

Maria Orwid (1930–2009)

Maria Orwid came from the assimilated Jewish family of Adolf and Klara Pfeffer. She was born on the 23rd of July 1930 in Przemyśl, where she was to spend the majority of her childhood, being brought up in a large family. She was especially fond of her grandfather Izydor Weinstock, her mother's father. Maria Orwid wrote about her mother's family:

Mother's family was a rich middle class family with intelligentsia leanings. Well maybe it was not intelligentsia given that they forbade the daughters from taking the school leaving certificate, being of the view that it just wasn't becoming. They thought that young women should sit at home, awaiting a husband and then busy themselves with the children.

Her father was a barrister and had from her earliest youth devoted a lot of attention to her, especially in matters of education. He did not interest himself in daily matters though. Here the women of the family were dominant and they tried to bring up Marysia to be a young lady, not without her vocal disapproval.

The Pfeffer family lived in the centre of Przemyśl, at 2 Na Bramie square. Next door to the living quarters was A. Pfeffer's legal surgery. The environment within which Maria grew up was most colourful, full of individualism and frequent discussions, often highly fiercely defended viewpoints.

Everyday in the evening, except for Saturdays, we would go to the Weinstock grandparents, who lived close to our house at Mickiewicz Street 6, in the so-called Eisnerówka. [...] All around lived acquaintances of grandmother's. Here home was always bustling and pleasant. The whole family would come and various friends.

In many situations young Maria was treated almost like a grown up. When she started her education at school she was aware of what was happening around her.

I started my first form of primary school in 1937. It was a terrible time. At Lvov Polytechnic a Jewish student was thrown out through a window. Then there took place his demonstrative funeral. 'Bench' ghettos came into being at the universities. [...] A time of real threat and danger arose, with the adults in no way trying to hide anything from me.

Maria attended a private school run on state school lines and regulations. And although the language of instruction was Polish the pupils studied everyday Hebrew and the basics of Yiddish. As in many other similar schools the children were brought up in the spirit of Zionism, being instilled from their earliest years with the notions of nation and a future Jewish state.

In the summer of 1939 Maria was to spend her holidays with her mother in Muszyna near Krynica. The holiday was suddenly interrupted by a dramatic telephone call from her father and instructions to return immediately to Przemyśl, with which this joyous period of her life was to come to an end. Shortly after World War II broke out and the conditions of life for Maria and her family were to dramatically change. However, the worst was still to come.

In June 1941, following the German incursion into Przemyśl, trying times for the whole family were to begin. In the spring of 1942 the Pfeffer family was forcibly moved to the ghetto. On the 20th of July 1942 the ghetto was shut down and the process of 'deportation' began. As a result of this Maria's grandparents – the Weinstocks, were to perish, along with a large part of their family. In the autumn of 1942, before the final act in the eradication of the ghetto, Marysia managed to escape along with her family. They hid using 'artisan papers' in Lvov, where in 1943 Marysia's beloved father died. From that moment onwards she was to be under her mother's care. Several months later Lvov was liberated. Soon after the cessation of hostilities Maria's mother was to marry again, this time to Daniel Herzhaft, who took a new surname – Orwid.

At the beginning of 1945 Maria, with her mother and her mother's new husband, moved to Cracow, where, like with many other repatriates from Lvov, they started off staying at the Polonia Hotel. Ms. Orwid – for she was at that time adopted by 'daddy Orwid' – continued her education which had been interrupted by the war at the Cracow Urszulanka Secondary School. Following her school leaving certificate in 1948, instead of reading philoso-

phy as she had earlier planned – she started, on the advice of Stanisław Lem, with whom the family were friendly, to study at the Medical Faculty of the Jagiellonian University. This meeting with the writer, then still a medical student, she was to recall many times, admitting that he had a great influence on the shaping of her outlook and views. He recommended films and books, and would discuss them with her. Yet what most impressed the young Maria was that he treated her as an adult and, when asked about her, was to answer briefly ‘no fool.’ Years later M. Orwid was to say of Lem:

He was my intellectual tutor and I trusted him immensely. We never talked about personal matters. I never had a crush on him. I was not frightened of him. I just felt good in his company and was never bored in his company even for a moment. Sometimes he would jest, sometimes he would shout. [...] Sometimes I was mad at him when he'd frighten me that he'd perform some experiment or other and turn me into a cloud of atoms.

Already during her degree at the Cracow Medical Academy, from year five onwards, she had the opportunity to study in a unit directed by Antoni Kępiński (1918–1972). After completing her medical studies with a specialisation in Psychiatry, she was given a job at the Cracow Psychiatric Clinic run by A. Kępiński, who was over the years to become her mentor and master. This was to take place at the time when, briefly, the degree of Ph.D. was replaced by that of candidate of science. Maria Orwid was to receive therefore a candidate scholarship with her formal academic tutors being Prof. Eugeniusz Brzezicki, and subsequently Prof. Karol Spett. However her real mentor in psychiatry and academic research was, then still a doctor, A. Kępiński. Under his guidance she was initially to involve herself in the psychopathology of schizophrenia, testing among other things the phenomenon described as autism. She did not manage to publish the results of her research, however, as they turned out to be convergent with the research results of Eugeniusz Minkowski. She was one of the first women to involve herself in psychiatry in Cracow, therefore she had to often prove that she was sufficiently able and competent in order to work within this specialist field.

For the period 1959–1964 M. Orwid together with Prof. Kępiński created the so-called Oświęcim Programme, which involved research into the psychiatric effects of concentration camp war experiences on former prisoners. This programme was to be one of the first in the world to deal with post-camp traumas. Maria Orwid also conducted research into the second and third generation of Polish Jews whose parents had lived in ghettos, concentration camps or in hiding during World War II.

Maria Orwid also participated in the changes designed to reform the Cracow Psychiatric Clinic during the second half of the 1950s. This reform was to involve the implementation of the principles of a therapeutic community,

as well as individual and group psychotherapy. Resulting from this was the first work in Poland on the subject of group psychotherapy. The subject of her Ph.D. thesis in 1963 was the problems of the social adaptation of former Auschwitz prisoners to post-camp life.

The next stage in her education and research was a visit in the mid 1960s to the London Institute of Psychiatry, where she had the opportunity to study youth psychiatry at the Tyson Unit, directed by Dr. Wilfried Warren, the British creator of this branch of psychiatry. Maria Orwid also trained then in group psychiatry under the guidance of Dr. Bob Hobson.

After her return to Poland she set up at the Psychiatric Clinic a youth psychiatry section, employing here the principles of therapeutic community and psychotherapy. A subsequent stage in the therapy of young people with psychic disturbances was incorporating work with parents. Maria Orwid, with the specialist in psychology Dr Wanda Badura-Madej, undertook research into the relations within the families of young patients hospitalised on the ward. The results of this research constituted the basis for her post-doctoral work *Sytuacja rodzinna młodzieży z zaburzeniami psychotycznymi niepsychotocznymi* [The family situation of young people with psychotic non-psychotic disturbances], which she was to submit twice. First in 1971 and then in 1975 in order to eventually successfully pass the post-doctoral examination in 1976. She was then awarded the academic position of assistant professor. As one of her colleagues Prof. Jacek Bomba was to write many years later: 'The body of the day awarding this position – the Central Qualification Commission, did not take the decision lightly accusing her of one-sidedness in her academic output.' Maria Orwid recalled however that all the possible logistic and personal perturbations connected with the extension of the post-doctoral award process were within the context of the loss of her hitherto mentor Prof. Kępiński, and the necessity to find herself a circle of new colleagues and potential reviewers. In Cracow she celebrated the awarding of the post-doctoral degree with her family accompanied by friends.

M. Orwid was to expand the scientific workshop of psychiatry and the methodology of working with families within the environment of international specialists under the leadership of Yrjö Alanen at the University of Turku, making use of a scholarship from the World Health Organisation. Having increasing experience and specialising in child and youth psychiatry and psychotherapy, M. Orwid founded the Clinic of Child and Youth Psychiatry in 1978 – the first in Poland, which she was to head until 2000. While running the clinic she was to receive the academic title of professor in 1989.

Professor M. Orwid was a joint founder of the working model for multi-professional units in psychiatry, the joint author of the first works on the psychiatric effects of concentration camp war experiences. She participated

in the work of the Section for the Scientific Therapy of Families of the Polish Psychiatric Society and the Polish-Israeli Society for Psychiatric Health. Maria Orwid was the creator of a therapy project for those who had survived the Holocaust. On her initiative members of the Society of Children of the Holocaust for years had the possibility to participate in group therapy twice annually. With time therapeutic classes were conducted also for representatives of the Second Generation – the children saved from the Holocaust, who were often burdened psychiatrically by the experiences of their parents. These meetings were conducted by Prof. M. Orwid together with teams of psychotherapists from Cracow and Warsaw. As members of the Society often recall: ‘These therapeutic workshops were for us *Children of the Holocaust* extremely important; after meetings that lasted a week at Śródborów we would return in good humour, with a will to live, with a sense that we were not alone in the world, that there were people who cared about us.’

Towards the end of the 20th century Prof. M. Orwid returned to her research into the consequences of trauma and involved herself in work on the later psychic effects of World War Two amongst Jews and the Roma. She organised at that time a research group, and then a therapeutic-research group which examined the problems of the consequences of trauma as well as the inter-generational transfer of trauma.

Prof. Maria Orwid was exceptionally active in her academic work, taking part in numerous conventions and academic conferences, at which she would present the academic achievements of Polish psychiatry and in particular those of the group she worked in. Lecturing in psychiatry as well as child and youth psychiatry as part of the degree programme at the Medical Faculty of the Jagiellonian University’s Collegium Medicum, she was also the joint author of a post-diploma teaching programme in a similar field. In the period up to 2000 she headed a postgraduate diploma training programme at the Cracow Department of Psychiatry.

Being an active member of the Polish Psychiatric Society she participated in the forming of the Society’s Academic Psychotherapy Section. She was also the co-author of a training programme in psychotherapy and procedures for qualification recognition in its independent application, which the Psychotherapy Section was the first to develop in Poland. She also founded an Academic Section for Family Therapy at the Polish Psychiatric Society, becoming its first president. As recognition for her services, the Polish Psychiatric Society made her an honorary member.

Professor M. Orwid was also an honorary member of the European Family Therapy Association. During the course of her professional work she belonged to numerous family therapy associations. She was a founder member of International Family Therapy. She actively cooperated with Deutsche

Akademie für Psychoanalyse, whose gold medal she received in recognition of her service. She was also a founding member and for many years board member of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry. It was also thanks to Prof. M. Orwid that in 1990 the World Congress of Family Therapy was organised in Cracow as well as in 2005 the World Congress of Dynamic Psychiatry.

While conducting research and teaching students Prof. M. Orwid was also the tutor and reviewer of many Ph.D. theses. Amongst the latter are the following studies: Kazimierz Pietruszewski's *Hospitalizacja psychiatryczna pacjenta młodzieżowego z punktu widzenia jego sytuacji rodzinnej* (1990) [The psychiatric hospitalisation of a young patient from the perspective of his family situation], Renata Modrzejewska-Kubiak's *Cechy systemu rodzinnego w doborze stacjonarnego i domowego leczenia psychiatrycznego młodzieży* (1998) [Traits of the family system in the selection of the stationary and home-based psychiatric treatment of young people], Maciej Pilecki's *Zaburzenia odżywiania się – analiza epidemiologiczna populacji klas pierwszych krakowskich szkół ponadpodstawowych* (2001) [Nutritional disturbances – epidemiological analysis of populations of first-formers in Cracow secondary schools], Beata Diomszyna's *Spoleczno-kulturowy kontekst jadłowstrętu psychicznego na Litwie* (2004) [The socio-cultural context of psychiatric anorexia in Lithuania].

Professor M. Orwid was to develop many students and successors who have continued her work both in research into the effects of trauma in the first and second generations of those who survived the Holocaust, as well as in psychotherapeutic care.

Independent of her academic and therapeutic work she was an active member of the Association of Children of the Holocaust and the Jewish Community in Cracow. When the concept for the reactivation of the Polish Lodge of B'nai B'rith came about in 2007, she was to become a founding member. She supported many charity initiatives and stood on the side of those discriminated against, regularly participating in Tolerance Marches. She declared that 'to the end of my life I will oppose all manifestations of totalitarianism and will fight against them in any way I deem fit.'

Straight after the end of World War II, while a teenager, she attended for a time the meetings of the left-wing *Hashomer-Hatzair* organisation. Years later she admitted that she had even thought about emigration to Palestine, and later to Israel. Paradoxically during this period she made a secret of her Jewish identity during public contact, chiefly on the advice of her parents, who feared potentially negative consequences if she were to reveal her true origins. Following her passing of the school-leaving certificate she even overtly introduced herself as 'Marysia Orwid, Jewess.' During her degree she was a member of the Union of Polish Academic Youth, in which she chose not to

hide her origins. She was to remain true in her openness in talking about her Jewish origins as equally her left-wing viewpoints to the end of her life, although later she consciously chose not to take an active role in political life.

Despite her huge involvement in academic work and charitable activities she found time for an active social life within Cracow's bohemian intellectual-artistic circles. She belonged to the group of friends and regular goers of the *Piwnica pod Baranami* cabaret, she was good friends with many Cracow artists. She loved fashion, interesting outfits and jewellery; consequently she could be often seen in art galleries, shops and markets selling artistic wares. People liked her because she was an excellent listener. Those closest to her, as well as those who met her only fleetingly, appreciated her as an excellent conversationalist.

Maria Orwid never married and never wanted to have a family. Certainly one of the causes of this was the death of her 8-year-old cousin Ludwik, deported in 1942 from the Przemysł ghetto to a Nazi death camp. For many years her partner was Marian Szulc.

To a certain extent M. Orwid attempted a summing up of her life, including various aspects of her academic work, in the publishing in 2006 of the recollections *Przeżyć... i co dalej* [To survive... and what then]. The publication was divided into two parts – recollections from childhood and youth as well as a conversation about her adult life conducted with her by Katarzyna Zimmerer and Krzysztof Szwejca.

One of Prof. Orwid's last undertakings was the attempt to have the title of Righteous Among the Nations granted posthumously to Teofila Kic, the woman who hid Maria and her mother in her flat in Przemysl when they had escaped from the ghetto.

Maria Orwid died on the 9th of February 2009 and was buried two days later at the Jewish cemetery on Miodowa Street in Cracow. The funeral was attended by representatives of the academic community, the Jewish community in Poland, including former patients of hers. There was also no absence of representatives of Polish Roma communities, with whom the professor had worked for many years.

On the headstone under the symbolic seven-branched menorah was placed the inscription:

Maria Orwid
Pfeffer
1930–2009
Psychiatrist
Professor of the Jagiellonian University

An important role in the remembrance of Prof. M. Orwid's activities was played by the Cracow Foundation for the Development of Psychotherapy, which was formed in 1991 as the first institution of its type in Poland. Its aim is the promotion of psychotherapy, help in education in this field and the development of family therapy within Poland. Professor M. Orwid was the head of the Foundation Council from 1991 to 2009. After her death, the members of the institutions decided to give the Foundation her name. The Professor Maria Orwid Cracow Foundation for the Development of Psychotherapy remains a living testament to one of the most important people in the development of psychiatry in Poland.

Bibliography

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