “personal and social-cultural identity is the result of a free and responsible choice concerning the self-specification of an individual, the conscious adoption of the task of creating oneself in a certain social-cultural space, situating oneself in relationships with other people, and specifying the hierarchy of values, principles and norms of behaviour” (2016: 26). Barbara Surma lists three aspects related to shaping one’s cultural identity: 1. Passing over tradition and cultural heritage; 2. Maintaining one’s own culture, shaping the system of values, and understanding oneself; and 3. A readiness to create a new cultural heritage, giving meaning to the world and one’s own actions (2016: 75). The creation of cultural identity is discussed by, among others, Agnieszka Suchocka and Iwona Królikowska (2014), Jerzy Nikitorowicz (2016), Barbara Surma (2016), and Robert John (2004).

Nevertheless, various aspects and elements of different cultures fall into oblivion and *Stories* – based on a specific, local example – clearly remind us that this is true. However, we should remember that these tendencies are not equally intensive in all cultures, and some cultures and groups protect the memory of their history and identity very strongly. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi wrote about the collective memory<sup>2</sup> of the Jewish nation<sup>3</sup>: it was “a function of the shared faith, cohesiveness, and will of the group itself, transmitting and recreating its past through an entire complex of interlocking social and religious institutions that functioned organically to achieve this” (Yerushalmi 1999: 95).

### *Stories from Oblivion* as a tool in upbringing young spectators

From the educational, pedagogical and ethical perspectives, apart from the issue of remembering/forgetting, which is the axis of the plot of the play and the factor that shapes the spectators’ identity, it is worth paying attention to several characters who appear in the performance<sup>4</sup> and who are taken from the *Bestiariusz*. These characters are carriers of memory, perceived as passing values from generation to generation, and that is why they are important in shaping identity. Moreover, although they come from the past, some of them offer valid references. Thus, we may assume that the mythological characters were selected in a careful manner, taking into account educational and upbringing aspects.

Planetnik – the main mythical character of *Stories* – deals with “filling clouds with water or rain, moving them across the sky and wringing them over a given area” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 114). The story of the Slavic Planetnik, who was taken down to Earth and gradually ‘erased’ from memory, is an image of the inseparable connection between the past, present and future. Forgetting about the past may result in a (climate) catastrophe in the future. It is also a clear reference to taking action against climate change.

<sup>2</sup> Ricoeur emphasizes the “inner relationships between individual memory and collective memory” (2006: 126).

<sup>3</sup> This is also true of other societies, although they may use different institutions that transmit cultural heritage and collective memory. In the case of Jews, the situation is unique due to their religious continuity (Christianity, which appeared in Poland, demythologized old reality). Moreover, in Judaism, remembering, memories, and narrative constitute the main elements of shaping identity and religious imperatives: “Moses focused on the significance of memory for people’s moral health. (...) In Judaism ... memory is the guardian of conscience” (Sack 2019).

<sup>4</sup> “The characters that appear in the story are included in the plot along with the events, and, together, they constitute the story that is being told” (Ricoeur 2006: 353).



Jędza, who, “in her mobile house on a hen’s foot, wandered through forests looking for victims – mainly innocent children ..., used something much more efficient than magic ... to attract little ones: sweets. Lured with the vision of unlimited access to candies, children easily got trapped ..., after which they were eaten by the hideous demon” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 96). Jędza is another character whose message is valid today. This is emphasized all the more because a child is chosen from the audience to take part in each scene with her. Nowadays, eating too much sugar and obesity among children are very important problems related to eating habits and upbringing. Emphasizing the bad results of eating sweets is significant from the educational point of view.<sup>5</sup>

Kłobuk is “a low-ranking demon” who, after being taken by a villager to his/her house, started to feel at home there. In time, “he started to bring various goods stolen from other villagers to the house” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 104). The role of Kłobuk in building the plot of the play is very important. He is the one to be blamed for all the problems with Płanetnik: the fact that Płanetnik fell down to Earth; the threat that if Płanetnik does not return to the sky, it will never rain; the fact that Płanetnik is gradually falling into oblivion. The truth is, however, that it is us who made the wish – it is us who erased Slavic myths from our memory, and Kłobuk was just our tool.

The figure of Kłobuk is related to two upbringing issues: 1) responsibility for one’s word, which also includes responsibility for making wishes; and 2) responsibility for group behaviour. Kłobuk becomes a victim of an attack from all the actors taking part in the play. Irrespective of whether he actually is guilty of the catastrophe, i.e. Płanetnik falling into oblivion, everyone attacks Kłobuk, shouts “it is him!” and points their fingers at him. Kłobuk is crouching with fear as the crowd assaults him. This scene may make the audience realize what being a victim of so-called ‘hate’ feels like.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Of course, we can look at Jędza and her eating-related behaviour from many different perspectives – starting from psychoanalysis, up to the concept of eating as an element of celebration, carnival and fun. Freud’s oral phase and its remnants can be noticed in, i. a., the activity of eating: “What remnants of the oral stage can be found in adults? (...) considerable participation in such oral behaviors as eating and drinking” (Erwin 2002: 406). In adult life, a fixation on the oral phase may lead to eating too much. And Johan Huizinga, in *Homo ludens*, mentions celebrations, feasting and dining, i.e. activities related to eating, as important aspects of a feast (1949: 21). However, the fact that Jędza uses a specific kind of food – sweets – results in the fact that the dietary point of view seems the most justified in the play.

<sup>6</sup> On the stage, we can see some behaviours that are rooted in the syndrome of a scapegoat – a person or a group blamed for all failures, misfortunes and catastrophes. Such a person or group is used by members of another group to release their aggression and anger. René Girard described such behaviour in his book dedicated to persecution: “I am talking ... about persecution that is collective or evokes collective response. The term «collective persecution» denotes acts of violence performed directly by an aggressive crowd, just like in the case of the massacre of the Jews during the plague. «Persecution that evokes

Baba, “an old woman who, in an old Polish village, dealt with healing people and warding off spells” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 10), is a less valid character, although it is her who makes the actors aware of the importance of memory not only for the ones who remember, but also for those who are remembered or forgotten. Baba utters the important statement “I am glad that you remember me.” Also, Baba makes the actors and the spectators aware of the threats related to the disappearance of Płanetnik (in the play, his disappearance is presented as falling into a crack located in one of the elements of the stage set): the lack of rain and the climate catastrophe. Moreover, in the pedagogical dimension, as an old woman,<sup>7</sup> she can function as a model of the combination of old age with wisdom, experience and knowledge of life. It is worth remembering (and teaching young generations) that, in the past, members of societies often asked old people for advice and referred to their wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the above-mentioned characters, one of the last scenes of the play is very important from the educational and ethical perspective. When Płanetnik is almost totally covered by dark elements of the stage set (the darkness of oblivion) and there is no egg from a black hen to save him,<sup>9</sup> one of the actors gives his hairless head as the egg that had just been laid by Kłobuk.<sup>10</sup> In this way, they sacrifice themselves to ensure a happy ending for the story. They save the collective memory of the people in the audience, they save Płanetnik from oblivion and they save the Earth from drought. In the next scene, from the sky to which Płanetnik returned, snow is starting to fall. This could be an example of a sacrifice made for the common good<sup>11</sup> – one of

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collective response» means acts of violence such as witch-hunts ... [and are] determined by angry public opinion” (Girard 1987: 21).

<sup>7</sup> It seems that this is a reference to the psychoanalysis of C.G. Jung. Baba may be a version of at least one of Jung’s archetypes: a Sage who symbolizes the spiritual component. “Here spirit means the sum-total of all the phenomena of rational thought, or of the intellect, including the will, memory, imagination, creating power and aspirations motivated by ideals” (Jung 2010: 86). Also, it seems that the authors refer to another Jungian archetype: the Great Mother. Baba cares about the future of our planet and people, and she is kind to the characters of the play, giving them good advice. Here is how Jung describes the Great Mother archetype: “The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; ... the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; ... all that cherishes and sustains” (Jung 2010: 16).

<sup>8</sup> At present, young people do not appreciate old people’s experience, and “the increasing number of old people are treated as a bunch of gaffers and not the elite of sages” (Erikson 2002: 9).

<sup>9</sup> “At some time ... Płanetnik fell down to Earth. Then he went to the villagers asking for milk from a black cow and eggs from a black hen. After eating them ... he returned to the sky” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 114).

<sup>10</sup> Kłobuk “took the form ... of a black bird similar to a chicken” (Zych, Vargas 2018: 104).

<sup>11</sup> Individual sacrifice for society is a value in many cultures – not only in the Christian one – confirmed, for example, by the ancient myth of Prometheus. The idea of the common good is described by, among others, A. Młynarska-Sobaczewska (2009) and M. Piechowiak (2003).

the most precious values not only in contemporary law but also in philosophy and pedagogy.

Ricoeur emphasizes the ethical dimension of a story as such, writing that

(...) the strategy of persuasion used by the narrator aims at imposing a certain vision of the world on the reader. The vision is never ethically neutral. Instead, it encourages the recipient ... to re-assess the world and himself (...). A story belongs to the ethical area because of its claim (typical of each narrative) to ethical correctness. (Ricoeur 2008c: 357)

Each theatrical play falls within the scope of the pedagogy of culture, the objective of which is “shaping personality based on the goods of culture” (Śliwerski, Milerski 2000: 153), and it is a tool of axiological education. Educating people through the goods and texts of culture

(...) becomes the key to the way a person understands his/her own being. In this sense, humanist education has an existential dimension, too. What is more, if the learner is connected with the texts of culture through a relationship of hermeneutical understanding, he/she not only learns to understand the texts and himself/herself, but he/she also interiorizes into his/her personality the meanings and values that are transmitted by the texts. And this is the essence of humanist education: shaping the cultural structure of a personality as the structure of meanings and values. (Milerski 2016: 41)

## Conclusion

The authors of the play write as follows:

We do not know much about the beliefs and rituals of old Slavs. Their monuments and temples were burnt, and pagan beliefs were effectively replaced with Christian ones. Only a tiny trace of the cultural heritage of our Slavic ancestors has survived. Through the play *Stories from Oblivion*, we would like to save the memory of the world, which has almost been forgotten. (Poznański Teatr Animacji n.d.b)

It is worth mentioning that this interesting reference to pre-Christian times takes place in the city in which the Golden Chapel is located – the place in which Mieszko I was buried. Mieszko I was the first Polish ruler to be baptized and introduced Poland to the world of Christian culture. However, in pre-Christian times, Slavic tribes also had their culture. These were not ‘wild’ times and it is worth remembering them, so it is an important issue from the pedagogical point of view.

The pedagogical influence of *Stories* may turn out to be difficult, because “perhaps ... we are witnesses – or maybe even doers – of a kind of death: the death of the

art of story-telling ..., from which the art of narrative derives ... each of its forms” (Ricoeur 2008b: 50-51). Obviously, “the death of story-telling” would influence our identity, which is why, “perhaps, *against all odds* ..., we should believe that new narrative forms ... which are being born, will confirm that the narrative function may change but not die. This is because we have no idea of what culture would be if it no longer knew what a *story* is” (Ricoeur 2008b: 50-51). Ricoeur’s conclusion may mean that contemporary people not only remove old myths presented in the play from their memory, consciousness and identity, but also reject the narrative forms that transmit those myths and that are important for education and shaping one’s identity. While emphasizing the significant place of memory in pedagogical and educational actions, Milerski writes:

Humanist education not only shapes a cultural personality, independent judgment, responsibility and communicative competences. It also teaches people to interpret the world in its ambiguity and ideological conditions (...). The fulfilment of the objectives defined in this way depends on whether – in the theory of education – we will take into account the category of social memory as the factor that ensures individual and collective consciousness. (Milerski 2016: 45-46)

Ricoeur perceives memory as an obligation and a debt: “the obligation to remember is the obligation to give justice to someone other than ourselves through memory” (2006: 117). The obligation to remember is related to the idea of a debt: “we owe something to those who preceded us in who we are” (Ricoeur 2006: 117) – we owe them our identity. In the case of *Stories from Oblivion*, we can clearly see what we owe to pre-Slavic culture. If it had not preceded the Slavic Christianity that resulted in Christianizing the major part of pagan traditions, today we would be different as individuals and as a society. Remembering this is probably the main role of a story and of the performance of *Stories from Oblivion*.

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#### CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

Anna Sanecka  
University of Lower Silesia  
e-mail: [anna.sanecka@gmail.com](mailto:anna.sanecka@gmail.com)