

www.forumhistoriae.sk



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



© 2025 The Author(s)
© 2025 Institute of History,
Slovak Academy of Sciences

Familiar Bias? Anti-Jewish and Gender Stereotypes in German Cultural Practice and their Reflection in Slovak Literature of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Miloslav Szabó

Keywords

antifeminism, antisemitism, German culture, Slovak literature, stereotypes, transfer

DOI

[10.31577/forhist.2025.19.1.4](https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2025.19.1.4)

Author

Miloslav Szabó
Katedra germanistiky, nederlandistiky a
škandinavistiky
Filozofická fakulta
Univerzity Komenského
Gondova 2
81102 Bratislava
Slovakia
Email: miloslav.szabo@uniba.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-9768-5805

Cite

SZABÓ, Miloslav. Familiar Bias? Anti-Jewish and Gender Stereotypes in German Cultural Practice and their Reflection in Slovak Literature of the 19th and 20th Centuries. In *Forum Historiae*, 2025, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 52–68, doi: [10.31577/forhist.2025.19.1.4](https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2025.19.1.4)

Abstract

SZABÓ, Miloslav. Familiar Bias? Anti-Jewish and Gender Stereotypes in German Cultural Practice and their Reflection in Slovak Literature of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The present study examines the transfer of the antisemitic and antifeminist stereotypes of the “pretty Jewess” and the “degenerate Jew” from the German linguistic and cultural sphere into Slovak literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. Using the methods of translation studies, the current research presents an interdisciplinary historical analysis of the images of difference in literature and partially film. This approach complements and adds to the present discourse analyses of antisemitism and antifeminism, which in the region of East-Central Europe, have largely studied these subjects separately and have not taken into account the historical interconnectedness of such phenomena or the mutual influence of the different cultural and ideological milieus.

Decades ago, one of the pioneers of research on the history of modern nationalism and racism, George L. Mosse, stated that German—even more than French, British, or Italian—nationalist ideology of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries had a distinctly gendered, specifically masculine, color. The German nation was actively made up of politically, economically, and culturally productive men, while German women were tasked with the passive role of reproduction. As such, they were allowed to symbolically represent the country as the embodiment of the virtuous mother of the nation, Germania (analogous to the French Marianne). However, the unbridled “hetaera” sexuality that male ideologues projected onto “not-respectable” women also served to stigmatize national—and increasingly “racial”—outsiders and enemies.¹ The bourgeois culture of imperial Germany identified the latter in particular overtly with Jews. Antisemitism, still largely marginal as a political movement at the

The study develops and reinterprets material from my book *Kráska a zvrhlík. Rasa a rod v literatúre 19. a 20. storočia*. Bratislava : N Press, 2022. It was written with the support of the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the Contract No. APVV-22-0301 History of Art in the Slovak State and Nazi Europe: Institutions and Reception between Centre and Periphery.

1 MOSSE, Georg L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 2020 (first edition 1985).

time, therefore used widespread antifeminism for legitimization.² A visible expression of this tendency is the transformation of the older stereotype of the “pretty Jewess,” whose attraction to Christian men had simulated the imperative of converting Jews to Christianity in previous centuries, but from the late 19th century onward, embodied a sexual threat to the moral integrity of the national, and increasingly the “racial,” community as they were imagined by male Christian Germans.³ With the rise of Nazism, these supposedly feminine qualities were overtaken by the stereotype of the “degenerate Jew,” who threatened the purity of “German blood.”

The present study uses selected authors as examples to reconstruct the gender stereotypes of the “pretty Jewess” and the “degenerate Jew” as reflected in Slovak literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Slovak nationalism also took on a gender dimension, manifested in the “usurpation of the female-biological functions of motherhood” through the cultural and scientific institution of *Matica slovenská* (the “Slovak Mother,” similar to other Slavic national movements).⁴ Though Slovak antisemitism developed differently from German antisemitism, it was an integral part of the ideology of the Slovak national movement in the second half of the 19th century. However, as it was a defensive ideology of a marginalized national movement under the assimilative pressure of official Hungarian nationalism, Jews were stereotyped among Slovaks socially as usurers, and nationally as facilitators of “Magyarization.” Modern racism was only introduced into Slovak antisemitism in the 1870s and 1880s by conservative writer Svetozár Hurban Vajanský (1846–1916), who also became the main opponent of the pioneers of Slovak feminism at the turn of the century.⁵ The first part of this study investigates to what extent antisemitism and antifeminism were intertwined in Vajanský’s ideology from the very beginning of his career. In particular, in the process of forming his worldview during his studies in Germany, and for this purpose, the figure of the “pretty Jewess” in his early literary work is analyzed. While Vajanský was first and foremost a nationalist ideologue, members of the younger generations and pioneers of modernism in Slovak literature, Ján Hrušovský (1892–1975) and František Švantner (1912–1950), were apolitical writers who did not programmatically propagate antisemitism. On the contrary, after their experiences with anti-Jewish violence and the persecution of Jews after the First and during the Second World War respectively, we can even find expressions of philosemitism in their work. How then are we to explain that their work also collates stereotypes of the “pretty Jewess” or the “degenerate Jew?” According to the thesis put forward here, cultural and ideological influences from the German societal realms motivated them to do so, directly or indirectly. In the case of Hrušovský, this requires a

2 VOLKOV, Shulamit. *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 129–144.

3 KROBB, Florian. *Die schöne Jüdin. Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum ersten Weltkrieg*. Berlin : Philo, 1993.

4 Ute Rassloff as quoted in ZAJAC, Peter. “Die tausendjährige Biene” als Mythos des Überlebens. In KLIEMS, Alfrun (ed.) *Slowakische Kultur und Literatur im Selbst- und Fremdverständnis*. Stuttgart : Schöningh, 2005, pp. 175–176 (footnote no. 20).

5 SZABÓ, Miloslav. *Von Worten zu Taten. Die slowakische Nationalbewegung und der Antisemitismus, 1875–1922*. Berlin : Metropol, 2014, pp. 73–104; SZABÓ, Miloslav. Vajanský antysemita. In *Tekstualia*, 2023, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 151–174.

reconstruction of how the motif of the “pretty Jewess” from Gustav Meyrink’s novel *Der Golem* (1915, *The Golem*) was translated, while in Švantner’s case, we have only the context of Nazi propaganda against the “degenerate Jew” in the wartime Slovak State.

It is still not commonplace in Slovak studies to analyze the literary canon with the tools of comparative literary studies, not to mention other, interdisciplinary approaches of cultural studies. For this reason, it should be emphasized that the method employed here is precisely interdisciplinary historical research on stereotypes and their cultural transfer. This concerns not just imagology as such, i.e. the deconstruction of “ethno-types” or “national characters” solely with the tools of literary scholarship, but also intertextual analysis in the sense of interdisciplinary translation studies, which deals with the transmission of images in the broadest sense of the word, including visual media. The transfer of antisemitic and antifeminist stereotypes in this sense falls under “the textual dissemination history analysis of a given trope or commonplace concerning a given nation’s ‘character.’”⁶ This study reconstructs the transmission of stereotypes from one culture to another, although the source material is limited and the transfer was by no means linear or direct. For this reason, the intertextual analysis is complemented by a historical and biographical contextualization of the circumstances and emergence of the texts analyzed, which is intended to “reduce the ambivalence” of gender antisemitic stereotypes resulting from their literary character.⁷

“The Spirit is Silent, only Raw Flesh Frigs Around.” The Racialization of Antisemitism and Antifeminism in the Ideology of Svetozár Hurban Vajanský

Sociologist Karin Stögner derived the affinity between antisemitism and antifeminism in the German cultural milieu of the turn of the 19th century in reference to the diagnosis of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who criticized the Enlightenment project as a process of alienation of modern man due to the subjugation and exploitation of nature and labour by the bourgeois subject. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, detachment from the natural world resulted in a demonization of the negative aspects of nature like illness or death, and the ambivalence of the bourgeois subject in relation to his own corporeality. The old opposition of spirit and body was simultaneously transformed into an opposition of the masculine and feminine principle and in the case of the antisemites, into the (post-) Christian nationalists’ contradictory ideas of their own in-group and “Jewry.”⁸ Adorno and Horkheimer found the roots of the “dialectic of the Enlightenment” not only in Greek mythology, but

6 FLYNN, Peter – LEERSEN, Joep – DOORSLAER, Luc van. On Translated Images, Stereotypes and Disciplines. In DOORSLAER, Luc van – FLYNN, Peter – LEERSEN, Joep (eds.) *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015, pp. 1–18, 3.

7 See: ENGEL, Manfred. Kontexte und Kontextrelevanzen in der Literaturwissenschaft. In *Kultur-Poetik*, 2018, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 78–89.

8 STÖGNER, Karin. *Antisemitismus und Sexismus: Historisch-gesellschaftliche Konstellationen*. Baden-Baden : Nomos, 2014, pp. 23–74.

also in the dead-end Christian oscillation between transcendence and “magic.”⁹ It is this aspect that makes the case of Svetozár Hurban Vajanský interesting: what did the transition between traditional anti-Judaism and modern antisemitism look like? And how is it reflected in the way the stereotype of the “pretty Jewess” is used? Vajanský’s thinking, despite the fact that he was the first in the Slovak environment to consistently use the concept of race, was still largely subject to Christian semantics. The tension arising from the apparent incompatibility of the two perspectives was manifested in a number of contexts that testify to the intense cultural transfer between the areas of German and Slovak language.

Vajanský is often characterized as a primordialist and holist nationalist who, in the face of national oppression in dualistic Hungary, sought a way out through Pan-Slavism and an uncritical admiration of Tsarist Russia.¹⁰ Given its official antisemitism, at first glance one might suggest that this influence explains Vajanský’s anti-Jewish prejudice, which older research downplayed by referring to the “privileged status” of the Jewish population of Upper Hungary, i.e. today’s Slovakia.¹¹ Vajanský’s early articles, however, demonstrate that his antisemitism grew out of domestic Central European roots, primarily in the context of the establishment of political antisemitism in Hungary, but no less so in the form of an ideological transfer from the German linguistic and cultural sphere.

In his programmatic 1881 article *Židovská otázka na Slovensku* (the Jewish Question in Slovakia), Vajanský outlined the irreconcilable opposition between the Slovak people and the “murderous Jewish race,” whose essence he cited as materialism and crude instinct. The latter were claimed to be the cause of Jewish unproductivity and uncreativity, as Vajanský argued with references to Richard Wagner’s pamphlet *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850, *Jewry in Music*).¹² At the same time, however, Vajanský attributed this reverse side of nature (“race”) to the Talmud, “a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs and history.”¹³ This text was demonized by the Prague-based Catholic theologian August Rohling as an alleged source of anti-Christian ideas and practices in his pamphlet *Der Talmudjude* (1870, *The Jew According to the Talmud*), which was published in several Slovak translations shortly after the German original, one of which is preserved among Vajanský’s papers.¹⁴

The tension between religious and racist justifications of antisemitism did not subside even twenty years later when Vajanský, while in prison for

9 HORKHEIMER, Max – ADORNO, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 145–146.

10 MARTINKOVIČ, Marcel. The Nation, Slavism, and Russia in the National Emancipation Conception of Svetozár Hurban Vajanský. In *Ethics and Bio-ethics (in Central Europe)*, 2022, vol. 12, no. 3/4, pp. 154–165.

11 JURÍČEK, Ján. *Vajanský: Príbeh odvážneho*. Bratislava : Obzor, 1988, p. 94. Despite the fact that in the meantime, historical research has proved the seriousness of antisemitism in the national ideology of Vajanský, scholars continue to ignore this finding. See: MARTINKOVIČ 2022.

12 HURBAN, Svetozár. *Židovská otázka na Slovensku*. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1881, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 289–292. See: SZABÓ 2014, pp. 88–90.

13 The Talmud. In *Encyclopedia Judaica*, <https://jewishencyclopedia.blogspot.com/2001/12/talmud.html> [last viewed on 2 May 2025].

14 Literárny archív, Slovenská národná knižnica (LA SNK), Martin, Slovakia, Signature (sign.) 138 AI 3, Zoznam kníh z knižnice Sv. Hurbana-Vajanského.

alleged sedition against the Hungarian nation, read what was then still a fresh, racist bestseller, *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1899, The Foundations of the 19th Century) by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a German-writing Englishman and Richard Wagner's son-in-law. On the one hand, Chamberlain's racial theory seemed to be inconsistent with Vajanský. He had learned a lot from Chamberlain, as he wrote to the friend who had sent him Chamberlain's book, but he thought "his interpretation of racial mixing" was wrong or unclear, saying: "He talks a lot about pure race, praises it, but at the same time he also praises [racial] mixing."¹⁵ Although Vajanský liked Chamberlain's "analysis of Judaism," he could not agree with him on one important point. In his prison diary, we find the following entry:

This morning, I was thinking about the very learned and complicated proof of Renan and Chamberlain, according to which Christ was not descended from the Jews, but from a completely different generation, which seems to me to be a non-Semitic race. I admit that it would be much more pleasant for my taste if his stirps, his *πάτῶρ*, had been Hellenic or Slavic [...]. No matter how real, positive, or proven this fact might be, it could not add anything essential to Christ. If one were to deny Christ all that is not so real, tangible, and certain (his evangelical deeds, words, and ideas), he would cease to exist and disappear from history as well as from the consciousness of humanity.¹⁶

However, Vajanský, like Chamberlain, also advocated for a "cultural" racism. The difference between them was the degree of secularization of a pseudo-Lutheran political theology, which they both fundamentally shared. While Chamberlain increasingly interpreted "race," originally conceived as the unity of body and soul, in a biologic manner, Vajanský insisted on its quasi-religious foundation. Nevertheless, both agreed in their male-patriarchal interpretation of Christ and Christianity. Vajanský's recognition of Chamberlain's appreciation of Christ must be understood in this sense: "His words: he brings not peace, but battle and sword, many are called, but few are chosen, [...] [Christ's Kingdom] causes a change in man, transforms the human being, poor in substance, physical, ugly in many ways [...]"¹⁷ Just as this negative anthropology can only be overcome by a heroic male religion, so Chamberlain's and Vajanský's secularized political theology can be summarized as follows: the feminine "people" or the "race" must be tamed by the idealism of male nationalist intellectuals.

However, also like Chamberlain, Vajanský was not content with merely disciplining the "foundations" of such a collective identity. Both men externalized the negative anthropology in the image of the enemy, "the Jew." Although Vajanský did not address Chamberlain's antisemitic theory of will in his prison diary, it corresponded fairly closely to his own statements.¹⁸ Vajanský had already sketched out a similar view of history a few years earlier, albeit one based on the biblical "racial" typology, in which he lamented the "moral decline" in

15 LA SNK, sign. 44 Dd 5 a, S. H. Vajanský to J. M. Hroboň, 5 February 1904.

16 PETRUS, Pavol (ed.) *Lístkový denník Svetozára Hurbana Vajanského z vacovského väzenia*. In *Literárny archív*, 1975, vol. 12. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1976, p. 203. All of the translations in the manuscript are the author's own.

17 VAJANSKÝ, Svetozár Hurban. Neodvážiteľné – nezmeriteľné (vianočné myšlienky). In *Národné noviny*, 24 December 1903, p. 1.

18 CHAMBERLAIN, Houston Stewart. *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Translated by John Lees. London; New York : John Lane, 1911, pp. 408–410.

contemporary Hungary. While in Chamberlain's worldview, the naturalization of the in-group, the "German race," was accompanied by the externalization of the negatively perceived physicality in the "Semitic will" that threatened the in-group, Vajanský formulated his patriarchal political anthropology in a dualistic racial dichotomy, in which a "Semitic sensuality" was said to be corroding the "Aryan peoples." While the "Japhetic races" (the white race) were born morally pure and chaste and were further strengthened in this by Christianity, Vajanský writes, the "Hamites" (the blacks) and especially the "Semites" had little regard for purity and abstinence from the outset. The latter are therefore:

To this day the greatest murderers of the ideal carry their sensuality deep into the Aryan nations by setting a [bad] example, providing the occasion [for sin], trading in living human flesh and through their literature, music, shameless enterprises, painting, and above all by chemically corroding the society around them in every respect [...].¹⁹

Vajanský learned to strengthen his masculinity very early in his life, though not so much by religious means. Instead, he discovered the benefits of hardening his own body and of "national" gymnastics, especially as a sophomore at a grammar school in the Prussian town of Stendal an der Elbe, which he attended shortly before the unification of Germany. In Prussia he kept a diary, which is a valuable testament not only to his passion for swimming (it contains a list of the rivers in which he swam), but especially to his enthusiasm for gymnastics due to the ideology of the romantic German nationalist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and the impressions left on him by the nationalist celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig.²⁰ Vajanský was serious about disciplining his own body, but also the collective national body, as evidenced by a letter to his father, Jozef Miloslav Hurban, one of the leaders of the founding generation of Slovak nationalists. Therein, he writes full of pride about the "health of the nation" as the highest value that will protect it from the fate of others, whom he says are facing extinction due to "diseases of the body."²¹ Jozef Miloslav Hurban, a Protestant parish priest, was obsessed with negative physicality, as evidenced by the prohibition of his daughters, Svetozár's sisters, from attending dance balls.²² Vajanský also forbade his fiancée, the German Ida Dobrovits from Pressburg, from dancing. He defined dancers as embodying the negative anthropology that was the basis of his racism, as people who "express with wild movements of the body their wild desires and sensual passions. Spirit is silent, only raw flesh frigs around."²³

Let us not be fooled by the fact that the Slovak nationalist Vajanský courted a German, as he was convinced—like the poet Ján Kollár before him—of her "Slavic" origins.²⁴ "National endogamy," i.e. the emphasis on marriage only between nationality related partners, which was not at all commonplace in

19 Úpadok mravov. In *Národné noviny*, 5 June 1896, p. 1.

20 LA SNK, sign. 138 AD 15, Denník Svetozára Hurbana vedený v Stendale nad Labom roku 1863–1864.

21 LA SNK, sign. 32 E 9, S. Hurban to J. M. Hurban, 19 March 1864.

22 LA SNK, sign. 126 T 39, S. Hurban to I. Dobrovits, 28 July 1870.

23 PETRUS, Pavol (ed.) *Láskou očarení: Lúbostná korešpondencia Svetozára Hurbana-Vajanského a Idy Dobrovitsovej z rokov 1870–1875*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1985, p. 36.

24 LA SNK, sign. 138 AD 15, 13 April 1864.

the multilingual and multiethnic environment of towns like Pressburg, also constitutes the plot of Vajanský's novella *Letiace tiene* (1882, Flying Shadows).²⁵ Vajanský worked on the story during a period of growing political antisemitism in Hungary, shortly before the outbreak of the Tiszaeszlár affair, in which several Jewish men were accused of murdering a young Hungarian girl, a claim that antisemites used to revive old accusations of ritual murder, but also to racially allege a perverse "Jewish" sexuality.²⁶

In the novella, Slovak nationalists court the daughters of Upper Hungarian noble landowners, whom they are thus supposed to reclaim for the Slovak people and to protect from the capitalist machinations of a German businessman and a conspiracy of Jewish usurers. The latter, mostly village innkeepers, were demonized in Slovak nationalist discourse as the cause of the physical and moral decline of the "Slovak people" and opponents of the Slovak national movement. One of these usurers, Vajanský's character Rosenzweig, wants to lead the Slovaks astray by using his daughter Rosa, "a pretty Jewess with a lush body" and a "golden chain around her neck," as a lure.²⁷ The Slovaks, of course, are not to be seduced. It does not escape their attention that Rosa has a "dirty petticoat," and when Rosenzweig asks them what news they have, they reply "they are going to tattoo the Jews [...] They are sticking a cross on everyone's forehead with needles."²⁸ In the figure of Rosa, reduced to her "dirty" sex, Vajanský has created the antithesis, in an erotic sense, of the pacified Slavic wife and mother, despite her episodic nature. As in the above examples, here we are dealing with a transitional state in which the old religious semantics give way to a racist one. The stigma of religious difference can no longer be washed away; it is etched into the Jewish body as indelibly as the racist "Semitic sensuality." Vajanský's "pretty Jewess" Rosa is not yet the *femme fatale* Salomé, whose biblical prefiguration demands the head of John the Baptist for her dance and whose specter was to spread a fear of castration among the bourgeoisie at the turn of the century. Moreover, the Slovaks in Vajanský's story are not yet decadents. On the contrary, they are brimming with health. They would have refused to watch the "Jewish dance" in the same way as Hurban father and son did.

The Whore and the Saint: Gustav Meyrink's Modification of the Jewish *Femme Fatale*

While the derivation of racism from religious semantics in images of sexual difference corresponded with the establishment of modern antisemitism in the 1870s and 1880s, by the turn of the century, the racial nature of the "pretty Jewess" stereotype—and increasingly also of the "degenerate Jew"—was no longer in doubt. Femininity pacified into the mother stereotype served as an in-group

25 On "national endogamy," see: MAXWELL, Alexander. National Endogamy and Double Standards: Sexuality and Nationalism in East-Central Europe during the 19th Century. In *Journal of Social History*, 2007, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 413–433.

26 See for example, Vajanský's poem *Krvavý khagal* (1883, The Bloody Kahal). See also: SZABÓ, Miloslav. Antisemitismus und Überraschung: Das Gedicht "Der blutige Kahal" des slowakischen Dichters Svetozár Hurban-Vajanský. In *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, 2014, vol. 23, pp. 275–278.

27 VAJANSKÝ, Svetozár Hurban. *Spisy*, vol. 3. Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1986, p. 171.

28 VAJANSKÝ 1986, p. 171.

identification tool for both nationalists and antisemites. Consequently, the feminine principle split into the labels of the “saint” (“Madonna”) and the “Whore” (“of Babylon”). However, the identity of the observers also changed; they became imaginary victims of a feminized decadence and either succumbed to the deadly seductions of the *femme fatale* or looked in vain for a way out via an extreme “Aryan idealism” à la Otto Weininger, who in his bestseller *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903, Sex and Character) connected the “Jewish race” with femininity in perhaps the most consistent way. But even this did not save him, as he committed suicide soon after.

A literary representation of the saint and the whore stereotypes which had an influence on Slovak literature, specifically on the work of the modernist Ján Hrušovský, is Gustav Meyrink’s novel *Der Golem*. It is set in the Prague Ghetto, an imaginary site of decay and degeneration for contemporaries teeming with Jewish prostitutes, sexual perversion, and disease—though whether these were antisemitic projections and stereotypes or simply an ambivalent aestheticism, as in the case of the short story *Das Gespenst der Judenstadt* (1914, The Phantom of a Jewish Town) by Prague-based German writer Paul Leppin, is open to debate.²⁹ Meyrink’s novel, which became a bestseller in 1915 as soon as it was published, takes its title from the legend of the Golem, an artificial man said to have been created in Prague the late 16th century by Rabbi Löw.³⁰ On the surface, *Der Golem* was conceived as a tribute to Jewish mysticism, the Kabbalah. Yet Meyrink’s contemporary, the great Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem, had previously pointed out that the story of the Prague Ghetto, framed by the Golem legend, actually had less in common with Jewish mysticism than with Indian doctrines or even contemporary esotericism.³¹

The plot of Meyrink’s novel is not easy to reproduce meaningfully. The narrator and his doppelgänger are torn between the search for wisdom and the pitfalls of the physical world, both embodied by the Jewish Ghetto and its inhabitants and visitors, respectively. Dream sequences, time loops, and Gothic horror visions make the story difficult or even impossible to interpret clearly. Significantly, in addition to “mystical” motifs, external contexts are also present in the text, which help to strip away the ambivalence of anti-Jewish and antifeminist stereotypes. This is the focus of the following analysis. The historical context of Prague at the turn of the 20th century matters, and we have to ask to what extent the plot of *Der Golem* reflects the status and relations of the three Prague ethnic groups, i.e. Czechs, Germans, and Jews. The narrator is German and his fear of extinction in the “Czech sea” is paradoxically accompanied by

29 GUISTINO, Cathleen M. *Tearing Down Prague’s Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics around 1900*. Boulder : East European Monographs, 2004; LEPPIN, Paul. *Das Gespenst der Judenstadt*. In WIENER, Oskar (ed.) *Deutsche Dichter aus Prag. Ein Sammelbuch*. Wien; Leipzig : Strache, 1919, pp. 197–202.

30 The interpretation of the Golem tradition is complex and has changed over time. It ranges from a mystical repetition of the act of creation through the aspect of servitude, the Golem as a human automaton or robot and the protector of the Jews from the oppression of the outside world, to the embodiment of destruction and annihilation. This last aspect developed in the early 20th century under the influence of the non-Jewish milieu, largely thanks to Meyrink’s novel. BAER, Elisabeth. *The Golem Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction*. Detroit : Wayne State University Press, 2012, pp. 18–22.

31 SCHOLEM, Gershom. *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik*. Zürich : Rhein, 1960, pp. 209–210.

a recognition of the need for collective cleansing and recovery, in the form of the demolition of the former Ghetto. The novel's Czech characters may be warped, manifested especially in their Slavic-sounding, distorted German, but history nevertheless ultimately crowns them as victors over the diffuse and degenerate Germans and Jews.

Amy Braun points out the important fact that *Der Golem* is the equivalent of British and American Gothic novels, set in dark and dank interiors inhabited by monsters. In the case of Meyrink's novel, Braun finds representations of these monsters in the female characters of the German aristocrat Angelina and her "Jewish doppelganger," the teenage prostitute Rosina. The two are united by the projection of a degenerate female sexuality, which contemporary scholars such as Cesare Lombroso and Otto Weininger saw as analogous to criminality, i.e. as atavism, a step backwards in evolutionary development, regression and decline, while linking it to ethnicity. This reduction of femininity to its supposedly animal essence is, according to Braun, even more serious in view of the absence of a counterpart of female figures such as the "saint" Miriam, whose character is only sketched out and meets a tragic end. Braun thus ultimately challenges the interpretation of *Der Golem* in terms of mysticism and aestheticism, instead emphasizing the role of social class, pauperization, and especially gender stereotypes.³² This certainly makes sense, but some questions remain unanswered. Given the much-emphasized connection between the Ghetto's demolition and Czech anti-semitism, the reader would expect a subscription to philosemitism from a German narrator allied to the Jewish Ghetto. And indeed, the characters of Jewish archivist Hillel and his daughter Miriam fit this positive stereotype precisely. The reader is allowed to associate the honest and spiritualized Miriam with sexuality only as a future mother, which is not contradicted by her physical beauty.³³

German nationalists and antisemites attacked Meyrink and his novel for this apparent philosemitism.³⁴ In doing so, they seem to have surprisingly overlooked the weight of the negative Jewish characters Wassertrum and Rosina, who are bound by an ambiguous but strong blood bond. Wassertrum is a peddler, and at first glance looks as if he has blended in with the rusty junk that no one buys from him. Beneath this façade, however, lurks a predator, who the narrator repeatedly compares to a spider and before whom, no one is sure of life and honesty, especially not women. Wassertrum is accompanied by the fourteen-year-old, red-haired Rosina who, despite her physical repulsiveness, emanates the embodiment of libido, seducing every man and even driving some mad. While Wassertrum and Rosina exemplify a degenerate "Jewish tribe" of filthy and sinful matter, Hillel and Miriam represent supremely mystical spiritual Jews who hardly need to eat to survive—and yet they are all Jews, and as such, according to antisemites, they should be united by a kind of mysterious solidarity (race). Even Miriam, who does not entirely condemn Wassertrum,

32 BRAUN, Amy M. *Impossible Communities in Prague's German Gothic: Nationalism, Degeneration, and the Monstrous Feminine in Gustav Meyrink's Der Golem (1915)* (PhD. Thesis). St. Louis : Washington University, 2019, pp. 169–235.

33 BRAUN 2019, p. 231.

34 See: QUASIM, Mohammad. *Gustav Meyrink: Eine monographische Untersuchung*. Stuttgart : Heinz, 1981, pp. 13–19.

although her mother rejected him in favor of Hillel, expresses herself in this vein. In anticipation of Miriam's violent death, the apparently decadent narrator eventually resigns to the pursuit of wisdom and succumbs to the trappings of the physical world, discarding Miriam and sleeping with both Angelina and Rosina. In this case, the "whore" triumphs over the "saint."

Such a seemingly simplistic and vulgar interpretation of Meyrink's novel is not as absurd as conventional interpretations of it might make it seem. As evidence, the public reception of *Der Golem* by the emerging Slovak writer Hrušovský will be reconstructed here. As previously mentioned, Meyrink's novel became a bestseller immediately after its release. Within two years, it sold almost 150 thousand copies. In order to get a rough idea not only of the scale of this success, but also of its background, it should be mentioned that these were war years; the novel was published in book form in 1915. What was the secret of this success? First and foremost, it comes down to the marketing strategy of the Leipzig publishing house Karl Wolf. The book's editor understood the nature and workings of modern advertising very well. Advertisements for the book flooded the newspapers, and huge red posters lined the streets. A cheap pocket edition was released and was read by soldiers at the front. How could it have appealed to them? Meyrink's biographer, Frans Smit, believes that in a situation of permanent frontline tension and imminent threat to life, the novel awakened "a need for the supersensible and the occult" in the soldiers.³⁵

Everything but the Saint: Ján Hrušovský and his Translations of Meyrink's Female, Anti-Jewish Stereotype

The memoirs of Slovak writer Ján Hrušovský offer a different explanation, one that has more to do with dark eroticism and aggression as is conveyed by the analysis of gender and anti-Jewish stereotypes in *Der Golem*. In Hrušovský's literary representations of wartime experiences—he fought on both the eastern and southern fronts of the First World War—we find the influence of Expressionism, but also of Gothic novels. The common element is the depiction of anxiety and fear of the moment of imminent death, as well as an exploration of the limits of life. These motifs are complemented by "erotic themes and sexual, especially sadomasochistic and oedipal fantasies."³⁶ The oedipal fantasies in this case did not refer to patricide, but to the penetration of "Mother Earth" by modern military technology; gigantic explosions, crawling in trenches, and wandering in underground labyrinths. This popular motif of Gothic novels appears both in Meyrink's novel and in Hrušovský's short stories. The demonic conquest in the realm of love and sexuality, in turn, forms the plot of Hrušovský's novel *Muž s protézou* (1925, *The Man with the Prosthesis*). Its fusion of eroticism and morbidity has a decadent air, not unlike that of *Der Golem*. Hrušovský's protagonist, Lieutenant Seeborn, has a tendency "to accuse women of primitiveness and animality."³⁷

35 SMIT, Frans. *Gustav Meyrink: Auf der Suche nach dem Übersinnlichen*. Munich; Wien : Langen Müller, 1988, p. 119.

36 KROČANOVÁ, Dagmar. Vojnový veterán ako vizionár: K poetike a metafyzike v diele J. Hrušovského. In *Slovenská literatúra*, 2013, vol. 60, no. 2, p. 110.

37 KROČANOVÁ 2013, p. 111.

The direct influence of Meyrink's novel is also reflected in Hrušovský's literary-stylized memoirs of the beginnings of the First World War. Hrušovský, who by virtue of his education was placed among the higher military ranks, describes the transfer of his unit from Vorarlberg, Austria, on the Bavarian border, to the "northern" battlefield in the territory of present-day Poland and subsequent deployment in the first battles against Russia. The text is interspersed with military realities and quotations in old Austrian German, and overall it is evident that the narrator had no problem functioning in the multilingual structures of the monarchy, despite—compared to others and given his own nationalist pedigree—a rather unobtrusive emphasis on national beliefs. He uses German confidently, even quoting classics of German literature such as Heinrich Heine, and does not rush into translations, apparently anticipating a familiarity with the language by an educated Slovak audience.

Hrušovský's book *Zo svetovej vojny* (1919, *From the World War*) describes the everyday life of soldiers at the front with its joys and sorrows, but also his impressions of encounters with other ethnic groups, especially Ukrainians and Jews. In between these descriptions, the author interweaves reflections on questions of human existence, digressions on the history of religion, and thoughts of violence, love, and hate. As the front approaches, he prepares for a confrontation with death, and thoughts of dying evoke decadent masochistic fantasies, "I love my original sin [...]"³⁸ His preparation or transition into a state of animalistic disintegration of the individual self is facilitated by alcoholic intoxication. He and the other soldiers become dependent on local Jewish tavern keepers and their wives or daughters in their efforts to procure drinks. The narrator conveys his impression of his encounter with them with a literary reference:

If I had known the Golem at the time, well, I'd say it was Rosina. Rosina with a big head and a numb face. Even Wassertrum was looking out of the window, grey, and with a small, fuzzy cap on his head. Rosina sells schnapps, old chocolate, moldy candies—and herself, too, in the cornfield behind the garden in the evening.³⁹

This fantasy prompts the narrator to reflect on his prejudice. He is very critical of the inconsistency and insincerity of Christians who preach water and drink wine. By their contempt and their assigning of collective guilt for the death of Jesus Christ, Christians are said to have caused the Jews not to disappear from the face of the earth and become Christians themselves; "Our original sin is these parasites."⁴⁰ But according to the narrator, this does not change the fact that Jews hate Christians sincerely and from the bottom of their hearts, and ultimately does not change the legitimacy of antisemitism, "Feelings are rampant and are not subject to criticism, much less analysis. One cannot change the past, ergo, one is happy to dust off the caftan when Wassertrum is sticking in it."⁴¹

38 HRUŠOVSKÝ, Ján. *Zo svetovej vojny: Halič, Ruské Poľsko, 1914, vol. 1*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin : Kníhtlačiarsky účastinársky spolok, 1919, p. 75. The narrator finds inspiration for this quasi-mystical experience of military death in the memory of his sister's recitation of a song by Robert Schumann, actually a setting of Heinrich Heine's poem about the inner satisfaction and reward of sacrificing family happiness for the sake of military loyalty.

39 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 81.

40 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 84.

41 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 84.

Following the confession “I love my original sin,” the narrator does not just approach the Wassertrums, but the Rosinas as well. It is enough if they become a little more beautiful—and that happens in a drunken stupor. When the soldiers next ask for a beer, they unexpectedly encounter resistance, “A handsome, black-eyed Jewess, protected by a bottle-covered counter, sighs, rolls her eyes, shrugs her shoulders: ‘Kein Bier, kein Bier! She doesn’t hef beer, doesn’t hef!’”⁴² The cheating, black-eyed beauty is not softened by the “fat purse” or the whisper in her “dirty ear.” On the contrary, she calls her mother, an equally “fat” and equally “dirty Jewess,” to her aid, and together they jeer the soldiers. When the “little devil” is about to cheat the narrator on *bryndza* (a Slovak-style soft cheese made from sheep’s milk), anger flares up in him and he threatens to report her. In response, the guest is ushered into a filthy “extra” room (reminding him of the beer halls of Salzburg). The narrator eagerly digs into the *bryndza* with memories of his Slovak home and its other attractions springing forward in his mind, “Even the frail, slim figure of Miss Annuška came to mind [...]”⁴³ All around are drunken officers and no one takes any notice of him until “Girl No. 2” enters the scene, “with an armful of beer bottles. That was a girl! Only around Lemberg do you see such beautifully developed Jewesses. Nothing but a sly smile, fire and love. She was brimming with passion and youth.”⁴⁴ Thanks to the stripes on his uniform, the narrator quickly convinces her to bring him one bottle after another, so much that at some point, all is obscured by a haze in which the swearing of the pretty Jewess mingles with the singing of drunken Austrian and Hungarian officers. All the narrator remembers next is that he climbs out the window, everything twists with him, and he falls “into something immensely deep and black [...]”⁴⁵

The fact that the reception of Meyrink’s *Der Golem* did not consist of a superficial adoption of gender or anti-Jewish stereotypes underlines the motif of forgetting. Unlike Meyrink’s narrator, who is trying to remember, with Hrušovský’s narrator, the loss of memory persists even after the excess—the “Golem” here is not a medium of recollection, but rather of suppression. Intoxication with alcohol and “pretty Jewesses” allows the narrator to “love his original sin,” while at the same time suppressing the aftermath, which in war meant forgetting the violence. This observation may relate to memories of the punitive expedition at the end of the book, which the narrator only fleetingly mentions, announcing that he will “keep quiet” about it.⁴⁶ In Hrušovský’s silence, Jelena Paštéková suspects a trace of a “self-preserving, perhaps even art-therapeutic fading of memory. [...] From the distance of today, his silence seems to be perhaps the most shaky, hidden secret of the book.”⁴⁷

Hrušovský’s translation of the gender and anti-Jewish stereotypes from Meyrink’s novel is not only proof that frontline soldiers did not have to read *Der Golem* out of “transcendental” motives, the decadent repression of the heroic male

42 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 91 (German expression in the Slovak original).

43 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 95.

44 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, pp. 96–97.

45 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 99.

46 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1919, p. 245.

47 PAŠTEKOVÁ, Jelena. Plusquamperfektum. In *Slovenská literatúra*, 2007, vol. 54, no. 6, p. 434.

subject through fantasies of merging with matter—embodied by the “pretty Jewess” stereotype—seems to have helped him to suppress the trauma of war. Moreover, in Hrušovský’s later work, where modernism receded into the background at the expense of nationalist ideology, the stereotype of the *femme fatale* was eventually morally eclipsed by the paradigm of the saint, only hinted at in the reminiscence of “Miss Annuška” in the memories of the First World War. Both gender stereotypes are devoid of any connection with Jewishness, which may be related to other experiences from the immediate post-war period, at a time in Upper Hungary and subsequently in Slovakia when there were lootings and expulsions of the Jewish population who were accused of profiting from the war and denouncing Slovaks to the Hungarian authorities. In the summer of 1919, war broke out between the Bolshevik Hungarian Republic and Czechoslovakia, during which massacres of Jews also took place.⁴⁸ One of them probably inspired Hrušovský to write *Žid* (1919, The Jew) a short story about the brutal execution of a wrongly accused man by Czechoslovak soldiers.⁴⁹

In the novel *Peter Pavel na prahu nového sveta* (1930, Peter Pavel on the Threshold of the New World), also set in the period of the First World War, we again meet a Slovak officer in the Austrian environment, but this time with a more developed national consciousness. Nevertheless, Peter Pavel allows himself to be seduced by an Austrian officer’s wife, who is again modeled on the sexist stereotype of a *femme fatale* dominated by bad instincts. For her sake, the narrator neglects “saint” Marilla, who falls victim to a bloodthirsty Bolshevik. Her sacrifice becomes the threshold through which the narrator, and with him the entire (Czecho)Slovak nation, leaves the “barbaric” old Austria and enters the “new millennium” of its own nation-state. The stereotype of the “saint” thus definitively, even apocalyptically so to speak, triumphs over the stereotype of the “whore.” The new millennial empire crushes Babylon.

Between Antisemitism and Philosemitism: *Jud Süß*, František Švantner, and the Stereotype of the “Degenerate Jew”

The fact that Hrušovský’s female “saint” pays for freedom with her honesty and her life heralds a new era in yet another sense.⁵⁰ Whereas in Hrušovský’s novel, the sexual aggressor and “defiler” of the nation is the brutal Bolshevik without a fatherland, in Nazi propaganda, this function is fulfilled by the stereotypical “degenerate Jew.” Meyrink’s *Wassertrum* corresponds to this stere-

48 SZABÓ, Miloslav. “Jewish reign of terror?": Campaigns against Jewish Officers and Antisemitism in Slovakia during the Period of the First Czechoslovak Republic. In LAMPRECHT, Gerald – LAPPIN-EPPÉL, Eleonore – WYRWA, Ulrich (eds.) *Jewish Soldiers in the Collective Memory of Central Europe: The Remembrance of World War I from a Jewish Perspective*. Wien : Böhlau, 2019, pp. 279–298.

49 The narrator, however, explained the soldiers’ rampage by their hatred of “parasites” accumulated over the ages, “This age-old grudge against the slippery, ruthless freeloader erupted out of them with an explosive force, and could not be suppressed by any wise reason.” HRUŠOVSKÝ, Ján. *Zmok a iné poviedky*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin : Kníhtlačiarsky účastinársky spolok, 1925, p. 102.

50 George Mosse describes its main characteristic as a dual, gendered heroism, “The hero had always been masculine, and woman in modern times was heroic only as a victim or martyr, usually defending her purity.” MOSSE, George L. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 167.

otype, which takes upon itself all the destructive, i.e., “feminine,” instinctive energy and whose victim is a pacified “Aryan” woman.⁵¹ The most notorious sexist portrayal of the “degenerate Jew” can be found in the film *Jud Süß* (1940, *Jew Süß*). Directed by Veit Harlan, the story reworks the 18th century history of a so-called court Jew (*Hofjude*) from southern Germany who was falsely accused of treason and executed. After the legend was revived in a novel by German-Jewish writer Lion Feuchtwanger, a British film of the same name was made in 1934. In contrast to its almost philosemitic tendencies, later Nazi filmmakers under the direction of Harlan and the direct supervision of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels distorted the story to conform to the racist Nuremberg Laws. In the film, Süß rapes the daughter of an Aryan townsman, who cannot bear the dishonor and commits suicide. A comparison with the North American context reveals interesting parallels, but also differences of this “peripeteia and tragedy.” Whereas in the American South, the accusation of rape often led to the lynching of a convicted African American man, as the majority white male society took justice into its own hands, in Harlan’s film, the accusation results in a quasi-legal death sentence.⁵² The Jew is convicted and executed not for ordinary delicts, but for “defilement of race” (*Rassenschande*).

As far as the alleged victims are concerned, there is a correspondence between the American and German contexts: in both cases, women are presented as male property and their harnessing is understood as a “racial” attack on an entire community, as a “defilement.” Moreover, they are left with no choice but to accept the role of victim. Even details such as the symbolism of white “innocence” in the film’s depiction correspond to these semantic penetrations.⁵³ The indirect similarity between lynching in the USA and the effects of *Jud Süß* on audiences in Nazi Europe ultimately lies in the compulsion of some armed or paramilitary forces to take justice into their own hands, despite—or because of—the certainty that the racial aggressor on the screen would be punished.⁵⁴ This scenario played out similarly in Slovakia, where the film arrived in cinemas in the autumn of 1940. The press—including the Catholic press—lauded the movie, and after a screening in Banská Bystrica in January 1941, a group of about ten members of the paramilitary group Hlinka

51 The stereotype of the “pretty Jewess” or the other “Oriental” or “Gypsy,” so widespread in the films of the 1920s and 1930s, disappeared under the Nazis as the image of the woman merged with that of the pacified mother. See: STÖGNER 2014, pp. 198–208.

52 TEGEL, Susan. *Jew Süß: Life, Legend, Fiction, Film*. London : Continuum, 2011, p. 180. Nevertheless, the “American model” influenced racist legislation in Nazi Germany. See: WHITMAN, James Q. *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2017.

53 On the posters of *Jud Süß*, Kristina Söderbaum, who played the raped Dorothea, is wearing a white dress and a white headscarf. Earlier, Marion, the rape victim of an African American in Thomas Dixon Jr.’s novel *The Clansman* (1907), committed suicide clad entirely in white. GUNNING, Sandra. *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890–1912*. New York; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 42.

54 Goebbels consciously calculated this effect. In Antwerp, after a screening of the film, 400 members of the Flemish SS went on a rampage in the Jewish quarter. This was not a spontaneous outburst of violence, however, but a planned action. NOLZEN, Armin. “Hier sieht man den Juden, wie er wirklich ist...” Die Rezeption des Filmes *Jud Süß* in der deutschen Bevölkerung. In PRZYREMBEL, Alexandra (ed.) *“Jud Süß”: Hofjude, literarische Figur, antisemitisches Zerrbild*. Frankfurt am Main : Campus, 2006, pp. 159–161, 257.

Guard staged a symbolic execution in the main square of a so-called “white Jew,” as the people who helped the racially persecuted were aptly called.⁵⁵

Writer František Švantner, who began publishing during the period of the Slovak State, was also active in the wider area of Banská Bystrica. We do not know whether he was referring to the Nazi film *Jud Süß* or even to the demonstration that took place in Banská Bystrica after the film was shown. In this context, he is of central importance because he introduced the racist stereotype of the “degenerate Jew” into the Slovak literary context, eventually merging it with that of the “beautiful Jewess.” Although Švantner was not a supporter of the Slovak regime collaborating with Nazi Germany, in his naturalistic, “lyrical” prose he also used the racist stereotype of the Jewish innkeeper, the “parasite,” and evoked images of violence.⁵⁶ Shortly after the war, when Švantner embarked on a literary treatment of both older and more recent Slovak history, he oscillated between the stereotypes of literary antisemitism and philosemitism. In the novel *Život bez konca* (1956, *Life Without End*), which was published posthumously, he depicted the national development of the Slovaks from the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the interwar period through the fate of a passive female protagonist. Ideologically non-significant, the novel moved between a peculiar non-Marxist adoration of “work” and a post-Christian philosophy of life, where nature emerges as an extremely ambivalent principle, the negative aspects of which are strikingly reminiscent of Schopenhauer’s demonization of the “will.”⁵⁷ In Švantner’s case, we cannot speak of a direct translation of certain stereotypes like in Hrušovský’s. For this reason, it is important to locate historically the anti-Jewish stereotypes not only in the novel *Život bez konca*, but also in the seemingly philosemitic novella *Sedliak* (1947, *Peasant*), which he worked on in parallel and was published during his lifetime.⁵⁸

We do not know to what extent Švantner reciprocated German propaganda during the war, but the way he treats gender and anti-Jewish stereotypes in particular in the novel *Život bez konca* is unique in Slovak literature precisely because of the transfer of the central stereotype of the “degenerate Jew.” Švantner’s work does not feature female Jewish characters but only Jewish men. The latter are characterized as parasites, with the older stereotype of the “Jewish usurer” racialized through the metaphor of blood, not unlike in the German narrative. In particular, this is the stereotype of “racial impregnation,” according to which sexual intercourse between a Jewish man and an “Aryan” woman infects her blood with a racial “contagion.”⁵⁹ This paranoid notion was the basis of the German antisemitic bestseller *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (1918, *Sin*

55 NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard – LÔNČÍKOVÁ, Michala. *Dejiny židovskej komunity v Banskej Bystrici*. Banská Bystrica : Židovská náboženská obec, 2016, pp. 42–44.

56 ŠVANTNER, František. *Nevesta hól’ a iné prózy*. Bratislava : Kalligram a Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV, 2007, p. 143.

57 In the post-war years, Švantner was introduced to the thought of this German philosopher in the Czech translation of Thomas Mann’s essay *Schopenhauer*.

58 See: SZABÓ, Miloslav. Wer schmarotzt an wem? Zur Umcodierung eines zentralen antisemitischen Stereotyps im Werk des slowakischen Schriftstellers František Švantner. In *Sprachkunst: Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*, 2020, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 101–116.

59 SPÖRRI, Myriam. *Reines und gemischtes Blut. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Blutgruppenforschung, 1900–1933*. Berlin : Transcript, 2013, p. 79.

Against Blood) by Artur Dinter, and surprisingly we also find it in Švantner's novel *Život bez konca*: The “degenerate Jew.” Ervin Tóth, son of the village shopkeeper, seduces the protagonist Paulínka, daughter of a non-Jewish innkeeper, infecting her with his unbound instinct and “sexualizing” her, reducing her to her supposed biological essence; as they had sex, Paulínka has Ervin “forever in her blood” and assumes the function of a “pretty Jewess.”⁶⁰ Because it was not rape, the narrator lets the “degenerate Jew” die, not the defiled female “Aryan,” who in reality spreads his sexual essence further.

The justification for this literary antisemitism was to situate the narrative in the period of “national oppression” in dualist Hungary, when Slovak nationalists instrumentalized the stereotype of the “Jewish usurer” standing in the service of the “Magyarization” of the Slovak people, to defend themselves from assimilationist pressures. However, Švantner, who himself took part in the anti-fascist resistance, knew that the real victims were ultimately the Jews and so, at the same time as working on *Život bez konca*, he conceived the novella *Sedliak*, in which he processed the persecution of Jews during the war, which he had knowledge of from his own experience.⁶¹ Like in Meyrink's case, however, the ambivalent nature of philosemitism became apparent as he sought simply to recode the antisemitic stereotype of the parasite from negative to positive. The protagonist of the novella *Sedliak* unwittingly has to take in a persecuted Jewish doctor who is on the verge of collapse despite the fact that he shows no signs of injury or illness and his only scourge is lice. These parasites, which were central to the semantics of Nazi antisemitism and the Holocaust, alienate the victim, who, from the antisemites' point of view, is their embodiment, a paradox that the narrator underscores by quantifying them, stating that the afflicted should be plagued by “millions, even billions” of lice.⁶² As if the ambivalence of this central antisemitic stereotype, of which the stereotype of the Jewish doctor is also a version, were not enough, the latter is also depicted as a rich man who tries to buy the peasant with “hidden gold.”⁶³ Because of these deeply ambivalent tropes, the peasant's fear, which forces him to absolve himself of responsibility and ultimately compels him to kill the Jew, does not come across as purely negative—whether this was the author's intention or not.

Conclusion

The transfer of gender and race stereotypes from the German context into Slovak literature of the 19th and 20th centuries was not a marginal phenomenon, reflecting both the radicalization of antisemitic discourse in the years before the Second World War and the rapid formation of its philosemitic counterpart immediately afterwards. This was by no means a mechanical takeover, a one-to-one translation so to speak. The Slovak variant the “pretty Jewess” and “degenerate Jew” stereotypes concentrated their aporias and ambivalences, as in Svetozár Hurban Vajanský's oscillation between Christian anti-Judaism and modern an-

60 ŠVANTNER, František. *Život bez konca*. Bratislava : Tatran, 1986, p. 273.

61 ŠVANTNER, František. *Integrálny denník*. Pezinok : Formát, 2001, p. 148.

62 ŠVANTNER 2007, p. 420.

63 ŠVANTNER 2007, p. 421.

tisemitism reflects the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, which was characteristic of Slovak nationalism and antisemitism even during the Second World War. At the same time, however, the strict separation of “national health” and “Jewish disease,” of which the “pretty Jewess” was the ambassador, anticipated the future reaction to “degeneracy” in Nazi Germany and to a lesser extent, in the Slovak State. In between lies the epoch of decadence, whose weakness on the one hand potentiated the threat of the Jewish *femme fatale*, but on the other hand, as in the case of Gustav Meyrink, tried to pacify it with the stereotype of the “saint.” The philosemitic attempt to integrate the two sides of the female (anti-)Jewish stereotype was doomed to failure in the interwar period, as evidenced by Ján Hrušovský’s reception and adaptation of stereotypes from Meyrink’s novel *Der Golem*. Instead, the division between the “Jewish whore” and respective non-Jewish national saints became established, not only among the National Socialists or their German predecessors. With the decline of the stereotype of the “beautiful Jewess,” her counterpart, the “degenerated Jew,” increasingly came to the fore. This effeminate, albeit impotent, predator was made infamous throughout Europe by the Nazi film *Jew Süss*, with its shadow even falling over the post-war period. František Švantner’s work not only demonstrates the cultural relevance of this shift, which was dictated by the imperative of the pacification of women as such in Nazi ideology and politics. Rather, Švantner attempted to reverse the trend by having the Jewish and the feminine once again enter into an uncanny synthesis. However, Švantner’s correction remained incomplete, because he was unable to recode the Jewish stereotypes in a philosemitic way. In the case of the male “Jewish parasite” stereotype, its parasitic nature seeps through even in the victim role, while Švantner did not even attempt to recode the corresponding female Jewish stereotype. This was left to other (male) authors. In post-war Germany, where the racist stereotype of the *femme fatale* was transferred from the “beautiful Jewess” to the “Gypsy Carmen,” she was distorted into a Christian-secularized martyr.⁶⁴ Such a “pretty Jewess” is the subject of prose by German writer Alfred Andersch, who disowned his Jewish wife during the Nazi era, eventually compensating for his feelings of guilt by writing about the painful subject after the war.⁶⁵ In the Czech and Slovak contexts, this phenomenon also includes the protagonists of Jan Otčenášek’s novel *Romeo, Julie a tma* (1958, Romeo, Juliet, and Darkness) and Rudolf Jašík’s novel *Námestie svätej Alžbety* (1958, St. Elisabeth Square). Faced with the Holocaust, the “pretty Jewess” was increasingly replaced by figures with whom ordinary Czechs and Slovaks could more easily identify.⁶⁶

64 This tendency is reflected in the novel *Děti z hliněné vesnice* (1952, The Children from Clay Village) by Czech communist writer Josef Sekera, and might have helped to disseminate its German translation in both East and West Germany. See: SZABÓ, Miloslav. “Cigánsky román” Josefa Sekeru *Děti z hliněné vesnice* a problematika literárneho kontextu. In *Česká literatura*, 2024, vol. 72, no. 5, pp. 535–553.

65 SCHEIDT, Gerhard. Unruhe zwischen den Projektionen: Zu den Romanen von Alfred Andersch—mit Anmerkungen zu Jean Améry und Ernst Jünger. In *Text + Kritik*, 2008, vol. 80, pp. 18–32.

66 HALLAMA, Peter. *Nationale Helden und jüdische Opfer: Tschechische Repräsentationen des Holocaust*. Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015, pp. 194–195.