

The Memory Trace of Jewishness in the Memoir Literature of Authors of the Late 19th Century*



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SYNOPSIS

This study focuses on the phenomenon of Jewishness and its representation in memoir literature. The author concentrates both on memoirs in the true sense of the word (recorded recollections) and on variations of the genre — e.g. memoir travelogues. However, she also takes into account texts in which distinctly fictionalised elements are discernible, and which can be classified within the genre of memoirs rather than that of the short story or novella only thanks to the author's statement (usually presented in the introduction) that the described event belongs to his or her own personal recollections. The analysed texts demonstrate various degrees of playing upon national stereotypes, but it would nevertheless be inaccurate to term them anti-Semitic. However, in the concluding part of the study attention is drawn to Jaroslava Procházková's pamphlet *Český lid a český Žid* (The Czech People and the Czech Jew), in which manifestly anti-Semitic propositions are put forth, intentionally accenting the stereotype of the Jew as a dishonest trader. The communication strategy in Procházková's writing lacks literary ambitions, and the childhood recollection presented therein is entirely subordinated to the ideology of anti-Semitism.

KEYWORDS

19th century; memoirs; stylisation; authenticity; Jewishness.

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It is evidently not necessary to overemphasise the significance and abundance of the contribution of memoir literature to the Czech literary tradition.¹ Within the context of the formation of collective memory via literary texts this contribution most certainly cannot be overlooked, especially in connection with a reflection upon

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1 This issue has been commented on systematically by Vlastimil Válek, for the individual texts see the register of academic literature.



such a significant cultural phenomenon as the thematisation of Jewishness or the portrayal of the figure of the Jew. Jewish themes are of significance for the cultural memory of the 19th century, similarly to the thematisation of the life of non-Catholic churches: it is only thanks to the Patent of Toleration at the end of the 18th century that the existence of both religious communities came to be officially respected (albeit with certain limitations) in the modern era.²

Although the representation of Jews and Jewishness, as well as the formation of national heterostereotypes in connection with the Jewish nation have received concentrated attention in recent years,³ similarly to the problem of anti-Semitism in the second half of the 19th century in general (Frankl 2007), memoirs from the turn of the 20th century in which Jewish otherness is thematised have so far remained relatively peripheral. Nonetheless, it is precisely from texts situated on the boundary between fiction and non-fiction that one can trace contemporary tendencies in the thinking of society. I have therefore focused on memoirs in the true sense (records of memories), as well as on variations of the genre (e.g. memoir travelogues). However, I have also taken into account memoirs in which distinctly fictional elements are discernible, and which can be differentiated from the genre of the short story or novella only thanks to the author's statement (usually presented in the introduction) that the described event belongs to his or her own personal recollections.

WHY MEMOIRS?

Many readers gravitate towards this type of literary production in order to feel for themselves, via the memories of a culturally (socially, politically...) distinguished personage, what they believe to be an authentic experience of a situation or time in which they themselves could not be a part, or by means of a confrontation of several memoir texts to arrive at a kind of 'historical truth'.⁴ However, literary scholarship is aware that this genre too is not free of stylising techniques, that the author's stance is determined by the readership for whom the book was written, by the function the

2 In connection with the acceptance of Judaism as a religion, Zdeněk Nešpor referred to the Edict of Tolerance, which with certain limitations placed Jews on an equal level to those tolerated Christian faiths, as an 'appendix to the Patent of Toleration' (Nešpor 2010, p. 15). However, he drew attention to the fact that the 'familiant law', which stipulated the acceptable number of Jews in individual countries, remained in effect — this number was merely raised by Emperor Joseph II in 1797 (ibid.).

3 Above all the research by Jiří Holý, following on from older studies by Alexej Mikulášek, and in particular from the catalogue of Jewish literature compiled by Oskar Donath, as well as the work of Robert Pynsent (see the index of academic literature).

4 According to Vlastimil Válek, 'memoir literature is a literary genre in which the authors submit an authentic testimony about past events that they have actually experienced or been witnesses to, in which they present an account of their lives and the lives of their family and friends. Events are always presented from the perspective of the author of the memoir, i.e. subjectively, but with an endeavour for objectivity, which nonetheless does not consist only in a "protocol" depiction of facts, but also in capturing the atmosphere of the time. Important factors for the processing and impression of memoirs are the social



author attributes to the memoir, as well as by his or her own social status, education, etc. (Válek 1984, p. 55). It also emerged from the discussions of the 1990s that the concept of authenticity, which is closely linked to the reception of memoir literature, is highly problematic. In his study *Autentickost jako rétorická figura* (Authenticity as a Rhetorical Figure), Peter Zajac asserts that one can understand authenticity as one possible manifestation of stylisation, that despite all the variability and ambivalence of the concept, authenticity points to the individuality of the subject and that ‘without a name, face and mask, there would simply be no literary text, nothing identical or different, nothing with which a reader could identify and from which he or she could maintain a distance’ (Zajac 1999, p. 28). If we relate this premise to the genre of memoirs, then it becomes culturally and literary-historically interesting precisely due to the choice of the processed themes and the invitation to readers to relate to them.

The first two memoir texts, in which I would like to illustrate part of the climate of the late 19th century in connection with a reflection upon the alterity of Jewishness, based on their title alone are typical representatives of the genre of memoirs — since they bear the designation memoirs or remembrances in their title: *Paměti starého vlastence* (Memoirs of an Old Patriot) by Ladislav Turnovský and *Upomínky* (Remembrances) by Karolina Světlá. Although the third text, penned by Svatopluk Čech, also includes the word memoirs in its title (*Vzpomínky z cest a života* — Memoirs from Travels and Life), upon closer examination of the work it becomes clear that in the analysis it is necessary also to take into account the genre of the travelogue. In the second part of this article I shall focus attention on texts augmented by means of fiction: short stories from the 1890s by the Jewish writer Leopold Kompert and the fictionalised memoirs of Jan Lier and Teréza Nováková.

MEMOIR LITERATURE FROM THE TURN OF THE CENTURY THEMATISING THE FIGURE OF THE JEW (TURNOVSKÝ, SVĚTLÁ, ČECH)

Josef Ladislav Turnovský, the Czech actor, writer and journalist, who is known in literary history rather because of the fact that following the death of Josef Kajetán Tyl he married Tyl’s sister-in-law, with whom Tyl had had nine children, published his prose work *Paměti starého vlastence* in 1900. These include a recollection of the year 1848 (thus the period briefly after the segregation of Jews was abolished; Holý — Nichtburgerová 2016, p. 7). At that time a Jewish family wished to settle in Sobotka, the author’s birthplace. Despite all the abuses and politicking of the local elders this eventually came to pass, and the family rented a house in the suburbs (they were not admitted into the town centre). Turnovský’s narration here is subordinated to the idea of confrontation with the ‘alien’, and a description of the gradual acceptance of otherness: ‘No Jew had ever settled here previously, and young and old alike raged against the arrival of the first’ (Turnovský 1901, p. 354). The opponents of accepting

status and personality of the author of the memoir, as well as the function that the memoir occupies at the given time or that the author himself attributes to it; it is this that is the basis for the selection and interpretation of the facts’ (Válek 1971, p. 458).



a Jewish family are referred to in this text as anti-Semites, and the author describes their behaviour and opinions with a certain degree of irony: 'All that remained for our anti-Semites was the small consolation that the Jew was at least not in the town, but on the outskirts' (ibid., p. 357). Turnovský presents his youthful Christian self undergoing a process of transformation from identification with the mob, when during Easter week he went in a group of Christian youths to make a commotion beneath the windows of the house of the Jewish family and chant insulting rhymes referring to the Jews being to blame for the crucifixion of Jesus, to the statement that by Easter of 1849 'we had now made friends with the Hammerschlag boys, and shortly afterwards the Jewish family moved into a much frequented street in the town' (ibid., p. 359). This transformation was naturally preceded by the prudent behaviour of the Jewish family, characterised by a desire to minimise conflicts, but with a clear delineation of the boundaries of infringement upon privacy: the family did not react in any way to the provocation they suffered during Easter week until the moment when the mob breached the boundaries of their land — at that moment a vessel full of filthy water was thrown out of the window at them. The recollection ends with the statement that within the space of ten years three Jewish families had settled in Sobotka, though at the same time Turnovský explains the process of their unproblematic assimilation by means of their patriotism, by which the text relates to the Kapperian⁵ tradition of tolerance towards Jews upon the condition of a clear declaration of Czech identity: 'And before a decade had passed, three Jewish families had settled in the town, one of which became especially popular among the townfolk. Its chief, Father Lustig, was the founder of the Citizens' Assembly, and was actively involved in the patriotic movement as an example to his fellow believers, most of whom to this day — unfortunately — do not wish to understand that they have a duty to the nation in which they enjoy equal civil rights. Once all Jews understand this, even the few remaining examples of anti-Semitism that appear here will disappear' (ibid.). It is clear from Turnovský's memoir that the otherness of the Jews was acceptable to society and magnanimously tolerated on the condition of the suppression of the experience of Jewish ethnicity in favour of Czech national identity. At the same time it points indirectly to a fundamental issue of the time relating to Jewishness: whether it is possible to separate Jewishness as a nation from the Jewish religion.⁶

5 Siegfried Kapper (1820–1879), a Jewish poet who 'bound the question of his Czech nationality closely together with his Jewishness. He declares himself to be Czech, but does not want to renounce his Jewishness' (Donath 1923, p. 13). He wrote the collection of poems *České listy* (Czech Letters), which was subjected to harsh criticism by Karel Havlíček Borovský in *Česká včela* (1846, pp. 355–356, 367, 371–372). Havlíček reacted to the national question raised by Kapper and his desire for assimilation with the Czech nation, by stating that 'it is impossible to have two homelands, two nations and to serve two masters at the same time' (Havlíček Borovský 1846, p. 355).

6 Karel Havlíček, in his aforementioned criticism of Kapper's *Czech Letters*, denies this possibility: 'For in the case of the Israelites it is not possible only to pay regard to their faith and religion, as if the Czechs could be Catholics, Protestants, Mosaics and perhaps even Mohammedans: but also and above all we must take into account their origin and nationality' (Havlíček Borovský 1846, p. 355).

Shortly afterwards (a year after Turnovský's book of remembrance), the Otto publishing house published Karolina Světlá's *Upomínky* (1901) and in the next decade also the two-volume *Vzpomínky z cest a života* by Svatopluk Čech (1908 and 1910). Whereas in both Turnovský's and Čech's works the recollection of an encounter with the figure of the Jew forms a separate compositional unit (in Turnovský's it is separated from the preceding text only graphically, but in Čech's work we find a separate extensive chapter entitled 'Různí židé' — 'Various Jews'), Karolina Světlá inserted cultural and historical realia relating to Jewishness (a description of the approach taken towards Jews in the period before 1848) into the flow of the text, together with memories of her school years and of her intense relationship with her sister Sophie. She describes how as young girls, on their walks full of fantasising dialogues, they encountered various kinds of people, including nuns and rabbis — and also Jews. Her recollection is presented with an emphasis on the unprejudiced attitude of the two sisters towards them, since they were both intimately acquainted with biblical texts: 'For the Jews were then for us still a nation called upon by God to achieve great things, and we always deeply regretted that they should now live in subjugation and contempt' (Světlá 1901, p. 179). Světlá also describes the disdainful relationship of the majority society towards the Jewish community from a personal distance, and states that the present generation (at the turn of the century) would no longer be able to comprehend such behaviour: 'Many people addressed every Jew using the pejorative, informal "you", and anything they took from the hands of a Jew they wiped demonstratively before their eyes, as if they were afraid of sullyng themselves. While out walking, few people remained seated on a bench if joined there by a Jew, which in any case rarely happened, since Jews on their walks did not dare to sit among Christians' (ibid.). A paradox is that despite her declared lack of prejudice towards the Jewish nation, narrated in a romanticising spirit in connection with the naivety of youth, Světlá's memoir nevertheless then veers off in the direction of a bitter personal affirmation of the anti-Semitic stereotype of Jews as hungry for money and power: 'We did not cease to envelop them with the glow of martyrdom, and to extend our warmest sympathy to them, until we saw how they revelled in their yearned-for freedom, thinking of nothing but how to enrich themselves and help to oppress our own nation by all possible means, as if they had never themselves known subjugation' (ibid., pp. 181–182). Thus, even in Světlá's work we are witnesses to the dominant 'national anti-Semitic attitude' of the time — if the Jews, whose lives she had observed, did not place their own thought in the intellectual services of the Czech national community (which was desirable, because they should understand from their own experience the wish to emancipate themselves from national oppression), the aforementioned traditional national stereotypes predominated in her thinking.⁷

7 A similar mentality was inherent also for example in Jan Neruda, whose anti-Semitic speeches are documented in the anthology *Jan Neruda a židé* (Jan Neruda and the Jews, Frankl — Toman 2012), which focuses on understanding Neruda's stance towards Jewishness, and the appropriateness of using the term anti-Semite, etc. (Homoláč 2013; Mareš — Randák 2013; Haman 2013).



In terms of genre, the chapter 'Různí židé' in Svatopluk Čech's *Vzpomínky z cest a života* oscillates between memoirs and a travelogue sketch.⁸ Before this text was included in the aforementioned collection of memoirs, it was published in 1884 in the book *Kresby z cest* (Sketches from Travels) and made references to Chekhov's journey to the East (Galicia, Russia, Crimea, Caucasus, Turkey), which he took in 1874. The text is introduced by a quotation from the prophecy of Jeremiah — 'I will scatter them among nations which neither they nor their fathers knew' (Čech 1910, p. 199) — which justifies the author's intention to present an image of variants of Jewishness based on his experiences from his travels. Before describing his own journey, Čech attempts to outline the general traits of the Jewish character:

The Jew is not wandering by nature. He loves a stable hearth, he likes to stay close to the ashes of his fathers, and he builds a solid stone shrine in which he, followed by his sons and his grandsons' grandsons, would worship in the manner of old the one great living God of Israel. And yet he is scattered to all the corners of the world! (ibid., pp. 199–200).

To this statement the author adds also the prevalent image of the Jew of that time, from which it is evident that despite all his apparent efforts not to write about Jews from an anti-Semitic position or to trigger negative connotations, he plays upon the reader's familiarity with the stereotypical conception of the Jew.⁹ He speaks of the 'national character of the face,' and states that 'this distinctive face, which has grown together in our imagination with the ordinary universal European costume, only little modulated according to self-made taste [...] is frequently the only obstacle that stands in the way of the complete outward merging of the Jews with the rest of the Western population' (ibid., p. 200). When describing a Polish or Galician household, he cannot resist asking the rhetorical question, 'Who has never heard of his [the Jew's] exemplary uncleanliness?' Indeed, he mentions filth as a characteristic Jewish trait several times throughout the entire text: 'I spied a figure somewhere among the crowd of dirty Jews...' (ibid., p. 202); 'In the end I exchanged my money with one of those squalid little money changers who carried their currencies around us in their hands and on their backs' (ibid., pp. 205–206). He even places this above all other traits when he includes it in the final sentence of the entire text, in which he talks about the last, 'somewhat sullied' picture of his road map (ibid., p. 236).¹⁰ Through his description of the experience of changing money, he accentuates the

8 'Texts on the theme of travel describe and problematise encounters with otherness — with the strange, the foreign, the other. One's self-image and the image of the other are two complementary aspects of a single human consciousness. A view in which a foreign reality serves as a surface of reflection enables a new, differentiated, potentially critical view of one's own reality' (Heller 2012, p. 393).

9 On negative stereotyping of Jews in Czech prose, see Jiří Holý (2013) or Robert B. Pynsent (1996).

10 Světlá also in her aforementioned memoirs mentions a 'purely oriental uncleanliness', leading especially in women to a specific disease of the eyes, which apparently disappeared when Jews adopted Christian morals and customs (Světlá 1901, p. 180).



stereotype of the Jew — a cunning fraudster, whose duplicity he even compares to the figure of Judas Iscariot. Of course, he also emphasises the importance of piety in the lives of the Jews when he compares the train on which he travelled through Poland to a Jewish tabernacle. He also presents a description of the Karaites, whom he refers to as a ‘minor Jewish sect’ (ibid., p. 212) — de facto separating them from the previous description by stating that he would not have recognised such a religiously formed Jew had he not been notified in advance by a fellow passenger, and also by his subsequent description of a somewhat different type of piety, which is dominated by an emphasis on strict honesty and the adherence to an unusual reverence for their exemplary morals (ibid.). Čech concludes the chapter with a reference to another renowned Jewish trait — a specific sense of humour. The author describes an encounter with a Hungarian of Czech origin, who was paid by a certain English company to call upon Jews to adopt the Christian faith. He joined him and saw how he approached one of them, only to be quickly dismissed. He asked him the reason for the Jew’s rejection of his evangelising address. This consisted in the statement that, in to his own words, the Jew ‘has a multitude of relatives, acquaintances and powerful intermediaries in his own heaven; what would he do in our heaven, where he does not have a single friend?’ (ibid., p. 236).

Although Svatopluk Čech also played upon the reader’s familiarity with stereotypes relating to the Jewish community, the travelogue character of the text in which the chapter on Jews is set led to a suppression of the narrator’s personal attitudes towards the issue of the Jews. This is probably also the reason why no significant interconnection with the theme of Czech nationality appears in this passage. However, what brings Čech’s travelogue memoir closest to a fictionalised memoir is the way in which it is directed towards a concluding, humorous punchline, which makes it possible to sum up the distance between the narrator and the described cultural otherness of the Jewish population by means of benevolent humour.

FICTIONALISED MEMOIRS (LIER, KOMPERT, NOVÁKOVÁ)

JEWISHNESS AS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY (JAN LIER)

In all three texts mentioned above, the figure of the Jew features in connotations of otherness, difference, foreignness, to which it is necessary to relate and which needs to be described. However, we can also find texts whose authors did not feel any need to emphasise particularly the Jewish identity of the depicted character — such an example can be found in Jan Lier’s short story *Můj přítel Gerson* (*My Friend Gerson*), which draws upon the author’s own personal memory.¹¹ The tragic fate of the protagonist is not caused by his Jewishness, about which the reader learns rather indirectly (via his name, Levi Gerson), but by his character traits — his kindness, timidity, trustworthiness, and his inability to stand up to manipulators (his cousin Popper, with whom went into business and who eventually abandoned him; the domineering

¹¹ First published in *Kalendář česko-židovský* in 1895, subsequently included in the fourth volume of Lier’s selected writings *S ptačí perspektivy* (*From a Bird’s Eye View*, 1910).



servant girl Lízinka, who thwarted Gerson's plans for an advantageous marriage and despite his attempts to resist became the mother of his child). Similarly, diversity of political opinions is not depicted in the story in a prejudiced manner:

But in the case of both the chaplain and Gerson we sometimes clashed in a cruel and upsetting battle, which plagued our friendly spirits in equal measure. But the object of our disputes was different than in the parish garden. Gerson was from somewhere in the vicinity of Žatec, with a German upbringing, and was taught to treat our desires with suspicion and rejection. He thus incited me to fierce attacks on those grudging opinions for which he found no emphatic support within his submissive soul (Lier 1920, pp. 145–146).

Within the context of Lier's work, it is not his religious persuasion that is of interest in the figure of Gerson; he is rather a document of social criticism in the spirit of Neruda, a realistic image of interpersonal relations in rural Moravia (Vranov). For this reason also, the story ends with the statement that Gerson was killed by his goodness: 'And perhaps atavism. He was from the sanctified House of Levi, from the spiritual aristocracy, whose good breeding discouraged him from engaging in the crude existential struggle that fate and people demanded of him' (ibid., p. 152). The descendants of Levi — the third son of Jacob — are referred to as Levites. They were originally chosen to serve in a tabernacle in the wilderness, and they are subsequently linked with various roles in the temple: assistants to priests, temple singers, musicians, teachers (Newman — Sivan 1992). Lier made use of an indirect characteristic associated with a significant section of the Jewish nation in order to create a metaphor for the unhappy fate of an educated and sensitive person. In this case, the Jewish context of the personal history of the title character is de facto no more than an embellishment of the story.

INTO ONE'S OWN RANKS (LEOPOLD KOMPERT)

Also of significance for our examination of the memoir literature of the late 19th century are texts that thematise Jewishness not in terms of the perception of a foreign entity, but rather via the understanding of one's own culture. For this purpose, we can once again consult the *Kalendář česko-židovský*.¹² In its seventeenth annual edition (1897/98) we find a fictionalised memoir by Leopold Kompert,¹³ entitled *Když si náš*

12 Published between the years of 1881–1939 by the *Spolek českých akademiků-židů* (Association of Czech Academic Jews). This organisation endeavoured to cultivate Czech-Jewish relations, professing its allegiance to the Czech nation following on from the Kapperian tradition. Indeed, in 1920 the organisation renamed itself the *Akademický spolek Kapper* (Kapper Academic Association) in his honour. It was dissolved by the Gestapo in 1939 (Anonymous 2016).

13 Leopold Kompert (1822–1886), author of the late romantic generation; in his works he frequently thematised problems of the coexistence of the Jewish minority with the majority (Czech) society — e.g. via an image of unequal love between a Jewish and non-Jewish partner (Holý — Nichtburgerová 2016, p. 11).

dědeček babičku bral (When our Grandfather Married our Grandmother), wherein the situation of the Jewish community in a small, unnamed town in northern Bohemia during the time of Maria Theresa is depicted with poignant and humorous hyperbole. The potency of the image is accentuated by the romanticising element of the character of the young rabbi, who, though he is expected with full honours, arrives at the place of his future employment incognito, in order to see for himself the true behaviour of his fellow believers. As an insignificant and penniless newcomer he is invited by the community to celebrate the Sabbath, but all that remains for him is a place in a poor family. However, it is precisely here that his learning, piety and wisdom are recognised and appreciated — not only by the father of the family, but especially by the eldest teenage daughter, who recognises the poor newcomer to be an exceedingly rare and gifted person. Consequently she later becomes the rabbi's wife.

Kompert's text is entirely free of the need to thematise Jewishness in contrast with the majority society.¹⁴ It was intended for readers familiar with Jewish customs and the internal social hierarchy of the community, exposing its weaknesses with humour. It is necessary to point out that the editorial board of the periodical in which the memoir was published clearly declared the need for the Jewish population to assimilate into the Czech population,¹⁵ professed its allegiance to the legacy and history of the Czech nation,¹⁶ and already in the first issue of the first year, in the entertainment section of the calendar printed a biography of Siegfried Kapper (Zirkl 1881–1882, pp. 70–76), as well as an anonymous poem commemorating the act of the adoption of the Jewish nation into the Slavic community:

*Hail to my motherland,
grant your love to your son,
who in your womb wishes to abide
as a child in the lap of its dear mother.*

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- 14 According to the typology of Alexej Mikulášek, this is the only one of the texts analysed here that could be described as an expression of Jewish literature, since it is free of the identity tension between the self-identity of the author and the heterogeneous identity of the portrayed character (Mikulášek 2020, p. 57).
- 15 Published under the auspices of the Spolek českých akademiků-židů, and the proclamation printed at the end of the first issue after the statutes of the association clearly declared that 'our association is not a confessional entity, but is solely and exclusively of national significance. [...] It has been our rightful pleasure to note in recent times how the Czech national consciousness has spread among our fellow believers throughout the Czech lands, and we have observed with sincere joy the considerable numbers of our fellow believers who have recently declared themselves to be of Czech nationality. We therefore express our just hope that — as you did a short time ago — now also you will make use of every opportunity to demonstrate your Czech national persuasion' (Fuchs — Zirkl 1881–1882, p. 148).
- 16 A noteworthy text within this context is August Stein's essay *Židé v Čechách* (The Jews in Bohemia), in which the author states that although Jews, having been scattered throughout the whole world, lack their own nationality, if they live in the midst of an 'awakened nation, conscious of its nationality, then the Jew cannot and should not remain without a nationality' (Stein 1881–1882, p. 83).



*Though he is not born of the family of the Children of Glory,
he nonetheless wishes to be your son,
he dedicates himself to you through his song,
composed on the altar of your love*
(Anonymous 1881–1882, p. 69).

In the view of the periodical it was therefore not especially desirable to accentuate the otherness of the Jewish community, but rather to declare its free existence, a role entirely fulfilled by Kompert's humorous text.¹⁷

WITHIN THE CONTEXTS OF CREATION (TERÉZA NOVÁKOVÁ)

The endeavour to follow on from Kapper's attempt to define a Jewish identity upon a background of the Czech aspirations for a national revival was one of the acceptable adaptation tendencies especially for intellectuals — as was evident from the aforementioned effort of the Jewish academics. However, we can also find it in Teréza Nováková's fictionalised memoir, which grows into a short story with autobiographical elements entitled 'Z mého rodného domu' (From My Native House), included in the collection of prose works *Z měst i ze samot* (From Towns and from Solitudes). The volume was first published in 1890, and again after the author's death in 1917. The author had previously published the text in 1883 in the periodical *Jitřenka*. In the subtitle it is directly stated that it concerns a memoir of the 1860s.¹⁸ The genre of the memoir is wholly fulfilled in the initial pages of the text: it consists of lyricised recollections covering four and a half printed pages, describing with a certain amount of nostalgia the environment of the writer's childhood; its composition shifts from the macro-space (Prague) to the micro-space (her native house). However, this distinctly subjectively coloured passage is followed by a compositional break (also marked by the graphic separation of both parts). The author formulated the second part of the text more distinctly in a spirit of literary fiction (the genre of sketches, short stories). However much the reader's impression of the authenticity of the narration is repeatedly confirmed during the process of reading the first part (the first-person narrator, references to contemporary realia from the author's childhood), the change of focali-

¹⁷ In the seventh annual *Kalendář česko-židovský*, Kompert's short story 'Z ghetta' ('From the Ghetto'), translated by Karel Fischer, was published under the title 'Blouzniilka' ('Wanderer'). The translator added a commentary in memory of the recently deceased Kompert (1886), characterising his work in the following words: 'Kompert, in his distinctive manner, began to portray the conditions of Czech Jews in dark Jewish streets, where the light of modern erudition and culture rarely penetrated. The greatest enchantment of Kompert's narration lies in his masterful portrayal of the details of Jewish family life; in this regard he has been equalled by nobody to this day' (Fischer 1887–1888, p. 100).

¹⁸ Teréza Nováková may have had a special kind of understanding of Jewishness: her grandparents were Jews, who were Christened for a pragmatic reason — because before 1848 as Jews they would not have enjoyed equal social status (Nejedlý 1958, p. 20). Her mother Arnoštka even had herself Christened after them at the age of eighteen. She did so secretly, in Bratislava, perhaps so that the Prague society would not be informed about it, as she was already considered a Christian after her parents (ibid., p. 24).



sation (from internal to external) indicates a more pronounced stylistic effort and an abatement of subjectivity. Attention is focused on the family of a Jewish doctor who has moved into the neighbourhood of the narrator's family, especially on one of his children — the son Heřman, whose contemplative nature and the depth of his inner world have been shaped since his youth by the Bohemian village where he grew up before his parents separated and he departed with his father for Prague:

Thus, finding nothing in reality that gratified him, the boy probably meandered in his thoughts through sunny days spent in the Bohemian village, and he thereby gravitated towards the speech and the people themselves, whose glorious, sorrowful fate and the beautiful role which the Czech patriots had already begun to fulfil fired every tender mind with enthusiasm and admiration (Nováková 1890, p. 47).

Later on, Nováková expressively escalates the description of his attachment to Czech culture:

The spark, once placed in the heart of a child, with the onset of his adolescent years was blown up into a blazing fire. He drank his fill of the sweet songs of our enthusiastic poets Kollár, Čelakovský, Mácha and Hálek; he read with growing admiration about martyrs to their cause, he beatifically observed advances in the field of art. With what ardour he spoke of Havlíček! For him he was the ideal of the patriot; his fiery rhetoric, his exemplary dauntlessness, his mournful exile in Brixen appeared to him to be supremely worthy of emulation (ibid., pp. 47–48).

Nováková makes use of familiar nationality-shaping narratives (origins in a country cottage, familiarity with the literary texts of 19th century Czech authors) in order to justify her interest in the theme of Jewishness. However, to make certain she secures the reader's sympathy for the figure of the young Jew through her portrayal of the romantic, tormented and martyrlike soul of Heřman and by means of an analogy with the suffering of the Czech nation:

In general the boy possessed a great revolutionary spirit. The fact that the Czech nation has suffered and continues to suffer, that it has suffered violence but has never succumbed to it, undoubtedly contributed to the love with which he clung to it. A happy people, at their full strength, working at the apex of glory, would surely not have become so deeply fixed within his heart (ibid., p. 46).

His Jewishness is rebranded by Czechness, by an inner attachment to the nation in which he lived. Nováková depicts him in his youthful enthusiasm writing the epic *Libuše*, inspired by the *Zelenohorský rukopis* (Manuscript of Zelená Hora), reciting the poem 'I am Czech and who is more?', singing *Hej Slované* and *Kde domov můj?*, falling in love with a Czech girl¹⁹ and dreaming of engaging in nationally prestigious work as an editor. The only person to remind Heřman of his Jewish roots is his father: in-

19 Nováková again depicts her manifestly stereotypically: 'a blonde-haired girl with blue eyes and snow-white complexion' (Nováková 1890, p. 54).



stead of buying the youth the *czamara* he desired for a concert held for the benefit of Prague high school students, his father bought him a tailcoat; during the student uprisings of 1868, his father and his second wife hid his clothes and shoes so that he could not take part in the protests and thereby jeopardise his promising career as a law student. The narrative escalates with a visit from his father's friend, also of Jewish origin, whom Nováková once again characterises in a romantic spirit,²⁰ with recourse to the stereotype of the Jew who comes by his fortune quickly and by dubious means, in an unequivocally negative portrayal which serves as a counterpoint to the morally strong Heřman.²¹ The climax of this escalation consists in their quarrel over the Czech national question. The Jewish doctor identifies himself with the Germans and speaks contemptuously of Czech aspirations: 'I truly do not know what those Czechs want! Such an uneducated, crude little nation, who ought to be pleased that we Germans wish to cultivate them, defy us and reward us with ingratitude!' (ibid., p. 57). Heřman supports the 'struggle for dear freedom' (ibid., p. 58), and when his father is also drawn into the argument by the visitor's barbed comment, we see for the first time in the text that relations between Jews and Czechs are less than idyllic: 'I will not put up with this nonsense any longer; I will burn his books and newspapers, even if they cost me a great deal of money, and if I hear of his patriotism once more I will banish him from my home without mercy. Let him then find refuge among his Czechs; he'll see how they welcome him — a Jew!' (ibid., p. 57). His rift with his father (referring to the ideas of romantic patriotism) continues after the visitor leaves, and culminates with the young rebel receiving a slap from his stepmother for disrespecting his father. However, this only escalates the conflict, and the young man shuts himself away in the solitude of his room, from which he leaves that evening without saying a word and only scantily clad. His family first wait for him at dinner, then they search for the youth overnight, but in vain. Nováková presents the figure of the father coming to acknowledge his own harshness and therefore also his guilt in his son's departure and, as it later transpires, his death (suicide by drowning).

The short story was written at the time of Teréza Nováková's literary debut (her first novel *Maloměstský román* (A Small-Town Novel), a loosely fictionalised biography of Karel Havlíček Borovský's daughter, whose name is not mentioned, is from the same year). Both the analysed short story and the aforementioned novel document how Nováková's first writings have their origin in the morphogenetic field of

20 'Some claimed that he had come by his fortune from all sorts of machinations in relation to conscription; others again whispered that he came from a family of pirates, as attested to by his terrifying countenance. The fact is that he indeed had a forbidding appearance: his bristly hair cut short, his smoothly shaven face alternating in blue and purple tones; his thick, black eyebrows knitted together above his eyelids shaded two eyes with a monstrous look in them; his flat nose and thick lips lent his face a kind of resemblance to the Moorish tribe' (ibid., p. 56).

21 'Heřman hated that man, and considered him to represent the evil spirit of his father, who through the poison of his calculation would aggravate even further the doctor's thirst for money. The head physician, well aware of the youth's dislike of him, stirred up the father's rancour against his son as far as he could, pointing in mockery to his quirks' (ibid., pp. 56–57).

Romanticism. The main characters are internally riven, and motifs of flight from the outside world and reality appear. In the case of *Maloměstský román* this concerns the heroine's flight, motivated by a desire to satisfy her romantic passion in spite of her social status; in the short story 'Z mého rodného domu' both flight and suicide are presented as the solution for the hero in a hopeless situation linked with national identity. Of the memoir texts presented here, it is Teréza Nováková's short story that is most markedly subject to literary stylisation in connection with the author's attempts of the time to find her own artistic profile. The author eventually abandoned romantic stylisation, and realistic techné appears as the dominant form in her later works. However, even in her best known and most critically acclaimed novel *Děti čistého živého* (Children of the Pure Living), we see similar tendencies towards the shaping of a national memory as in her aforementioned early works: the idealisation of the village cottage as the birthplace of a pure national consciousness, an intimate acquaintance with the canonical texts that form the intellectual climate of the Czech nation. As documented above, her writing on the theme of Jewishness is also subordinated to this manner of stylisation in the analysed short story 'Z mého rodného domu'. Therefore, unlike the other texts commented on here, this is not a de facto isolated recollection (albeit fictionalised) of contact with the otherness of Jewishness, but on the contrary, the thematisation of Judaism is intentionally set within the intellectual context of Nováková's work, which attempted to promote the idea of reconstituting a strong Czech nation with a distinguished history.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the aspirations for assimilation proclaimed in the *Kalendář česko-židovský*, anti-Semitism in various forms continued to proliferate among Czechs. A remarkable document of this fact can be provided by Jaroslava Procházková's pamphlet *Český lid a český Žid* (The Czech People and the Czech Jew), written in 1897. In this the author attempted to distance herself from the primitive anti-Semitism that was based on hate of race or religion, in which she stated that 'it is certain that only a negligible amount of Jews in their daily lives are governed by Talmudic doctrines, while a similarly negligible proportion of Christians live entirely according to Christian teaching. In addition to the commercial law there are other practices that are observed, in addition to the laws of God and the state there are also living practices that have originated on the basis of life experience' (Procházková 1897, p. 28). However, the variant of anti-Semitism she subscribed to was more sophisticated: it was founded upon a stereotype of the Jew — an adroit and frequently dishonourable businessman, on whose interest and exchange rates many Czech fortunes depended. Procházková understood this as the 'national economic Jewish question in the Czech lands' (Procházková 1897, p. 33). The author dismissed all Jewish endeavours to assimilate as calculated and insincere:

The national disputes of other nations interest him only insofar as they divert attention from the question of anti-Semitism. He lends his support to the Czech aspirations, if they are expressed with ostentatious formalities, wherever his interests





so demand, with a kind of commercial courtesy, all the time thinking: Play with what you like, Vašíček, just be a good boy! He will lose not the slightest trace of his Jewishness if he passes himself off as a political Czech today and a political German tomorrow (ibid., p. 41).

For our contemplation of memory set down in memoir texts, the childhood recollections of Jana Procházková are of interest, recorded in the third chapter of the aforementioned text and bearing the title 'Oprávněnost antisemitismu' (The Legitimacy of anti-Semitism). Similarly as we saw in the work of Karolína Světlá and Teréza Nováková, in the text, which is most certainly not a memoir in terms of its genre, an important role for shaping the perception of the otherness of the Jews during that time is played by recollections of childhood and relating to the social contexts of the space in which they grew up. Within the context of Jaroslava Procházková's agitprop, as concerns the merit of the message this recollection is merely a peripheral comment, which nevertheless serves as a document of the gradual acceptance of stereotyping, a *growth into stereotype*. In it, the author describes a moment when, as a ten year old girl, she cried bitterly because her mother had bought the material for her dress 'from the Jew'. She felt a 'sense of ugliness, instilled in her childish mind by the contempt of the elders, from whose stories I had become acquainted with the unappealing qualities of the Jews, the mentality of a child who, seeing the world with a clear eye, cannot understand how decent people can cultivate relations with the descendants of the murderers of the Son of God, who was presented to us as a model at school and who we were taught to love. Surely all children — even without being especially incited to do so — must hate the enemies of who they love?' (ibid., p. 20). Perhaps out of a need to emphasise the objectivity of her presented opinion of the Jews, she follows this childhood memory with another, recalling the author's best friend — a Jewish girl. Nevertheless, from the perspective of a Czech Christian girl, their mutually close relationship was valued because she was a girl of a 'good heart, ideal, educated, refined, in whom I did not perceive any of the loathsome qualities that set apart the members of her tribe' (ibid., pp. 20–21). This communication strategy, emphasising the possibility of seeing Jews in a good light, even if only entirely exceptionally, upon a background of an acceptance of the prevalent stereotypes of the time is in evidence throughout the volume, and could have functioned as a trap for insufficiently critical readers, reaffirming an impression of the author's impartiality and objectivity. This polemical tract may then have achieved an all the more powerful effect with its concluding appeal that 'it is desirable that all strata of the nation, not just one, become anti-Semitic, and that all, regardless of political parties, engage in activities in this direction as an assertion of Czech state law and the Central Schools Association. And thus I firmly believe that we shall demonstrate that we have not lost our appetite for the struggle, and we shall therefore win the right to life; and the Czech shall become the full and unrestrained master in the lands he has inherited from his ancestors' (ibid., p. 64).

In the analysed memoir texts, in addition to the work of Svatopluk Čech we have seen a strong interconnection between the prevailing thinking about Jews and thinking concerning the Czech nation. Jews were either reprehended for inclining towards the German community or, by contrast, their identification with the Czech national

idea was presented positively as a defence of their acceptance within the Czech sphere. Their otherness was measured in terms of their relationship to the Czech national question, and it would be overly superficial and I dare say misleading to suspect the authors themselves of expressing anti-Semitic sentiments. In Procházková's pamphlet, however, we see an extreme position of a nationally motivated view of Jews — one which is fully intentionally anti-Semitic. This can be seen not only in the fact that she does not avoid using the word and applies it actively, but also in her manipulative stylisation, which incites readers to adopt anti-Jewish attitudes. The memoir texts presented here have shown a memory trace documenting the presence of nationalistic thinking about Jews, even if in most cases it was combined with an attempt to understand their different culture and way of life. However, Procházková's pamphlet, within the context of the endeavours of the Association of Czech Academic Jews, reminds us of the fragility of the social contract concerning the existence of the Jewish community in the Czech lands.



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