

The Jewish World in the Prose Works of Mychajlo Šmajda*



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SYNOPSIS

In this contribution we analyse images of Jews in two prose works by the writer Mychajlo Šmajda. These are the novel *Lemkos* (1964) and the short story *Contraband* (1989), both of which are written in Ukrainian. Ukrainian literature in Slovakia is represented by members of the Ukrainian (previously Ruthenian-Ukrainian) minority, who are considered the indigenous population of the north-eastern part of Slovakia. These hitherto unexplored literary monuments reflecting the legacy of the Jewish minority represent a source of intangible wealth and the only mementos of this ethnic group, which once constituted an integral component of the history of Europe.

KEYWORDS

Jews; Ruthenians; Ukrainian Literature; Slovakia; Mychajlo Šmajda.

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The Jewish population probably lived for a long time scattered throughout small, rural settlements in eastern Slovakia, and their numbers began to grow significantly only after the beginning of migration from Poland, from the region of Galicia, which was attached to the Habsburg monarchy (Kónya 1997, p. 52).¹ The first Jews² settled within the territory of Šariš with the support of the aristocracy, and within a relatively short space of time came to occupy an important position within the economic life of the region (Švorc — Derfiňák 2014, p. 18). The nobility often rented distilleries, pubs and

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- 1 The text contains quotations from Ukrainian originals, which were first of all translated by the author of the article into Slovak, and subsequently translated into English.
- 2 In this study we understand Jews as an ethnic group, even though in the past, before the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, they were not permitted to declare themselves as of Jewish ethnicity in the census. However, the studied prose works map the period before the Second World War. In other places, Jews are viewed rather within the context of a religious group.



land to Jews, but also made use of their commercial and financial services. Jews not only owned lands, but also worked on them as peasant farmers or woodcutters. They traded in agricultural crops, poultry and cattle. Unlike in other parts of Europe, more than two thirds of the Jews in north-eastern Slovakia lived in rural areas, and most of them were equally as poor as the indigenous Ruthenian-Ukrainian population. In the opinion of many observers, it is precisely this similar socio-economic status of these two ethnic groups that fostered their equality and mutual respect. Good relations predominated between Jews and Christians (the historians whose texts we have studied on this theme concur in this view: Magocsi, Kónya, Švorc, Hlavinka), and they were united for example by the intense experience of their faith in God. The two groups had mutual respect for one another due to their passionate religious devotion, which was typical of both the Ashkenazi Jews and the Greek Catholic or Orthodox Christians who predominated within the region. However, this does not mean that no elements of anti-Semitism ever surfaced. The sometimes voluntary, though more often enforced isolation of Jews meant that they were frequently shrouded in mystery in the view of the surrounding population, which was further reinforced by the existing prejudices and stereotypes (Salner 2011, p. 5). From the late 1840s, Neolog communities began to establish themselves in Hungary, based on the model from Western Europe, which represented a reformist current.³ Similarly to the Christian population of the region, they too split into various religious persuasions. The great majority of Ashkenazi Jews in north-eastern Slovakia belonged to the Orthodox Hasidic school, which was typified by its fervent displays of religiosity and celebration of life.⁴ At the turn of the 20th century, the number of Jews gradually began to decline due to the migration of the younger population to larger cities (Büchler 2010, p. 5).

3 In 1865 a conflict broke out at the Michalovce synod, and later at the General All-Hungarian Jewish Congress in Pest (which was held from November 1868 to February 1869). At this point a definitive schism occurred between the Neolog and Orthodox currents of Hungarian Jewry (Kónya 1997, p. 65).

4 Whereas in Central Europe the currents of Judaism were divided into Orthodox and Reformist, within the territory of today's western Ukraine and south-eastern Poland (Podolia and Volhynia) a schism occurred between the individual Orthodox groups, resulting in the establishment of Hasidism. This Jewish movement, founded by Baal Shem Tov (approx. 1700–1760), was inspired by Jewish mysticism. The Hasidim rejected the ascetic form of piety of their predecessors, and their religious practices synthesised East European piety and new forms of the Kabbalah. In practical life, they expressed themselves by rejoicing in everyday life and in their belief that every person could come to know God through mystical contemplation (Magocsi 2016, p. 135). Hasidic dynasties were thus established, headed by influential rabbis. In the second half of the 18th century, Hasidism spread to the Slavic countries of East and Central Europe (Balog — Morgenstern 2010). During the time of Rabbi Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam (1811–1899), Stropkov (a small town in north-eastern Slovakia) was one of the most respected Hasidic centres in all of Hungary and Galicia. After 1942 and the first deportations this process was violently interrupted, and many Jews from the region perished in the Holocaust. Today the surviving descendants of these families live predominantly in the USA and in Jerusalem, where they continue to cultivate Hasidic communities (Stropkover Yeshiva).



The Carpathian region is distinguished also by a further specific feature. No organised or spontaneous acts of violence against Jews took place here. In most areas throughout Central and Eastern Europe, pogroms were a relatively frequent phenomenon at various times in history (Magocsi 2016, p. 320). Individual conflicts occasionally broke out, especially when the non-Jewish population was indebted to the local Jews and was unable to pay off the debt. The ensuing seizures of property represented a great personal tragedy for the debtors. According to the view of the historian Peter Švorc, for a long time this factor soured relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish population in eastern Slovakia, and culminated dramatically at times of watershed events such as the end of the First World War, with the attendant catastrophic social conditions that resulted for the local population (Švorc — Derfiňák 2014, p. 35). According to the preserved information, however, conflicts occurred more often between recent Jewish immigrants and the established Jewish settlers (*ibid.*, p. 34).

We may assume that their relationship towards religion, shared conditions of poverty and temperament were among the reasons for peaceful coexistence of Christians and Jews within this territory. A certain symbiosis was manifested also in mutual communication. In addition to their native language, the Jews were also fluent in the local dialects, while on the other side the local population adopted elements of Yiddish. The communities lived alongside one another, but they were also interconnected. As the historian Ján Hlavinka states, ‘over the course of the years, the Ruthenians as the ethnic majority and the Jews as the economically most active and dominant elements found a model of coexistence. Since no written sources have been preserved, when seeking an answer to the question of what coexistence was like between Ruthenians and Jews, we can rely only upon the testimonies of witnesses’ (Hlavinka 2007, p. 32). Upon reading these memoirs, we discover that these two communities visited and befriended each other, and owed each other goods or money, which they exchanged for certain services or repairs. They had a common loathing for the wealthy, whether they be Jews or Christians. We may add that in addition to authentic eyewitness testimonies, works of literature represent another possible source when reconstructing the past. However, this multicultural world was shattered by the Second World War, the change of regime in the wartime Slovak state and the anti-Jewish laws.⁵ The Hasidim of eastern Slovakia found themselves in the stage of the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish question’. Even though the existence of the Jewish population had been a regular part of the life and history of these municipalities and townships, they left behind them only a few brick synagogues in the towns (some of the stone buildings changed their function shortly after the war), while in the villages there were mostly only wooden tabernacles which were burned down, with nothing remaining. As other historians confirm, there are insufficient relevant sources in order for us to reconstruct an image of the situation of the Jewish community in the inter-war period, and which could provide us with not only a better outline but also an understanding of the relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of the eastern Slovakian settlements. The Holocaust and the associated liquidation of everything that was Jewish — the Jewish people themselves and items relating to

⁵ The Jewish Code entered into validity in Slovakia on 9 September 1941.



their culture, religion, traditions, thus written sources (Švorc — Derfiňák 2014, p. 9), make any such reconstruction impossible.

Although we no longer encounter living Hasidism in Europe today, the Hasidim have left their legacy in art,⁶ philosophy⁷ and literature.

In the text below we shall focus on the Jewish world that is reflected in the literary works of an author from eastern Slovakia. Ukrainian regional literature has been and continues to be written by representatives of the Ukrainian national minority (previously the Ruthenian-Ukrainian minority), who are considered to be the indigenous population of the north-eastern part of Slovakia. Works of literature are written in Ukrainian, while some contain more and others fewer regional linguistic elements. During the period of the reawakening of national consciousness (from the late 18th century to the end of the 19th century), the authors diverged towards Old Church Slavonic, with an additional blending of local linguistic elements. At this point we consider it necessary to emphasise that the reception and investigation of the literary production of the Ukrainians of Slovakia is thus limited to those who have mastered the Ukrainian language, or that in an investigation of works from the past, knowledge of Old Church Slavonic is required. For others interested in the topic, the literary heritage remains inaccessible and encoded. Virtually no translations into Slovak or Czech exist.

Jews appear in the Ukrainian literature of Slovakia practically in the first didactically oriented works by representatives of the local intelligentsia of north-eastern Slovakia (Alexander Duchnovič, Alexander Pavlovič, Anatolij Kralyckyj). At the end of the 19th century, this part of the territory formed a homogeneous whole with the territory of today's Zakarpattia Oblast in western Ukraine (then part of the Kingdom of Hungary).⁸ In their works, the Jewish minority appears as a warning to readers mainly against the dangers of alcoholism. Since Jews were engaged in the running of inns, they consequently became seen as the cause of this serious problem, and peasant farmers were 'merely' their victims. In comparison with the field of history, where consolidated book studies are available tracing the standing of Jews in Slovak society at the end of the 19th century and up to the mid-20th century, in literature authors have focused on Jews only minimally.⁹ The thematising of Jewishness has been

6 Klezmer — the vivacious folk music of the East European Jews in Yiddish language, with its characteristic sharp changes of tempo and frequent improvisation.

7 For example the German philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965), who wrote tales of Hasidic rabbis (*Príběhy rabiho Nachmana* [Tales of Rabbi Nachman], Malvern, Praha 2018).

8 Many scholars originating from north-eastern Slovakia studied not only at home, but also in Uzhorod (Alexander Duchnovič 1803–1865, Anatolij Kralyckyj 1835–1894), or they pursued a career in St. Petersburg or Lviv (Petro Lodij 1764–1829, Arsenij Kocak 1737–1800). Education abroad functioned also in the opposite direction, for example the philosopher, poet and linguist Vasyľ Dovhovič (1783–1849) studied in Trnava. A periodical from the time, the newspaper Церковная газета (Vienna), Свѣтъ (Uzhorod), Новый свѣтъ, Карпаты, Слово (Lviv), the Uzhorod and Lvov calendar Мѣсяцословъ, were available for a certain time on both sides of the Carpathians, and thus ideas could be freely disseminated.

9 Naturally with a few exceptions, for example Ladislav Grosman: the short story *Nevesta, Obchod na korze* (Bride, The Shop on Main Street), Gejza Vámoš: the novel *Odlomená haluz* (The Severed Twig).

on the margins of interest in literary studies. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the communist regime made a taboo of Jewish themes. As Jiří Holý states:

[...] we encounter the marginalisation of anti-Jewish stereotypes in the works of authors of the classical literary canon only in post-communist countries. These stereotypes long remained on the periphery of interest. It is only in recent years, undoubtedly in connection with discussions of post-colonialism and gender issues, that the perforation of traditional approaches has begun, and a view of negative heterostereotypes in literature has begun to emerge more sharply (Holý 2013, pp. 28–29).

According to the information we have available to us, evidently for the aforementioned reasons, to date nobody has focused on a reflection of Jewish images, figures of Jews or Jews as an ethnic or religious group within the region of eastern Slovakia.¹⁰

In our contribution we concentrate on two works of literature by Mychajlo Šmajda¹¹ (1920–2017), whose output was written in the second half of the 20th century and overlaps into the 21st century. These are the novel *Лемки* (Lemkos, 1964) and the short story *Контрабанд* (Contraband, 1989). From the originally intended trilogy of the novel *Lemkos*, only the first part was published. Mychajlo Šmajda denounced the invasion of the Soviet armies into Czechoslovakia in 1968, and as a consequence he was persecuted and was unable to continue in his literary work. In the fictional world of his works of literature we concentrate not only on the place of the Jews, but also on an examination of the author's narrative strategy, the layout and characteristics of the protagonists, the alternation of narrative perspectives, the use of metaphor, and his portrayal or denial of widespread stereotypes. This will therefore concern specific literary approaches.

From the perspective of literary typology, a number of paradigms existed upon which the author could base his work. Significant types of depiction of Jewish ethnicity included the wise, morally worthy, broad-minded, tolerant, and at other times even exotic Jew. The female type is mostly represented by an extraordinarily beautiful and suffering Jewess. A rare type is that of the Jewish warrior, but all the more

¹⁰ Bartolomej Krpec, in the book *Bardejov a jeho okolie dávno a dnes* (Bardejov and its surroundings, historically and today), Miestny odbor Matice slovenskej v Bardejove, Bardejov 1935, outlines the customs, traditions and religion of the Jewish minority.

¹¹ Mychajlo Šmajda was the author of the first post-war novel in Ukrainian literature to be published in Slovakia, *Лідь pukajú* (*Трицять кригу*, *The Ice is Cracking*, 1957), which was awarded by the Slovak Writers' Union. After 1970 (after he had declared his opposition to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet armies in 1968), Šmajda was forced out of his employment and was unable to publish. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989 he was rehabilitated, and his membership of the Ukrainian Writers' Union of Slovakia was returned to him. He was accepted as a member of the Writers' Union of Ukraine, and awarded the Ivan Franko Prize of the Slovak Literary Fund. In 2008, Mychajlo Šmajda was awarded the state honour of the Pribina Cross of the Third Class by the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, for his contributions to the advancement of culture, literature, ethnography and folklore in the Ruthenian region in Slovakia, and in 2010 he received the European Union Prize for Art and Creative Activity.



common is the type of the comical Jew, who differs from others in his language, expression and customs, and is usually miserly and cunning (we frequently encounter this type in anecdotes). In artistic literature of European provenance, the most common type of Jew is the merchant, the market trader, often an innkeeper or money-lender (Sukalenko 2018, p. 461). The mercenary and heartless Jew stands in sharp contrast with the modest, poor, honourable and naive Christian. The other two schematic contrasts are typical in works of literature from the mid-19th century.

Contrasts were manifested mainly along religious (Judaism versus Christianity) or moral lines (for example the predominant 'blood libel' stereotypes about the use of Christian blood in Jewish religious rituals).¹² Allegiance to a certain nation also generated disputes and mistrust (within the territory of north-eastern Slovakia Jews often declared themselves Hungarians, while Ruthenian-Ukrainians at various times declared themselves Slovaks, Ukrainians, but also Hungarians). It was precisely during the period of aspirations for the emancipation of the Slovak nation that the Jewish population — who furthermore predominantly felt an allegiance to the Hungarians — began to appear as 'something that doesn't belong here'. This feeling was then sustained and cultivated also in further generations (Alner 2011, p. 12). However, even an unequivocal identification with one of the nations was unable to protect the Jews from the ever growing anti-Semitism. Social class was also a source of tension (the Jew as innkeeper, merchant — contrasting with the proletarian Ruthenian-Ukrainian ethnic group). In the works analysed here, a combination of a number of the above-mentioned schematic contrasts was applied.

Jewish stereotypes do not form the central motif in the prose works of Mychajlo Šmajda, although in the novel *Lemkos* we could assume that this applies, since the first book is entitled *Корчмарський слуга* (The Innkeeper's Servant), and the innkeeper, of course, is represented by a Jew. The novel was intended as a family saga in which the author focuses on the life of the main character, Jurko Holod. A number of historical ruptures are played out against the backdrop of the story (the First World War, Jurko's father's engagement in combat on the Russian front, the inter-war period, the encroaching collectivisation), as well as family tragedies and traumas (the rape of Jurko's mother by a Russian soldier, followed by the birth of an illegitimate child — a 'moskalchata' (bastard), as a result of which her husband throws her out of his home, together with his own two sons. Jurko was subsequently forced to enter the services of the Jew, while his brother Feco was employed as a servant at the parish under the priest).

In the following section we shall outline the characteristic motifs and procedures, in order to draw our conclusions at the end of the study regarding how the stereotype of the Jew was modelled by Mychajlo Šmajda in the selected works. Immediately in the opening lines of the novel *Lemkos* we are presented with the character of Jurko Holod, who is introduced as a servant of the innkeeper from Roztoky, Chaim Schönfeld. The author subsequently shifts his attention to the innkeeper, and presents to the readers an image of the Jew during his early morning prayers: 'Inside the house the landlord Chaim was already praying by candlelight, rocking

12 The case of an accusation of ritual murder from 1764 in the village of Orkucany in north-eastern Slovakia (Kónya 1997, p. 55).

back and forth over a table, with a tallit draped over his shoulders. He beat his chest, waved his arms, and with a sigh murmured a prayer' (Šmajda 1964, p. 5).¹³ In the introduction the author chooses the paradigm of the devout Jew, explaining in the footnotes the purpose of the tallit — a Jewish prayer shawl. A few pages later, he again refers to Chaim, who stands '[...] with thoroughly wrung payots [...], in a black skullcap and a waistcoat, beneath which his tzitzit hung down, here and there rinsing out beer glasses, looking out at the courtyard and then counting something in chalk at the bar' (ibid., p. 22).¹⁴ It appears as if the author wishes to stress the vigour and versatility of the innkeeper Chaim, while at the same time he creates a further paradigm, the type of the shrewd businessman, though so far without any accent on his mercenary greed. He explains the meaning of the exotic term tzitzit (dialect word 'tsitsesy') in the footnotes. The readiness and dexterity of the Jewish merchant is manifested not only behind the bar of the inn, but also on the market, where 'Chaim quickly set out his wares, smiled graciously at everyone and deftly poured a beer for one customer, spirits for another, now and then he cut off a piece of sausage and placed it on the bar together with some white bagels' (ibid., p. 9).¹⁵ In his narrative strategy, Šmajda does not provide the Jewish businessman Chaim with many opportunities to enter the plot; for the most part he works silently behind the bar, setting out his wares, opening the door, or debating 'with his own'. However, out of curiosity he occasionally enters into the goyim's conversations: 'Chaim, with a tefillin attached to his forehead and on his left hand, looked out from behind the kitchen curtain. [...] I feel sorry for her... — muttered the tinker [...] Chaim entered the tavern. He scratched his whiskers and inquired caustically: — And might I know the reason why the master is lamenting so? — What's it to you, boy? — retorted the tinker' (ibid., pp. 61–62). Chaim immediately withdraws in the face of this sharp and disrespectful reaction on the part of the tinker: '— Now, now, I think so too. And you, Jurko, don't forget to tap the scythe... [...]' (ibid., p. 62), and changes the subject. However, the tinker fixes his gaze upon him for a long time, to which Chaim responds assertively: '— And why do you look at me like that, master? — asked Chaim, as the tinker continued to look daggers at him. — I only wish you well, master. You should rather drink up some good schnapps for your health' (ibid.). However, the tinker was not appeased by the Jew's pacification, and pounding the table angrily he thundered '— I know that without you telling me... [...] You'll

13 'В хаті при свічці, хитаючись над столом, вже молився господар Хаїм у закинутому через плече таласі. Він бив себе в груди, махав руками і, зітхаючи, бурмотів молитву' (Šmajda 1964, p. 5). Fragments of the novel here and elsewhere have been translated into English. In the footnotes they are presented in the original language, Ukrainian. Elsewhere only the page number is listed by excerpts from the novel *Lemkos*. We quote according to the edition listed in the bibliography.

14 '[...] із старанно підкрученими пейсами... [...] в чорній тубатейці і у жилеті, з якого звисали цицеси, то полоскав склянки з-під пива, то заглядав на подвір'я, то крейдою рахував щось на прилавку' (ibid., p. 22).

15 'Хаїм, швидко поклавши свій товар, злегка всміхався до кожного і спритно наливав то пиво, то горілку, то відрізавав кусень ковбаси і разом з білими булками клав на прилавок' (ibid., p. 9).



eat us alive, you bastards!' (ibid.).¹⁶ Šmajda does not particularly draw attention to the physiognomy of this representative of the Jewish minority, mentioning only his tall stature and clothing: 'The tall Chaim, whose trousers were always falling down, in a black waistcoat and matching black hat went out onto the porch [...]' (ibid., p. 8),¹⁷ which suggests that Chaim was fairly thin and therefore rather poor than wealthy. Or elsewhere in the text he refers to an encounter '[...] with an old, bearded Jew in a stained black kaftan' (ibid., p. 176).¹⁸ The wretched conditions of the Jewish population are illustrated also by a description of their horses: 'Behind the station were a few Jewish wagons, their horses dried to the bone, waiting for passengers' (ibid., p. 199).¹⁹

It is interesting that with other characters the author does not describe their external appearance in such detail. By contrast, in the case of the Jews he takes note of this and accents it in several places throughout the text: 'Here a group of men were already waiting for Chaim, dressed in black coats, under which their drill trousers were whitening' (ibid., p. 9). Drill is a type of homespun cotton fabric, which was equally widespread among Ruthenians and Jews. From the description we can ascertain that the local Jews shared common elements of clothing with the Ruthenians, and thus that their social status was fairly similar. The clothing of Jewish children did not differ in any way from that of their Christian counterparts. One of the subsequent sections of the text illustrates the manner in which Jews reflected upon the religious ceremonies of Christians. Passing by a procession: 'Chaim cleared his throat and turned aside, resting his chin on his hands' (ibid., p. 8).²⁰ The author thereby expresses that the Jews did not take an interest in the Christians, but silently accepted them. In the introduction to his book *Slovenské pohľady na Židov alebo Židia v Slovenských pohľadoch* (Slovak Views of Jews or Jews in Slovak Perspectives), Peter Salner characterises this with the term 'vedľažtie' (living side by side; Salner 2011, p. 5). As a representative of Jewishness in this work, Chaim exemplifies the tolerance of the Jews towards the apostates.

Within the category of negative stereotypes we may include the speech of Jews, which is frequently referred to by others as just some kind of unintelligible mumbling (see the example of the prayer), or '[...] the incomprehensible noise of the Jew-

16 'Хаїм з прикріпленим тфлином до чола і до лівої руки зиркнув з-поза фіранта з кухні. [...] Мені її жаль... — бурмотів дрітар [...] Хаїм зайшов до корчми. Пошкрябавшись в бороді, облесно спитав: — Можу знати, на що пан майстер так мулатують? — Тобі що до того?! — відсік дрітар, зразу перейшовши на ти'. — Так, так ... і я так думаю. — А ти, Юрку, не забудь наклепати косу [...] — А ви чому до мене так дивитесь, пане майстер? [...] — Я вам, пане майстер лем добра хочу. Радше випийте на здоров'я доброї палінки. — Знаю і без тебе... — хитнув дрітар [...] — Їсте ви нас, стерви!' (ibid., pp. 61–62).

17 'Високий Хаїм, у якого раз у раз сповзали ногавки, у чорній жилетці і такому ж чорному капелюсі вийшов на ганок [...]' (ibid., p. 8).

18 '[...] із старим бородатим євреєм у засмальцьованому чорному кафтані' (ibid., p. 176).

19 'За станцією чекало кілька єврейських повозок з на кість висохлими кіньми, чекали на пасажирів' (ibid., p. 199).

20 'Хаїм, покашлюючи, обернувся в другий бік, запустив руки в бороду' (ibid., p. 8).

ish tabernacle' (Šmajda 1964, p. 50).²¹ At this point we translate 'tabernacle' using the word *bužňa*, which was used to refer to the prayer house in East Slovak dialects. However, after nine years in the services of the Jew, the innkeeper's servant has now mastered their language, and even promises himself some employment from it, declaring that: 'In Austria and Germany I could get by on my own. I can speak a bit of Jewish... and I've served in the army with the Germans' (ibid., p. 281).²² He therefore considers the Jewish language to be fairly useful. By contrast, the innkeeper Chaim, in his communication with the Ruthenians, uses their dialect. It is only in the case of a visit to the Russified Mr. Svolynskyj that, in an attempt to adapt, he has difficulty finding the right words, upon which Chaim '[...] broke into various dialects [...]' (ibid., p. 96).²³

Very widespread stereotypes with negative connotations included those situations in which the gullibility of the rural population came into conflict with the guile of the Jews. Ruthenians were predominantly accustomed to barter trade, and soon realised that the Jews were well oriented not only in this, but also in financial and market operations, bonds, promissory notes and bills of exchange. In an excerpt, the locals complain about the crafty Jews: 'You know Diller. Miserly devil! And what's more, instead of money he'll give you coupons so you go and buy your groceries in his shop. — So he knows how to make a profit off you twice. — Hm. — Jews are all the same, Judases... [...]' (ibid., p. 59).²⁴ The conflict depicted here is presented on the level of morality. The Christians represent the ideal state, and at the same time they are oppressed. The Jews, through their competitiveness, jeopardise the balance of values and make money from the poverty of others. In another passage in the novel, Šmajda presents the example of the ingenuity of Jewish traders bargaining over a purchase. To the question from a Jew (a trader in panels) regarding how much the vendor wants for a calf, the Ruthenian gives the following answer: '— Enough for at least four panels, so that I can make a trunk out of all new panels' (ibid., p. 176).²⁵ This is an example of an interaction between an experienced trader and a gullible man. Šmajda, in the spirit of Jewish anecdotes, completes this scene with the following situational response: '— You know what? I'll give you three. I can't give you any more. I'd be making a loss. You don't need a new panel on the base. You might find something at home...' (ibid.).²⁶ Whether or not a calf is worth more panels only remains a matter for debate. Nevertheless, the majority population cannot get by without the Jews, and they borrow money from them, for example for a journey abroad: '— Even if some agents came looking for people to go to Canada or Argentina [...] — And where would I get money

21 '[...] нерозбірливий гомін жидівської бужні' (ibid., p. 50).

22 'В Австрії і в Німеччині я би собі вже порадив. Трохи знаю по-жидівськи... та й з німцями служив у війську' (ibid., p. 281).

23 '[...] ламав Хаїм на різних діалектах [...]' (ibid., p. 96).

24 'Знаєш Ділера. Скупий, як марія! Та ще замість грошей дає тобі картки, щоб ти купував на них харчі в його магазині. — Значить, два рази хоче на людині заробити. — Мгм. — Всі вони однакові ішкаріотські юди... [...]' (ibid., p. 59).

25 '— Щоб вийшло хоч на чотири дошки, щоб труна була із всіх нових дощок' (ibid., p. 176).

26 '— Знаєш що? Дам тобі три. Більше не можу. Не вийду на тому. На спід не мусить бути нова дошка. Може, дещо знайдеш дома...' (ibid.).



for the journey? [...] — You'd borrow it from Chaim or from the priest. — And would they lend it? And even if they did lend it, then afterwards they'd skin me a hundred times over [...] (ibid., p. 60).²⁷ At this point it is not clear as to whom the accusation is directed at, though in all probability it is not aimed at the clergy. In another part of the novel, the possibility of borrowing is presented as a way out of a situation, practically a rescue: 'Who has any money today? You don't, and nor do I. Neither of us do. And if I had some, how would you pay me back, when you yourself are a beggar? Just go to Chaim. He'll lend you some, whether it's for some land, for a cow or a pig' (ibid., p. 172).²⁸ The following passage, in accordance with the stereotype of a dark (or possibly dirty) place, also presents a brief description of a Jewish store in the town:

The narrow, dusty window displays were full of sausages, pastries and clothing. People were constantly coming and going, and the Jews often ran out after them crying: — Wait, come back! — I won't give you another heller, — cried one man. — Now, come on, come back. Don't be like that. You'll make concessions, I'll make concessions, we'll reach an agreement. — I've got no more money. — That's nothing, don't worry about it. I'll give it to you on credit, just so you know what kind of man I am... (ibid., p. 200).²⁹

An element of the characteristics of other Jews (with the exception of Chaim) is their conduct aimed at achieving a certain goal, which the narrator indeed reveals in the above passage. Also worthy of note is the manner by which the author presents the individual characters in this section; the customers are people who shout, while the traders are Jews who bellow. The evaluating commentary which unwittingly surfaces here confronts both stereotypes: the conventional stereotype of the mercenary Jew, and the Christian thrown at his mercy. We may assume that the writer was attempting to highlight different Jewish characters, and just as he presents Chaim in a positive manner, creating a sympathetic image of him, in the past also the local population had their 'favourite' innkeepers, whom they trusted, from whom they borrowed, while by contrast they regarded others as speculators. Another contrast also emerges here: the village versus the town, in an opposition of the positive and unspoiled set against the negative den of iniquity. In one of the rejoinders a well-worn phrase can be heard: '— When in need, then go to the Jew, when need has passed, the devil take

27 '— Хочби прийшли якісь агенти вербувати до Канади або до Аргентини [...] — А звідки взяти грошей на дорогу? [...] — Позичити від Хаїма, або в попа. — А хіба вони позичать? А коли би і позичив, то потім би здер і стоцату шкіру... [...] (ibid., p. 60).

28 'Кто маєт днескай гроші? Ти не маш, я тиш не мам. Оба не маме. А готя би і імил, та скади ти мні вернеш, кед ти сам жебрак? Ти лем готь до Гаїма. Он ти пожичит, чи на землю, альбо на корову, альбо на паца' (ibid., p. 172).

29 'Вузенькі запорошені вітрини крамниць були напхані ковбасами, булками, одягом. До них постійно входили й виходили люди, слідом за якими часто вибігали євреї, вигукуючи: — Ану, ще вернітья! — Я більше ані сотника не дам, — гукав якийсь чоловік. — Но лем вернітья. Не будьте такий. Ви спустите, і я спушу, і ся злагодиме. — Я ані більше грошей не маю. — То ніч за-то. Я буду вам дати на бірґ, же би знали, який я чоловік...' (ibid., p. 200).



him [...]’ (ibid., p. 121).³⁰ This again documents the author’s stance, in which he attempts to maintain an objective position when reflecting on the Jews, their business and their coexistence with the majority population.

As the central Jewish character of Šmajda’s novel, Chaim represents a peaceable innkeeper who advises others to mind their own business and not to trifle with what they do not understand, for example politics: ‘[...] don’t get mixed up in stuff you don’t know about’ (ibid., p. 63).³¹ However, this stance generates antipathy, and is labelled hypocrisy. From here it is only a small step to servility, which can be perceived in the remarks the author attributes to Chaim when he is indirectly drawn into an argument between a female villager and a lord of the manor, in which the villager accuses the representative of the higher social class of being ‘overfed’: ‘Chaim, listening to the conversation, looked amiably at the lords, and addressing the lady said: Madam, don’t blaspheme. Be thankful for what you have’ (ibid., p. 213).³² Jews always had a tendency to look up to the ruling nation of the day; during the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy this meant the Hungarians, and then later, in independent Czechoslovakia, the representatives of the regime — the officials. In the absence of their own Jewish state, they sought protection from the government of the day, to which they in turn demonstrated loyalty. As a result, during the various scuffles that took place in his tavern, Chaim often acted as the one who calmed those present down and called for conciliation: ‘And Chaim was always mumbling something [...] He cast penetratingly cold glances at the crowd of villagers who stood clumsily in the middle of the alehouse, and tried to persuade them. — Come now, good people, go home to bed. I... can’t sell you any more — the bottles are broken. Go home’ (ibid., p. 216).³³

In one of the following chapters, the author turns the Jewish tavern into a refuge for Mr. Svolynskij, who had previously called the constabulary on the villagers. The villagers, headed by Jurko Holod, discover his whereabouts and break into Chaim’s house, frightening his wife and children. Even at this point, there is no hint that the people’s aggression is directed against the Jewish innkeeper, although a certain irritation and indignation is clear:

Chaim! Open up, I tell you! Chaim’s red beard and glassy, bulging and startled eyes appeared in the window, blinking at Jurko to calm down, but Jurko [...] smashed his fist through the window. There was a sound of shattering glass [...]. Jurko jumped into the room, scowling at the terrified Chaim, and barked: Where’s that snake! — Jurko, please. Wait a moment, please, the children are frightened... without looking back, Jurko flew past Chaim into the bedroom. [...] he tore a red floral sheet from one of the

³⁰ ‘— Як біда, та до жида, а по біді, чорт по жиді [...]’ (ibid., p. 121).

³¹ ‘[...] не мішайся, до чого не розуміш [...]’ (ibid., p. 63).

³² ‘Хаїм, почувши розмову, добродушно глянув на панів, повернувся до жінки: — Газдинь, не пробивайте бога. Дякійте і за те, що маєте’ (ibid., p. 213).

³³ ‘А Хаїм весь час щось бурчав [...] Він колючими холодними очима кидав по юрбі селян, які ніяково стояли посеред корчми, і умовляв їх. — Йой, добрі люде, ідьте домів спати. Я, ... я вже не можу нічого продати — пляшки побиті. Ідьте домів’ (ibid., p. 216).



beds [...] and under the bed he saw Svolynskij [...] Chaim, with trembling hands, unlocked the door, the terrified Rifka ran out of the kitchen and the children screamed. Several villagers rushed into the cottage (ibid., p. 230).³⁴

Šmajda portrays Chaim as a passive figure, who offers no resistance in this situation, but on the contrary humbly awaits and submits to his fate, while it is possible to deduce from his actions and remarks that he lives in constant fear. He fears not only the landlord but also the villagers, and he fears for his wife, his children and his property, as the source of his livelihood. However, he also shows empathy towards his Christian neighbours when one of them is taken away by the constabulary: 'Chaim went out in front of the house, onto the bridge, with a tefillin coiled around his forehead, with cords wrapped around both arms and a rug thrown over his shoulders, whispering prayers and looking at the constables, in sympathy with the sorrow of some of the villagers' (ibid., p. 253).³⁵ The author therefore depicts Chaim as a man of flesh and blood, with feelings, even with the capacity for empathising with the predicaments of others. He portrays not only his positive but also his negative qualities, and attempts to remain impartial.

In relation to the Jews, the characters in the novel are depicted as a priori hostile, for example the aforementioned tinker who contemptuously calls the innkeeper 'boy' regardless of his age and status. In connection with the above, Šmajda employs various lexical devices in order to express this pronounced antipathy:

[...] he fixed a furious gaze on Chaim [...] he scowled at Chaim, spat angrily on the floor, as if Chaim alone were to blame for everything... [...] what are you staring at me like that for, Mr. Chaim? (ibid., p. 62).³⁶

Here Šmajda reveals an authorial strategy, from the position of which he sympathises with the innkeeper. At the same time he nevertheless attempts to remain objective and does not idealise the relations between the Jews and Christians, as a result of which anti-Semitism is notable in the words and actions of some of the characters.

34 'Хаїм! Відімкни, кажу! У вікні показалаь руда борода Хаїма і тупі опуклі перелякані очі, які прижмурювались, щоб Юрко дав спокій, але він, [...] тріснув п'ястуком по шибці. Скло висипалось [...] Юрко перекинувся в кімнату, хмуρο глянув на переляканого Хаїма, крикнув: Де він, гад! — Юрку, прошу красно. Лем тепер, тобі прошу, діти бояться... Юрко, не повертаючи голови, мигнув мимо Хаїма в спальню. [...] зірвав з одного ліжка червону квітчасту плахту [...] і помітив під ліжком Сволінського [...] Хаїм тремтячими руками відімкнув двері, з кухні вибігла перелякана Рифка, заверещали діти. Кілька селян ввалилось у хату' (ibid., p. 230).

35 'На мостик вмйшов Хаїм з омотаним тфилином на чолі, з пов'язаними мотузами біля обох рук, з накинутим на плечі покрівцем, він шептав молитви й глядів на жандармів та часом співчутливо зживався із горем подекотрих селян' (ibid., p. 253).

36 '[...] звів дрітар злісний погляд на Хаїма... [...] нахмарившись на Хаїма, злісно сплюнув на долівку, наче б тільки сам Хаїм був у цьому винуватий... [...] що так на мене вилупуєте цибулі, пан Хаїм?' (ibid., p. 62).



Šmajda wrote the following prose work, entitled *Contraband*, with the subtitle *The Tale of an Old Villager*, much later, in 1989. A story from more than half a century previously is narrated through the eyes of the eighty-year-old Petro Hryckanyn. One calm autumn evening, he is incited to reminisce by the curious student Jurko Kurtyšyn. At the time when the story took place, the narrator himself was aged seventeen years, and as he recalls, it was a different world. In 1919 four boys from the town of Medzilaborce, together with some Polish Jews (following the overthrow of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy), were illegally smuggling goods across the Polish border. Their services were enlisted to accompany seven wagons containing barrels of liquor by a Jew from Medzilaborce named Diller. The route was meant to lead from the Hungarian to the Polish border, since the newly established Czechoslovak Republic did not yet have border guards, of which the Polish Jews were well aware. They arrived in Nové Mesto (formerly Sátoraljaújhely) together with five Polish Jews — a father and his four sons, and another Jewish wagon pulled up a few dozen metres in front of them. Other than Diller, the author does not name any of the Jewish characters. Old Petro Hryckanyn describes how they spent the night in the town of Humenné, ate their evening meal at a Jewish tavern, where they also drank a little spirits, before arriving at Diller's place in Medzilaborce: 'In Medzilaborce the old Polish Jew treated us to Polish sausage and Polish vodka'³⁷ (Šmajda 2000, p. 174).³⁸ When, after their break, they set out again on their journey, they did not stop until they reached the village of Palota, where a wedding procession was gathering before one of the wooden cottages. The travellers listened to the songs of the wedding party, and observed with interest the ceremonial customs, until they were distracted by a flurry on the Jewish wagon:

Suddenly a commotion broke out on the Jewish wagon! The Jews cried out madly, jumped off the wagon and put their heads together. They gabbled, gabbled, and one young Jew jumped into the garden of the wedding house and disappeared among the ripe cherry trees. [...] A panic ensued among the Jews. We looked up the road. Somewhere about five or six hundred metres away some officers were approaching with rifles over their shoulders... [...] (ibid., p. 175).³⁹

In the introduction to the short story, the narration unfolds in an objective, impartial spirit, whereas at this point the author switches to a metaphorical style, which

³⁷ 'У Міжлабірцях старий польський жид нагодував нас польською ковбасою і польською водкою' (Šmajda 2000, p. 174).

³⁸ As in the previous case, fragments from the short story have been translated into English. In the footnotes they are presented in the original language, Ukrainian. Elsewhere only the page number is listed by the excerpts. We quote according to the edition listed in the bibliography.

³⁹ 'Та зразу на жидівський бричці переполох! Жиди шалено вайкають, повискакували з брички і всі голови до купи. Пошвандрикали, пошвандрикали, а молодий жидок скочив у садок весільної хати і зник між молоком налитим черешнями. [...] Між жидами паніка. Ми глянули вгору на дорогу. Деся на відстані п'ятсот-шістсот метрів згори наближаються фінанси з карабінами на плечах...[...]' (ibid., p. 175).



in its way bears traces of stereotyping. An interesting feature is the interaction expressing lamenting — translated into Slovak as *vajkanie*. This term is used almost exclusively in connection with Jews, and is stated in the *Dictionary of Slovak Language* (2021) in the form of *ajvaj* and *aj-vaj* (*oyvey* and *oy-vey*).⁴⁰ Yiddish was viewed as incomprehensible by the majority in its spoken form, and could thus be the object of parody or mockery. From here there originates another expressive term: *pošvandrkovať*, which symbolises unintelligible speech. People often interpret their position in society with recourse to the binary categories of the in-group and out-group. This opposition forms the perspective from which the others are perceived. Whatever deviates from one's own understanding (other speech) is automatically foreign. In the spirit of the post-colonial studies of Edward Said, it applies that such a binary view of the world indicates an insufficient knowledge of other cultures. In his theory, Said stressed the importance of understanding the cultural, linguistic and political diversity of the world in which we live (Said 1979). The range of reactions to the unfamiliar oscillates from curiosity, through fascination, to uncertainty and fear. In the above passage the plot culminates at the moment when the officers, members of an armed border guard unit, appear. At this same moment, the bridegroom's dwelling catches fire, and they help to put out the flames. The narrator of the story comments on the situation as follows: 'And so imagine, we didn't even notice when the Jew ran backwards towards the wagon. The Jews and the coachmen drove the horses onwards, and rushed as fast as they could to the border, which was now close by [...]. — It looks as if that little Jew set fire to the cottage!' (Šmajda 2000, p. 176).⁴¹ Does the author refer to the young Jew using the term *Židko*, *Židik*, which represents a diminutive form, with the intention of evoking sympathy in the readers? He could also have used other, pejorative designations, since after all he commits the shameful act of arson. Despite this, he remains with the expressive but dulcifying form of 'Židik'. Of course, this may be ironic. In the following part of the story we learn that: 'One month later, Diller called us to Medzilaborce and, no word of a lie, paid us down to the last heller. Completely! The Jews knew each other...' (ibid.).⁴² In defiance of the stereotype he thus accents the honourable approach of the Jewish businessman, before adding a stereotypical comment referring to the mutual co-operation of the Jews within their own community. The story continues with the narrator's reminiscences of the events that followed several years after the devastating fire, when he learned what the actual consequences had been for the bridegroom and his cottage. When visiting a mill in town Stropkov he narrated the story of the fire, to which many of those present immediately responded: 'Did those Jews have God on their side?! Their God Yahweh

40 *Ajvaj* and *aj-vaj* (*oyvey* and *oy-vey*) expresses lamentation (usually in the case of Jews; *Slovník slovenského jazyka* 2021).

41 'Та уяви собі, що ми й не запримітили, коли жидок прибіг назад до брочки. Жиди і фурмани попідпікали коней і щосили спішили до кордону, який був вже недалеко [...]. — Виходить так, що той жидок підпалив хату!' (Šmajda 2000, p. 176).

42 'Через місяць покликав нас Діллер до Міжлабірців і він лем як правда, виплатив нас до галера. Сакомпак! Жиди ся знали...' (ibid.).



allows the Jews to swindle the goyim. A Jewish proverb has it that the Jewish God Yahweh has only as many rights as the Jews themselves allow him' (ibid., p. 177).⁴³ Theories about a Jewish conspiracy against the goyim were part of the anti-Semitic stereotypes that were firmly anchored within society. They manipulated people's ignorance, and in the words of the scholar Jiří Holý offered '[...] a simplified and easily digestible image of reality, constructing a demonic, powerful and treacherous enemy' (Holý 2013, p. 39). Indeed, equivalent notions of similar ethnic groups 'keeping together' remain relatively common to this day. However, the image of the Jews connects to the stereotype of an enemy who intrudes into a foreign territory and destroys the property of others, a stereotype that has been encoded in the culture for centuries. This proposition is supported in the short story by the rejoinders of those present. However, the author could not resist another Jewish anecdote, which in its satirical spirit also touches upon the ranks of believers in the Old Testament, and in a certain manner alleviates the tension. In addition, it indisputably represents a certain expression of sympathy, in which Šmajda offers what is perhaps a somewhat unexpected dénouement of the story. At the Stropkov mill, where the witnesses to the fire have met a number of years later, the injured bridegroom also appears, and narrates his own version of the events that took place. He recalls how, sitting forlornly on pile of ashes where his cottage had been, he was hailed with the words 'God bless you, sir' by: '[...] an old Jew, a large, thickset fellow in a long black kaftan and a matching black wide-brimmed hat' (Šmajda 2000, p. 179).⁴⁴ The Jew addressed him in broken speech:

*'Oh my, what misfortune happen you... I see how your cottage burn. We then travel through here, to Poland... [...] Our God Yahweh love me. He also your God. We have one prophet — Elijah, and he also your Christian saint. I like people, even if they goyim... [...] And so we Israelites too love our poor Ruthenian...' — and the old Jew reached into the breast pocket of his kaftan and took out a handful of paper credits, which he placed in my hands (ibid.).*⁴⁵

The bridegroom looked in surprise at the handful of money, at which the old Jew remarked with a smile:

43 "“Та чи мали ці жиди бога у серці?! [...]... ‘Іхній бог Ягве дозволяє жидам ошукувати гоїв. Жидівська приказка говорить, що жидівський бог Ягве має лише стільки прав, скільки йому самі жиди дозволять”” (ibid., p. 177).

44 '[...] старий жид — грубий великий хлопина, у чорному довгому кафтани і в такому ж чорному капелюсі з широкими крисами' (ibid., p. 179).

45 'Ой, ой, яке нещастя тебе постигнути...Ми видіти, як твоя хата горіти. Ми тоді іхати коло вас до Польщі... [...] Мене любити наш бог Ягве. Він теж бути і вашим богом. У нас є один пророк — Ілько, а він теж і ваш християнський святило. Я любити людей, хоч вони і гої... [...] От і ми, ізраїльтяни, любити нашого бідного русин...' — і старий жид всунув руку у нагрудну кишеню кафтана, витяг жмут паперових кредитів, всунув мені в руки' (ibid.).



*You have and you build new cottage — a house, not of wood, but of stone or brick, and you cover it not with straw roof but with cement. And if you need more money, go to Medzilaborce, Mr. Diller, he give you everything (ibid.).*⁴⁶

The physiognomy of the Jew in the passage is not presented as any different from the other characters. The author does not use visually hackneyed stereotypes of the typical hair colour, type of face, especially the nose and lips. The broken speech presented here in translation may be justified by the fact that the Jew originated from Poland, and had not mastered the speech of the locals from around Medzilaborce. An unusual and non-stereotypical device is the religious Jew's reference to the common root of both religions, Judaism and Christianity. The highlighting of the Old Testament prophet Elijah (referred to by Šmajda as Il'ka), who is worshipped also by Christians, since he appeared at the scene of the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor, is an outright ecumenical element. The compensation which the honourable Jew confers upon the abject Ruthenian merely augments the exceptional character of the entire passage, especially in the place where he states that the man should build a better quality, brick house, not a mere wooden cottage, which could again be reduced to ashes. The Jew therefore offers not only a balancing of two values, but also compensation, which is in absolute contradiction of the traditional notions of the mercenary and treacherous character of Jewish merchants, who seek only their own profit at all costs. However, with regard to the compensation offered by the Jew, the narrator Petro Hryckanyn also then matter-of-factly relates the following aside: 'From their contraband, the Jews made perhaps enough to build ten cottages like the one that burned down' (ibid., p. 180).⁴⁷ And after a moment's contemplation, he justifies the given state as he sees it: '— God loves the Jews, since they pray more and don't drink like us Ruthenians [...]' (ibid.).⁴⁸ In doing so he denies the well-established stereotypes which for several decades portrayed Jewish innkeepers as solely to blame for the alcoholism of the poor Christians. In turn, his young listener considers the Jewish world view and value system to be one of the reasons preventing the assimilation of the Jews: 'The Jews cast aside the ideology of Marx and Christ, even though both were Jews. They have their own Semitic ideology, which has protected them from assimilation for two thousand years [...]' (ibid.).⁴⁹ The old man summarises his life experiences and formulates them into an idea which acknowledges the superiority of Jewish religion to Christian morality. He expresses his respect for the time-honoured Jewish solidarity:

46 'Ти мати та збудувати нову хату — дім, та не з дровна, а з каменю або цегли, і накрити її не соломною, але шіфер-етерніт. А як буде бракувало грошей, то заходи до Мойшелаборець, до пана Діллер, то він тобі все дати' (ibid.).

47 'Жиди заробили на контрабанді грошей, може на десять таких хат, що згоріла' (ibid., p. 180).

48 'Жидів любить бог, бо вони більше моляться і не пиячять, як ми, русини...' (ibid.).

49 'Жиди відкинули ідеологію Маркса і Христа, а вони були обоє жидами. Вони мають свою семітську ідеологію, яка їх оберігає від асиміляції вже на дві тисячки років...' (ibid.).

The Jewish God allows the Jews to deceive the goyim. And he orders us Christians to love our neighbour as we do ourselves. And this is the problem. — But not even Christian clergymen abide by this Christian ethic, let alone ordinary mortals. [...] People quarrel among themselves. We should learn from the Jews. Then we would not betray the faith of our ancestors, the Ruthenian school, the Ruthenian language... — We are ignorant of our history, grandfather... — Yes, yes. Ruthenians and Slovaks! [...] — ironised the old man [...] (ibid., p. 181).⁵⁰



He criticises the weaker national consciousness of the Ruthenians, evaluates assimilation and denounces those who abandon their native tongue and the creed of their ancestors. The author pointed to these errors at the threshold of the 1990s, when assimilationist tendencies within the environment of the Ruthenians were very strong. He appreciates the solidarity which helped the Jews to overcome open hostility and persecution from the majority population. However, this did not manage to prevent the tragedy of the 20th century — the Holocaust, although the narrator does not open up this theme in the prose works examined here. He focuses on it in his novel *Паразити* (Parasites, 1953), which for reasons of lack of space we do not analyse in this study.

Through an analysis of the selected prose works we have documented that Šmajda's literary discourse does not abet the prejudices and stereotypes that provide motivation for discrimination against minority groups. We may state that the images of Šmajda's Jews tend rather towards ambivalence in the interest of an objective literary representation of reality. On one hand, some of the characters in the novel are portrayed as negative, ridiculous and malevolent. These characters mostly present the majority opinions of the society. On the other hand, a few individuals from the indigenous population are appreciated for their dexterity, ingenuity and honourable approach. Tolerance is confirmed by statements about the shrewdness of the Jews, who are even able to command the highest one — Yahweh, which were circulated on the level of adages or short stories with a comic point. The Jewish characters in the novel *Lemkos* stand on the periphery of the plot, without influencing or otherwise interfering with the flow of the narrative in any way. In their own way they live their lives, they look after their own, predominantly business manners, and live in parallel alongside the homogeneous majority population. The author creates a positive image of the Jewish innkeeper Chaim, while the other Jewish characters are minimised. By contrast, in the short story *Contraband*, Jews are the central characters, and their story is narrated from the perspective of others, foreigners. Although Jewish characters set fire to the cottage of a Gentile in order to protect their contraband, the narrator and his listener adopt an understanding stance towards them. In the conclusion

50 'Жидівський бог дозволяє жидам ошукати гоїв. А наш, християнський, каже любити ближнього, як самого себе. От де тут пропасть. — Але цей християнський кодекс не дотримують ані християнські душпастирі, не то щоб дотримували його звичайні смертні. [...] Люди взаємно жеруться. Нам би повчитись від жидів. Тоді би ми не продавали прадідну віру, руську школу, руську бесіду... — Не знаємо своєї історії, діду... — Так, так. Руські люде, а словаки! [...] — заіронізував дідо [...] (ibid., p. 181).



they make a number of complimentary observations regarding the Jewish philosophy and approach to life. They even express a wish for Ruthenians to take inspiration from them, and to be as proud of their nationality and language as the Jews are. It is evident that Šmajda's literary discourse, in both of the presented works, is markedly pro-Jewish.

The aim of this study has been at least in part to uncover the little explored theme of the images of Jewish characters in the field of Ukrainian literature in Slovakia. The world of Hasidic Jews, within a region in which the Pax Romana and Pax Orthodoxa meet, sank irretrievably into oblivion after the first deportations in the spring of 1942. These hitherto unexplored literary monuments reflecting the legacy of Jews represent a source of intangible wealth and the only mementos of this ethnic group, which once constituted an integral component of the history of Europe, and naturally also of our own Slovak history.

In conclusion we shall quote Milan Kundera, from his famous essay 'A Kidnapped West, or Culture Bows Out', also known as 'The Tragedy of Central Europe', which I believe best captures the influence and presence of the Jews within our territory:

Indeed, no other part of the world has been so deeply marked by the influence of Jewish genius. Aliens everywhere and everywhere at home, lifted above national quarrels, the Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in Central Europe: they were its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of is spiritual unity (Kundera 1983, p. 14).

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