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THE JEWISH STEREOTYPE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION OF THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

Issues concerning the mutual relations between Poles and Jews continue to stir emotions, as can be seen in the increasing number of publications, among which there are constantly recurring attempts at characterizing the ways of perceiving members of the Jewish faith throughout history. The following considerations, while remaining part of this strand, focus on the conscious construction of images of followers of Judaism, especially among young people. Those are the very *pictures in our heads* that Walter Lippman, considered the precursor of the modern understanding of stereotypes, wrote about [Lippmann 1922: 5; Gostkowski 1959; Chlewiński 1992].

The social dimension of the stereotype refers to a specific group - in our case the Jews. However, it should be remembered that it was formed and endorsed by a specific community [Ossowski 1967: 39; Wilska-Duszyńska 1971]. The aim of the hereby text is to approximate the mechanisms of creating such a simplified, limited to several distinctive features and emotional image [Macrea, Stangor, Hewstone 1999: 16], used in Jesuit educational establishments before the outbreak of the Second World War.

It is worth to remember that in Polish history the twenty-year interwar period is a time of increasingly severe divisions between ethnic and religious groups. The strongest antagonisms emerged especially in contacts between the Polish and Jewish populations. Their extreme nationalist and fascist radicalization took place with the active involvement of members of the catholic clergy who had a long tradition of fighting Judaism [Żarnowski 2005: 632-634]. A significant and sadly shameful role in this process was played by the Society of Jesus, whose printing houses were famous for popularizing anti-Semitic literature, especially in the times of the Saxon rulers in Poland [Rok 1999: 163-174]. Initially this role concerned matters of religion [Kalik 2000: 88], however, it soon took on a distinctly anti-Jewish character. In December

1880 the Jesuit periodical “La Civiltà Cattolica,” published through initiative of Pope Pius IX, began printing regular installments of a rabidly anti-Semitic character, which must have been effective in shaping public opinion. The Polish nationalist movement, which became active around this time, considered the Jewish issue to be of fundamental importance [Kertzer 2005: 287].

Of special importance for the hereby considerations is the fact that unsympathetic and sometimes hostile views of Jews were sometimes propagated among school-age youth. An interesting example can be found at the *Collegium Nobilium* in Warsaw. Students’ of that institution, preparing to take over the highest positions in the state, delivered series of speeches concerning the plans of expelling Jews from Poland [Bohomolec 1759]. The participants, appearing at the college lecture hall, enacted a debate on the following topic: *Jeżeli Żydów mamy cierpieć w Polsce* (If Jews need to be endured in Poland). They delivered speeches *Against Jews* (6 speeches) and *In Favour of Jews* (4 speeches). The opposing side used unrefined brutal insults, resembling the language used in an anonymous brochure published by the Jesuits, entitled *Sekret żydowskiej przewrotności wyjawiony i światu polskiemu w przestrodze wielce pożyteczny pokazany* (The Secret of Jewish Perversity Revealed and Shown to the Polish World as a Word of Useful Caution). It depicts typical Jews as “Perverse, bloody, rabid, fierce and the most antagonistic towards the name of Christ our Lord as well as to the entire Christian nation” [Rok 1999: 169]. On the other hand, those in favor of the Jews remaining in the Polish Commonwealth used arguments based on rational, mostly economic and demographic conditions. Though far from humanitarian values and tolerance, these arguments constituted a specific and isolated instance of progress in the order's approach to the Jewish issue [Kryda 1979: 133-139]. However, Szymon Majchrowicz soon started calling upon fellow countrymen to disregard any profit and finally solve the Jewish problem [Majchrowicz 1764].

The suppression of the Society of Jesus significantly weakened its influence on the Polish populace. In the mid-19th century the Jesuits, not long ago a potentate in the realm of education, ran only one school in Galicia – a college in Tarnopol. In 1886 it was moved to Chyrow, though this location was considered a disadvantage, due to “uncertain

environment and surroundings”[Dunin] which meant the multinational composition of the local population. Chyrow, as most towns in the Eastern Borderlands was inhabited by Ukrainians, Poles and most of all by Jews [Sulmierski 1880: 669; "Przegląd Chyrowski", 163 (1933)]. Thirty five years later the order established another educational institution in Vilnius, and just before the Second World War a Jesuit gymnasium was founded in Gdynia, though it did not develop to the planned extent [E.Z. 1935-1938: 337-339]. These schools, according to the guidelines issued by the founder of the order, Ignatius of Loyola, were meant to educate the elites, in order to influence the whole society by their means. Their objective was to “tutor and mentally shape those who would in the future be worthy and useful members of families, the motherland and the Church” [*Ustawy i przepisy...1896: 3; Przepisy uczniów...*, p. 3; *Konwikt Chyrowski...1928: 47*], “to give the youth a foundation of complete cultural development, to prepare it for active participation in the life of the state-organized society” [*Statut Prywatnego Męskiego Gimnazjum...2000: 494*]. The Scientific and Educational Department of the Jesuit Fathers in Bakowice, near Chyrow, an exclusive establishment gathering students who were to become leaders of the country’s political, economic and cultural life [*Ustawy i przepisy...1896: 3; Przepisy uczniów...*, p. 3; Włodarczyk 1967:169; *Program Zakładu...1907*], offered particularly suitable conditions to fulfill this objective. This gymnasium, relating to the experiences of the *Collegium Nobilium* was considered one of the best schools of this type in Poland and referred to as the Polish Eton [Nowaczyński 1936].

During the 53 years of functioning of the Galician establishment, and the 19 years of functioning of the school in Vilnius, the teachers of the Society saw to the education of around ten thousand boys [Cybulski 2000: 67; Niemiec 1998: 153-162]. It was for them that the authorities of the order insisted on maintaining a very high level of teaching, content-based and methodical preparation of the teaching staff, and the state of didactic aids. Both institutions respected the realization of program guidelines issued by the contemporary ministry of education. The schools made efforts to achieve state eligibility [Włodarczyk 1967: 165-166], and because of frequent inspections by the kuratorium (board of education) no political or social comments were allowed to be made

during classes. However, it needs to be mentioned that in order to propagate attitudes and viewpoints among the youth the Jesuits made extensive use of after school periods.

Among the highlights in the history of the institutions discussed here was the theatre, in accordance with the *scholae et pietas* principle, as in the beginning of the Society of Jesus [Yanitelli 1952: 135-136; Poplatek 1957: 17]. The repertoire of the school theatres was the responsibility of their contemporary directors. Texts of plays meant to be staged were to draw no objections from state censorship [Szydłowska 1995: 17-52]. They should comply with the educational standards, and at the same time remain connected with the occasion for staging, through subject and evoked impressions. The uplifting story was meant to improve mores, and the audience was not to witness any inappropriate thread [see: Puchowska 2003: 67-72]. It should be added that the notion of appropriateness concerned especially male-female relationships.

Among the plays staged in front of audiences in Jesuit schools the majority were comedies, which remains in accordance with the opinion of theatre historian Karol Estreicher, who believed that stage plays should be "moral, mirthful but not impish. They should entertain, not spread moral degradation or perverted principles against the harmony of national classes and ideas. The plays would have to be suitable for the clergy and schools to encourage audiences" [Estreicher 1900: 9; Wosiek 1975: 13]. Comedy repertoire was recommended for amateur theatre troupes [Rapacki 1890: 57-60; Gawalewicz 1883; Przybylski 1908: 9]. It was stated that although these pieces were mainly to entertain "they were not devoid of the thought to shape and morally educate the general public, broadening its mental horizons, developing the noble aspects of human nature." [Bielawska 1996: 73]

Analyses of the school repertoire indicate that for the Jesuits "developing the noble aspects of human nature" also took place through considerations of the Jewish issue [see: Kadulska 1993: 95-96, 229]. An entire collection of comedies and monologues in which the protagonist is a Jew was started with monodramas and monologues. The first original staging was presented by Gustaw Fiszer, residing in Chyrow in 1889. Fiszer was a distinguished comedy actor of the Lvov theatre, the creator of "independent stage characters based on a dramatic character derived from the theatrical world of the earlier encountered drama."

[*Pamiętnik...1903*: 32; Ciechowicz 1984: 150; *Słownik biograficzny...1973*: 168-169]. *Josel Rajszower-afiszjer* (Josel Rajszower - the Poster), *Babcia Perlmutter* (Grandmother Perlmutter) and *Pan Silberstein* (Mr. Silberstein) [Manuscript APPP 1172-III 28, 34; *Pamiętnik...1903*: 239-240, 244] depicted a very superficial and stereotypical portrayal of the Israeli. The question whether Fiszer's artistic program was negotiated earlier with the school authorities remains open.

In many of the spectacles staged in Chyrow the Jew was a minor character, such as Lejba Friedman, a monger in *Nieszczęsny frak* (The Wretched Coat) [Manuscript APPP 1172-III 178; "Kwartalnik Chyrowski", 74 (1912)], a three-act comedy with couplets. However, in most cases the adventures of the Jewish character were the audience's main attraction. In December 1905 spectators were entertained by the comedy *Ukarana chciwość* (Punished Greed), with characters of Mosiek Kostman and his sons Szmulek and Lejba [Manuscript APPP 1172-III 86; "Z Chyrowa", 51 (1906)]. On 15th November 1908 the audience in Chyrow saw the performance of *Oberżysta polityk* (The Politician Inn-Keeper), a one-act comedy in two scenes. The school chronicle later mentioned that "Szmul, along with the silversmiths and type-setters entertained us greatly" [„Z Chyrowa”, 62 (1909)]. Three years later, on 19th March the audience laughed at the performance of *Przezorny Żyd* (The Cautious Jew) by Solbrig, staged by students of the seventh and eighth grades [Manuscript APPP 1172-III 168; „Z Chyrowa”, 72 (1911)].

In the period of the Second Republic the stage at Chyrow often saw the return to earlier staged Jewish farces and comedies. Władysław Feldman writes of them "The portrayal of the Jew served here primarily to evoke laughter, good-hearted true mirth, characteristic of the gentry" [Feldman 1905: 238-239]. This opinion, however, can hardly be extended to the play *Żyd w beczce* (The Jew in the Barrel), a vaudeville by Aleksander Ladnowski. It was probably very much enjoyed by the audience for it was staged four times ["Kwartalnik Chyrowski", 111 (1922); "Przegląd Chyrowski", 125 (1925), 143 (1929), 159 (1932)].

Fortunately the Chyrow copy of Ladnowski's text survived the war¹. Thanks to it we know that the young actors, playing the characters of the old cooper Maciej, his son Marcin, and Jozef, a journeyman, addressed the title character Salomon and another Jew in the following manner: "you scum, swindler, kacap, you crummy Jew" thus broadening the arsenal of invectives used for centuries. The spectators were also taught the value of honest labor. The poor but overworked Jozek argued with Salomon:

- "You damned shylock! You think that you are better than me because you are rich. I have little, but all of it earned through honest work - and you earned everything through swindles". He also sang

„Żem ja biedak przy robocie,
Czyż to jakiś wstyd?
Ty zaś, chociaż liczysz krocie,
Zawsześ szachraj Żyd!
Choć ja trzęsę łachmanami
Każdy czci mój stan.
Ty, choć liczysz tysiącami,
Szachraj a nie pan!”

The song contrasted with another one, sang by Icek, which was to reveal the alleged parasitic character of Jews:

„Czy jest na świecie gdzie taki kraj, jak ten tu nasz? Aj waj waj!
Całkiem takiego nie ma! – Jest Palestyna, Jerozolima,
Lecz w polskiej niewoli żyd siedzieć woli.
Tu Izraele z pomocą bożą żyją wygodnie i nic się nie trwożą –
Tu spacerują z pejsy, gupice, swój mają kahał, rabiny, bóżnice.
Nie sieją łan, ni zbierać potrzebują –
Tu Izrael pan, tu goje nań pracują!
Tu czysty raj, ten polski kraj, aj waj waj!”

The action of the play, in which a simple peasant unwisely borrows money from a Jew and has to return his manifold debt, but thanks to his

¹ *Żyd w becze*, Biblioteka Teatru Zakładu O.O. Jezuitów Chyrów, 129, copy 2. Archives of the Library of the Department of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus in Krakow, manuscript, no signature.

cunningness regains his financial papers from the dishonest money-lender and drives him out of the village, ends in a warning addressed to the Jews:

“You scum, ulcers on our body! Now get out. (...) Yes, you manges, you will all run, just wait till we join forces against you!”

The audience's laughter after the curtain fall was no longer kind hearted, as Feldman had expected, but ominous. What is more, after many years the issue of expelling the Jews, once taken up by students belonging to Enlightenment era nobility, was back.

Equally anti-Semitic overtones appear in another preserved text - a farce entitled *Cudowny rabin z Sadogóry* ([The Wonderful Rabbi from Sadogóra). Its author, a long-time director of the stage at Chyrowo, father Aleksander Piątkiewicz was perfectly aware that the theatre is a medium of great influence. Especially when a young person or child is sitting among the audience, watching a character played by a classmate. In 1919 he wrote “Stage performances of good plays (...) are not only necessary, but they are also one of the best means of achieving a positive effect on both actors and spectators” [Piątkiewicz 1919/1920].

Cudowny rabin z Sadogóry was performed five times by students in Chyrow [Pamiętnik ...1903: 292; "Z Chyrowa", 38 (1903); "Kwartalnik Chyrowski", 78 (1913), 111 (1922); "Przegląd Chyrowski", 165 (1933), 183 (1937)]. The play ridiculed the faith of the Jewish community in the supernatural abilities of its Rabbi, Baruch Wunderman. A pathetic gallery of Jewish characters was presented before the audience in Chyrow - characters who were cowardly, superstitious, scheming, stupid, and who valued wealth over all else. The language of the dialogues was not limited to ridiculing the specific pronunciation of Polish words by Jews. The title character, here also labeled with various epithets, of which “onion-peddler” is the lightest one, is asked by Jankiel, the inn-keeper, to resurrect his son, and for a considerable amount of money he agrees. In fact the son only feigns death in order to avoid military service. The dialogues between the Rabbi and the inn-keeper are to reveal the most characteristic Jewish traits. Thus, faced with the death of his son, Jankiel bargains for the life of his only-child, trying to lower the price for his resurrection:

“Ay, what do should give? What capital? I am poor. A few bottles of counterfeit vodka, that’s all my capital. What do you want? I’m a deadbeat.”

Eventually the Rabbi, derided and humiliated Falls victim to his own greed and cunning, and the final scene ends with the moral: “Do not cheat others or they will cheat you even more. There will be an end to your evil ways!”. This is spoken by Jankiel, which sounds all the more comical since he too was far from being honest².

Stage plays with a Jewish protagonist, though hardly refined, were always entertaining for the young audience. However, adding to the zest was the fact that the audience was not unified in terms of nationality and religion. Among students of this ultra-Catholic school were also boys of Jewish faith. These were the external studies students, citizens of Chyrow, a town populated mostly by Jews. No one found this strange, no one persecuted them, no one forbade them to do it. They did not take part in the daily church services; they only took the opportunity to receive an education [Garliński 1992: 56].

Today we cannot say beyond any doubt whether the plays discussed above were also staged at the Jesuit theatre in Vilnius. Sources concerning the history of that theatre are scarce. We do know, however, that students from Vilnius staged many of the plays which were also staged in Chyrow. What is more, the same professors lectured in both institutions and several of them held the functions of theatre directors in both schools successively [Houwalt 2000: 357-389; *Encyklopedia* ...1996]. It is possible that, in accordance with the one-time custom of the Society, dramatic texts would travel along with the teachers. We should also remember that in a city as large as Vilnius, unlike the provincial Chyrow, school authorities were very particular about politically correct behavior among their students, and condemned any activities violating the equality of nations and religions, guaranteed by law. A recollection by Zygmunt Kęstowicz, an outstanding figure of the Polish theatre and an important member of the Jesuit school theatre in

² A. Piątkiewicz, *Cudowny rabin (heca in one act)*. Biblioteka Teatru Zakładu O.O. Jezuitów Chyrów, 3, copy 2. Archives of the Library of the Department of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus in Krakow, manuscript. R-82.

Vilnius, is very interesting in this context: “(...) we were awoken by an incredible noise: strange screaming and singing in a foreign, yet somehow familiar language ... we jumped out of beds and opened the windows ... A great crowd of starozakonni (lit. of the old-order, meaning Jews) surged through the whole length and width of Wielka street! From Subocz to Niemiecka street, all the way from the Casino to the Wir cinemas ... right below us a canopy of sorts, and all of it together turning into Hetmanska street ... A perfect opportunity! Each of us had a basin full of water next to his bed, for our morning “ablution”! ... The first to make use of it was “Helka” Ledochowski, nephew of the General of Jesuits, and slush! - the whole basin of water straight onto the canopy! ... and all followed his example ... slush! ... - the remaining basins of the entire floor (...)”[Kęstowicz 2000: 283-284]. The incident described here probably coincided with anti-Semitic riots at the Vilnius University. The kuratorium (board of education) later wrote of the involvement of gymnasium students: “Excesses were rare, however some tension and incidents undoubtedly occurred, resulting from clashing influences of parents, the press and the street, etc.” [Dziennik Urzędowy...1938: 3]. It should be added that the young Ledochowski, in spite of family connections, received severe punishment - he was expelled from the school.

The ambitions of Jesuit teachers were not limited to exhorting educational influence on the young theatre audiences, i.e. first groups of spectators, actors and their schoolmates. Parents of students, comprising the country’s political and intellectual elite, people of considerable social and financial status, were also frequently present among the audience. The performances they saw worked mostly as advertisements confirming the schools’ reputation, however, a properly selected theatrical play and dialogues spoken by their beloved sons created an opportunity to pass important advice onto adults. Thus, the school theatre became a second pulpit [compare: Poplatek 1957: 15-16; Kadulska 1985: 101-105].

The effects of the theatrical play do not end with the fall of the curtain. Emotions evoked at the theatre are moments “that are always remembered, they are not laid to waste, often after many years (...) they will be remembered in times of hardship, at crossroads, they will elevate, relieve pain and often return one from a path of immorality”

[Piątkiewicz 1919/1920]. This was well known to Jesuit school authorities which is why they spared no expense on preserving information about spectacles. Posters were printed and special programs were distributed to the dignified public. The scope of the stage was effectively broadened by reviews in school newspapers, sent in large numbers to subscribers. They reached parents and graduates spread all around the world. The written word memorialized performances, spread information about them but also provided adult readers with standards of repertoire choice, and indicated interpretation keys. A reader of the school gazette, interested in the developments of the theatrical scene, found in it numerous texts and reviews, which confirmed him in his beliefs. The aim of these periodicals was to maintain the spirit of religious, national and social ideals, taught within school walls.

Gymnasium students, reading gazettes circulating in Chyrow and Vilnius, could easily find in them interpretations of the message conveyed in such plays as *Żyd w becze* or *Cudowny rabin*. An anonymous author began with numbering the three "worst elements":

"The Jew - a landlord, the Jew - a friend, and Jewish vodka"
after which he advised:

„Kto zmuszon dług zaciągnąć, Żyda nie omija:
Dobrobyt swój i spokój na zawsze zabija.

Nie bierz Żyda pachciarza do obory swojej,
Bo on nie krowy twoje, lecz ciebie wydoi.

Gdy sprzedajesz Żydowi konia, cielę, zboże:
Nie czujesz, że sam siebie sprzedałeś w tej porze.

Nie będziesz z Żydem wchodził w handle i konszachty:
Zje Żyd chaty, jak połknął nie jeden dwór szlachty.

Nie kupuj nic u Żyda, najszczęsza to rada:
Kto u Żydów kupuje sam siebie okrada.”

As we can see, in spite of recommendations issued by the ministry and kuratorium, expressing an aspiration that "in accordance with the principles voiced in the Constitution, the school should be an environment of consensual coexistence regardless of differences in

matters of nationality, religion (...) [Dziennik Urzędowy...1927: 229], anti-Semitic teachings found ardent followers. One such case must have been the author of the article entitled *Patriotyzm polskiego ucznia* (Patriotism of the Polish Student), hiding under the initial "B". He writes:

"Nearly all of our patriotism is expressed in skirmishes with Jews, which does not in any case stop us from fattening those who are the worst enemies of the state, through buying from them everything, from pins to the worst demoralizing books"³.

In order for young readers to be certain which books would not threaten their morality school gazettes included columns dedicated to recommended novelties. In 1921 Jesuit school students were encouraged to read an anonymous brochure entitled *My a żydzi* (Us and the Jews). A year later the publication of two books by father Józef Kruszynski: *Dążenia Żydów* (Aspirations of Jews) and *Polityka żydowska* (Jewish Politics) was announced. Two years later - the appearance of *Odżydzenie miast i miasteczek* (Jew-free Cities and Towns) by B. Wasiutynski, and *W szponach sfinksa, sprawa żydowska* (In the Claws of Sphinx, the Jewish Question) by S. Zielinski. 1924 saw two more publications authored by Kruszynski: *Niebezpieczeństwo żydowskie* (The Jewish Threat) and *Dlaczego występuję przeciwko żydom* (Why Do I Take Issue Against the Jews). However, if some of the young readers preferred slightly shorter forms than those authored by Kruszynski, the future rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, who believed in a world-wide Jewish conspiracy and stated that "In order to vanquish the Jewish plague from the world they must all be eradicated - to the last Jew" [after: Kertzer 2005: 300], they could always read the latest issue of the thoroughly anti-Semitic catholic magazine "Mały Dziennik", subscribed in Niepokalanów [Modras 1994: 284-285; Żarnowski 2005: 650].

The school gazette in Chyrow also had another regular column - the satirical "To i Owo". It often featured texts concerning Jews. In 1923 gymnasium students were entertained by *Bajka* (The Fable) by Wisniewski, comparing the Jew with an importunate fly, which "sits in

³ B., *Patriotyzm polskiego ucznia*, "Młode Siły", LCVA, F. 190, op. 1, 40.

dirt and filth, washes its mitts in pestilence and spreads it onto people", which "does not work, is idle, yet lives comfortably". According to the author "shops, schools and courts, newspapers and transport are befouled, mottled and ruined through the dirty work" of Jews [see also Puchowska 2004: 75-84].

A reflection of these convictions also appears in the following poem, which is a paraphrase of a religious song:

„Kiedy ranne wstają zorze,
Strzeż od Żyda, Panie Boże!
Bo Żyd zawsze chytra sztuka,
Ocygani i oszuka.

Kiedy słońce na południe
Idzie blaskiem świecąc cudnie,
By nie spadła na mnie bieda,
Panie Boże chroń od Żyda.

Gdy tak dzienne skończę sprawy,
Westchnę szczerze: Bóg łaskawy
Dał mi spełnić, com zamierzył,
Bez Żyda-m dzień cały przeżył.” [”Kwartalnik Chyrowski”, 81 (1913)]

The portrayal of Jews emerging from the analysis of the repertoire of the Jesuit school theatrical stage during the interwar period is a mirror image of the stereotypical, explicitly negative image, popularized for years in mass literature. The catalogue of vices attributed to Jews is quite short, though of considerable gravity [see: Rolnik 2007: 351-369]. The issue of religious separateness is not raised, nevertheless the image of members of the Jewish population, reinforced by the press, catholic publications, and student gazettes was to invoke mockery, antipathy, and contempt among the Society's students, as well as to act as a warning against any contact with the Jews. The substantial role of the theatre in creating such attitudes indicates that once again the stage exhibited its great sensitivity to political climate and its will to participate in propaganda campaigns. It appears that the thesis raised by Jerzy Axer, concerning the political character of the Old Polish Jesuit theatre, can not only be applied to the theatrical scenes in Chyrow and Vilnius, but

can also be expanded onto all spheres of cultural education in these educational establishments [see: Axer 1993: 11-22].

The question arises whether and to what extent the alumni of Jesuit gymnasiums, thoroughly educated, fluent in foreign languages, sensitive recipients of culture, on prestigious political, economic and cultural positions, carried the anti-Semitic sentiments of their educators, which cast a shadow on the history of the Society's education system in the years of the *Second Polish Republic*, into their adult lives. We can only hope, that the excesses of youth did not take on a more refined form. This issue, which has been ignored in publications, requires further source-based research.

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COLLEGIUM NOBILIUM W OSTROGU - Z TRADYCJI EDUKACJI ELIT EUROPY

1. Ekskluzywne kolegia w systemie oświatowym jezuitów

Podziały zrodzone reformacją skłoniły wszystkie wyznania do tworzenia instytucji edukacyjnych kształcących świadomych własnej