

On the Image of Jews in Latin Humanist Poetry*



Jana Kolářová

Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Czech Studies
jana.kolarova@upol.cz

SYNOPSIS

This study is devoted to the depiction of Jews, Jewishness and the stereotypes connected therewith in Latin humanist poetry (from approximately the first third of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century). An analysis of the texts of 'occasional poetry' confirmed the predominant anti-Jewish discourse which pervaded the intellectual circles to whom the authors of this poetry mostly belonged during the time of Renaissance humanism.

KEYWORDS

Jews; Jewishness; Latin poetry; Renaissance humanism.

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.14712/23366680.2022.1.8>

In our contribution we would like to focus on a relatively narrowly delineated theme, namely the image of Jews, Jewishness and the stereotypes connected therewith in the Latin humanist poetry written within the period approximately from the first third of the 16th century until the period preceding the Battle of White Mountain (first third of the 17th century). We shall therefore attempt a certain investigation into the literary material of Latin provenance from that time, within the framework of this one literary genre. The study is limited to texts written in Latin, since Czech-written works, thanks to their accessibility, are generally better mapped (see Veselá-Prudková 2003; Havelka 2009; Soukup 2016).

There is not sufficient room within our contribution for a detailed characterisation of the situation of Jews in the Czech lands in the early modern era, and as a result we note only the entirely basic facts for the purpose of contextualisation, in which we draw primarily upon the work of Tomáš Pěkný (1993), Iveta Cermanová and Ivo Cerman (2013). Although we do not have precise information about the numbers of the Jewish population until the later period, it is known that a relatively large Jewish

* This publication was made possible thanks to targeted funding provided by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for specific research, granted in 2021 to Palacký University Olomouc (IGA_FF_2021_027).



minority lived within the territory of Bohemia and Moravia during the Renaissance and Baroque era (Cermanová — Cerman 2013, pp. 344–346). The status of this community was relatively more stabilised than in the Middle Ages, which was a period of frequent anti-Jewish riots and pogroms, though it is certainly not possible to assert that their situation had improved fundamentally. Jews were repeatedly expelled both from royal cities and from the entire country, and these draconian measures had the support of the majority population. Even early modern cities were not free of occasional anti-Jewish riots, in which violence took place, frequently supported by the local secular and clerical authorities. Almost every political instability, war event or violent change of government impacted negatively upon coexistence with the Jewish minority (*ibid.*, p. 347). The Habsburg rulers themselves had an ambivalent relationship towards the Jews. Ferdinand I initially displayed a relatively benevolent approach to them, confirming a range of privileges and promising to protect them, since the Jews represented a source of income for him. However, he eventually succumbed to strong pressure and complaints especially from the old town burghers and authorities, and granted his consent to the expulsion of Jews from the kingdom. During his time in office, the sovereign often deferred the exercise of his decisions, permitted exceptions (if they were sufficiently paid for) and then once again stiffened his policy, as a result of which throughout the entire period of his reign (until 1564) the Jewish community found itself in a situation of permanent insecurity and fears for its existence (Pěkný 1993, pp. 52–53, 57–58). The accession of Maximilian II brought Bohemian Jews a certain amount of relief — the emperor restored old privileges and relaxed certain restrictions on Jewish trade and enterprise; he also promised that they would not be expelled from the country (*ibid.*, p. 59). Yet greater stability for the Jewish population was subsequently established under the reign of Rudolf II. The Jews had allies in the royal court and part of the nobility, with whom they were linked by commercial interests. The Jewish ghetto of Prague experienced an unprecedented period of flourishing, and this situation persisted until the Thirty Years War (*ibid.*, pp. 60–61).¹

The reasons for the acrimonious, or at the very least negative relationship of the Christian majority towards the Jews are well known. They have their roots partially in religious and cultural differences, and are also partly economic. The primary cause is the alleged ‘guilt’ of the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ, their refusal to accept Christianity and their persistence in the faith of their fathers, resulting not only in religious heterogeneity but also their adherence to a foreign language and script, customs and rituals etc., which continued to isolate the Jewish community from the majority population. Although St. Thomas Aquinas² for example had expressed the view that Jewish communities should remain preserved within Christian countries, so that by the very fact of their existence they could attest to the veracity of the events

1 On the situation of the Prague Jews in particular during the reign of the Habsburg rulers during the course of the 16th century see also one of the pioneering works on this theme within the Bohemian environment, the collective monograph *Prague Ghetto in the Renaissance Period* (Muneles — Heřman 1965).

2 We find this view in the writings of St. Augustine, from whom it was subsequently adopted by the Church Fathers and other authorities.

portrayed in the Bible, it was often the church, and in particular certain religious orders, that fomented anti-Jewish sentiments or endeavoured, frequently by means of indiscriminate pressure, to convert Jews (Cermanová — Cerman 2013, pp. 348–349). Antipathy was also generated by their means of subsistence, as summarised by Jiří Mikulec:

A substantial proportion of the Jewish populace was engaged in trade and finance. Since they were not Christians, in their financial transactions they were not bound by the requirements of ‘Christian’ interest (maximum 6%), and could lend money at interest rates several times higher. Not only did they profit considerably from this, with Christian financiers unable to compete with them, but they also thereby incurred the wrath of the debtors from the majority society (Mikulec 2016, p. 186).

However, at the same time the nobility and even the sovereign himself frequently borrowed money from Jews; in such cases the Jews in question enjoyed protection, which mostly led to further resentment on the part of their Christian neighbours.

It is not our intention here to discuss this issue in greater depth, so let us rather turn our attention to literary texts which presented images of Jews and their perception during that period.

First of all, let us briefly consider the characteristics of the literary production that is the subject of our investigation. In recent decades, Latin-written literature in the Czech lands from the early modern era has been the subject of scholarly inquiry from a number of different perspectives (see e.g. Storchová 2020; Storchová 2014 etc.). In particular, ‘occasional poetry’, of which a considerable amount of variable quality was produced within the delineated period, formed a quantitatively significant segment of the literary production from the end of the 15th to the beginning of the 17th century, and especially in the period preceding the Battle of White Mountain the number of these texts increased. It was practically an intellectual fashion to write poetry, and virtually anyone who was well versed in Latin and the classics of antiquity could become a *poeta doctus* (‘learned poet’). The authors were mostly inspired by Latin models from the times of the greatest zenith of ancient Roman lyricism (Virgil, Ovid, Horace etc.), whom they imitated in abundance. As a series of scholars have documented (Storchová 2011), this type of Latin humanist poetry fulfilled not only an aesthetic but also an important social function, since it was a means of establishing and maintaining contacts between authors and the manner of representation of the poetic community, which mostly recruited from the ranks of graduates from Czech or European universities, thus the intellectual elite of the day.

If we are to address the issue of Jewishness in this collection of texts, it is necessary to emphasise right from the outset that it did not represent a dominant or frequently appearing theme in these texts. The circle of authors writing Latin poetry preferred genres that communicated, as already stated, primarily with artists within a relatively limited poetic *res publica litteraria* (verses written for the occasions of graduations, weddings, births or deaths), or were addressed to elites (panegyric poems to patrons and their estates, encomia dedicated to distinguished personages including the sovereign, celebratory descriptions of towns dedicated to municipal councils etc.). The diversity of the genre related primarily to texts





on a secular theme, while ecclesiastical poetry was less variable; paraphrases of psalms or elaborations of stories from the life of Christ were popular. It ensues from the character of these texts that the theme of Jewishness entered them rather peripherally. Within the framework of his reflections on the relationship of the Hodějovský group (one of the most distinctive literary circles centred around the patron Jan Hodějovský the elder of Hodějov) to the cultural contribution of other nations living within the Czech lands, Jan Martínek refers to a certain reticence and moderation inherent within the work of the Czech humanists, and states that 'in their anti-Semitic opinions our writers were generally in agreement with the majority population. We find this tendency especially in the compositions of Mitis, Orpheus and Collinus' (Martínková — Martínek 2012, p. 326); we shall return to these writers later.

If we were to compare the frequency of appearance of anti-Jewish statements with the literary reflection of other traditional enemies of the Christian faith, then especially in the second half of the 16th century we find far more compositions on an anti-Turkish theme in the poetic writings of Latin humanists. This was felt far more acutely and gravely due to the constant threat to Europe from the Ottoman Empire, and the verses mostly have a strongly exhortatory function. Similarly, we may note a larger number of writings in which reflections upon denominational disputes appear (texts attacking heretics from various perspectives, according to the religious persuasion of the author), which also escalated with the approaching turn of the 17th century. Confessional differences among Christians of various denominations attracted considerable intellectual attention on the part of authors, although the Latin-written verses we focus on here were rather of the nature of invectives or references, or short satirical poems, whereas anti-Turkish themes tended to be presented in more extensive compositions. This is due among other factors to the nature of the personages to whom the compositions relating to the Ottoman threat were dedicated. These were usually noblemen, high-ranking dignitaries or even the sovereign himself, who through the means of poetry were entreated to show resolve and courage in repelling the Turkish menace.

However, let us return to Jewishness. European Renaissance scholars and writers, who in many cases were a model for Czech authors, shared the hostile stance of the majority society towards Jews, although as a rule they expressed this in a more cultivated form. Humanists such as Sebastian Brant, Beatus Rhenanus, Konrad Celtis and Desiderius Erasmus considered Jews to be usurers, idlers and generally a people worthy of contempt (Delumeau 1999, p. 116). Even the most tolerant Renaissance thinkers viewed Jews at best as ossified and obstinate deniers of the New Testament of Christ, who persisted in their own 'darkened religion'.³ Even the Reformation did not bring any fundamental change in this respect; after showing initial sympathies, which ensued from the presupposition that the reformed church would succeed in leading

3 'In these writings, Renaissance thinkers move beyond the antagonistic categories used to typologize religions that are found in ancient and medieval Christian writers: the categories of obsolescence and heresy. In these conceptions, as described R. W. Southern and other scholars, Judaism and paganism are ordinarily relegated to the category of obsolescence. Though the Jews were vouchsafed a shadowy religious truth through the law and



the Jews to conversion, Martin Luther altered his rhetoric into a sharply anti-Jewish tirade (*ibid.*, p. 117). Among other matters, in his texts Luther entertained the idea of a kinship or alliance of Jews and Turks as the enemies of Christian Europe. A whole series of texts appeared concerning the bond of alliance between Jews and Turks; for example, within the Czech environment the writings of the German convert Ernst Ferdinand Hess, *Speculum Iudeorum* and *Flagellum Iudeorum* were well known. Both texts were translated into Czech by Martin Kraus (Carchesius); although the second of these, bearing the Czech title of *Bič židovský* (The Jewish Whip, 1603), was written primarily ‘against all hitherto obdurate, accursed Jews’, it also contains a great deal about ‘the Turkish faith and religion and on the origin of their Mahomet, of whom the Jews are the degenerate uncles’ (Hess 1603). Jews were accused of espionage in the service of the Turks, and blamed for participating in arson (see below).⁴ As Veselá-Prudková notes, this rhetoric was strongly rooted within the anti-Semitic discourse, and became a component of the majority of the later anti-Semitic tracts, including sermons (Veselá-Prudková 2003, p. 88). In Latin humanist poetry a mention of the bond between the Jews and the Ottoman Turks appears for example in the poem *De Iudeis* by Matouš Collinus of Chotěřina, in which the author states that the people righteously rebelled against the Jews, who wished to betray Prague to the Turks (RHB I, p. 449).⁵ Jaroslav Miller states:

in the majority of sources of Christian provenance, Jews were depicted in a similar spirit, as an alien, hostile and inscrutable community, whose presence had a multifaceted, negative impact on Christian society. In medieval and early modern texts, whether they related to works of art, news reporting of the time or folk readings, the Jews were endlessly accused of the same transgressions and moral failings, including usury, dubious financial speculations, ritual murders and various types of criminal practices, as well as conspiracies directed against Christians (Miller 2006, p. 113).

However, it is necessary to remember at this point that the intellectual interests of the scholarly humanists during the course of the 16th century were attracted by the Hebrew language, since it was one of the original biblical tongues. Renaissance scholars were also interested in Jewish philosophy, or in the interpretation of Old Testament texts. Of course, this did not mean that their deeper knowledge made them any more willing to tolerate the Jewish religion. As Erika Rummel notes:

the prophets, that wisdom was now fulfilled and superseded by Christian revelation, and Jews who persisted in the old law were typically seen by Christians as “stubborn” or “stiff-necked” for their refusal to accept the new dispensation’ (Hankins 2006, p. 140).

- 4 ‘Many Jews, recently driven out of the Iberian peninsula, eventually found a relatively safe haven in the Turkish empire; it is evidently herein that the denunciations have their origin’ (Pěkný 1993, p. 53).
- 5 The text entered in Hodějovský’s copybook has not been preserved. (Note: We refer hereinafter to the collective work *Rukověť humanistického básnictví* — Handbook of Humanist Poetry — using the abbreviation RHB, with the number of the relevant work.)



[t]hey read Jewish commentaries, not to explore diverse opinions, but to disprove them and corroborate their own ideological positions. Even the Talmud was valuable for that purpose [...]. Although humanists favored encyclopedic learning and promoted the idea of cultural syncretism, they did not rise above the prejudices of their time. The new interest in Hebrew studies was not paralleled by a greater acceptance of or more tolerant attitude toward Jews (Rummel 2006, pp. 11–12).

The relationship of Czech scholars to Judaism and in particular to the Hebrew language in the early modern era is described by Lenka Veselá-Prudková, who speaks of a very gradual penetration of interest in the Hebrew language into the university environment, which was initially accompanied by a mistrust of people versed in it (Veselá-Prudková 2003, p. 17). However, in the second half of the 16th century this situation gradually changed. The number of scholars who had genuine knowledge of Hebrew increased (the head of the Žatec school Jakub Strabo, who was the author of a number of Hebrew texts (RHB V, p. 208), the poet Kašpar Cropacius etc.; in 1611 Mikuláš Albert of Kamének became the first professor of Hebrew at Prague university, contributing to the translation of the Bible of Kralice),⁶ and Hebrew thus appeared as a theme also in the final disputations of university students (Veselá-Prudková 2003, pp. 17–18). However, this still concerned only a very narrow circle of scholars. In literary texts Hebrew figured mostly as a language by means of which the authors demonstrated their erudition, though often only as an embellishment or as a device to make the text more distinctive.

Let us now focus on a number of specific mentions of Jews in literary texts.

One of the most distinguished representatives of the ‘first generation’ of Latin-writing humanists was Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkowitz (1461–1510). He touched upon the theme of Jewishness in his collection *Farrago*, which contains the poem ‘De potentia Iudaeorum’, in which he rails against the increasing influence and power of Jews over all nations, and graphically warns against another crucifixion:

*Am I perhaps mistaken? The fortifications of the nation of Jerusalem are being erected here,
the multitude of the circumcised shall confer rights upon the nations.
For we shall be ruled far more by the Apellas,⁷
the synagogue shall then mean more than the Christian church.*

⁶ Mikuláš Albert of Kamének (1547–1617), among other works, published the treatise *Oratio de Hebraeae linguae studio* (Prague, Jiří Hanuš 1611), in which he described the individual dialects of the Hebrew language, explained the reasons why this language should be studied (especially due to the possibility of familiarisation with and interpretation of the original biblical text), and described methods of teaching (see RHB I, p. 64).

⁷ The name Apella appears in Horace’s first book of *Satires* (5, 100) in the phrase ‘Credat Iudaeus Apella, non ego’ (The Jew Apella may believe this, not I), in which the figure of a credulous Jew is depicted. From here the phrase found its way for example into the *Chronicle of the Czechs*, where the same appellation is also given to the Jewish ‘deputy lord’ (post ducem vicedominus) Jakub Apella, whose ignominious story is narrated by the author Cosmas (book 3, chapter 4 of the Chronicle).

*Flee far from here, O Christ, begetter of things,
lest you suffer once again on the wicked cross of the Jews*
(Hasištejnský in Vaculínová 2006, p. 234).⁸

The anti-Jewish rhetoric fitted in well with the overall tone of the work of Bohuslav Hasištejnský, who was a devout Catholic and whose output is distinguished by a strong emphasis on morality, humility and true, i.e. Catholic piety. At the same time Hasištejnský also adopted a critical stance towards the ranks of the Christian majority, when he expressed the view that the Jews were tolerated only because the majority society had succumbed to Mammon. We can quote this anti-Jewish tetrastich from the *Farrago* collection in English translation:

*When we have resolved so many times to drive out the Jews,
why then do we see them continue to dwell in our homes?
Is it perhaps because the world has been vanquished by the jangling purse,
that more than their banishment, we love their gold?*
(Martínek 1996, p. 65).⁹

We have already mentioned the many celebratory poems produced by the Latin-writing humanists. Some of these were panegyrics dedicated to sovereigns on the occasion of their coronation or ceremonial entrance into the city. A great event which appeared in a number of literary reflections was the visit of Ferdinand I to Prague in 1558. It was recorded in prose form in Latin in the writing of Matouš Collinus of Chotěřina and Martin Kuthen of Šprinsberk (*Brevis et succincta descriptio pompae...*; see also RHB I, p. 118), and also in the form of a poetic composition described only by Matouš Collinus under the title of *Ad invictissimum... Ferdinandum... regem ode gratulatoria* (Collinus 1558), with a dedication to the archdukes Ferdinand and Charles and a request that they notify their father of the composition. Both of these works contain a description of the presence of Jews in the welcoming procession, which was composed of representatives of the nobility, members of the town council, the clergy, university masters and others. The Jewish community presented itself here in force, among other matters with rabbis themselves carrying the Ten Commandments beneath a canopy, accompanied by cantors singing psalms (Veselá-Prudková 2003, p. 64). Collinus provides a relatively detailed description, especially concerning the ceremonial garments, and concedes that those present were genuinely captivated by

8 'Fallimur? An Solymae [Greek and Latin designation for Jerusalem — Hierosolyma] fient hic moenia gentis, / et recutita cohors iura dabit populis. / Plus nobis multo quoniam dominantur Apellae, / ecclesiaeque isthic plus synagoga potest. / Hinc procul, o genitor rerum, fuge, Christe, nefandam / rursus ab Hebraeis ne patiare crucem.' A mention of this poem can be found also in RHB III, p. 194. Unless stated otherwise in the bibliography, Latin texts were used in this study, which were translated into Czech by the author of the article, and subsequently into English.

9 'Pellere cum toties populum statuamus Hebraeum, / cur, precor, hunc nostris cernimus in Laribus? / An mundus victus oculis clangentibus aurum / et plus Hebraeum quam placet exilium?' (Martínek 1996, p. 64).



the spectacle, although — as he does not neglect to point out — rather by the Jewish superstition than by the festivities (Collinus — Kuthen 1558).

It is not without interest that above all the first, prose version of this work met with considerable resentment from the Jesuits, who were offended by the alleged ironic barb aimed against the order. This is in part because the text mentioned the unwillingness of the sovereign's horse to keep still and enable Ferdinand to concentrate on the Jesuit welcoming ceremony, and partly also for the reason that after meeting with the Jesuits the emperor allegedly went immediately to the Jews, thus the enemies of the Christian faith. According to the text it was not only Ferdinand's horse, but the emperor himself who turned away from them.¹⁰

In his comparison of the first and second editions of the tract, Jan Martínek draws attention to the fact that in the second version the description had now been stylised in such a manner that the connection between the Jesuits and Jews was no longer evident, and did not invite comparison (Martínek 1959, pp. 113–114). It therefore appears that Matouš Collinus (who was probably the author of the incriminated passage) made use of the Jews as a vehicle for expressing his derision regarding the Jesuit order, of whom he was an opponent (*ibid.*, p. 115).¹¹

Another genre of Latin poetry in which mentions of Jews sporadically appear is that of 'hodoeporica',¹² namely poetic descriptions of journeys in which the experiences of the traveller are rendered relatively authentically, although in certain passages the authors, in accordance with the rules of the genre, resort to stylised descriptions of certain places and sometimes also people. They also do not record every detail, since they attempt to produce a composition as a coherent whole. The relatively small space of hodoeporica usually permits the author only to present observations and subjective, often superficial impressions, which nevertheless are not without interest. The authors record primarily personages and events that have captured their attention, and in addition to this usually describe in detail the places they have passed through.

We may take as an example one of the hodoeporica whose author was the prolific humanist poet and editor Tomáš Mitis. In a description of a journey leading through a number of Central Bohemian towns (Český Brod, Kutná Hora, Nymburk) he mentions a fire that ravaged several houses in Nymburk, which was allegedly caused by arsonists. Twelve of them were reportedly detained and taken to Prague, and among them was the ringleader, some kind of Jew, who in Mitis's opinion would undoubtedly bribe his way to acquittal. This inserted tale demonstrates not only the author's view but also the generally widespread stereotypical conviction that it was necessary to

10 'Fratribus religiosi religionis nostrae Christianae hostes Iudaei in excipiendo Imperatore successuri erant, sed institutum ipsorum non bene eis cessit, quippe quos non solum equus Imperatoris, sed ipse etiam Imperator fuit aversatus, & ad cantus, ac vociferationes eorum plane obsurdit, perrexitque praeter teloneum [...]' (*Brevis et succincta descriptio...*, f. Fivv).

11 As Martínek adds, based on the complaints of the Jesuits and aware of their influence, in the second edition of the work Collinus amended the passage so as not to provoke controversy, and the same applies to Collinus's poetic version.

12 'Hodoeporicon' in the singular.



seek the origin of most deliberately started fires within the ranks of the Jewish community, and it also criticises the corrupting power of Jewish money (RHB III, p. 360). The comment on the starting of fires by Jews in the aforementioned poem 'De Iudeis' by Matouš Collinus of Chotěřina is made in a similar spirit (RHB I, p. 449). Another author from Hodějovský's circle, the prematurely deceased poet Jan Orpheus, stylised his composition *Epistola Boemiae ad regem Ferdinandum* as the speech of a personified Bohemia, who complains to the king of the tribulations she must face, the general moral decay, and laments the ruin of Prague in the calamitous fire that occurred in 1541.¹³ Bohemia believes in the restoration of conditions under Ferdinand's leadership, and recommends that he seek support from educated men, whom he names (present among them is the patron Hodějovský).¹⁴ This poem also contains accusations directed against Jews of arson and collaboration with the Turks:

*The deception and lies of the Jewish tribe are plain to see,
through their intrigues they multiply our losses.
Here and there they set fire to estates, settlements and towns,
willingly serving the Mohammedan marauders
(Orpheus 1561, fol. 145a–148b).¹⁵*

At the same time, here a diatribe against the Jews is added to with criticisms directed at one's own ranks (similarly as in one of Bohuslav Hasištejnský's poems above), in this case not because of Mammon but due to the poor morals of the Christians, specifically profligacy and drunkenness.

Besides poems describing experiences from travels, anti-Semitic rhetoric may appear also in the genre known as *laus urbis*, i.e. the praise or celebration of a city. The majority of these compositions among other factors contain descriptions of calamities that have afflicted the city in the past, in which devastating fires were very frequent events. However, it is not possible to claim that in all the works we examine here the authors accuse members of the Jewish minority for starting them, since the majority of them are attributed rather to divine wrath, similarly as in the case of natural disasters, and the authors concede that the origin of the fire is unknown. Mentions of Jewish inhabitants may appear in connection with the topography of cities, although in general the authors avoid these parts of the city in their descriptions, which is due to the fact that they concentrate on the municipal elite: they praise the members of the town council or distinguished personages, and describe important buildings. The Jewish ghetto did not rank among those places

13 The fire, which primarily destroyed the Castle District and the Lesser Town, is reflected in Latin poetry by a number of other poets, in addition to Orpheus also e.g. Matouš Collinus ('De conflagratione arcis Pragensis'). Part of Orpheus's aforementioned composition was translated by Bohumil Ryba, and was printed in the anthology by Vincy Schwarz entitled *Očima lásky: Verše českých básníků o Praze* (Through the Eyes of Love: Verses on Prague by Czech Poets, 1941, pp. 70–72).

14 See RHB IV, p. 75.

15 'Gentis Iudeae fallacia, frausque, relecta est, / insidiis auxit quae mala nostra suis. / Haec incendebat villas passim, oppida et urbes, / pro Mahometigenis officiosa Getis.'



upon which attention was to be focused, let alone words of praise. When verses on this theme do appear, they are in a negative spirit, such as in the description of Louny written by Martin Rakovský (Rakocius). Rakocius describes Jewish Street in Louny, named according to its former inhabitants, who allegedly stole, initially in secret. Eventually they committed a theft of silver from the church and were driven out of the city.

The third street is known as the former seat of the Jews, and it has borne their name since long ago. That nation used to reside in Palestine, where it stole in secret. But when they were found out, having stolen silverware from the sacred temple, they were given a severe punishment. They were driven out. Now the houses and charming homesteads here are occupied by craftsmen (Rakocius 1558, fol. Aviiiib, in Martínková 1964, pp. 14–15).¹⁶

As Martínková notes, the Jews subsequently returned to Louny, where they were again accused of theft from churches and arson, which once more led to their expulsion in 1655 (Martínková 1964, p. 92).

Anti-Jewish themes also appeared in the Latin compositions that dealt with the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. These texts enjoyed great popularity in humanist poetry, and have been preserved in a substantial quantity. They did not usually excel in any particular originality, since they adhered to the narrative of the New Testament, which was merely modified in a number of variations. Lenka Veselá-Prudková reflects upon the fact that the ‘themes of the poems relating to the figure of Jesus evidently encouraged certain authors to express their own personal opinions on the Jewish nation, or to give vent to traditional stereotypes’ (Veselá-Prudková 2003, p. 91). An example may be found in the poetic composition ‘De Christi Domini gloriosa a devicta morte resurrectione’ by Jan Černovický (1592), who inserted religious considerations with an anti-Semitic theme in places in the poem (RHB II, p. 14). Similarly, the aforementioned Kašpar Cropacius, in the composition ‘Hexametrum pro Calendis Ianuariis’ (RHB I, p. 499) dealt with the theme of the birth of Jesus and connected New Testament events, into which he incorporated invectives against the Jews (RHB I, p. 499).

The theme could also appear in poems in connection with Easter, the chief Christian festival, as is the case in another of the occasional compositions with a Jewish theme written by Šimon Pistorius (RHB IV, p. 190), a burgher and later mayor of the town of Vodňany. Although he achieved a prominent status as a city official, his poetic output is modest, to say the least. He was close to the literary circle based around Jan Hostovský the elder of Hodějov, and a number of Pistorius’s poems appear in collections dedicated to this patron. One of these is a poem entitled ‘Querela domini nostri Iesu Christi’, which was written as a greeting to Jan Hodějovský on the occasion of the Easter holidays. The poem is conceived as a lament of the Heavenly Father that the Jews had rejected the saviour, sent to them in the form of Jesus Christ:

¹⁶ ‘Namque Palestinae plebs illam gentis habebat, / dum latuit furtis non manifesta suis. / Ast ubi subtracto sacra se prodidit aede / argento, poenas sensit ab acta graves.’

*Hear ye the sorrowful lament of the Heavenly Father,
 who long ago led the Jewish nation.
 His son, by the name of Jesus Christ,
 was sent here for their salvation.
 O ye unfaithful, O ye callous Jewish tribe,
 to whom was formerly given the name of Israel. [...]
 How gentle and benevolent was Christ?
 But the Jewish mob was hostile
 (Pistorius 1563 in RHB IV, p. 190).¹⁷*



Based on biblical stories, the author enumerates all the favours granted to the Jewish nation, and in opposition to this he places their behaviour towards Christ, culminating in his crucifixion. The effect of the poem is achieved by the use of the lyrical subject in the first person, who addresses his emotionally charged remonstrance directly to the ungrateful Jews. The composition is reportedly a translation from Czech (*ex Boiémico redacta*), to which Pistorius refers also in the immediately preceding dedicatory poem, where he apologises to Hodějovský for the somewhat unrefined style of the following composition resulting from its translation from the Czech original.

Here we have attempted, at least in brief, to depict the way in which the Latin humanist poetry of the 16th century reflects the theme of Jewishness. It ensues from our investigation that the interests of scholarly intellectuals were oriented primarily towards other problems, and as regards religious heterogeneity far greater attention was devoted to the Ottoman Turks, who were threatening the lands of Europe. Furthermore, the rational approach of the educated humanists frequently led to a situation in which, in addition to criticism of other religions, they also pointed to the shortcomings of the members of their own faith, who instead of leading by example were in many respects moral backsliders themselves, and were held up as an unpleasant mirror by the dissenters. Upon the background of the Turkish menace, the authors frequently drew attention to the disunity of the Christian lands and the indiscipline of the soldiers of the Christian armies, and they similarly fulminated that coexistence with the Jewish community revealed how Christians had succumbed to the desire for money and how susceptible they were to corruption. In their depiction of the Jewish minority, the Latin-writing humanist poets kept almost entirely within the limits placed by the traditional and most common negative stereotypes about Jews (arson, collaboration with the Turks, pernicious qualities of Jews such as miserliness, usury, lies and hypocrisy, theft etc.). In most cases this related rather to problems ensuing from the necessity of coexistence, and accusations for example of ritual murder, desecration of communion wafers etc. did not appear. It is also not possible to assert that any fundamental differences existed between texts of Catholic and non-Catholic provenance: the Catholic Hasištejnský wrote anti-Semitic invectives in the same manner as the representatives of the Reform confessions from Hodějovský's

¹⁷ 'Coelicoli Patris moestas audite querelas, / quo Iudeorum gens fuit usa duce. / Illius et gnati, cui nomen Christus Iesus, / huc missus quorum causa salutis erat. / O infida, o dura nimis Iudaea propago, / quae prius Israel nomine dicta fuit. [...] Quam mansuetus erat, quam mitis Christus Iesus? / Ast Iudaea cohors huic inimica fuit.'



circle. Incidentally, in their poems many of them expressed their devotion to the Emperor Ferdinand and the House of Habsburg (Collinus, Orpheus); it is evident that religious denomination did not play any fundamental role in relation to the Jews. The authors are also not distinguished by excessive expressiveness or explicitly malicious manifestations, and in the most extreme cases incite the banishment of the Jews. Although our analysis has confirmed Jan Martínek's assertion, cited above, concerning the reticent approach of our humanists towards religious and ethnic heterogeneity, it is nevertheless not possible to use this as a basis for the conclusion that humanists in the Czech lands were characterised by a greater degree of tolerance with regard to the Jewish community than was the case in other regions of Europe. A look at the European context confirms that humanists did not hesitate to place their poetic art in the services of attacks and campaigns directed against Jews. The dependency of the authors on the patronage of influential representatives of ecclesiastical or secular power led to a situation in which they joined anti-Jewish campaigns and adopted the discriminatory rhetoric of their patrons, as is documented in a series of examples, for example from the Italian environment (see e.g. Bowd — Cullington 2012); a similar case applied also in other countries. The relatively small number of anti-Semitic invectives in the Latin poems originating from Bohemia can therefore not be considered to represent a manifestation of tolerance, but rather a lesser interest and perhaps a certain 'self-absorption' inherent in the humanist literature of the Czech lands, including that of the more cosmopolitan authors writing in Latin. As Erika Rummel concludes her study: '[...] Christians and Jews continued to inhabit separate worlds and the humanistic ideal of a human fellowship remained a utopia' (Rummel 2006, p. 30).

LITERATURE

Primary Sources

Collinus, Matouš: *Ad invictissimum...*

Ferdinandum... regem ode gratulatoria, continens brevem descriptionem pompae in ingressu suae Maiestatis in urbem Pragam... Ioannes Cantor, Praha 1558. Strahovská knihovna, AO XVI 12 přív. B.

Collinus, Matouš — Kuthen, Martin: *Brevis et succinta descriptio pompae in honorem...*

imperatoris Ferdinandi Primi... Jiří Melantrich z Aventina, Praha 1558. Strahovská knihovna, AO XVI 12 přív. B.

Cropacius, Kašpar: *Hexametrum pro Calendis*

Ianuariis. Ioannes Gitzinus, Praha 1568. Strahovská knihovna, AA XV 42 přív. 4.

Černovický, Jan: *De Christi domini gloriosa*

a devicta morte resurrectione. Praha, Iohannes Schuman 1592. Národní knihovna Praha, sign. 52 C 6 přív. 35.

Hess, Ernst Ferdinand: *Flagellum Iudaeorum.*

Bič židovský. Praha, s. n. 1603.

Hodějovský z Hodějova, Jan starší et

al. (eds.): *Farrago quarta poematum ab aliquot studiosis poeticae Bohemis scriptorum diversis temporibus ad... d. Ioannem seniore*
Hoddeiovinum ab Hoddeiova... Ioannes Cantor, Praha 1561. Národní knihovna Praha, sign. 9 G 157, 52 G 17.

Martínek, Jan (ed.): *Bohuslav Hasištejnský*

z Lobkovic. Carmina selecta, transl. Helena Businská, Dana Martínková. Aula, Praha 1996.

Martínková, Dana (transl.): *Popsání českého*

města Lúny v elegické básni od Martina Rakovského Panonského z Turce. Severografia, Louny 1964.

Orpheus, Jan: *Iohannis Orphei epistola*

Boiemiae ad regem Ferdinandum. In: Jan

Hodějovský z Hodějova starší et al. (eds.): *Secunda Farrago elegiarum et idylliorum ab aliquot studiosis poeticae Bohemis scriptorum diversis temporibus...* Ioannes Cantor, Praha 1561. Národní knihovna Praha, sign. 9 G 157, 52 G 17.

Pistorius, Simon: *Querela domini nostri Iesu Christi*. In: *De obitu nobilis et honestae matronae D. Ursulae ab Ugezd clarissimae coniugis D. Ioannis senioris Hoddeiovini... lugubria aliquot poemata. De eiusdem D. Joannis ab Hoddeiova novis nuptiis cum nobili... virgine... Magdalena*

a Brloha... aliquot epithalamia. Tomáš Mitis, Joannes Caper, Praha 1563. Strahovská knihovna, sign. AO XVII 36.

Rakocius, Martin: *Descriptio urbis Lunae Boiemicae facta elegiaco carmine...* Iohannes Cantor, Praha 1558. Knihovna Národního muzea Praha, sign. 49 G 1.

Schwarz, Vincy (ed.): *Očima lásky: Verše českých básníků o Praze*. F. Borový, Praha 1941.

Vaculínová, Marta (ed.): *Bohuslaus Hassensteinius a Lobkowicz: Opera poetica*. K. G. Saur, Leipzig — München 2006.

Secondary Sources

Bell, Dean Phillip — Burnett, Stephen G. (eds.): *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*. Brill, Leiden — Boston 2006.

Bowd, Stephen — Cullington, Donald J. (eds.): *'On Everyone's Lips': Humanists, Jews, and the Tale of Simon Trent*. Brepols, Turnhout 2012.

Cermanová, Iveta — Cerman, Ivo: *Židé v českých zemích raného novověku*. In: Marie Šedivá Koldinská — Ivo Cerman et al. (eds): *Základní problémy studia raného novověku*. Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha 2013, s. 335–369.

Delumeau, Jean: *Strach na Západě ve 14.–18. století. Obležená obec*. II, transl. J. Smutná-Lemonnierová. Argo, Praha 1999.

Hankins, James: *Religion and the Modernity of Renaissance Humanism*. In: Angelo Mazzocco (ed.): *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*. Brill, Leiden — Boston 2006, s. 137–153.

Havelka, Tomáš: *Komika českého raného novověkého bohemikálního dramatu*. Doctoral thesis, Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity, Brno 2009.

Martínek, Jan: *Dvě díla M. Matouše Collina. Listy filologické / Folia philologica* 82, 1959, no. 1, pp. 111–121.

Martínková, Dana — Martínek, Jan: *Literární druh veršovaných popisů měst v naší latinské humanistické literatuře. Jan Hodějovský a jeho literární okruh*. Národní muzeum, Praha 2012.

Mazzocco, Angelo (ed.): *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*. Brill, Leiden — Boston 2006.

Mikulec, Jiří: *České země v letech 1620–1705*. Libri, Praha 2016.

Miller, Jaroslav: *Uzavřená společnost a její nepřátelé: Město středovýchodní Evropy (1500–1700)*. Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha 2006.

Muneles, Otto — Heřman, Jan (eds.): *Prague Ghetto in the Renaissance Period*. Židovské muzeum v Praze, Praha 1965.

Pěkný, Tomáš: *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*. Sefer, Praha 1993.

Price, David H.: *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy the Jewish Books*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

Rummel, Erika: *Humanists, Jews, and Judaism*. In: Dean Phillip Bell — Stephen G. Burnett (eds.): *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*. Brill, Leiden — Boston 2006, pp. 3–31.

Soukup, Daniel: *Obráz Židů v českém kazatelství přelomu 17. a 18. století. Předběžné poznámky*. *Bohemica litteraria* 19, 2016, no. 1, pp. 72–106.

Storchová, Lucie: *Paupertate styloque connecti. Utváření humanistické učenecké komunity v českých zemích*. Scriptorium, Praha 2011.

Storchová, Lucie: *Bohemian School Humanism and its Editorial Practices (ca. 1550–1610)*. Brepols, Turnhout 2014.

Storchová, Lucie (ed.): *Companion to Central and Eastern European Humanism*.





The Czech Lands. I. De Gruyter, Berlín 2020.

Šedivá Koldinská, Marie — Cerman, Ivo et al. (eds.): *Základní problémy studia raného novověku*. Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha 2013.

Truhlář, Antonín — Hrdina, Karel — Hejnic, Josef — Martínek, Jan: *Rukověť humanistického básnictví I. A–C*. Academia, Praha 1966.

Truhlář, Antonín — Hrdina, Karel — Hejnic, Josef — Martínek, Jan: *Rukověť humanistického básnictví II. Č–J*. Academia, Praha 1966.

Truhlář, Antonín — Hrdina, Karel — Hejnic, Josef — Martínek, Jan: *Rukověť*

humanistického básnictví III. K–M. Academia, Praha 1969.

Truhlář, Antonín — Hrdina, Karel — Hejnic, Josef — Martínek, Jan: *Rukověť humanistického básnictví IV. N–Ř*. Academia, Praha 1973.

Truhlář, Antonín — Hrdina, Karel — Hejnic, Josef — Martínek, Jan: *Rukověť humanistického básnictví V. S–Ž*. Academia, Praha 1982.

Veselá-Prudková, Lenka: *Židé a česká společnost v zrcadle literatury*. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2003.