

Summary

Poet – Teacher – Child

Works for Children by Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa in the Changing Pre-school Reality

The author takes up the issue of works for children written by Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa. Today both are acknowledged as outstanding poets writing for children, although their paths to poetry for young audiences were completely different. The author presents this in the first chapter of her work, describing selected facts from their childhoods (very different, consisting of important experiences shaping their personality as future poets), their youth, and their artistic and literary quests.

In the first chapter, entitled *In search of the sources of Julian Tuwim's and Jan Brzechwa's work for children*, the author seeks to describe the facts from their lives and the inspirations for their creative work for children. In the case of Julian Tuwim, she presents his involvement in creating texts for the famous Marian Falski primer, describes his pre-war published work, and post-war reprints of his volumes for children. For Jan Brzechwa, she chronicles three periods of his work: pre-war, war and post-war. Using selected examples, the author discusses how the work of both poets was received in pedagogical and literary circles in the period before and shortly after the war. She draws attention to favourable responses that related to their works with kindness and understanding, but also more critical ones, which are an expression of a misunderstanding of the authors' intentions and their literary craftsmanship. In this chapter, the author also describes the different ways in which these poets related to children. In the case of Julian Tuwim, she focuses on the characteristics of his relationship with his adoptive daughter, Ewa, while with Jan Brzechwa, the focus is on his post-war contacts with young readers. From documents, memoirs and research papers, she seeks to extract the biographies of the poets, which were so very different.

The second chapter, entitled *The works of Tuwim and Brzechwa in a changing reality*, attempts to show both poets' works for children in terms of the changing social, cultural, economic, and educational reality. It seeks an answer to the question of the extent to which generational differences determine children's understanding of literary works. Attention is drawn to the role of language as a tool in the process of communicating and interpreting the world, and points to the dynamics of the changes to which language is subject in connection with ongoing social, political, economic and moral changes. Against this back-

ground, the author highlights the importance that works by Brzechwa and Tuwim have in the process of intergenerational transmission in terms of conveying socio-cultural content. She shows selected objects recorded in the works of both poets, whose names we do not know today, because these objects have passed out of everyday use, meaning there is no need to name them. She points to the new names given to the “old” objects, indicating the change in meanings on the basis of selected terms taken from the works of Brzechwa and Tuwim. She also attempts to show the universality of both poets’ works, how their innovativeness is manifested, and what is no longer relevant today, as well as what elements of their work arouse controversy and discussion. The author goes on to take up the theme of addressing literary works to children and the role of an adult intermediary in this process. She bases her discussion on Lev Wygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development, stressing the importance of actions relating to the potential capabilities of a child, their resources and the role of the adult in developing this potential. Therefore, the author identifies three roles for the adult intermediary, which are important in the process of dealing with literary text. She lists the types of intermediaries and defines their tasks, and discusses elements of a child’s relationship with a literary work. She exemplifies her reflections using the example of making a literary text accessible to a small child by reading it together with looking at the illustrations.

Chapter Three, entitled *Children are competent – works by Jan Brzechwa and Julian Tuwim from the perspective of the developmental potential of pre-school children*, focuses attention on what shapes the potential (especially linguistic potential) of pre-school children and makes them ready and competent to understand and interpret works by Brzechwa and Tuwim. The author assumes, in accordance with developmental patterns, that the primary form of children’s activity is playing, through which they have the opportunity to manifest their various competences. During this activity, children are creative and authentic, they communicate, express their sense of humour, explore the world and experience their own cause in which they reflect on the world and themselves in the world. While playing, they try to explore their own and others’ boundaries, and see what will happen when the boundaries set by others are crossed. The role of Brzechwa and Tuwim’s works as cultural tools for their activity in the sphere of proximal development is presented here in terms of the development potential of the pre-school child. The author emphasises that this activity should be carried out with support from adults who are important to the child.

In the last chapter, entitled *Works by Brzechwa and Tuwim in the changing pre-school reality in the light of materials from the magazine “Wychowanie w Przedszkolu”*, an attempt is made to find answers to the following questions:

- How do teachers integrate works by Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa into the general framework set by the core curriculum for pre-school education?
- How are teachers’ choices of Brzechwa and Tuwim’s works changing in their work with pre-school children?
- How (in what forms) do teachers make works by both poets more accessible for pre-school children?

The author sought answers by analysing the materials featured in the “Wychowanie w Przedszkolu” journal from 1948-2020. As a result of this search, she illustrates good practices presented by teachers. She stresses that the reason why works by both poets are of value to teachers is expressed not so much by the fact that they wish to get to know, ex-

perience and interpret them together with their children (although there is no shortage of such motivation), but by the fact that they are tools for achieving other educational goals. As the author's analysis shows, the useful character of these works also manifests itself in the fact their being used in various situations. One might even say that it will always be possible to find a poem by either poet that is suitable for the situation, topic or task to be accomplished. In the final part of the study, the author presents traps that people working with pre-school children fall into, such as ignoring significant facts, infantilising, instructing, and perpetuating stereotypes.

The summary draws attention to the presence of both poets in public space in the form of street names, and monuments to them, as well as monuments to characters they created, such as two monuments to the beetle in *Szczebrzeszyn*. Both poets, like the characters they invented, are also patrons of schools and kindergartens. In conclusion, the author returns to the role of the book, the literary text, highlighting how important it is for teachers at all levels of education, from the earliest stages of education, to be able to show children and young people that encountering a literary work is an unhurried activity, leading to "the reader's self-development". Acquainting oneself with a literary work or a poem is also a process of immersing oneself in reading, discovering in one's own way and for oneself its meanings, it is fun with reading and interpreting.

Translated by Rob Pagett