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The Image of the Wife in the Homiletics
of Antoni Węgrzynowicz*

Obraz żony w zbiorach kaznodziejskich Antoniego Węgrzynowicza

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Abstract. The aim of the article is to characterise the image of the wife in the homiletics of Antoni Węgrzynowicz. The analysis of selected excerpts from sermons dedicated to women allows us to see the following issues that are in the preacher's area of interest: a woman's place in marriage, obedience to her husband, responsibility for the good name of the family and raising children. The faults he particularly condemns are quarrelsomeness, vanity, and alcohol abuse. He gives different ways of disciplining women, but generally disapproves of domestic violence and points out that responsibility for a successful relationship lies with both spouses. Against the background of anti-woman literature and theology of the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries, Węgrzynowicz's sermons are characterised by a balanced and moderate approach.

Keywords: Antoni Węgrzynowicz, sermons, 17th-century literature, early 18th-century literature, wife, woman

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Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest charakterystyka obrazu żony w zbiorach kaznodziejskich Antoniego Węgrzynowicza. Analiza wybranych fragmentów kazań poświęconych kobietom pozwala dostrzec kwestie, które znalazły się w obszarze zainteresowań kaznodziei, takie jak: miejsce kobiety w małżeństwie, posłuszeństwo wobec męża, odpowiedzialność za dobre imię rodziny i wychowanie dzieci. Wady, które szczególnie potępia kaznodzieja, to: kłótniowość, próżność oraz nadużywanie alkoholu. Podaje różne sposoby dyscyplinowania kobiet, nie pochwała jednak na ogół przemocy domowej i zaznacza, że odpowiedzialność za udany związek spoczywa na obydwu małżonkach. Na tle antykobiecej literatury oraz teologii drugiej połowy XVII i początku XVIII wieku kazania Węgrzynowicza cechuje podejście wyważone i umiarkowane.

Słowa kluczowe: Antoni Węgrzynowicz, kazania, literatura XVII wieku, literatura początku XVIII wieku, żona, kobieta

The homiletics of the old Polish era are more and more often appreciated by researchers as a source of knowledge about the customs, mentality and life of people in old Poland (examples of more recent studies in this field are given by Szczukowski, 2016, p. 11). This interest goes hand in hand in considering for lesser known authors such as Berard Gutowski, Bazyli Rychlewicz, Franciszek Rychłowski and Antoni Węgrzynowicz. The latter in particular deserves attention: a Franciscan-reformer, living in 1658–1721, preacher, writer, and religious professor, connected with Krakow throughout his life, he was also a painter and a sculptor. His literary output is mainly Mariological writings and collections of sermons written for all Sundays and holidays of the liturgical year, which, against the background of numerous similar publications from the turn of the 17th century, are distinguished not only by their ingenuity and erudition, but also excellent literary quality.¹ Among the diverse and very varied thematic texts, there were reflections on good and bad wives.

According to Maria Bogucka, a researcher and expert on “matronly” issues, the status of a woman and the nature of her existence in Old Poland was determined by two factors: sex and origin, while the subsequent phases of her life were determined by her place in the family: as a maiden, married woman, mother or widow. Each of these stages was connected with different rights and duties written not only in the law but also in the social consciousness and customs of the time (Bogucka, 1998, p. 34). Reading Antoni Węgrzynowicz’s homiletics collection leaves no doubt that the second of the women’s roles mentioned is the focus of his interest. Even if the title of the sermon or introductory remarks foreshadows the discussion of a given problem in relation to the whole fairer sex (e.g. “about

¹ I wrote more about Węgrzynowicz, taking into account his biography and the state of research, in Walińska (2014).

matronly drunkenness” [“o pijaństwie białogłowskim”] – AW I 281²), in practice, the author writes mainly or exclusively about married women, using arguments closely related to this social role.

In fact, in the 17th century, a woman’s place was in the home, and her main aim and desired path in life was marriage, in which she had to submit to a man (Bogucka, 1998, p. 114). The medieval tradition of courtly love, which idealised the woman, appreciating her on an unprecedented scale, had an impact on Renaissance thought and brought about views that a woman could be spiritually equal to a man (as claimed by Erasmus of Rotterdam), or even superior to him (such a bold thesis was put forward by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, cf. Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016, pp. 36–40); nevertheless, the Catholic Church remained unmoved in this regard. The assumption of a woman’s “natural” inferiority was derived from the interpretation of the biblical description of Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib and supported by other passages of the Old Testament, without any attempt to understand the historical conditions of its anti-feminist message. Ancient authors, not hiding their negative attitude towards the female sex (Aristotle, Plato) and Christian writers ruthless in their opinions, also helped this view: Clement of Alexandria believed that the very thought of being a woman should be disgusting, Tertullian called the woman “the devil’s chamber,” and Saint Thomas considered them to be unsuccessful, defective men (Bogucka, 1998, pp. 116–118). An extreme expansion of these concepts was contained in a German brochure published at the end of the 16th century, the author of which argued that women did not belong to the human race at all. Anti-woman accents were also present in Polish literature of the 16th and 17th centuries, but only a few extremely misogynist texts can be noted (by Bartosz Paprocki; see Bogucka, 1998, p. 135; Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016).

Węgrzynowicz, in what was by no means common practice (cf. Szczukowski, 2016, p. 12), devotes a few sermons exclusively to women’s issues and includes comments on them in texts on marriage or, incidentally, on other topics. Not surprisingly, he writes about the role of the woman in the home, in addition to the characteristics of the man as the head of the family. In order to illustrate family relations convincingly, the preacher reaches back to the Biblical Apocalypse (this also results from the compositional assumptions of the collection, which consists of the eponymous “seven trumpets of Revelation of Saint John” [“siedm trąb Objawienia Jana świętego”]) and presents the consequences of the spouses’ conduct, using solar-lunar metaphors:

² I use two sets of sermons, using the following abbreviations: AW I = Węgrzynowicz, 1708, AW II = Węgrzynowicz, 1713. The number indicates the column number.

The sun means the husband, a host in the house, while the moon means the wife [...]. The moon shines beautifully even though it is night, as long as it stands *e diametro* of the sun as if it were looking at it; but if the sun hides from the moon's eyes, which is before a new moon or during an eclipse, when the moon is sad and dark, and the night becomes cloudy, obscuring the stars. In a similar way, as long as the mystical sun, that is the host, stays in front of the eyes of the moon, that is the wife; as long as he sits, does his work at home, watches over the workshop, or if the sun has to leave the house for a time, he does not hide it from the moon, and soon returns to his wife, to his children [...]. (AW I 277)³

The man is, therefore, the most important person in the home, the guarantor of family happiness and the equivalent of a ruler in the state (as is mentioned earlier). However, this entails responsibility for the children and, above all, for the wife, who, like the moon, shines only with reflected light. Hence the lack of a husband, being away from home too often, especially “underground” (which means, in this case, in taverns) destabilises family life and even, in the case of alcohol abuse, causes “poverty, hunger and misery for the wife and children” [“ubóstwo, głód i nędza żony i dzieciak”] in the home (AW I 277). The most important task of a woman, on the other hand, is obedience, “in all things according to her husband's opinion, and not according to her own; in all things acting according to his will” [“we wszystkim za zdaniem męża, a nie za swoim idąc; we wszystkim według woli jego się sprawując”] (AW II 339). Using arguments based on the authority of the Bible, the preacher does not stop at quoting passages from the Scriptures, but in many cases, he gives a detailed exegesis. This is the case with the justification of the position of the woman based on the representation of the woman as a fruitful vine, contained in Psalm 128. This metaphor is not compatible with the subsequent depiction of children as olive shoots; the preacher, therefore, wonders whether it would not be appropriate to call the mother and wife an olive tree, especially since the connotations associated with the “liquors” given by the trees mentioned above speak for themselves: oil is commonly regarded as a beneficial beverage, even to the doctor, and as an industrial material that gives light; wine, on the other hand, is an alcohol, an “intoxicating beverage” [“napoj upojający”] (AW II 341), whose abuse Węgrzynowicz strongly criticises. However, the preacher goes on to say, given the other circumstances, that it must be acknowledged that a woman's comparison to

³ “Słońce znaczy męża, gospodarza w domu, miesiąc zaś żonę [...]. Miesiąc w ten czas pięknie świeci chociaż i w nocy, póki *e diametro* słońca stoi i na nie niejako patrzy; lecz skoro się słońce z oczu miesiącowi skryje pod ziemię, co się trafia przed nowiem albo podczas zaćmienia, zaraz też miesiąc niejako smuci się i ciemnym się pokazuje, pochmurna i same gwiazdy przyćmiewająca staje się noc. Podobnym sposobem, póki mistyczne słońce, to jest gospodarz zostaje na oczach miesiąca, to jest żony; póki siedzi, robi w domu, warsztatu pilnuje, albo jeżeli temu słońcu wychylić się trzeba na czas z domu, nie kryje się z tym przed swoim miesiącem, prętko z pożytkiem wraca do żony, do dzieciak [...].”

the vine is more appropriate, because it best shows the ideal characteristics of the wife. While, as *Mundus theoreticus divinorum iudiciorum* by Georg Stengel states, quoted many times by Węgrzynowicz, the olive tree is a symbol of impatience (“an impatient, impermanent, [...] incompatible tree” [“drzewo niecierpliwe, nietrwale, [...] niezgodliwe”] AW II 341), the vine has to endure the most burdensome and painful garden treatments – bending, pruning, burying – but thanks to this, it bears better fruit. The same applies to the wife, who should obey her husband’s orders in everything, give in to his orders, let herself be “pruned, that is give up voluntarily what is not to the husband’s liking [...], buried, that is [...] sit at home” [“obcinać, to jest co się mężowi ich nie podobna tego ochotnie odstępować [...], zakopać, to jest [...] w domu siedzieć”] (AW II 342).

Obedience to the husband is a non-negotiable requirement, but Węgrzynowicz draws attention to a wider problem, which is the issue of a compatible marital life. The Sermon *Przeciwko gniewliwym małżonkom* [*Against Angry Spouses*] begins with the teaching of the harmfulness of anger in living together, emphasising that this sin is just as grave when a husband is angry with his wife as it is when she is angry with him. However, almost immediately the author adds that he will devote most of his speech to the female half of the relationship: “Commonly, the women are the cause of conflicts in marriage, and thus plagues or other misfortunes that follow; therefore, we must speak more and first about the impetuosity of women than of men” [“Pospolicie zaś przyczyną niezgód w małżeństwie, a za tym plag albo nieszczęścia za niezgodami idącego są białogłowy: przeto więcej i pierwej mówić się tu musi o zapalczywościach niewieścich niżeli o męskich”] (AW I 337). An angry wife often harms not only herself (starting with the destructive influence of anger on beauty) but also her husband and the whole family: “in a house with a cantankerous hostess, everyone is affected by her, the household flees from such a house, [...] the husband has to leave the house, [...] poverty and destitution will follow” [“w którym domu jest gospodyni swarliwa, każdemu się tam od niej dostanie, ucieka z takiego domu czeladka, [...] mąż musi ustąpić z domu, [...] bieda i ubóstwo nastąpi”] (AW I 339). The wife’s quarrelsomeness, her tendency to gossip and slander her husband brings dishonour to the family and, indirectly, testifies to the incompetence of the head of the house. That is why the preacher stresses: “Because it is a great shame to have a bad wife” [“Bo to sromota wielka i wstyd mieć złą żonę”] (AW I 338). Her behaviour has a negative impact on children, who “learn and get used to such bad manners of swearing” [“takichże złych obyczajów sposobów przeklinania uczą się i nawykają”] (AW I 341).

The sermon on conflicts in marriage ends with advice for men who cannot cope with disobedient and “cantankerous” wives. In the reality of the 17th century, both Polish and European, the most common way of disciplining women was,

unfortunately, physical violence – commonly accepted and used, as confirmed by the laws of the time, which only contained certain restrictions on tools: a rod or whip was allowed, while sharp tools were banned (cf. Dziechcińska, 2001, p. 47; Yalom, 2019, p. 71). The approval of beating wives is also confirmed by preaching and literary texts (cf. Wiśniewska, 2003, pp. 118–119). A record of real tragedies can be found in the wills written by women who died tormented by their husbands, such as Anna Rosochacka, who in her last words only wanted to deprive her husband of the care of their son for fear of his life because her first child “struck his foot only once and went to the grave, as I am leaving this world by his hand as well” [“nogą tylko raz uderzył i w grób poszło, jak i ja z rąk jego z świata idę”] (after Popiołek, 2008, p. 288). It must be admitted, however, that the author allows the beating of a wife only in extreme cases, which he considers drunkenness to be. In other situations, he does not recommend physical violence; on the contrary, he openly condemns it: “So that no harm be done to the woman, I appeal especially to passionate husbands, who insult, and worse, cripple their wives out of anger. It is certain that for such viciousness, one must fear eternal damnation” [“Więc aby krzywdy nie miały niewiasty, aplikuję ja osobliwie do mężów pasjonatów, znieważających, a co gorsza z gniewu kaliczących żony swoje. Jakoż to rzecz pewna, iż za te swoje narowy trzeba się takim bać wiecznego potępienia”] (AW I 341). Citing Saint John Chrysostom, Węgrzynowicz advises husbands to treat their wives’ faults with forbearance and try to change them: “have pity on her, admonish her, save her, counsel her” [“miej politowanie nad nią, napominaj, ratuj, radź koło niej”] (AW I 345–346). However, if this does not help, the preacher suggests (also after Chrysostom) that they treat the evil wife as their cross and use it in the process of spiritual penance: “Think and say to yourself: this evil wife is God’s just punishment for my sins; I humbly accept it from a just God” [“Pomyśl i rzecz do siebie: kara to Boża sprawiedliwa za grzechy moje ta żona zła; pokornie ją tedy od Boga sprawiedliwego przyjmuję”] (AW I 345–346). The above declarations, however, do not prevent the preacher from quoting an anecdote which shows the good sides of an “angry” wife, but also trivialises violence: a man who had problems with the examination of conscience, and at the same time knew the explosive character of his wife, used to hit her “in the face” before going to church, and she reminded him of his sins every time he struck, “and he recorded it all for the sake of a complete future confession” [“a on to sobie wszystko notował dla zupełności przyszej spowiedzi”] (AW I 339–340).

One of the reasons for disagreement between spouses is the suspicion of adultery. Węgrzynowicz describes this phenomenon in an exceptionally precise manner, dedicating to it the last sermon of the sixth part (“trumpets”) of the first book of Sunday sermons (AW I 462; see Walińska, 2014). *Zelotypia*, or unjustified and excessive jealousy, is a sinful feeling *per se* and leads to further sins. A jealous

wife (*zelotypa*) poisons her husband's life every day, and the biggest burden is her words, the accusations she constantly makes:

The sword hurts, the arrow hurts, but quietly; and when they whip someone, not only does it hurt, but also the swish can be heard far away. The unfaithful wife scourges her husband often, she reproaches him, dresses him down, curses him, noise, hustle and bustle in the house, such conflicts between them will not be quickly hidden, relatives, neighbours will find out: and then, shame, infamy. (AW I 463)⁴

At the same time, however, numerous examples from collections of compendiums, exempla and other sources of homiletic erudition show that the consequences of the morbid jealousy of husbands are much worse: crimes against innocent women wrongly accused of adultery.

Each sermon of Book I contains a final part with advice on how to avoid one of the seven principal sins; this is no different for *zelotypes*. The most important thing is that spouses do not give each other reasons to be jealous: "let the wife give up the cards, the gifts, the laughing, remembering that according to Saint Jerome, that is the argument of suspect love" ["zona niech da pokój karteczkom, podarunczkom, śmieszkom, pamiętając, iż to według ś. Hieronima jest argumentem podejrzanego miłości"] (AW I 468). Listening to gossip and a lack of trust are equally harmful. To sum up, a happy and consensual marriage is – here the preacher recalls a maxim ascribed to Alfonso V of Aragon, *uxor caeca, maritus surdus*, that is: a blind wife and a deaf husband.

One of the circumstances that brought gossip and "bad fame" to women was the excessive attention paid to their appearance. Węgrzynowicz devotes a sermon entitled *Przeciwko strojom białogłowskim* [*Against Matronly Garments*] to this issue. As in other cases, most of the comments addressed to women are *de facto* intended for married women and the same offences are treated more severely than when committed by unmarried women.

The preacher sees three dangers in his preaching predilection for dressing up (which in Węgrzynowicz, as in other moralistic texts, is *pars pro toto* excessive care of appearance, and also includes hairstyles and makeup). First of all, an attractive-looking woman exposes men to temptation and leads them, like the biblical Eve, down the wrong path (it is not without reason that this sermon is in the section on the sin of impurity):

women sin mortally with these adornments, when they do so with the lewd intention, wanting to please someone else besides their husband; or when there is a danger that they will arouse someone

⁴ "Rani miecz, rani strzała, ale cicho; kiedy zaś biczem kogo śmigają, nie tylko boli, ale i daleko świst słyhać. Biczuje nie raz niewierna żona męża swego językiem swoim, wymawia mu, łaje, przeklina go, hałas, zgiełk w domu, nie zatai się to prętko o takich difidencjach między niemi, krewni, sąsiedzi dowiedzą się: aż sromota, niesława."

to an evil lust with their imaginative desirability and beauty; and if they do so out of a feeble female shyness, and do not see the dangers to shock their neighbour, they commit a venial sin. (AW I 195)⁵

The weight of the sin is emphasised by the preacher through the accumulation of arguments from authority, recalling the most important names in the history of the Church, starting with Saint Augustine, through to Saint Jerome, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Bernardino of Siena, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. This should not come as a surprise, since “the women’s garment, in addition to sophisticated hairstyles and make-up, was considered a tool in the hand of the devil” [“Ubiór niewieści, zresztą obok wyrafinowanych fryzur i makijażu, uznano za narzędzie w ręku szatana”] (Ryba, 2010, p. 143).

Secondly, by embellishing herself, the woman questions the work of the Creator, who has decided that she will look like this, and not otherwise – she can therefore expect adequate punishment, such as the negative impact of the specifics used on her health. “Moreover, they still experience other ruinations on their bodies: for those who paint themselves, white, age quickly, or the Lord God visits upon them illnesses that wreak havoc on their bodies” [“Oprócz tego odnoszą jeszcze na swoim ciele ruina insze: bo takie, co się malują, biela, prętko się starzeją albo Pan Bóg chorobami jakimi wynędza ich ciało”] (AW I 198). *Nota bene*, in this case, Węgrzynowicz uses a rational argument: the substances used for bleaching and face painting at this time include mercury, arsenic and lead. The latter was used to produce a highly toxic lead-containing skin whitener called “ceruse”:

Thanks to its pure lead content, mattifying properties and the satin finish it gave, Venetian ceruse has become the most desirable white base. It was mainly preferred by the European aristocracy [...]. Long-term use caused skin discolouration, the complexion became grey, tired, took on shades of yellow, green, and violet, which finally made the face look like a dried out old fruit. Continuous use of the specific was also the cause of tooth decay, bad breath and hair loss, and even permanent lung damage. (Elridge, 2017, p. 45)⁶

The third “temporal harm” is the financial cost of “dressing up” to the family (and above all to the husband), which in many cases leads to “domestic ruin” (AW

⁵ “niewiasty grzeszą śmiertelnie temi przyprawami, gdy to czynią intencją lubieżną, chcąc się komu innemu oprócz męża swego upodobać; albo gdy niebezpieczeństwo jest, by kogo do złej chuci oną zmyśloną udatnością, pięknnością nie pobudziły; jeżeli to zaś z mamej tylko płocności niewieściej czynią, a niebezpieczeństwa do pogorszenia bliźniego nie widzą, grzech w tym powszedni popełniają.”

⁶ “Dzięki zawartości czystego ołowiu, właściwościom matującym i satynowemu wykończeniu, które nadawał, cerusyt wenecki stał się najbardziej pożądanym białym podkładem. Preferowała go głównie europejska arystokracja [...]. Długotrwałe stosowanie powodowało przebarwienia skóry, cera stawała się szara, zmęczona, nabierała odcieni żółci, zieleni i fioletu, przez co twarz w końcu zaczynała wyglądać jak wysuszony stary owoc. Ciągłe używanie specyfiku było również przyczyną próchnicy zębów, nieswieżego oddechu i wypadania włosów, a nawet trwałego uszkodzenia płuc.”

I 198–199). Squandering money on luxuries is the main aspect of the anti-woman literature of the time, e.g. in *Nowe zwierciadło modzie dzisiejszego stroju akomodowane...* [*A New Fashion Mirror of Today's Outfit Accomodante...*] by Jakub Łącznowolski (1678), as well as in numerous satirical texts (see Bogucka, 1998, pp. 138–139; Ryba, 2010).

From a social point of view, an undoubtedly more serious “sin” than the predilection for dressing up was alcohol abuse. In this case, Węgrzynowicz admits that men are more likely to be affected by the problem, which is why they are the main addressees of a sermon entitled *Przeciw pijaństwu oficjalistów i gospodarzów* [*Against Drunkenness of Officials and Hosts*]. Among the consequences of their alcoholism is the destructive effect on the family. If the head of the house drinks, “he sins gravely, not only by the sin of drunkenness but also by the sin of lovelessness; and yes, a kind of tyranny over his wife and children” [“ciężko bardzo pogrzeusza, nie tylko grzechem pijaństwa, ale też grzechem niemiłości; i owszem, niejako tyraństwa nad żoną i dziećmi swymi”] (AW I 274). In support of his words, he cites the exemplum of a woman led to desperation by her drunkard husband, who drank away all the money he earned. Beaten by him severely, the woman returns to her children crying at home, “practically eating their dresses off themselves from hunger” [“prawie od głodu sukienki na sobie zębami gryzące widzi”] (AW I 278); from despair and helplessness she killed her sons and then her husband, and then gave herself up to the executioner, and on her last journey “fervently admonished all drunken wastrel husbands” [“żarliwie napominała wszystkich mężów pijaków utratników”] (AW I 278).

The author’s ambition and assumption is a comprehensive description of behaviours related to the seven deadly sins. Therefore, the next sermon is entitled *Przeciwko pijaństwu niewiast i gospodyń* [*Against the Drunkenness of Women and Housewives*], and in practice, it is addressed to married mothers. Węgrzynowicz stresses that whatever he said about men’s drunkenness also concerns women. The preacher presents alcoholism, apart from being a sin primarily against oneself (according to the classification of the Council of Trent – see Goliński, 2002, p. 71), as having a disastrous impact on one’s surroundings and – what is worth emphasising here – he places greater responsibility on women (wives). Drinking mothers set a bad example for their children, they lose their authority, so they are inefficient in education, they bring poverty to the family, they drink away their dowry, because “they steal from their husbands, whatever they can take from the house, they will” [“mężę swoje kradną, z domu, co mogą, wywleczą”] (AW I 281), and do not perform their duties (in which Węgrzynowicz also sees real financial losses). It is no wonder that some Fathers of the Church believe that women’s drinking is a more serious sin than men’s, and Węgrzynowicz compares it to apocalyptic plagues:

The first plague is an eclipse [...]. For where the housekeeper is a drunkard, in such a house everything must surely be eclipsed, a sad husband, sad little children, sad residents, neighbours, friends; the household is in decline, constant trouble, conflicts, curses and the like. (AW I 284)⁷

In support of his theses, Węgrzynowicz quotes, apart from the Holy Scriptures, among others, Saint John Chrysostom and one of his favourite modern Bible commentators, Cornelius a Lapide; however, by translating or interpreting fragments of their authorship about women as a whole, he consistently narrows the semantic field of the word *mulier* to the meaning of the mother-wife, and extracts from their texts those features of the alcohol-abusing women which show themselves most at home. It, therefore, condemns the conduct of a woman who is “by nature” prone to anger and talkativeness, and alcohol intensifies this trait: “a wagon would not take what a drunkard woman talks, lies, curses, etc.” [“furmański wóz nie zabrałby tego, co pijaczka nagada, nałaje, naprzeklina etc.”] (AW I 284). As a result, “she brings shame and revulsion to her husband [...], confusion and disgrace to her children: for it is barely worse to have a drunken mother than an adulteress,” “she does not care for her husband’s admonition, she is rebellious, disobedient to him,” “she easily breaks her marital vows” [“wstydem i obrzydzeniem jest mężowi [...], własnym dzieciom konfuzją, niesławę przynosi: bo ledwie niegorzej mieć matkę pijaczkę niżeli cudzołóżnicę”, “na napomnienie małżonka nie dba, krnąbrna, nieposłuszna się onemu staje”, “wiarę małżeńską łatwo łamie”] (AW I 285–286).

In order to finally convince the audience of the havoc that alcohol wreaks, he compares a woman addicted to it to the plague air, adding that “There are various cures for the plague, but there is no cure for the plague of drunken women” [“Rozmaite znajdują się lekarstwa na zarazę, ale na tę zarazę jaką są pijaczki lekarstwa nie ma”] (AW I 287). The “treatment” is hindered by the innate cleverness and stubbornness of women, which cannot be overcome by force in this case: “[husbands – M.W.] will break and batter them, but only after the moment she gets out of bed after such treatment, [...] she will find a way” [“[mężowie – M.W.] potłuką, pobiją, ledwie druga po takim lekarstwie z łóżka wstanie, [...] najdzie ona sposób”] (AW I 287). One such ploy is told by an exemplum taken from *Mundus theoreticus divinatorum iudiciorum*: a woman brought to court by her husband was banned from drinking, but she deceitfully asked to keep the law of the *litkup* (a drink that seals a transaction). She then made an arrangement with the wife of “the neighbour, same as she was, every day they would sell each other a bed, and the next day they would buy it back; and so, drinking the *litkup*, she got drunk

⁷ “Pierwsza tedy plaga to jest zaćmienie [...]. Albowiem gdzie gospodyni jest pijaczka, w takim domu pewnie zaćmić się wszystko musi, smutny mąż, smutne dzieci, smutna czeladka, sąsiedzi, przyjaciele; gospodarstwo niszczy, ustawiczne kłopoty, swary, przekleństwa i tym podobne utrapienia.”

every day” [“[żoną – M.W.] sąsiada, taką jako i sama była, co dzień łoże one sobie przedawały, a nazajutrz odkupowały wzajemnie; i tak litkup pijąc, codziennie się upijała”] (AW I 287).

Nevertheless, the preacher gives different ways to eradicate drunkenness in women based on the experiences of husbands. Some of them may astonish: one of them wrapped his wife up in swaddling clothes and treated her like an infant (allegedly it proved effective); others made sure she had no money to buy alcohol with; still, others threw her out for a while or beat her, “which husbands have the right to do, as long as it does not happen in tyranny or out of passion” [“do czego mają mężowie prawo, byle się to nie działo po tyrańsku ani z pasji”] (AW I 290). While accepting physical violence, in this case, he again admits that beating generally does not help for long. It is best that women want to change themselves, and one of the arguments – a surprisingly modern one – that can appeal to them is the negative impact of alcohol on the foetus, as pregnant women already knew in ancient times:

Let such women consider themselves, as on a judicious day, to be shamed by pagan women, who, in order to give birth to children who are not sick or weak, but healthy and strong [...] did not drink any drink [...]. And how will you fare in God’s judgement, Christian woman? You, who knowing this well, harm the life of your foetus with your drunkenness, not only in body, but in time and in the soul, when the foetus, either taken from this life by your actions, dies without baptism, or having been born [...] lacks a proper, decent [...] education. (AW I 290)⁸

This time the preacher uses an *a fortiori* argument, built on the scheme: if even the pagans knew/have done so, Christians should know/do so even more. If all methods of returning one’s wife to the proper path fail, there is the consolation that being with a bad wife every day is a good opportunity to practice the virtue of patience: “Jesus bears evil ones, drunks, gamblers, etc. in His Church, so you, husband, should bear patiently a drunkard, angry, impulsive and stubborn wife” [“znosi Pan Jezus w Kościele swoim złych, pijaków, kosterów etc. i ty mężu znos cierpliwie pijaczkę, złą, zapalczywą, uporną żonę”].

However, both literary and historical materials, as well as sermons confirm that women had to exercise patience much more often in an old Polish marriage. Węgrzynowicz mentions examples of wives who had to endure much from their

⁸ “Niech sobie takie niewiasty uważą, jako ich na sądnym dniu zawstydzą niewiasty pogańskie, które aby były rodziły dzieci nie chore ani słabe, ale zdrowe i mocne [...] żadnego trunku pijanego nie pijały [...]. A tobie jako to na sądzie Bożym ujdzie chrześcijańska niewiasto? Która dobrze o tym wiedząc pijaństwem swoim płodowi żywota twego szkodzisz, nie tylko na ciele, ale na czas i na duszy, gdy albo umorzony w żywocie twoim z tej okazji płód bez chrztu umiera, albo urodziwszy się [...] pilnego, należytego [...] wychowania nie ma.”

spouses, tolerating their drunkenness, infidelity, hooligan lifestyle, and violence. In this case, unlike in the recommendations given about the sinful behaviour of wives, preachers did not have much good advice for women. The only solution, also presented by Węgrzynowicz, is not to oppose the husband and patiently bear his defects. As role models, the preacher presents the heroines of exempla, historical figures who confirmed with their lives the validity of such a solution. One of them was Saint Monica of Hippo, mother of Saint Augustine, later recognised by the Catholic Church as the patron saint of married women who live in “difficult” relationships (that is, violent if we discard the euphemistic language of the Church). Married to a pagan, a brutal and uncouth man, she was often asked by her neighbours how it was possible that she did not bear the traces of beatings that they themselves sometimes experienced from their husbands. She then replied that patience saves her: “patiently enduring her husband’s wild manners, not standing against him in anything, but rather doing everything according to his will, as if given to him as a slave under a marriage contract, following him” [“cierpliwie znosząc dzikie obyczaje męża swego, w niczym mu się nie przeciwiać, ale raczej we wszystkim do woli jego, jakoby za niewolnicę kontraktem małżeńskim oddana jemu, stosując się”] (AW II 344). A sermon on *zelotypia* contained several examples who faced unjust accusations of adultery (one of them was Saint Cunigunde of Luxembourg, who had to undergo a trial of walking over red-hot ploughshares to prove her innocence). The wife of a suffering, sick or crippled man must also show exceptional patience, but as a reward, she may deserve the honourable title of *uxor martyris* – martyr’s wife (AW I 344).

Reading the orders and prohibitions addressed to married women, as well as the knowledge we have about the reality of the 16th and 17th centuries, allows us to say – exaggerating only slightly – that the best thing that awaited a married woman was the hope of becoming a widow. This status allowed for independent living and property management, social and – to some extent – public activity; therefore, it is no wonder that widows were not in a hurry to remarry (see Bogucka, 1998, p. 60). Neither did the Church encourage them to do so, although its vision of a widow’s life was radically different. Węgrzynowicz gives a threefold definition of a “true” widow after Saint Paul (1 Tim 5:3–16):

Three signs, or conditions of a true widow [...]: The first [...] that she does not have any more intention of getting married [...] The second condition, that the decision should come from pious intentions [...], and not for a vain secular end [...]. The third condition [...] that she remains far from delicacies, secular amusements, recreation, conversations, costumes, worldly ones, etc. (AW II 231)⁹

⁹ “Trzy znaki albo kondycyje prawdziwej wdowy [...]: Pierwsza [...] aby nie miała intencji więcej pość za mąż [...] Druga kondycyja, aby postanowienie pochodziło z pobożnej intencji [...],

Let us add that the intention of Saint Paul was to limit the number of widows whom the Church was supposed to help financially (“untrue” widows were not eligible for this help); however, in religious literature, the most frequent reference was made to Saint Jerome’s *List do Furii o zachowaniu wdowieństwa* [*Letter to Furia on the Best Means of Preserving Her Widowhood*], containing suggestively painted threats and difficulties that await women after their second marriage (Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016, pp. 126–127).

The image of the wife in the homiletics of Antoni Węgrzynowicz reflects the attitudes prevailing in the theology and literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. In constructing the portrait of a woman, he lists the features which made up the preaching canon of the “ideal wife:” conformity (generally understood as obedience to the husband), moderation, diligence, modesty, and a good reputation (cf. Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016, p. 108). However, he is far from directly calling a married woman a slave, as Piotr Skarga happened to do (Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016, pp. 109–111). He stresses that a successful relationship depends on two people, he does not approve of physical violence, and he notes situations where the woman surpasses the man, e.g. with patience and dedication. Neither does he take up the thesis of the superiority of virginity over marital status – thus discrediting married women – which was frequently discussed in the theology and homiletics of the time, and which was present in the sermons of Jakub Wujek and Piotr Skarga, he does not praise vows of chastity, and he does not treat marriage in categories of an “imperfect medicine” for sinful lusts (Skarga’s term, see also: Stuchlik-Surowiak, 2016, pp. 97–102). Thus, it can be concluded that the views of Antoni Węgrzynowicz, although far from progressive, do not allow him to be counted among the old Polish enemies of the fairer sex.

Translated into English: Lingua Lab

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AW I – Węgrzynowicz, Antoni. (1708). *Kazań niedzielnych księga pierwsza, to jest siedm trąb Objawienia Jana świętego przeciwko siedmiom głównym grzechom napisane*. Kraków: Drukarnia Akademicka.
- AW II – Węgrzynowicz, Antoni. (1713). *Kazań niedzielnych księga wtóra, to jest siedm kolumn domu mądrości duchownej*. Częstochowa: Drukarnia Paulinów.

a nie dla próżnego świeckiego jakiego końca [...]. Trzecia kondycyja [...], żeby była daleka od delicyj, świeckich krotofil, rekreacyj, konwersacyj, strojów, światowych etc.”

SOURCES

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