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Buchach – a city at the meeting point of different national narratives

Our article presents three different historic narratives of the city of Buchach in former Eastern Galicia, a Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian one, according to the city's mixed population, consisting of a larger Jewish, a smaller Polish and a still smaller Ukrainian group. The Polish historic narrative is represented by Sadok Barącz's book *Pamiętki buczackie*, the Ukrainian one by the Historical and Memoiristical Collection *The City of Buchach and its Region*, compiled by emigration writers, and the Jewish narrative by Y.S. Agnon's *A City in its Fulness*. These sources provide different ways of presenting history, sometimes converging and sometimes diverging from each other, which is illustrated by the depiction of selected historic events: the siege of the city by Chmelnicki's troops in 1648, the role of the city in the Polish-Turkish war of 1672, the importance of Austrian rule since 1772 for the city, and the city's fate in the time of World War I and immediately after the war. Our comparison of the above three historic narratives ends with the re-evaluation of the figure of Mikołaj Potocki, Polish nobleman, who today is held in high esteem by Ukrainian historians of art because of his function as a founder of the most beautiful buildings in Buchach and a sponsor of famous artists, creators of these architectural monuments. He is seen as a mediator between the Polish and Ukrainian tradition.

Keywords: Buchach, Barącz, S., Agnon, Y. S., Potocki, M.

Buczacz, located at the south-east end of Galicia in the historic region of Podolia, is by no means one of the most important towns in Galicia either with regard to its size – before WWI it was inhabited by little over 10 thousand people, one of minor towns in the Crown Country – or with regard to its significance. It has remained so until today; the present-day Ukrainian Buchach has rather modest ambitions both economically and culturally, and cannot compete with cities such as Ivano-Frankivsk or Drohobych. Buczacz appears in the chapters of history only once – in reference to the peace treaty of 1672, which, however, was not a glorious event in the history of Poland. On the basis of the treaty, which, by the way, had not been ratified by the Sejm, the Republic of

Poland had to cede Podolia to the Ottoman Empire. The Strypa River, which flowing through the city center was for 20 years the border between Poland and Turkey until Podolia returned to Poland after the peace concluded in Karłowice in 1699.

Buczacz seems to be more favorably perceived as a place which might draw attention to its architecture: its baroque town hall is considered to be the most beautiful in all of Eastern Galicia, the churches are of historical importance, the Basilian monastery with the temple, all make a tremendous impression, and the large synagogue with its interior was one of the monuments of the city until it was demolished in the 1950s. The architectural dimension of Buczacz is even more complex and includes the picturesque surroundings of the city. Its landscapes are always indicated as a great asset in the sense of its historical *laus urbis*. The above mentioned natural layout has been preserved in a relatively intact form to this day, while the physical dilapidation of some buildings can no longer be stopped.

Buczacz, the first historical records of which date back to the fourteenth century, has since been inhabited by three ethnic groups: Poles, Ukrainians and Jews (in later times the largest group, as in many other Galician small and medium-sized towns). No wonder that each of the above-mentioned ethnic groups represented their own Buczacz in the city, represented mainly in architecture. The Polish Buczacz was embodied in the parish church and the castle (in ruins since the 18th century), the Ukrainian one – in the church of St. Nicholas, Orthodox Church of Pokrowa and the Basilian Monastery; and the Jewish one – in the synagogues and houses of prayer. In addition, there are also buildings of transnational importance, such as the town hall and the gymnasium, that served the needs of all three ethnic groups.

Each of them has also developed its own historical narrative about the city, which meets, overlaps, but also contradicts the narratives of other groups. It can be clearly seen in cases when the history of the city is presented separately from the point of view of each of these communities. One and the same event or several dates from the city's history are perceived differently and presented from the perspective of individual national groups; the aim of a grand synthesis of a city's history that does not yet exist would be to "harmonize" different points of view and propose a unified picture of controversial events, which seemingly is not an easy undertaking.

An example applied to compare the different narratives could be *Pamiętki buczackie* [Buchach memorabilia] (1882)¹ by Sadok Barącz. It is the most

¹ *Pamiętki buczackie*, collected and handed over for the benefit of the hospital in Buczacz by Rev. Sadok Barącz, Nakładem wydawcy, Lwów 1882.

comprehensive study of the history of the city, which – contrary to the title suggesting rather selected memories – offers a coherent description of the history of Buchach from the 13th to the 19th century and ends with a synchronic overview of Latin and Byzantine churches and statistical data. The anthology *Бучач і Бучаччина. Історично-мемуарний збірник / The City of Butchach and its Region. A historical and memoiristical Collection* (1972)² is representative of the Ukrainian narrative, containing statements made by several authors. In addition to longer cross-sectional reviews, the anthology includes many short studies on individual stages in the history of the city, institutions operating in it as well as famous personalities from Buchach. The authors of the anthology are Ukrainian emigrants who moved overseas, especially in the period after World War II. For this reason, the book is also a memoir, serving to recall the lost world from the Ukrainian perspective that must be preserved in relation to the Soviet present of the city at the time of writing. Similar memories were written also from a Jewish perspective.³ However, the Jewish narrative can be recreated on the basis of the texts of the most illustrious son of Buchach – the Jewish writer Szmuel Josef Agnon (real name: Szmuel Josef Czaczkes). In the 1950s and 1960s in Israel, he began to write images from the history of his father's city, which he had already left in 1908. In 1973 these sketches were collected in the book *A City in its Fullness*,⁴ the title of which also suggests a holistic view of the city life, however, not in the sense of showing all possible spheres of public life, but rather in the sense of the entire city population identified here with the Jewish community.

For the first time, different interpretations of one date in the history of the city appear in the accounts of the Cossack uprising led by Bohdan Chmielnicki in 1648–1654. This uprising quickly spread from central to western Ukraine in 1648, where Chmielnicki managed to decisively defeat the Polish Crown troops on several occasions. After a short siege of Lviv in October 1648 (the city managed to pay a high ransom for the withdrawal of the besieging troops), the Cossack attack stopped in front of Zamość, from where Chmielnicki retreated to central Ukraine for the winter. Buchach was also located, if not directly, at least near the route followed by the Cossack army in its march to the west.

² *Бучач і Бучаччина. Історично-мемуарний збірник* (Naukove Товариство ім. Шевченка, Українськ'яй Архив, т. XXVII); Nju Jork–London–Paryž–Sydney–Toronto 1971 / *The City of Butchach and its Region. A historical and memoiristical Collection* (Shevchenko Scientific Society, Ukrainian Archiv, vol. XXVII), New York–London–Paris–Sidney–Toronto 1972.

³ *Memorial (Yizkor) Book of the Jewish Community of Buczacz, Galicia*, ed. by Y. Cohen, Tel Aviv 1956, transl. from the Hebrew 1999 (Yizkor Book Project).

⁴ S.Y. Agnon, *A city in Its Fullness*, transl. from the Hebrew, ed. by A. Mintz and J. Saks, New Milford USA, wyd. 3, 2016.

Barącz reports that the young Jan Potocki managed to keep the besieged city. The Cossacks, who did not expect such strong resistance, left, plundering and burning only the surrounding villages.⁵ From the Polish point of view, this is undoubtedly a praiseworthy chapter in Buczacz's history. The Ukrainian historian Nykola Andrusiak presents these events in a similar way: after the victory at Piławce, the main army of Chmielnicki moved behind Buchach towards Lviv, and only smaller units tried to take the castles on the way, but suffered defeats at Jazłowiec and Buchach.⁶ However, Andrusiak did not mention the names of the city's defenders.

The Ukrainian version of the city's history entails a certain problem with this event: the Chmielnicki Uprising against the Polish authorities is considered a national war against foreign rule, but in the Ukrainian historical narrative, Buchach is a Ukrainian city from the very beginning that should actually have joined the national uprising, and not defended itself against it; therefore, Andrusiak also tries to present the unclear origins of the anti-nobility movement in this period.⁷ A similar information is provided by a 2007 guidebook: "During the Liberation War of the Ukrainian people of 1648–1654 anti-feudal movement developed in the town."⁸ However, the guidebook does not contain detailed information on what this anti-feudal movement looked like.

S. J. Agnon presents these events quite differently from the Jewish point of view. In the novel *A simple story* (1935), the plot of which takes place in Buchach, he mentions for the first time the destruction of the city by the Cossacks: "Szybucz⁹ is an old city and Jews lived there from the very beginning; in 1648, when the city was destroyed, the great synagogue was burned down and everyone in the city was murdered."¹⁰ Also in the later autobiographical novel *A Guest for the Night* (1951), the narrator refers to the year 1648: in the building of the so-called Old School, a plaque was hung "with the names of those holy Jewish communities who died during the extermination in 1648."¹¹

In his late work, Agnon returns once again to the pogrom that Chmielnicki's Cossacks were to commit in Buchach. In the short story *The Parabel and its Lesson*, originally published in the journal in 1958 and then in the posthumously published collection *A City in its Fullness* in 1973, the narrator argues with those

⁵ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczańskie*, s. 6.

⁶ N. Andrusiak, *Mynule Bučaččyny* [w:] *The City of Butchach and its Region*, s. 36.

⁷ Tamże.

⁸ *Bučač. Oblyččja mista*, Kyjiv, Kartohrafija, 2007, b.s.

⁹ In his fiction, Agnon uses the changed names of his hometown.

¹⁰ The English translation based on: S.J. Agnon, *Eine einfache Geschichte*, tłum. z hebrajskiego K. Steinschneider, Frankfurt 1987, s. 166.

¹¹ S.J. Agnon, *Wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, tłum. z hebrajskiego K. Steinschneider, Frankfurt 1964, s. 138.

who dispute this fact: “To be sure, some things related here will not square with those who maintain that Buczacz was unaffected by the Khmelnitski pogroms. I leave it to the One who reconciles all matters to settle this one too.”¹² Among the reports that do not inform about the conquest of the city or the massacre of its inhabitants, there is, however, the most important Jewish source about the Chmielnicki uprising, i.e. an account of a man living in that era, which was published in Venice in 1654 under the title *Jawein Mecula t. j. Bagno głębokie: kronika zdarzeń z lat 1648–1652* [Jawein Mecula i.e. Deep Swamp: a chronicle of events from 1648–1652] (Lviv 1912). Agnon was familiar with this source¹³ but insisted on a different version – why?

As Alan Mintz notes in his extensive essay *The Parabel and its Lesson*, the narrator does not want to be a historian, but a chronicler of his city’s events, who cares not about facts but about memory. The memory of the catastrophe of 1648 has the character of something that can be called “liturgical totalisation”:¹⁴ during the annual celebrations in the synagogue, the names of all cities and towns destroyed by the Cossacks, including Buchach, are read out, even if there was no actual damage there. Agnon applies a typically Jewish discourse, which sees the first great catastrophe that befell Jews in Central and Eastern Europe in the Chmielnicki Uprising of 1648. The experience of the Holocaust also shows that the events of 1648 are seen as a kind of prefiguration of the catastrophe that began in 1941 – both are similar in their overall character. Agnon’s narrative, as well as the entire book *A City in its Fullness*, are “a unique response to the murder of European Jewry.”¹⁵

For the Polish historical narrative, the period of the Turkish wars in 1672–1699 is of paramount importance – Poland’s victories over the Turks, most of which are associated with the name of King John III Sobieski, such as the victory at Chocim in 1672 or the Succor of Vienna in 1683, occupy a central place in Polish historical awareness. Buchach, however, is a place that, unlike Chocim or Vienna, evokes negative connotations: it is where the shameful peace for Poland from 1672 was concluded, in which Poland had to surrender Podolia. The city was surrounded by overwhelming enemy forces – Barącz mentions 300,000 Turkish soldiers and 100,000 Crimean Khan Tatars, as well as on the contingents of the Moldavian hospodars and Cossacks of Hetman

¹² S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and its Lesson. A novella. Translated and annotated by James S. Diamond. With an Introduction and Critical Essay by Alan Mintz*, Stanford University Press, eBook Super Collection 2014, s. 1.

¹³ A. Mintz, Essay on *The Parabel and its Lesson* [w:] S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and its Lesson*, s. 85.

¹⁴ Tamże, s. 115.

¹⁵ A. Mintz, *Introduction* [w:] S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and its Lesson*, s. XIV.

Doroshenko¹⁶ – after the much better fortified Kamieniec Podolski had capitulated, Buchach was taken without a fight. This huge, undoubtedly exaggerated, number of enemy forces fits the image of a disaster that cannot be controlled by military force, also because it is God’s punishment for deviating from the right faith during the Reformation, which, however, in Buczacz is poorly documented: “therefore, the punishment of God in the wake of the betrayal of faith fell on the city and its inhabitants. God, in his unblemished justice, armed the hordes of Turks to execute judgment on the apostates with sword and fire. Buchach was completely ruined!”¹⁷ “This is what the historian says, a Catholic clergyman of Armenian origin, issuing a judgment which cannot be substantiated by examining the sources. Buchach is therefore a symbol of the Polish misfortune, and not of success in the fight against the Ottomans.

In this context, an anecdote from the report of the French secretary of King Sobieski, Dalairac, is of particular importance – Barącz cites the original in a footnote:¹⁸ courage of the lady of the castle (Mrs. Potocka, whose husband is not mentioned), who proposes to surrender the castle to the Sultan, in reaction to which, a Muslim, who “was not so wild that the customs of civilization would not be familiar to him,”¹⁹ returns the precious gifts given to him by the lady to her little children. This anecdote related by a foreign observer, not a Polish one, enthusiastically reported by a Polish historian, includes a defense of the Polish character: even if one has to succumb to sovereignty, it is done with dignity.

Buchach contributes to the myth of Sobieski only to a very limited extent: during his visit to the city with his wife and court in 1687, the king of Poland held a war council, sang *Te Deum*, however, in honor of the victory won by Prince Eugene of Savoy in Hungary, and departed, “having done nothing for the city,”²⁰ which lay in ruins, as Barącz not uncritically notices. The Sobieski Fountain, commemorating the stay of the great king in Buchach, also lacks heroism, rather resembles the tops of Buchach as a city rich in natural springs – even the king could refresh himself with their water. Thanks to this fountain, the Jewish narrative of the city’s history also refers to Sobieski. In *A Guest for the Night*, Agnon describes the fountain during the narrator’s stay in the city in the 1920s: “At the Royal Fountain – the one from which John III Sobieski drank after his victorious return from the war – the steps were broken, and the plate was shattered, gilded letters names weathered, and blood-red grass grew out

¹⁶ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 8.

¹⁷ Tamże, s. 7.

¹⁸ *Les Anecdotes de Pologne ou Memoires secrets du Regne du Jean Sobieski* a Paris 1699, t. II, s. 228, 330 [w:] S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 12.

¹⁹ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 12.

²⁰ Tamże, s. 13.

of it, as if the Angel of Death had sharpened his knife on it.”²¹ The fountain is scarred by the devastation of World War I that severely hit the city.

In the Austrian period, from 1772 onwards, history no longer knew either great heroes or great events; historiography was dominated by descriptions of everyday life and infrastructure – the heroic gives way to the bureaucratic. The Ukrainian historian Andrusiak discusses the new administrative system of Galicia, divided into poviats: Buchach’s territory was divided into three poviats, thus the city lost its importance as a regional center. Andrusiak emphasizes the improvement of the situation of serfs and the attachment of Ruthenians to the emperor in the revolutionary year 1848.²²

The Polish historian Barącz mentions the cholera epidemic in 1831 and the great fire of the city in 1865, in which 220 houses, the town hall, the Church of Pokrowa, the Basilian monastery, the roof of the Roman Catholic parish church and the large synagogue were destroyed.²³ At that time disasters suffered by civilians replaced the military disasters of the seventeenth century. For the Polish historian, the sign of a successful reconstruction is the town hall, which, shortly after the city fire, returned to its former glory (with this description Barącz ends his historical review). The description of the present condition of the city leads to an extremely positive overall assessment: “So Buchach has everything that one’s heart could desire, healthy air, plenty of water [sic!], a lot of trees, public roads for trade, in times of weakness – doctors and a pharmacy, it should develop successfully and flourish with abundance and prosperity.”²⁴

The Jewish historical narrative about Buchach in the nineteenth century has a peculiarity unknown to the Polish and Ukrainian ones – the memory of Emperor Franz Joseph, who was the guarantor of security for Jews. After the unsuccessful assassination attempt on young Franz Joseph in 1853, the chief rabbi of Buchach expressed his unconditional devotion to the emperor as the epitome of the Austrian state: “we Israelites feel it all the more because His grace has given us equal rights with all other faiths, has placed our lives and property in His care, and in His lands we enjoy all freedoms more than in all other kingdoms of the world.”²⁵

²¹ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 6.

²² N. Andrusjak, *Mynule Bučaččyny*, s. 53 i n.

²³ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 38.

²⁴ Tamże, s. 151.

²⁵ Z. Reich, *Worte des Dankes. Wegen des gegen Seine k. k. apostolische Majestät unseres allergnädigsten Kaisers FRANZ JOSEPH I. am 18. Februar 1853 versuchten und glücklich abgewendeten Atentate, gesprochen in der großen Synagoge zu Buczac in Anwesenheit aller Honorationen und Se. Hochwohlgeboren des Grundherrn Adam Grafen Potocki k.k. Rittmeister in der Armee, von Zadek Reich. Erstem Vorsteher daselbst, Lemberg 1853.*

A similar attitude is presented by the imaginary heroes of Agnon's novels. Even before the First World War, Jews said "long live the emperor! – the one who wants good for the Jews"²⁶ and after the war, like Freide Kaiser, because of her name affectionately called "Kaiserin" [Empress], they eagerly recall Franz Joseph: "see how much good our emperor – may he rest in peace – did for Russians... And this Russian emperor not only did not thank him, but also started a war with him."²⁷

The boundless sympathy of the Jewish population of Buchach for Emperor Franz Joseph, and thus for Austria, is also emphasized by Simon Wiesenthal, one of the most famous Jewish sons of the city: "we felt like Austrians. Emperor Franz Joseph was a father figure for us. We measured everything with the distance from Vienna and we spoke as if it was just around the corner. Legend had it that the emperor would open his Hofburg if the Galician Jews were forced to flee."²⁸

A constant element of the description of the city, appearing in the Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian narratives, is the reference to the environmental advantages of the city and its immediate vicinity – an inseparable element of praise bestowed on the city both in the 19th and 20th centuries. Water appears many times, streams and springs in the city and its surroundings. In his *Pamiętki* [Memorabilia], Barącz describes a waterfall near the old ruins of the monastery, where nature and culture combine to create a unique spectacle: "at the back of the monastery... in the middle of the rocky ground there is a spring of clear water, like a crystal making its way through the monastery courtyard and from a height of 20 cubits it rushes down with a roar of two pillars to descend in a thunderous cascade over the precipice of rocks... to the Strypa, which flows around the monastery hill at its feet."²⁹ The monk and historian, who loves to quote Latin and Polish documents, is delighted when he describes the waterfall: "who is able to render with a pen, that is, with a brush, all the richness of colors with which these two water columns sparkle, splashing into thousands of drops, seemingly borrowing all their rainbow coloration from the sun's rays, from daylight, from cloudy shadows, from the silver glow of the moon."³⁰

Also Agnon, in his account of his stay in a city devastated by war and impoverished in its aftermath, in the novel *A Guest for the Night* does not ignore its natural beauty, which it owes to springs and fountains: "...the murmur of a spring that flows from above. This is the spring that I used to go to with my fa-

²⁶ S.J. Agnon, *Eine einfache Geschichte*, s. 251.

²⁷ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 265.

²⁸ H. Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal. Eine Biographie*, tłum. z ang. S. Klockmann, Reinbek b. Hamburg 1992, s. 58.

²⁹ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 153.

³⁰ Tamże.

ther in the summer, ...at the end of the Sabbath to drink from it...”³¹ Wiesenthal’s biographer, Tom Segev, in his praise of the city unites these two great Jewish sons of Buchach: “In the Wiesenthals’ house, one could hear the sound of a stream flowing between Jewish houses in Buchach, and it can be assumed that they also heard the ‘water speech’ in the Czaczkeses’ house, as Samuel Josef Czaczkes, later Szmuel Josef Agnon, writes.”³² Agnon’s childhood in Buchach is also marked by the idyllic sound of water: “and the Strypa River runs through the city and surrounds its sides, streams draw water from it and irrigate reeds, bushes and trees, good springs give gushing fresh water, and birds live in trees and chirp in them. Among them are those who come from our city and those who came to our city in the process of fleeing, and those who remained there, who saw and recognized that our city is more praised than other places.”³³ The streams that fall into the Strypa in Buchach today are thin streams, the troughs are polluted. In the brochure *Buczacz – oblicza miasta* [Buchach – faces of the city] from 2007, among the illustrations, there is a photo of this waterfall next to the ruins of a monastery,³⁴ which Barącz was enthusiastic over a hundred years earlier; it is a silent echo of the city’s praise from times gone by.

Particular national narratives differ from each other especially with regard to World War I, especially in the case of the Ukrainian and Jewish versions. The immediate vicinity of the city was the site of hostilities, as the front line ran north of Buchach. The city itself was captured and heavily damaged in the first weeks of the war; after the withdrawal of the Russian troops in August 1915, Buchach was liberated, but the destruction remained.

The Ukrainian narrative about World War I emphasizes not so much the great disaster as a chance for the emergence of a separate state, which *de facto* also came into being in the form of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic (WUPR) 1918–1921. The first guarantor of the fulfillment of national ambitions were the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, a separate military formation created within the Austrian army. According to Stepan Šypyljavyj, the Ukrainian youth from Buchach did not hesitate to join the riflemen and give their lives for freedom.³⁵ The list of all men from the town and the vicinity of Buchach who died in the ranks of the Sich Riflemen includes over 100 names.³⁶ Among them

³¹ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 227.

³² T. Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal. Die Biographie*, tłum. z hebr. M. Lemke, München 2010, s. 43.

³³ S.J. Agnon [w:] T. Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal*, s. 43.

³⁴ *Bučač. Oblyččja mista*, b.s.

³⁵ S. Šypyljavyj, *Bučaččyna v borot’bi za samostijnju ukrajins’ku deržavu* [w:] *The City of Butchach and its Region*, s. 71 i n.

³⁶ S. Šypyljavyj, *Spys Ukrajins’kych Sičovyh Stril’civ, vojakiv UHA poljahlych na poljach bojiv...* [w:] *The City of Butchach and its Region*, s. 431 i n.

are graduates of the Buchach secondary school, also a young poet, Ivan Baljuk (born 1894), who died in 1915 in a fight with a Russian enemy on the front line near his hometown.³⁷ One of the few surviving poems of his authorship, under the meaningful title *Скошений цвіт*,³⁸ describes the existential dilemmas of a young soldier who knows that he will never return home from this war alive.

The subject of Sich Riflemen and Ukrainian heroism during World War I occupies a central place in the work of one of the most important representatives of Ukrainian literature in Buchach. Osyp Nazaruk (1883–1940), one of the most prolific writers from Buchach, also active as a publicist and politician, served in the Rifle Division in 1915–1918. In his first book, *In the Footsteps of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen*,³⁹ from 1916, Nazaruk, head of the Riflemen press office, presents a series of portraits of characters from the front and back of the army, often including images of ordinary soldiers, showing their patriotism and fighting spirit. A year later, Nazaruk published another work: *Under the Golden Linden. In the camps of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen*,⁴⁰ dedicated to the heroic efforts of Sich Riflemen to re-capture Galicia in the spring of 1915. In this book, the author once again combines the documentary concern of the correspondent with the literary flair of the writer.

The months immediately after the end of the war, i.e. the period from November 1918 to July 1919, when Buchach and its surroundings were part of the West Ukrainian National Republic, are extremely important for the Ukrainian narrative about World War I. There were also four deputies from Buchach, including the aforementioned Nazaruk, in its parliament (“the Council”). The short period of Ukrainian statehood is summarized as a time of order and discipline, disregarding the divergent interests of various groups of the population: *Бучачина не затратила почуття ладу й дисципліни, показала показалась зрілою до державницького життя* [Buchach did not lose its sense of order and discipline, it turned out to be ready to live in its own country].⁴¹

The Jewish narrative about World War I emphasizes the chaos caused by the great exodus at the beginning of the war and the wave of suffering that particularly affected Jews under the Russian occupation. In Eastern Galicia, they know what to expect from the Russian occupiers, especially the Cossacks, which is why they flee *en masse*, which often leads to dramatic scenes. For ex-

³⁷ S. Špyl'javyj, *Peredovi hromadjany i vyznačni postati Bučaččyny* [w:] *The City of Buchach and its Region*, s. 393.

³⁸ I. Baljuk, *Skošenij cvit* [w:] *Strilec'ka Golgofa. Sproba antolohiji*, uporjad. T. Ju. Salyha, Kamenjar, L'viv 1992, s. 313–318.

³⁹ O. Nazaruk, *Slidamy ukrajins'kych sičovych stril'cijv*, L'viv 1916.

⁴⁰ O. Nazaruk, *Nad zolotoju lypoju. V taborach ukrajins'kych sičovych stril'cijv*, Viden' 1917.

⁴¹ S. Špyl'javyj, *Bučaččyna v borot'bi za samostijnu ukrajins'ku deržavu*, s. 75.

ample, Rachela – a fictional character from the novel by Agnon *A Guest for the Night* – loses a small child who, while escaping from the Russians, fell out of a wagon in September 1914 to happily find him in Vienna.⁴²

Among the real Jewish refugees from Buchach are also the Wiesenthals, who escaped only in 1915: “Simon Wiesenthal was a small, confused, seven-year-old boy when he first came to Vienna. ...It was just before the end of 1915. His father, Ascher, died as an Austrian Army reservist on October 14 on the Galician Eastern Front. Buchach was captured by the Tartarian soldiers of the Tsarist army. In order to escape from marauding Cossacks tormenting Jews, his mother took Szymon and his younger brother to Lviv, where her parents lived. In Lviv, a small family decided to follow the example of thousands of troubled Galician Jews and go to Vienna for safety.”⁴³ The deportation of Jewish citizens to Siberia is also one of the methods used by the Russian invader to terrorize the urban population of Eastern Galicia. Also, Agnon’s narrator from the book *A Guest for the Night*, visiting his hometown Buchach a few years after the end of the war, states that Rabbi Chajm was deported by the Russians and there is no news about him until this day.⁴⁴

The Jewish narrative of the war, more than the Ukrainian or the Polish one, emphasizes the enormous number of victims resulting from the frontline fighting. While in Polish and Ukrainian terms the tribute of blood is offered for the future of one’s own country, the sacrifices of the Jews do not make any such sense. In *A Guest for the Night*, Agnon presents an example of a simple Jewish woman, showing the magnitude of the losses she suffered: “On the same day, when Freide rose from mourning for two sons who shed blood at the same time, it was found out that her third son had died.”⁴⁵ Among the many killed during the first two years of the war was the father of Szymon Wiesenthal: “When World War I broke out, Ascher Wiesenthal, who was a reservist in the Austro-Hungarian army, drafted into the army and sent to the Eastern Front. There he died in 1915 – fighting for the same cause as Corporal Adolf Hitler in Flanders. Simon and his brother mourned the loss of their father – one out of many.”⁴⁶ Also in this respect, literary fiction and biographical documentation correspond and are equally representative of the national narrative.

Contrary to the Polish and Ukrainian narratives, which describe the emergence of new states on the ruins of the old world, the Jewish narrative emphasizes the devastation which the war left behind and which remained for many years.

⁴² S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 73 i n.

⁴³ H. Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal*, s. 46.

⁴⁴ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 7.

⁴⁵ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 84.

⁴⁶ A. Levy, *Die Akte Wiesenthal*, tłum. z amer. H. Mittler, Wien 1995, s. 18.

The new nation-states were a poor substitute for old Austria; Buchach would never become what it was before the First World War. The narrator in Agnon's novel, immediately after arriving at the train station, while walking to the city center, realizes that only the ground floor remains of the originally multi-story houses; monuments such as the Royal Fountain were also destroyed.⁴⁷ For the pious Jew who is the protagonist, it is especially painful to witness the destruction of the Great Synagogue from which the candelabras had been taken; the same applies to the Old School, where thousands of books were lost.⁴⁸ However, even more serious consequences of the war affected the population – many of the protagonist's friends died or disappeared, disabled people beg in the streets, people became impoverished, and trade on the market practically vanished.⁴⁹ One of the latest works devoted to Agnon's novels emphasizes this view of the post-war Buchach: "This narration illustrates how the war caused the degradation and the spiritual and existential crisis of the local Jews. Although the narrated time is around the years after the war, Buchach still licks its wounds. The city is still in ruins, full of crippled and amputated people, refugees, and broken families."⁵⁰

The end of old Austria meant the end to the safety of the Jewish population in Buchach and all of Eastern Galicia. Agnon depicts the pogroms that took place right after the end of the war: "When the war was over – someone added – and we returned to our city, pogroms began."⁵¹ The narrator also criticizes the Polish state of the interwar period, its brutal practices, which were also applied with excessive severity to Jews: "Austria had been replaced by Poland, whose rulers were harsh masters. Because they did not know how to conduct themselves with reason, they ruled with angry cruelty; they knew nothing of mercy, they only understood harsh decrees. They afflicted the Jews in every way that they could, until the Jews despised their lives."⁵²

The Polish narrative views the period after World War I differently. It focuses on the country's consolidation in the late 1920s and 1930s. Witold Stankowski, another biographer of Wiesenthal, describes the situation in the Polish interwar Buchach in a way that is definitely different from the Jewish authors: "Poles were proud that Buchach had returned to the Polish bosom. In addition to the reconstruction after the war damage after the First World War, restoration of the splendor of the monuments of Polish architecture continued. Excavation research has

⁴⁷ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 6.

⁴⁸ Por. tamże, s. 9, 12 i n.

⁴⁹ Por. tamże, s. 29, 31, 187.

⁵⁰ Sh. Ronen, *A Decline of a Town: Buczacz in A Guest for the Night* by S.Y. Agnon [w:] *Galician Polyphony. Places and Voices*, ed. by A. Molisak and J. Wierzejska, Warsaw 2015, s. 43.

⁵¹ S.J. Agnon, *Nur wie ein Gast zur Nacht*, s. 14.

⁵² S.Y. Agnon, *In the Nighttime of Exile* [w:] tegoż, *A City in its Fulness*, s. 560.

begun. In 1927, i.e. less than ten years after the end of the war, Buchach recovered from the ruins. Many municipal and housing investments were started or continued in the city. Hotels and restaurants have opened their doors.”⁵³ It is hard to find a greater difference in the description of the city in the years after World War I in relation to Agnon’s account – in one narrative: a successful reconstruction and an optimistic new beginning, a world in ruins and stagnation in the other one.

It would be possible to follow the differences between the individual national narratives in different accounts of the period of World War II, the Nazi occupation, the Holocaust and the takeover of power by the Soviets; however, due to the limited volume of this text, these considerations will not be continued. Instead, the focus will be on a figure from the 18th century closely related to the history of Buchach and who is today a kind of link between the Polish and Ukrainian narratives about the city, namely, Mikołaj Potocki (1708–1783), the governor of Kaniów, a Polish magnate of the Baroque era, who, due to his eccentric lifestyle, became the embodiment of despotic playfulness. Above all, the Ukrainian narrative about Buchach tries to rehabilitate Potocki, who has been assessed very negatively since the beginning of the Polish Enlightenment: he is a great builder and promoter of the city’s development, to whom it owes its last period of prosperity before the Galician-Austrian period.

Sadok Barącz in *Pamiętki* [Memorabilia] devotes over 20 pages to Mikołaj Potocki. He describes his education at the Jesuit college in Lviv, political involvement and the first churches he founded.⁵⁴ With his conversion to the Greek Catholic faith, Potocki also became, in a way, a Ruthenian, and the Ukrainian side considered him one of their own.⁵⁵ Thanks to the construction of a large monastic complex in Począjów (1771–1783), as well as the new building of the Basilian monastery in Buchach (1761–1771), Potocki erected perhaps the largest monuments of his glory. In addition, the town hall, the Catholic parish church, the Pokrowa Church, the new building of the Church of St. Nicholas and smaller buildings that were built on Potocki’s initiative, made him one of the builders of the city.

In 1774, he left his estates in Austrian Galicia and moved to the monastery in Począjów, where in the same year he made his famous will,⁵⁶ in which he divided his extensive property among the children of his closest relatives (he himself had no children entitled to inherit). He died in 1783 as a simple monk and was buried according to his will with a rope around his neck.⁵⁷

⁵³ W. Stankowski. *Szymon Wiesenthal. Biografia*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 2009, s. 24.

⁵⁴ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 55 i n.

⁵⁵ M. Stankevych, *Bučač ta okolyci. Malen'ki obrazky*, SKIM, L'viv 2010, s. 218.

⁵⁶ S. Barącz, *Pamiętki buczackie*, s. 60.

⁵⁷ Tamże, s. 69.

Negative reports about Potocki appear in his contemporaries who knew him personally, which is emphasized by songs in Polish and Ukrainian folklore. One famous story has it that Potocki ordered Jews or women to climb trees, pretended to be a cuckoo,⁵⁸ and then shot them as alleged birds.⁵⁹ Anecdotes about Potocki's misdeeds, for which Mikołaj Potocki was entirely to blame, were so widespread in Galicia that they also found their way into the first German-language travel reports. Thus, Heinrich Traunpaur in his *Listy o Galicji* [Letters on Galicia] reports as follows:

Apparently, in this church, which was originally wooden, the priest was shot at the altar by the despotic Potocki with a pistol, for preaching on the same day about the sixth commandment, and in the presence of this strict magnate, who, among other things, had the habit of bringing every bride to him by force and spending the first wedding night with her.

So during the sermon, all eyes were on the tyrant, and he was so indignant that he sacrificed the priest on the altar of his vengeance. Years later, when he himself became fatally ill, he suffered indescribable pain. He could neither recover nor die. Then his pious confessor persuaded him to repent of his cruel act and to make amends through a donation. He did so by enrolling in his will a million Polish guilders for the construction of the future beautiful church, and a few hours later he drew his terminal breath.⁶⁰

The relationship between the legend and architecture is certainly one of the reasons Potocki has aroused interest among Ukrainian researchers in recent years. In 2005, the art historian Borys Voznyc'kyj published a book devoted not only to Potocki, but also to two great artists of his time working for the magnate: Bernhard Meretin and Johann Georg Pinsel.⁶¹ After a detailed description of all possible anecdotes about Potocki, the author deals with his numerous portraits, which are, in a way, a transition to the historical and artistic part of the book. The work also includes Potocki into the Ukrainian nation: Voznyc'kyj states that the magnate not only came from an originally Ukrainian and only later Polonized family, but by changing the language to "native" and by choosing to convert to the "confession of the fathers" he protested against the authority of Polish feudal lords.⁶²

More important than these hard-to-prove claims (apart from his conversion to Greek Catholicism) is the relationship of Potocki as the benefactor with two

⁵⁸ J. Krzyżanowski, *Starosta kaniowski w tradycji ludowej* [w:] tegoż, *Paralele. Studia porównawcze z pogranicza literatury i folkloru*, Warszawa 1961, s. 303–309.

⁵⁹ Tamże, s. 305; B. Voznyc'kyj, *Mykola Potoc'kyj. Bernhard Meretyn. Ioan Heorhij Pinzel'*, Centr Jevropy, L'viv 2005, s. 24.

⁶⁰ A.H. Traunpaur, *Dreissig Briefe über Galizien oder Beobachtungen eines unpartheyischen Mannes, der sich mehr als nur ein Paar Monate in diesem Königreiche umgesehen hat*, Wien 1787, s. 61.

⁶¹ B. Voznyc'kyj, *Mykola Potoc'kyj. Bernhard Meretyn. Ioan Heorhij Pinzel'*, L'viv 2005.

⁶² Por. tamże, s. 48.

other “Ukrainians by choice” – artists hired by him and essentially associated with Buchach. Bernhard Meretin (died 1759), architect of the town hall, and Johann Georg Pinsel (died 1761), from southern Germany or Bohemia, probably the most famous sculptor in old Galicia, who started his career in Buchach. Meretin was probably of German origin (Merderer), but the Italian form of his surname, Bernardo Merettini, suggests additional Italian connections.

Johann Georg Pinsel in particular is recently seen as Buchach’s great son, even if he arrived in it as an immigrant. Little is known about Pinsel, an important sculptor whose name has also been documented in various other forms (Pinzel, Pilze, Penzel, etc.), possibly alluding to the artist’s tools. Pinsel is highly valued and considered the founder of the Lviv school of baroque sculpture. The first important works on Pinsel were published in Polish in the interwar period, when almost everything the sculptor had created still existed. Soviet ideology considered the religious art of the Catholic Baroque as completely worthless, and Pinsel carried out his work mainly on commission from Roman Catholic churches, which led to the destruction of most of his works. Since the fall of communism, the artist has been discovered by Ukrainian art historians, and what was saved from his sculptures is now exhibited in a museum dedicated to him in the former Catholic church in Lviv.

Pinsel, whose origin is completely unclear, may have come to Buczacz around 1750. According to the public records of the local Roman Catholic church, in 1751 he married the widow Marianna Majewska. His eldest son was baptized in the same parish church in 1752 (the godfather was the famous architect Meretin), and his second son was born in 1759. Three years later, his wife was already a widow and married for the third time, so Pinsel probably died in 1761.⁶³ During these ten years, the master probably lived in Buchach, even if he carried out his assignments elsewhere. With regard to the earlier projects, which were completed before his death, his main client was Mikołaj Potocki. His cooperation with the aforementioned architect Bernhard Meretin was of great importance, and in his church designs he also planned figures decorating the façade and the arrangement of altars inside, which were then made by Pinsel. During several years of work in today’s Ukraine, Pinsel left a huge legacy – altar figures, church facades, columns – which suggests that the artist had a workshop in which his assistants performed less important parts of orders.⁶⁴ Several of his students are known, and the master’s school is visible in their works.

⁶³ Por. tamże, s. 71 i n.

⁶⁴ Por. J.K. Ostrowski, *A Great Baroque Master on the Outskirts of Latin Europe. Johann Georg Pinsel and the High Altar of the Church at Hodowica* [w:] *Artibus et Historiae* 2000, vol. 12, nr 42, s. 199.

At the beginning of his activity, Pinsel made for Buchach twelve stone sculptures for the town hall (which was rather unusual for him as a wood sculptor), only two of which have survived to this day in a heavily damaged form. The artist also made two sculptures on columns on the then border of the city – the Immaculate Virgin Mary and St. John of Nepomuk, which have survived to this day and have been restored.⁶⁵ Pinsel's figures are very expressive as their movement is presented in an excessive form, which is additionally emphasized by the effective folding of their robes. Only the face and hands are in natural colors, the character's clothes are gilded. Pinsel embodies the baroque style that directly refers to the Middle Ages; the master does not seem to know the canons of the Renaissance.⁶⁶

Along with the story about the artist and his patron, Agnon also takes up the plot of Potocki – the builder of Buchach. In this version,⁶⁷ Potocki brings the Italian artist, Theodore, to the city, so that he could erect a town hall building, which had never existed in Poland before. The prince, however, instead of the promised salary, imprisoned the artist in the town hall he built and ordered him to starve there. Only then would Theodore not be able to erect such another beautiful building. The architect ran away like Daedalus in the past, on wings he made from scraps of material, and died like Icarus, crashing down due to exhaustion of his strength. But the hill in the immediate vicinity of the city to this day bears his name (in a Ukrainianized form) – Fedor Hill. Also in this story, the combination of motifs known from world literature (the killing of the artist by the protector of art; Daedalus and Icarus) with specific regional details: information about the exact appearance of the town hall, its dimensions, columns and figures with which it was decorated, but also with aitiological geography of Buchach, which explains the origin of the name Fedor Hill.

In another story about Potocki, *The Partners*⁶⁸ Agnon, on the one hand, paints a more positive image of the city's ruler, but, on the other, uses a well-known history to create an image of a righteous Jew. Poor Jew Nahum Ze'ev saves Potocki's life, who got lost in the forest while hunting (contrary to the previous narrative, it is not stated which Potocki is meant here). Nahum Ze'ev carries the master to his hut and thus protects him from freezing to death. It is told in detail how the Jew brings the Polish prince to the city and his castle with the last of his strength, and when asked about the prize, he gives no answer. As a reward, Potocki gives him a permanent lease of the town hall cellar so that he can trade yeast there and – what is even more important for a Jew –

⁶⁵ Por. M. Stankevyč, *Bučač ta okolicy*, s. 107–111.

⁶⁶ Por. Ostrowski, *A Great Baroque Master*, s. 203.

⁶⁷ S.Y. Agnon, *The Great Town Hall* [w:] tegoż, *A City in its Fulness*, s. 192–199.

⁶⁸ S.Y. Agnon, *The Partners* [w:] tegoż, *A City in its Fulness*, s. 201–223.

visit the synagogue every day. Soon after his arrival in the city, the blessing of this righteous man becomes apparent: he opens his vaulted cellar and arranges a warehouse there for many small Jewish merchants, thus reviving life in the market square. The story of a righteous Jew (Potocki is no longer present in the second part of the story) continues to this day, where a distant descendant of Nahum Ze'ev does not want to move out of the town hall basement, even at a high price, because he refers both to the privilege given by Potocki and to the tradition of his ancestor.

Patrons like Potocki and artists like Pinsel and Meretin do not only connect different national narratives with each other, but also have significance for the whole of Western Ukraine. They were active not only in Buchach, but also in Lviv and its vicinity. A despotic nobleman of Polish origin and a sculptor, whose origin is not even known, are not perceived as representatives of national art, but regional art, and thus transnational. They are counted among the “great sons” of Buchach, as they made a significant contribution to its cultural heritage. In this way, the search for purely national, Ukrainian “great figures” will be abandoned, which is still typical of *Parnas z Buczacza* [Parnas from Buchach] from the volume *The City of Buchach*, which does not mention the Polish patron or German artists. Today, this regional art is considered Ukrainian, and in the interwar period it was treated as Polish. It is Ukrainian and Polish, and cannot be attributed to just one national option.

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Buczacz – miasto na styku odmiennych narracji narodowych

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje trzy różne narracje narodowe na temat historii miasta Buczacz w byłej Galicji wschodniej, polską, żydowską i ukraińską, odpowiednio do trzech grup etnicznych, z których składało się społeczeństwo miasta. Reprezentatywne dla narracji polskiej są *Pamiętki buczackie* Sadoka Barącz, dla ukraińskiej szkice historyczne i wspomnienia w tomie *Bučač i Bučačćyna*, które zostały zebrane przez autorów emigracji, dla żydowskiej fikcyjna historia miasta *A City in its Fulness* Y. S. Agnona. W tych interpretacjach znajdują się różne sposoby postrzegania, które częściowo się pokrywają, częściowo również są ze sobą sprzeczne. Pozwala to ukazać opis określonych wydarzeń historycznych: oblężenie miasta przez wojska Bohdana Chmielnickiego 1648, jego rolę w polsko-tureckiej wojnie z 1672, znaczenie czasu austriackiego dla miasta i losów miasta w czasie I wojny światowej oraz bezpośrednio potem. To porównanie zostaje zakończone oceną postaci historycznej, magnata Mikołaja Potockiego, który jako budowniczy miasta Buczacz i jako mecenas wielkich artystów jest postrzegany dzisiaj, szczególnie przez stronę ukraińską, jako swoisty łącznik narodowych tradycji.

Słowa kluczowe: Buczacz, Sadok Barącz, Y. S. Agnon, Mikołaj Potocki