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The modernizing Jewish family as a negative role model in Polish popular novels at the turn of 19th and 20th century

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Abstract: In Poland at the turn of 19th and 20th century a modernizing Jewish family appears quite frequently in anti-Semitic and non-anti-Semitic "Jewish novels". In both cases a Jewish family is presented in rather pejorative light as a point of reference to a Polish family. In such comparison Polish culture and Poles are presented as a more attractive, more civilized and that is why their way of living is followed by the Jews. Jewish families try to undergo the process of assimilation but their effort are depicted in rather pejorative or even ridiculous way.

There are some Jewish heroes presented as a role model, but they only prove the role. There is a huge gap between Poles and Jews who have to make an effort to change their personality and behaviour according to Polish expectations.

In anti-Semitic novels a description of the process of modernization and assimilation of Jews had to prove its negative consequences. Jews were treated as enemies and novels' plot revealed their main goal – the conquest of Poland. This kind of writing can be also seen as a warning against mix marriages to prevent Polish society from the integration with Jews, who are presented as the main threat of homogeneity of Polish nation.

After the January Uprising

In the early 1860s the Kingdom of Poland saw a number of changes relevant not only for Poles but also for Jews. However, social and ideological transformations within the Jewish community had begun earlier.[1] As Marcin Wodziński writes, in the 1840s among young followers of the Haskalah, the liberal bourgeoisie and Jewish intelligentsia a new formation emerged, gradually gaining dominance over other currents of modernization among Polish Jews.[2] It advocated progressive social and cultural integration with the Polish nation while maintaining religious separation. Its development flourished

[1] See Eisenbach 1972: 306–325; Cała 1989: 33–86.
[2] See Wodziński 2003: 157. Also Jagodzińska 2008: 35–41.

in the years preceding the outbreak of the January Uprising in 1863. In Warsaw's progressive synagogues, Izaak Kramsztyk and Marcus Jastrow emphasized the duty of patriotism and solidarity with Poles.[3] They were supported in promoting these ideas by the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw, Ber Meisels. Their appeals provoked a lively response from the Jewish community, which participated in patriotic demonstrations not only in Warsaw but also in other cities of the Polish Kingdom.[4] These efforts were received kindly by Poles, who began to call Jews their "brothers" or "Jewish Poles." Thus, as noted by Agnieszka Jagodzińska, the second condition of national identity was fulfilled: integrationists perceived themselves as Poles, and so were they seen by the Poles.[5]

The failure of the January Uprising and repressions against the Polish Kingdom set new challenges for Polish people. Among the groups competing on the ideological scene, the central place was taken by the positivists, who based their views on Herbert Spencer's organicism and John Stewart Mill's utilitarianism. In journalism and literature (which were closely related to the former), positivists indicated the source of social problems and sought methods for solving them.[6] New legal regulations – the enfranchisement of peasants and equal rights for Jews – and the progressive women's emancipation movement demanded the attention of those who saw themselves as reformers of the Polish society. The Jewish question was strongly emphasized, appearing in the works of the most prominent writers of the positivist era: Bolesław Prus, Aleksander Świętochowski and Maria Konopnicka, and most vividly in the works of Eliza Orzeszkowa.[7] The author addressed this question not only in her article "On Jews and the Jewish Question" (1882), but also in a number of texts which viewed the Jewish world from an inside perspective.[8] Her desire was not only to gain the broadest possible knowledge of the history and religion of Jews, but also, first and foremost, to educate Poles and refute anti-Jewish stereotypes. Undoubtedly, the perspective of the author of *Meir Ezofovich* was consistent with the views of Samuel Peltyn, editor of *Israelite* (*Izraelita*), a magazine of the integrationist group, with whom the writer exchanged many letters and followed his advice.[9]

[3] Sermons were delivered in Polish. Kramsztyk and Jastrow were arrested and imprisoned for their activity. Then, Kramsztyk was sent to exile far into Russia, while Jastrow, as a Prussian subject, was deported. After the January Uprising, Jewish insurrectionists were sent to Siberia. More about Izaak Kramsztyk and Marcus Jastrow, see Galas 2007; Wodziński 2003: 161–164; Jagodzińska 2008: 45–58.

[4] See Eisenbach, Fajnhauz, Wein 1963: 331.

[5] Jagodzińska 2008: 51.

[6] About Polish positivism see Safran 2000: 72–75; Weeks 2006: 51–65.

[7] The Jewish issue appeared in her writings early, first in the novel *Eli Makower* (1874), then in the most important novels devoted to Polish-Jewish relations, *Meir Ezofovich* (1878), and *Mirtala* (1886), as well as in many of her shortstories. More about the Jewish issue in Orzeszkowa's writings see: Safran 2000: 63–107; Friedrich 2008: 66–81; Friedrich 2009: 75.

[8] As Grażyna Borkowska writes, in her striving for the most complete understanding, Orzeszkowa placed herself inside and outside of the discussed issue (see Borkowska 2004: 144). Moreover, as Władysław Panas noted, Orzeszkowa's novel transcends its historical period and the author's personal limitations. It is possible that *Meir Ezofovich* is the only novel of its time to attempt to capture the complex religious processes among Jews in Lithuania during the 19th century (Panas 1996: 39).

[9] About *Izraelita* see: Kołodziejska 2014.

Meir means "light"

The eponymous Meir Ezofovich, born into a family known for their involvement in the Polish-Jewish dialogue, is a young man who wants to break free from the influence of strict orthodoxy. Orzeszkowa gave him a name meaning "light" and provided him with a thirst for knowledge, not only secular but also religious. Not without reason, the signs marking the path of his quest are *Guide for the Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides, and the testament of his great-grandfather Hersh Ezofovich, in which the author herself presented her own views on the modernization of Jews. In this way, the religious transformation is rooted in the Judaic tradition, while the socially embedded one is placed in the context of the debate on the reform of Polish Jews from the Enlightenment era. Under the assumptions of Polish positivism, Orzeszkowa advocated the progressive integration (of Jews) with the Polish people and the polonisation of (their) language, while maintaining the Jewish identity based on reformed Judaism. Following the widespread prejudice, she thought the Talmud to be a source of evil and thus stressed the need for changes in its interpretation consistent with the development of civilization. Criticizing the teaching in *cheders*, she stressed the importance of secular education for the formation of egalitarian attitudes, and the development of the individual and its place in society. As a Polish writer maintaining respect for Jewish tradition, she recognized the supremacy of the culture and interests of Poland – the homeland of both Poles and Jews.[10]

She rejected, however, ostensible assimilation; thus, in *Meir Ezofovich* she gives us the Witebski family, a negative model of modernization. The writer recognized external signs of change – such as the modification of dress or hairstyle, sending children to schools focusing only on superficial education (i.e. boarding schools), indifference to the backwardness of fellow Jews – as a phenomenon worse than the continuance of the tradition which provided an individual with moral support. This type of transformation, resulting from selfish motives, would later dominate the works of Polish authors of the "*minorum gentium*" of the late nineteenth century.

Mixed marriages in 19th-century popular fiction

As noted by Eugenia Prokop-Janiec:

> In popular fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the issue of Jewish emancipation and assimilation radically changes its status: moving from the realm of ideological projects to the area of contemporary social problems. The blurring of cultural differences – polonizing the language, names, the acquisition of Polish customs and lifestyle, accepting religion – all this becomes one of the subjects of the popular environmental "Jewish novel."[11]

[10] For a Polonocentric perspective on Orzeszkowa's writings, see: Philips 1995: 70, 90.
[11] Prokop-Janiec 2004: 217.

Jewish protagonists appear in the literary canon, like in *The Doll* by Bolesław Prus, and also in numerous popular novels, where they are presented from an anti-Semitic perspective (Artur Gruszecki, Antoni Skrzynecki, Kazimierz Laskowski, Józef Weyssenhoff). Moreover, there are cases in which Jewish characters are described from a seemingly neutral, yet still Polonocentric point of view (Marian Gawalewicz, Wincenty Łoś, Michał Bałucki). The aim of anti-Semitic novels is to show Jews as worthy of disgust, strange and incompatible with the Polish society. In the texts that are seemingly neutral, integration with the Polish society is possible, but only on an exceptional basis. Thus, in each case the hermeticism of Polish society dominates. Despite its apparent openness to strangers, it remains closed to them.

In the popular fiction of the nineteenth century, issues connected with the new social phenomena, radical assimilation or acculturation and the theme of mixed marriages, play an important role and show he processes of modernization. Infrequent but visible "*matrimoniae mixta*" (marriages between names of the old gentry and the rich Warsaw bourgeoisie were widely reported in the press and aroused public interest). Novels about the high life with themes of romance satisfied the curiosity of readers, offering them a glance of a world inaccessible to them.[12] However, missing from the image of social groups outlined in these texts were the rich reality of life and complexity of the phenomenon.

In the anti-Semitic novels, the plot is subordinated to a clear ideological thesis. In the works not driven by anti-Semitism, the narrators' Poland-centric perspectives render the aspirations of the Jewish families comical at best. The confrontations between Polish and Jewish characters accentuate this comical element while emphasizing the superiority of Polish culture and lifestyle.[13] Thus, when deconstructed, the Jewish novel written by Poles says more about the self-awareness of the Polish than that of the Jews.[14] Attempts to penetrate the mentality of Jewish communities are usually superficial, leading to the weaving of all kinds of fantasy. In both types of writings Jewish characters, observed from an outsider's perspective and deprived of all cultural background, had to earn the right of entry into the civilization, one considered superior and, more importantly, derived from Western Europe. In novels with no anti-Semitic agenda, however, this path, albeit arduous, remained open to them; in antisemitic novels such attempts ended in failure.

Marian Gawalewicz' novel *Mechesy* (*Baptised Jews*) features the Sandstein family as protagonists.[15] Although they had converted, both the omniscient narrator and other characters treat them as Jews, making their origins, and not their religion, the determinant of Jewishness. The source of their ridiculousness is the artificiality of their behavior resulting from a desire to disguise their origins. The harder their efforts, the more obvious it becomes. Absences from family gatherings, even those of the closest relatives, are discussed. No Jews are ever invited to the Sandstein home, and this lack draws attention. Although close family members are only admitted into the kitchen through the back

[12] Martuszewska, Pyszny 2003.

[13] For comparison of the comical depiction of the Jew in Russian literature, see Rosenhield 2009.

[14] See Hertz 1988: 78.

[15] Marian Gawalewicz (1852–1910) was a long-time journalist for the important Warsaw daily *Kurier Warszawski* and the weeklies *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Bluszcz*. He is also and the author of numerous dramas, short stories and novels.

door, the origins evident in their name is a public secret. The stigma is to be erased by the spectacular wedding of the son Bernard Sandstein to the impoverished countess Tola Zabiełowska. The failed marriage only confirms the distance between the two worlds. This gap manifests itself in the culture of everyday life, as the inappropriate behavior of the in-laws at the table, their lack of manners and *nouveau-riche* lifestyle are the qualities noticed through the eyes of the noblewoman.[16] Bernard Sandstein is aware of the social ostracism and the laws governing the world he enters. As the bearer of the stigma, he realizes that he must atone for his usurpation with his suffering.[17]

With heroic determination, he undertakes efforts in his father's factory to improve the working conditions and raise salaries. For this he risks his father's financial loss, thus proving the sincerity of his intentions and, in his opinion, undermining the negative stereotype of a Jew.[18] As a reward, the author allows him to connect with his wife, although condemning them to a solitary life in the countryside. According to Zygmunt Bauman, the hero of *Baptised Jews* may thus be an example of an alien caught in a trap with no way out. Sandstein knows that he can only earn public approval provided he admits that his past was shameful. He must also be aware that it will never be forgotten.[19]

Gawalewicz thus does open the door leading to Polishness to those seeking assimilation, but he does not spare criticism of the Poles; above all else, however, it is the Jews that must be transformed. They must not forget the stigma with which they were branded. Hence, in Gawalewicz's novel the greatest sympathy is directed to those Jews who do not deny their origins. The grandmother of the Feinguss family is one figure who retains the traditions. She has books on religion in her apartment and follows the principles of Judaism in her life, helping the poor. Thus, at her funeral, there are numerous poor people who, in contrast to her family, mourn her death.

The writer does, however, outline what he considers the proper way to radical assimilation. Regina, the niece of Eleanora Sandstein, is wedded to a surgeon with the Jewish-sounding name of Klugermann. The pattern presented by Gawalewicz amazes with its hybridity. In this configuration, the model of hiding convictions is reversed. As the Sandsteins want to hide their Jewish background, so the Klugermanns want to keep their leanings towards Catholicism secret, so as not to hurt the family. Celebrating Catholic traditions at home (such as Christmas), they prepare themselves and their children for a conscious act of conversion in the future.[20] Although *Baptised Jews* was not intended as an anti-Semitic novel, some aspects do push the limits. Bernard considers it absolutely normal when Regina responds to a friend expressing anti-Semitic beliefs by "suffocating with laughter and nodding as eagerly as the most dedicated anti-Semite."[21] Thus, just as

[16] Gawalewicz 1894, vol. 1: 348. The heroine of Gruszecki's anti-Semitic novel *Nawrócony* (1901) looks at the family of her husband in a similar way.

[17] The same motif is present in the anti-Semitic novel by Antoni Skrzynecki, *Potomek Wallensteina* (*Wallenstein's Descendant*) published in weekly installments in the first antisemitic weekly in the Polish Kingdom, *Rola* in 1903, where Stanisław Kon rejects his grandfather's fortune, earns his living as an engineer and converts to Christianity. More about Polish antisemitic novels published in *Rola* weekly: see Domagalska 2009: 59–66; 2015.

[18] More on the consequences of the stigmatization of an individual, see Goffman 2005.

[19] Bauman 1995: 106.

[20] See Gawalewicz 1894, vol. 2: 399.

[21] *Ibid*.: 400.

self-hatred is written in the fate of an assimilating Jew, so do unconscious forms of anti-Semitism exist in the perspective of the external narrative. Although Bernard Sandstein is – in the author's vision – a noble, tragic hero, he still remains the exception. Others, making desperate efforts to lose the stigma, are simply meant to be laughed at.

A similar type of evaluation is shown in Wincenty Łoś' novel *Zięciowie domu Kohn et Cie* (*Sons-in-law of the House of Cohn and Company*), in which the Polish nobleman Witold Łęcki falls in love with a banker's daughter, Maria Kohn.[22] Just as in the novel by Gawalewicz, the Kohn family had converted, but the parents of Maria are already a mixed couple. The mother is English, and the father a Jew by origin.

It is through the eyes of Łęcki that the reader sees the banker for the first time, at a ball in his palace. In the Pole's mind, the division into "our people" and strangers is immediately made.[23] The banker seems to him "less ridiculous than many others," but other guests "looked funny because their Semitic features, not mixed with any different type, gained more clarity."[24] The beauty of the daughters of Kohn is also subjected to evaluation. Maria – Łęcki's beloved – is beautiful because her face is not marked by Jewish features, while the second daughter is flawed in her Jewishness.[25] The Kohn family provokes disgust in the hero because "to too large an extent did they retain the qualities of their origin."[26] The blade of criticism also strikes those in the sphere of the *nouveau-riche*, who show off their wealth and extravagance, leading to their bankruptcy.[27]

From the perspective of the Polish hero, the bearer of positive values is Maria's mother, an Englishwoman whose manners, knowledge and tact are the object of his admiration. She deals with the upbringing of her daughters, providing them with an excellent education. She also maintains contacts with the traditional, poor family of her husband. Łęcki has a problem with evaluation of the banker's mother. On the one hand, the fact that she lives in her son's palace is evaluated positively, while on the other hand, in the eyes of Łęcki she looks strange in the surrounding splendor, "as if she has just arrived from a shabby shop."[28]

Thus, in the Poland-centric outlook of Łęcki, as well as in the narrative elements of aesthetics, anti-Semitism can be noticed. Jewishness is associated with ugliness, so Maria's beauty is defined as oriental.[29] Łęcki, as the embodiment of male beauty and the honor of a Polish nobleman, has the sympathy of both the narrator and the reader. His mother is another model of good taste and moral virtue. Overcoming internal resistance and accepting her son's choice is an act of nobility, not to say heroism, if her grandson is to be born with the taint of Jewishness. Only true love and the great mother's heart can lead to acceptance. In the final part of the novel, therefore, the ideal Łęcki family comes

[22] Wincenty Łoś (1857–1918), nobleman and the owner of the Dębniki property near Cracow, the author of many popular novels published in Warsaw and Lviv newspapers.

[23] See Łoś 1895, vol. 1: 63.

[24] *Ibid*.: 62.

[25] *Ibid*.: 118.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] The same motif appears in a different novel by Łoś 1897, *Ze Starżów Pani Appelstein*, the story of a noblewoman who saved her family from ruin by marrying an heir of a family of bankers, Bernard Appelstein.

[28] Łoś 1895, vol. 1: 118.

[29] Stanisław Kon (*Potomek Wallensteina*) is described in a similar way. More on orientalism as a form of an attempt to conceal Jewishness see: Prokop-Janiec 2005: 91–108.

to the forefront. Maria *née* Khon must accept this fact and recognize that fate has been kind to her, opening her a path to the world of higher values. Mariola Siennicka, historian of the customs of the Warsaw bourgeoisie, adds that such women: "by becoming wives, subordinate legally and financially to their husbands, entering new environment, usually had to adapt to the surrounding standards."[30] As to whether they were happy in this situation, this novel is silent.

From an Anti-Semitic perspective

Artur Gruszecki's dilogy proposes a different solution to a similar situation. Part one, with the significant title *Szachraje* (*The Duffers*), tells the story of Gottlieb Strauchfeld and his stock market machinations.[31] Speculating in shares on the Warsaw Stock Exchange, he becomes a millionaire while causing the financial ruin of many Poles, including the family of a noblewoman, Karolina Danborska. Her forced marriage to Strauchfeld's son Maurycy is the subject of part two, *Nawrócony* (*A Convert*).

The ideological basis of the novels is not only the aversion to the Jewish bourgeoisie, but also the fear of a capitalist economy based on the circulation of money. In economically backward Poland, where the economic activity is dominated by agricultural production, the gentry resisted trading in securities. The traditional opposition against commercial business met the fear, fueled by anti-Semitic writings, that Polish capital was in foreign hands.

The negative depiction of Gottlieb, the hero of *The Duffers*, is based on his lack of social ideals, dishonesty, and above all his avarice. His dishonest enterprises are supported by his wife and daughter, whose characters are shaped according to the negative model of the middle class, present in the writings of naturalist authors. However, in this case it is a kind of "selective naturalism," for the negative evaluation applies only to Jews. The figures of the Poles are shaped in an idealistic way. While the Jewish characters in the novels by Gawalewicz or Łoś are placed in the category of the ridiculous, here it is disgust that dominates. Although Gottlieb Strauchfeld is a handsome and elegant man, he nevertheless inspires disgust in the Polish female characters, who immediately wash their hands after being stained by his kiss. The physiognomy of his wife, with her "great rotten teeth" is repugnant not only for her daughter-in-law within the world of the novel. The main goal is to evoke feelings of disgust in the readership. The juxtaposition of Polish and Jewish heroines of the novel clearly situates the Polish women as higher in the social hierarchy, while the Jewish women are locked in an imaginary world of caste. Emphasizing the contrast between the poor but dignified nobility and the rich social climbers, Gruszecki dresses his Jewish heroines in clothes that are not only old, but also dirty. The taste and noble beauty of the Polish heroines, as well as their purity – both the

[30] Siennicka 1998: 37.

[31] Artur Gruszecki (1852–1929). He studied law at Lviv University, then philosophy at Jagiellonian University in Cracow. After finishing his studies he worked as a private teacher of history. In 1897 he began his cooperation with the weekly *Przegląd Tygodniowy* and he started to publish his short stories and novels. In 1883 he began working as an editor of the important literary weekly *Wędrowiec*.

external and the corresponding spiritual – are repeatedly emphasized. No wonder that Strauchfeld's appearance is accompanied by a smell. Although the banker does not look like a "gabardine Jew," Karolina says in a conversation with her mother, "Mom, I can really smell a Jew, and their smell is disgusting to me."[32]

In accordance with the principles of naturalistic description, the presentation of interiors is not neutral. The very description of Strauchfeld's apartment when compared with the lodgings of the Danborski noblewomen reveals the difference. Although the Strauchfelds are still Jews, in their house there are no objects related to Judaism. This can be evidence of the depreciation of Jewish culture or an indication of their indifference towards moral principles derived from religion.[33] The Danborski's modest flat is presented from Strauchfeld's perspective, thus evoking disdain and contempt in the visitor. The old furniture and paintings are of no interest; they are just worthless rubbish.[34]

While initially the banker's son Maurycy, an idealist and a lover of learning, has the reader's sympathy, in the second novel this situation is reversed. Perhaps the transformation is caused by the ideological thesis of the novel, as expressed by Maurycy: "the distinctive features of the race continue in a mix with another race for centuries."[35] Thus, in the course of the novel's development, the negative traits ascribed to Jewishness must be disclosed. Maurycy realizes his own ugliness, and he is watching the world around him from the position of the dominant culture. He behaves according to a principle described by Sander Gilman: "The more one attempts to identify with those who have labeled one as different, the more one accepts the values, social structures, and attitudes of this group, the farther away from true acceptability one seems to be." It leads Maurycy to believe that "the contradiction must be within me, since that which I wish to become cannot be flawed. Perhaps I am truly different, a parody of that which I wish to be."[36] As he interacts with his Polish wife and her family, the hero feels an increasingly strong aversion to himself. He wants to earn their approval but the harder he tries, the more he reinforces his own alienation. It must therefore be concluded that everything Jewish is repulsive. This belief is evident in a scene where he compares portraits of his wife and mother.[37] Maurycy carefully looks at the portrait of his wife so that her beautiful features are engraved in his memory, while the mother's face seems to him common. As her son, under the law of heredity, he is also a carrier of the defect (he is contaminated).

Thus, between the Polish and Jewish characters an insurmountable gulf appears. Unlike his parents, clearly defined and outlined, Maurycy Strauchfeld is a hybrid. He was cut off from the Jewish world, although according to the theory of race it still exists in his blood; he does not belong to the Polish world, either. Julia Kristeva writes, "an

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[32] Gruszecki 1899, vol. 1: 171. As Umberto Eco writes: the enemy always stinks and "The Jew has been described as monstrous and smelly since at least the birth of Christianity" (2011: 18).

[33] "We, Rózia, are not Jews anymore. We don't observe the Shabbat, the holidays, we eat everything every day…

His wife looked at him horrified and asked quickly:

– Libuś, do you want to be Catholic?

– No, Rózia, this is no business, I will die in my faith." Gruszecki 1899, vol. 2: 209.

[34] *Ibid*., vol. 1: 112.

[35] *Ibid*., vol. 2: 250.

[36] Gilman 1999: 2–3.

[37] See Gruszecki 1901: 67.

abomination is what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, places, rules. A certain in-between, ambiguous, mixed."[38] Therefore, Maurycy Strauchfeld must die for the order to be restored. In this act, the novel's ideology is revealed. Jews, even those accultured, do not cross the line if they retain Jewish identity. Those who do cross this boundary have no place, at least in the world of the novel.

Similarly, in novels by Kazimierz Laskowski[39] and Michał Bałucki[40] (who had initially created a positive image of Jews), the image of a modernizing Jewish family is decidedly negative. In Laskowski's *Zużyty* (*Outworn*) the protagonist is Antoni Czarski, a ruined nobleman seeking employment in the office of a banker named Werthauser. Laskowski renders his character as overly sensitive, but he also gives him a sense of dignity and honor, typical of the ethos of the nobility. Despite his emotional imbalance, the hero has the reader's sympathy, so his assessment of the banker should be reliable. The very physique of Werthauser signposts his race. His "plump, jellylike hand" points not only to his profession as a banker, but also to his dishonesty in business. His son's appearance clearly implies his inclination for embezzlement. Both this and the suggested lechery, so often attributed to the Jewish characters of anti-Semitic novels, is confirmed further in the book.[41] Closer view of the character occurs in the living room during dinner. At the table, as reported in Czarski's diary: "There were six Werthausers, several 'steins' and 'bergs,' and I even heard endings like ...ski and ...wicz."[42] The name endings designate origins – but Jewish ones also depreciate the people who carry them. Czarski's observations of the appearance of the guests and their discussion lead him to assessment. It does not go beyond the anti-Semitic stereotype identifying Jews with money. Thus, the difference between values – spiritual on the side of Poles and material amongst the Jews – is emphasized. Czarski observes: "A strange race, pushing everywhere, wedges into the trunk of society among which it lives, apparently fused, and in a cross-section it always differs from the surrounding tissue. Underneath the varnish of Aryan civilization, good manners, the Semite can always be spotted."[43]

The same idea guided Michał Bałucki in the creation of the Lipman family in his novel *Przeklęte pieniądze* (*Cursed Money*). The Lipman's apartment, divided into two parts, reflects their mentality: One, opulent, is for show; the other is for the family. It is in the latter that the family's real, "dirty" life occurs: their "dirty avarice" is visible. Here, the Lipmans, as the narrator states, "felt more themselves and at home."[44] The image is

[38] Kristeva 2008: 10.

[39] Kazimierz Laskowski (1861–1913). The nobleman and the owner of Podgaje. When he lost his land estate, he moved to Warsaw and started writing for the newspapers *Gazeta Warszawska*, *Kurier Polski*, and *Kurier Warszawski*. He wrote many short stories and novels, some for children and young readers.

[40] Michał Bałucki (1837–1901). He was born in Cracow into a family of craftsmen. His mother had Jewish origins. He studied at the Jagiellonian University, and worked as a private teacher for a long time. During the January Uprising he was arrested and accused of a conspiratorial activity. He was very popular as a writer of many comedies and novels. In 1901 he commited suicide.

[41] Laskowski 1895: 40.

[42] *Ibid*.: 54.

[43] *Ibid*.: 77.

[44] Bałucki 1899: 39.

completed by the traits of the characters, expressed through demeaning language. The banker's sister not only has a hooked nose but her wit smells of garlic and onions.[45]

The influence of the "Litvak issue"

Interestingly, the anti-Semitic perspective is changed by the appearance of what became known as the Litvak issue.[46] In 1911, Artur Gruszecki published the novel *Litwackie mrowie* (*The Litvaks' Lot*). The very title, like many of his earlier novels (such as *Bujne chwasty* / *Lush weed*) hints at its interpretation. The Jews in the book are portrayed as both negative and positive, and the omniscient narrator's overview of the Jews who settled in Warsaw changes here dramatically.[47] In the center of events, there are two families: that of Mojżesz Fiszkun, who had lived in Moscow until he was displaced, and a polonized family of Warsaw Jews named the Kleinbergs. Mojżesz Fiszkun and his circle despise the Poles and, in accordance with a conspiracy theory, assume that Poland is an area to be exploited by the Jews. They also believe feel that Russian should be the dominant language in the Polish territories annexed to Russia.

In terms of religion, the two families maintained the tradition of Judaism. However, while the Kleinbergs follow reformed Judaism, the Fiszkuns stick to a more orthodox version. In their thinking about the world, they follow the Talmud, which is presented as an enemy of Christianity. Not without significance for the readers' positive assessment of the Warsaw Jew is Fiszkun's allegation that Kleinberg is a "*kojfrym*": one who ignores the Talmudic rules.[48] Interestingly, the Fiszkun family are assigned features which had so far prevailed in the description of Jewish families in Gruszecki's other novels: arrogance, pride, lack of taste, a nouveau riche attitude and unscrupulous business conduct. This is followed by descriptions of the repulsive physiological features required to evoke the disgust characteristic of anti-Semitic discourse.[49] These features are not present in the Fiszkun children, Sonia and Sasza, who belong to the younger generation of idealists.[50] The Kleinbergs are described predominantly as having characteristics attributed

[45] However, in Bałucki's novel *The Jewess* published in 1870, he creates a touching portrait of the female Jewish protagonist, Regina, whose love for a Catholic man drives her to a decision to convert to Christianity. Although the novel was not free from anti-Jewish prejudice, the narrator's comments in particular convey an unambiguously humanistic message about the human right to respect for one's dignity.

[46] About Litvaks see: Guesner 1999: 73–80.

[47] The novel also addresses Zionism, treating it as fantasy. According to the anti-Semitic paradigm, it was the countries of the diaspora, especially Poland, that were the real "promised land" for Jews. The author also stressed the pogrom atmosphere in Moscow, while presenting Warsaw as a city open to Jewish settlement.

[48] Gruszecki 1911: 69.

[49] It can be fleshy lips symbolizing eroticism or greediness, protruding ears, a hooked nose, or filthiness. An example of describing Fiszkuns' relatives can be scene:

"'Simon, eat,' Fiszkun encouraged, 'we have just eaten supper and you are straight from the road.'

Markun swallowed loudly, moistening his fat fleshy lips with his tongue, and started eating with pleasure, picking the bones clean and licking his greasy fingers" (Gruszecki 1911: 32).

[50] Sasza is described as: "dark-haired, with a serious, focused face, a pretty, scrawny boy of eighteen" (27), Sonia is a slim, slender brunette with calm dark eyes (26). Both are empathetic, sensitive, well-mannered people.

to Poles, such as modesty, integrity, good taste, education, culture, and knowledge of social standards and foreign languages. The Kleinbergs do not butcher the Polish language, which is often a sign of alienation in anti-Semitic works. They embody the ideal model of a Jewish family involved in Polish affairs. On many levels of behavior, they declare the superiority of Polish culture and the values inscribed in the romantic paradigm, such as nobility and sacrifice. Their children also have traditional Polish names: Irena and Mieczysław. Differences are also evident on the level of family relationships. In the Kleinberg family, children have the right to express their views, while the young Fiszkuns are subordinate to the will of their parents: the daughter cannot refuse to marry a man chosen by her parents. The cultural gap between the families is revealed in scenes of confrontation. Given the earlier anti-Semitic works by Gruszecki, one can reflect on this novel's intended readership. Undoubtedly, the book was addressed to a Polish-speaking audience, but does that mean Poles or Jews? If Poles, it would demonstrate a positivist model of acculturation of the Jews, so criticized by the anti-Semitic writings (anti-Semitic press). However, if the book was written to be read by Polish-speaking Jews, its aim would be to demonstrate the ugliness of the Litvaks, in the domains of both culture and economy. Its task would be to exacerbate the antagonism between Jews living in the Polish Kingdom and those who came from Russia. However, there are no Poles in the novel who would recognize the Jews as their own. The two worlds of Jewish and Polish remain separate, and thus Gruszecki's reflections are only theoretical. His subsequent return to the anti-Semitic discourse confirms that his pro-Jewish sympathies were only temporary.

Conclusion

By analyzing the image of a modernizing Polish Jewish family in the popular novel, one cannot ignore its form. In most cases, they are full families consisting of parents and two children. The spouses lead stable and consistent lives. The wife takes care of the house, while the husband provides for the family. In Gawalewicz's *Baptised Jews*, Eleanora Sandstein is well-versed in her husband's business and often gives him advice, although, according to the custom, as a woman she pretends to know nothing.[51]

As for the Polish families, they are not full families. In Gruszecki's *A Convert*, Karolina Danborska's closest relatives are her mother and sister, and in Łoś' *Ze Starżów Pani Appelstein* (*Mrs. Appelstein of the Starża Family*) it is the same. Tola Zabiełowska in *Baptised Jews* is an orphan. This incompleteness is probably connected to the patriarchal family model. Polish women deprived of a man's care are doomed to an unwanted marriage to a Jew.[52] Any father who would allow such a marriage would be a negative model, devoid of paternal decision-making power.

[51] See Gawalewicz 1894, vol 1: 143. Sandstein treated his wife as a business partner and he did not make any decisions without her.

[52] This trope is also repeated in Łoś's novel *Ze Starżów Pani Appelstein*. The lack of man's support shaped the model of a Polish women as a martyr who sacrifices herself in in order to save her relatives from poverty. She represents the model of evangelical love, because she sacrifices her own happiness for the sake of others and bears her suffering in silence. The definition after: Starczewska 1975: 37, 47.

An incomplete assimilated Jewish family appears in a new type of anti-Semitic novel after the revolution of 1905. In *Hetmani* (*The Hetmans*) by Józef Weyssenhoff,[53] father and daughter form a harmonious duo, acting for international Jewish interests, in accordance with a conspiracy theory of history.[54] The character of Hela Latzka is a blend of the stereotype of a "beautiful Jewess" and the modernist model of the femme fatale. Following her father's orders and using her erotic charms, she seduces a naive Polish hero in order to make him an unwitting instrument of Jewish-German politics. The fight to save his soul from the demonic Jewess is undertaken by an honorable Polish woman, vestal-like and devoid of sensuality. The hero, led to temptation, must make the right choice and demonstrate the integrity of a Polish nobleman by conquering his own desires. He must start a family which, in accordance with the principles of nationalism, will uphold the homogeneity of the Polish nation.

By way of summary, it can be concluded that the portrayal of a Jewish family in the Polish popular literature of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries diverged far from the truth. Although the works of this period describe the phenomenon of acculturation and assimilation, it was treated in accordance with the Poland-centric perspectives of the authors and narrators. Distortions were common in this approach, and the popular literature served as a magic mirror for those Poles seeking confirmation of their uniqueness. It depicted the superiority of Polish culture, depreciating all others, It was compensation for a nation that was not independent at the time. It outlined the boundaries and set up the bar high for those who were willing to overcome it. Assimilated Jews and their families often appeared in an aura of ridiculousness. It opened the door to those who were persistent, but, as guardian of the homogeneity of the nation, it pointed them to a secluded (separate) place where they were meant to stay.

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[53] Józef Weyssenhoff (1860–1932), the nobleman, studied law in Dorpat. In 1885 he married the daughter of Jan Bloch, a Warsaw banker of Jewish origin. For many reasons Bloch was frequently attacked by anti-Semitic magazines such as *Rola*, edited by Jan Jeleński. Weyssenhoff published his articles in many newspapers such as *Tygodnik Polski* and *Kurier Warszawski*. After 1905 he aligned himself with the National Democracy Party and wrote some tendency novels. He was a very popular writer and an activist in the field of culture.

[54] Weyssenhoff 1911.

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