

Underneath the Wedding Veil: Class Conflicts in Wyspiański's *Wesele*¹

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Abstract: The article discusses the descriptions of social class strife included but masked in the plot and characters' construction in the famous Polish play *Wesele* (*The Wedding*) by Stanisław Wyspiański. According to the author of the article, the scenes depicting the wedding customs and party are inherently a façade that attempts to mask class conflicts. The class tensions appear consequently in dialogues throughout the play (especially in its climax) and with regard to several different characters. Their role reversals consist of extrinsic signs, which suggest that they are playing the roles and not actually fulfilling them. Thus, the symbols they use in the play are merely costumes that mask their actual backgrounds, drawing for the readers or audience of Wyspiański's drama the line between appearance and reality.

Key words: drama, Stanisław Wyspiański, social class, class struggle

Pod ślubnym welonem: konflikty klasowe w *Weselu* Stanisława Wyspiańskiego

Abstrakt: Artykuł omawia konflikty klas społecznych ujęte, lecz zamaskowane w fabule i kreacjach postaci sztuki *Wesele* Stanisława Wyspiańskiego. Jak wskazuje autorka artykułu, sceny portretujące obyczaje i przyjęcie weselne stanowią w istocie fasadę, za którą ukrywają się zatargi klasowe. Napięcia między przedstawicielami różnych klas społecznych pojawiają się we fragmentach dialogów konsekwentnie w obrębie całej sztuki (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jej partii kulminacyjnej) i dotyczą różnych bohaterów dramatu. W ich kreacjach dokonuje się odwrócenie odgrywanych ról, bowiem zewnętrzne atrybuty klasowej przynależności nie pasują do ich zachowań. W rezultacie symbole, którymi postacie posługują się, są jedynie kostiumami maskującymi ich właściwe pochodzenie, wyznaczając dla czytelników lub widzów dramatu Wyspiańskiego granicę między pozorem a rzeczywistością. Tekst jest przykładem pracy pisanej przez studentów studiujących literaturę polską na amerykańskim uniwersytecie.

Słowa kluczowe: dramat, Stanisław Wyspiański, klasa społeczna, walka klasowa

¹ The article has been written by a student attending Polish literature course at an American university.

Stanisław Wyspiański's (January 15, 1869–November 28, 1907) play *Wesele* opened on the theatrical stage on March 16, 1901 (Kapolka 9). Critics and readers of Wyspiański generally consider *Wesele* to be his greatest masterpiece, especially since it captured the macrocosm of Polish class conflict in the 19th century and adapted it to the microcosm of a wedding between an aristocrat and a peasant girl. The seemingly ordinary celebration is steeped in the depth and complexity of Polish history, the constant tugs and pulls between the szlachta (noblemen) and the chłopci (peasants). Each character carries an intrinsic baggage to the wedding: the nuances and implications of his or her status and occupation. No one is free from judgment, and no one can escape the tension of class warfare.

The wedding itself is inherently a façade that attempts to mask class conflicts. However, it is a false and ultimately unsuccessful guise. There is a vain attempt to blur the class lines, as peasant boys wear peacock feathers in their hats, the symbols of the szlachta, and noblemen such as Pan Młody (Groom) experience chłopomania, an utter fascination with the realm of the peasants. Despite these gestures, however, the tension of class conflict still exists, as seen in celebrants' remembrances of the peasant rebellion of 1846. These tensions reach a climax as they are manifested in the appearance of Jakub Szela's bloody ghost. Thus, the wedding is in and of itself a play, a mask of the stark reality of class conflict. This guise, however, is unsuccessful in genuinely combating and perhaps repairing these tensions; the entire wedding party falls under a spell, which is a continuation of their lame attempt to close the gap between the classes.

The wedding serves as a tool to mask class tensions, as certain characters enact a reversal of roles. Several peasant boys pretend to be noblemen, and Pan Młody attempts to fit into the peasantry. Interestingly, their role reversals consist of extrinsic signs, which suggest that they are playing the roles and not actually fulfilling them. These symbols are merely costumes that mask their actual backgrounds, drawing the line between appearance and reality. For example, the chłopci Jasiek and Kasper place peacock feathers in their hats, and these feathers are symbols of nobility and vanity. Even though Jasiek may have a genuine aspiration to advance to the upper class, the wearing of a peacock feather at the wedding is a denial of his peasant status. He says:

Zdobyłem se pawich piór,
nastroilem pawich piór:
pawie pióra ładne,
pawie pióra kradne:
postawie se pański dwór!

Zdobęde se pański dwór,
wywleke se złoty wór:
złoty wór wysypie
ludziskom przed ślipie:
nakupie se pawich piór!

I got myself some peacock plumes,
Decked myself in peacock plumes,
What a lovely sight;
Though not mine by right,
They help to brighten up your rooms.

I'll seize your manor by and by—
That purse of gold that I espy—
And sprinkle golden coins before
The eyes of all the hungry poor,
And peacock plumes I'll buy. (Wyspiański I.34, trans. Clark)

Jasiek merrily sings praises for the peacock feathers placed in his hat; however, these feathers are not only pretty (“ładne”) but stolen (“kradne”). Thus the feathers do not belong to him but moreover do not belong to his class. The feathers in his hat represent his intrinsic wish to become affluent, but the fact that they are not really his underscores that they are merely a façade, a game of pretend for this one night. And since they are also a symbol of vanity, it is important to note that Jasiek wishes for wealth not for the sake of becoming a nobleman in and of itself, but in order to buy more peacock feathers. The cycle of vanity depicts that Jasiek is more interested in the display of superiority that nobleman can afford, literally, to give. Thus Jasiek is merely acting a role reversal, contributing to the wedding's play of veiling class conflicts.

Pan Młody's role reversal occurs in the opposite direction. Here, a nobleman attempts to play the role of a peasant without actually becoming part of his class. The groom inserts himself into the lower class realm not because he wants to decrease in status or wealth but because this new, seemingly undiscovered culture fascinates him intellectually. He views the peasants as exotic and their lifestyles as foreign and completely antithetical to his known atmosphere: “Tak to czuję, tak to słyszę,/ i ten spokój, i tę ciszę...Żyłem dotąd w takiej cieśni,/ pośród murów szarej pleśni” [“What I feel is what I hear—/ the quiet, peaceful atmosphere...Up to now my life's been spent/crabbed by mouldy walls, cement”] (I.19.564-565, 568-569). In marrying a peasant girl, Pan Młody is expanding his horizons; he admitted that he felt entrapped in his life as a nobleman, and this marriage is a vehicle that allows him to discover part of the Polish culture that he had never before witnessed firsthand. As he continues speaking, he uses binary pairings to underscore how exotic this peasant world is versus his nobility: “życie młode” [“all's young and bright”] vs. “wszystko było szare, stare” [everything was old and drab]; “patrzę się i patrzę/ w ten lud krasny, kolorowy” [“I look around, my eyes devour/ this lovely, colorful array/ or sprightly, robust folk at play”] vs. “[w]szystko dawne coraz bledsze,” [“my past is fading by the hour”] respectively (I.19.573, 570, 574-575, 578). He is enamored with this new world precisely because he has never experienced it before; he is part of the movement known as *chłopomania*, where noblemen were

inclined to marry peasant girls because of their robustness and vigor vis-à-vis noblewomen. Just like Jasiek and Kasper, however, Pan Młody is only acting a role or playing a performance. He focuses on physical gestures to prove his apparent understanding of the peasantry: “od miesiąca chodzę boso,/ od razu się czuję zdrowo,/ chadzam boso, z gołą głową:/ pod spód więcej nic nie wdziewam,/ od razu się lepiej miewam” [“Four weeks, since I wore shoes and I/ have never felt so fit and strong—/ shoeless, hatless, all day long—/ much free-er since I took a chance/ and gave up wearing underpants!”] (1.19.584-588). Just as the feathers in the peasants’ hats are mere objects that function as costumes, these extrinsic gestures portray an appearance—a form of pretend—and not reality. Pan Młody still intrinsically identifies himself with the nobility, for he says that “kiedyś wszystko to napiszę” [“Some day, I’ll write what now I know”] (1.19.580). Writing is an exercise and an art used by the upper classes; the need for him to write about his experiences signals that this wedding is a vehicle or tool that enables him to experience something extraordinary. It is a guise to blur class lines but cannot extinguish them.

Slowly throughout the play, the characters of Dziad (Grandfather), Pan Młody, and Gospodarz (Host) begin to realize that the wedding is in fact masking class tensions, avoiding them and not confronting them. Here, *Wesele* exemplifies a double entendre: it is a play for an audience, but the characters are likewise merely acting out the mask or play of the wedding. As the night wears on, memories of the rebellion of 1846 return. In 1846, Jakub Szela, instigated by Austrian officials, organized a group of serfs to rebel against the noblemen who had anti-Austrian leanings. Norman Davies, in the second volume of his work *God’s Playground*, relates the violent onslaught that occurred: “In the ensuing *mêlée*, the estates of noble conspirators were invaded. Noblemen, landlords, bailiffs, and protesting officials were butchered in cold blood. The innocent suffered with the guilty. Before long, the peasant bands were offering the severed heads of their noble victims to the authorities as proof of their zeal” (147-148). The peasants turned against their landlords, mostly decapitating them at night. This was one of the major, if not the largest, peasant rebellions in 19th century Poland. The peasants were instigated to this rebellion as they were “promised an end to their feudal obligations if they would turn on their masters” (Davies 147). The *chłopi* resented the affluent, facile lives of the *szlachta* and took a stand against what they felt was economic oppression.

This class conflict surfaces in remembrances of the bloody rebellion of 1846. Dziad and the Ojciec (Father) of Panna Młoda (Bride) have a conversation concerning class differences. Dziad asks him curiously: “Piekne pany, szumne pany,/ i cóż wy na to mówicie,/ że to niby różne stany—?” [“Fine sight these townfolk make! Alas,/ you can’t get round the simple fact:/ there’s a difference of class”] (Wyspiański I.26.951-963). Ojciec keeps an optimistic perspective, answering: “Co tam po kim szukać stanu./ Ot,

spodobała się panu./ Jednakowo wszyscy ludzie” [“Who cares for status—all that stuff?/ He fancies her and that’s enough!/ We’re all of us the same at heart”] (954-956). He claims that all men are equal despite their status and wonders why people should be differentiated by their class. He is keeping his daughter’s interests at heart by not concentrating on the status inequality. At this point, however, the Dziad remembers that violence soiled the class tensions not so long ago:

Bawiom, bawiom, moiściewy,
a toć były dawniej gniewy!
Nawet była krew, rzezańce
i splamiła krew sukmany....
Byleś młodszy,
a ja bywał blisko, bywał,
widziałem, patrzyły oczy,
jak topniał śnieg i krew splukiwał...

Fun? Not always, take my word!
Angry outbursts have occurred—
even bloodshed. Throats were slit,
peasant topcoats splashed with gore...
You were still a child,
but I was there myself and saw—
watched and saw with my own eyes—
the blood-soaked snow begin to thaw... (959-962, 969-972)

The Dziad, who is older than Panna Młoda’s father, remembers vividly the excessive killing of the past. The blood of the past has stained their clothing—“splamiła krew sukmany” [“topcoats splashed with gore” — and has likewise stained his memory. It is interesting that he uses the word *playing* to describe the festivities: “Bawiom, bawiom, moiściewy” “Fun” (959). It can be interpreted that the celebrants indeed are playing and acting as if nothing had happened, ignoring the magnitude of this fairly recent grievance. This sentiment hits a nerve with the Ojciec, who, vexed, cries out: “O! wy, dziadu, jakby kruk/ włóczyście się przy weselu” [“You’re like a raven, grandad! You’ll / blight the wedding with disaster!”] (986-987). He calls the Dziad a raven, the symbol of darkness and death, suggesting that the Dziad’s words are killing the naïveté of the wedding and slowly unveiling the mask to reveal genuine class tensions. To this the Dziad replies: “Hej, hej, stary przyjacielu./ będzie pan twój wnuk” [“Mark my words, I’m not a fool:/ your grandson will be lord and master!”] (988-989). The Dziad raises important issues that undercut the wedding. Panna Młoda’s father, a hard-working peasant, will have a nobleman as a grandson. According to class status, the grandson will therefore be superior to his grandfather, as he would belong to the upper class. He would be the antithesis of his grandfather and would carry with him the weight of his noble ancestors who have oppressed the chłopci; Ojciec and his grandson would not share

a common bond. Thus by remembering the rebellion of 1846, the *Dziad* opens up a Pandora's Box of class tensions for *Ojciec*.

The rebellion of 1846 surfaces in the conversation between Pan Młody and *Gospodarz*, as they admit that they have forgotten the peasants' violence against their forefathers. As they discuss the past, the class tension arises and Pan Młody enters a state of denial:

Znam to tylko z opowiadań,
ale strzegę się tych badań,
bo mi trują myśl o polskiej wsi:
to byli jacyś psi,
co wody oddechem zatruli,
a krew im przyrosła do koszuli.
Patrzę się na chłopów dziś...

I only know from what I've heard;
I'd sooner not let what occurred
Pollute my view of country-life.
Some breed of mongrels, bent on strife
Poisoned rivers with their breath—
In blood-soaked shirts, dispensing death.
But look how peasants are today... (1.30.1090-1096)

Pan Młody had forgotten about the 1846 rebellion because he was removed from it, hearing of the event only through stories. Relating events through *tales* distances the listener from the actual occurrences; because these tales were so horrific, Pan Młody refuses to believe them. The truth about the 1846 rebellion poisons his romantic conceptions of village life. He claims that the rebels must have been some sort of dogs, a derogatory label signifying bestiality and lack of human compassion. Thinking about the past jars his fragile *chłopomania*. The *Gospodarz*, however, reaches the climax of this surfaced class tension when he states: "To, co było, może przyjsć" ["It happened once, and who's to say—"] (1097). The *Gospodarz* verbalizes a fear that brews within this class tension: history may repeat itself. And the fear has become even more pertinent within the confines of the wedding: now Pan Młody is tied to the peasant class, and the possibility of another revolt will be in the back of his mind. He slowly recedes from his denial, saying as if in a trance: "Myśmy wszystko zapomnieli;/ mego dziadka piłą różnili.../ Myśmy wszystko zapomnieli" "We've forgotten everything./ They sawed my grandfather in two!/ We've forgotten everything." (1098-1100).

Pan Młody's *dziadek* was a casualty in the rebellion of 1846, which was led by *Jakub Szela*. It is the apparition of his ghost to *Dziad* that is the physical manifestation of the underlying class tensions in *Wesele*. *Jakub Szela* is often labeled as a controversial figure, as *Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach* notes in her *Seven Stories*: "Some call *Jak[u]b Szela* a leader of men, others call him a perverter of them. The former revere him as the epitome of loyalty, a wise man well-versed in the law; the latter see him as a robber

and a murdering arsonist, as well as a shady dealer and a hair-splitter" (11). These completely divergent viewpoints, although not attributed to any specific group, are most likely reflective of the peasantry and the nobility, respectively. The nobility viewed Szela as a scoundrel, perhaps even a type of terrorist; on the other hand, the peasantry of the time period saw him as their hero. Szela was born in 1787 as a member of the lower class, and became "a tenant farmer of Smarzowa in the district of Tarnow" (ibid). In his youth, he served in the army, but when he settled down, he was "famed for his successful litigations against wealthy landlords" (Davies 147). Here, then, it can be surmised were the beginnings of his "battle" against the upper class, which climaxed in the rebellion of 1846. Austrian officials instigated Szela into enacting the rebellion, for their ulterior motive was to squelch a noble conspiracy against the Austrian government (ibid). At this point in history, Poland was partitioned among three governments: Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The Austrian government was the most lenient of the three, allowing the Poles more liberty than in the other two provinces. The Austrians knew Szela already felt aggression towards the upper class and that he had a very well-respected voice and position within the *chłopi*. So the Austrian authorities enlisted his support.

Henceforth, in 1846, the *chłopi* rebelled against their noble landlords, and scenes of bloody rage ensued. Szela had gathered a seemingly large number of peasants, as Ebner-Eschenbach writes, "And those peasants! Their throng seemed to have no end. Crowd after crowd marched in" (18). They invaded manors and estates and often killed their victims using saws or scythes, as Pan Młody remembers: "mego dziadka piłą rżnęli" ["They sawed my grandfather in two!"] (Wyspiański 1.30.1099). The scythe is an instrument utilized in harvesting wheat and other crops and hence was perverted into a metaphorical harvesting of heads: "Before long, the peasant bands were offering the severed heads of their noble victims to the authorities as proof of their zeal. In some cases, they appear to have been paid for their wares in salt" (Davies 147-148). What was a tool of abundance and bounty metamorphosed into a tool of destruction. It is ironic that the noble's heads were being traded for profit, for those very same heads had once demanded work from the peasants. More than 2,000 noblemen had been killed in the rebellion (ibid). After the violence was subdued, Jakub Szela "was arrested as a matter of form, but was then rewarded with a large estate in the distant province of Bukovina" (ibid). The bloodshed was not a lesson easily forgotten: "For the Austrian authorities, it was a sobering reminder of the excesses to which loyalty, no less than rebellion, could lead. For the Poles, it was a rude awakening to the fact that Polish-speaking peasants could not be relied on to support Polish noblemen in patriotic enterprises" (ibid). Davies states very accurately that the rebellion was a "rude awakening," in that it brought to light the extreme, underlying class tensions between the *chłopi* and the *szlachta*. Thus, the rebellion of

1846 even further enlarged the gap between the lower and upper classes, creating a tension that still exists in *Wesele*.

Jakub Szela manifests himself as a ghost, appearing as the Upiór (Specter) to Dziad. This is the climax of the class conflict in Wyspiański's text. The Dziad is caught off-guard by the ghostly figure who appears to him. The Upiór says:

Ja weselny, ja weselny
dajcie, bracie, kubel wody:
ręce myć, gębe myć,
chce mi się tu na Weselu
żyć, hulać, pić.

I'm invited... I'm a guest!
[Brothers] Fetch a bowl of water please—
give me hands and gave a sluice
I like these festivities:
drink and dance, you know—cut loose. (Wyspiański 2.15.771-775)

Jakub Szela's ghost calls the Dziad and the rest of the wedding guests "bracie" ["brothers"], which is significant because the guest list includes members of both upper and lower classes. He is implying that the union of a nobleman with a peasant girl will have automatically made everyone brothers and equals; this is why he asks for a pail of water: "dajcie, bracie, kubel wody" [{"Brothers} fetch a bowl of water, please"] (772). Not only is this an allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but water is a symbol of purification, replenishment, and cleansing. By asking for a pail of water to wash his hands, he is asking in essence to be freed from the memory of his rebellion, akin to Pilate's washing of hands to be freed from the crucifixion of Jesus. The irony in calling for "bracie," however, is the fact that these class tensions have not disappeared at all, as seen in Dziad's vehement response to the Upiór: "Precz, przeklęty, precz, przeklęty" ["Be off with you, you filthy wretch!"] (776). These very strong curses are repeated twice, portraying the Dziad's discomfort and fright in response to the ghost. Dziad observes that the horrors Szela enacted are manifest as well: "Krew na sukniach, krew na włosach..." ["Blood-stained clothes and blood-soaked hair!"] (779). The crimes of Szela have even stained his ghost and are made visible to Dziad and to us as readers.

The ghost cannot escape his past, and yet his presence signifies that the class tensions that existed in 1846 still exist in *Wesele*. He makes his identity explicitly known to Dziad when he says:

Jeno ty nie przeklinaj usty,
boś brat—drzyj! ja Szela!!
Przyszedłem tu do Wesela,
bo byłem ich ojcom kat,
a dzisiaj ja jestem swat!!
Umyje się, wystroje się.

Dajcie, bracie, kubel wody:
ręce myć, gębe myć,
suknie prać—nie będzie znać;
chce mi się tu na Weselu
żyć, hulać, pić...

"No call to yell at me that way—
we're brother peasants after all;
I'm Szela—come to join the ball!
In forty-six, we slew their dads—
Now, our daughters woo their lads!
All togged out in Sunday best!
[Brothers] Fetch a bowl of water, please—
give me face and hands a sluice,
you won't know me, once I'm spruce.
I love these here festivities—
drinking, dancing, cutting loose—
it's just the mark upon me brow..." (2.15.784-794).

Szela makes a very accurate remark when he says "byłem ich ojcom kat,/ a dzisiaj ja jestem swat!!" ["In forty-six, we slew their dads—/ Now, our daughters woo their lads!"] (787-788). In 1846, the class tensions resulted in a rebellion, whereas now during the wedding, these same tensions are glossed over and ignored. The friction still exists, but the reactions are contradictory. No one is confronting the issue explicitly; with the appearance of Szela's ghost, the Dziad has the chance to tackle it. Szela reiterates his request for a pail of water to cleanse his garments and his hands. This water would wash away the blood, the stain of slaughter, and the antagonism towards the upper class. It is significant, then, that the Dziad does not fulfill Szela's wish. Instead, he repeats a curse, demanding that the ghost leave him: "Przeklęty! Maryjo, strać!" ["Mary curse him—Heaven's Queen!"] (804). This refusal to accommodate Szela can be read in multiple ways. It is obvious that the Dziad is frightened and shocked at the ghost's appearance; however, not providing Szela with a pail of water has serious implications. One is the possibility that subconsciously, the Dziad realizes that class conflicts still exist, and thus it is impossible to simply "wash away" such deep-rooted tensions. Another possibility, on the other hand, is that the Dziad himself harbors some sort of resentment towards the szlachta, and thus cannot fathom the possibility of becoming "brać" with the noblemen because he would not want to experience a deeper fraternization. All in all, it is significant that Szela cannot wash the stains away because this signals that the class tensions are far from being solved. Thus, Szela is a manifestation of the class conflicts in *Wesele*.

As the play reaches its dénouement, the class conflicts do not disappear, which underscores the fact that the wedding is inherently a mask and a play. The arousal of class tensions appears on both sides of the spectrum, the szlachta and the chłopci. Radczyini brings up the class differences to Panna Młoda herself:

...ale o czym wy będziecie mówili,
jak tak nadejdzie wieczór długi:
mówić się nie chce, trza przesiedzieć;
on wykształcony, ty bez szkół—

What topics will you find to air
as longer evenings stretch ahead?
You'll be tongue-tied, night and day:
he's clever; you've not been to school! (3.13.450-453)

Radczyni comments on Panna Młoda's lack of education; however, the young bride does not understand the noblewoman's snide concern, and so the class differences are not confronted but glossed over: "Po cóż by, prose pani, godo!/, jakby mi nie miał nic powiedzieć./ po cóż by sobie gębę psuł?" ["Madam, he'd need to be a fool,/ to talk to me, with nowt to say—/ silence is golden—that's the rule!"] (3.13.454-456). Through this discussion, the social class discrepancy is apparent, but it is only brought to light and not at all repaired. Czepiec, who is the epitome of the *chłopi*, has a short temper and violent tendencies. He holds much pride in his work and has a hostile temperance towards those who are superior to him on the social ladder: the landlords, the nobles, the *Żyd*, and the priest. He is blatant in his sentiments towards the upper class, saying:

O pon, widno, niewidomy;
widać, że nie znacie nas...
Pon ino widzisz pchły,
pchły, świcidła, rośe, ćmy,
a nie chcesz znać, co som my:
że w nas dnieje, dusa świci,
że zarucko kur zapieje,
że na nas czekają w mieście,
że nas tu jest ze dwiedzieście
z kosom, cepem, żelaziwem
i że to, to nie som sny.

This I know, sir—you are blind:
you don't know *us*, who live round here!...
All you see are fleas—
fleas, dews, spectres, moths and snow!
Us peasants, you don't want to know:
nor that, in our souls, it's light
and presently the cock will crow;
that there, in town, they wait for us—
that here, we number twenty plus—
armed with sickle, scythe and flail:
we're no dream, no fairy-tale! (3.19.703-704, 746-753)

It is significant that Czepiec refers to scythes, since that was the weapon utilized in the rebellion of 1846. He is ready to fight, and he will destroy

anything that stands in his way. The tension he feels for the upper class, however, is downplayed by Pan Młody and the Poeta (Poet), who says: "Co on mówi? A to dziwne,/ bo mi się to dziś marzyło:/ jako dramat, jako sen" ["Funny he should talk of this;/ only today, quite vividly,/ I thought of it as a play, or dream" (3.19.754-756)]. The Poet belittles Czepiec's anger by reducing his concern to the realm of literature and imagination. They do not take him seriously; thus, just as in Radczyni's case, the class tensions are merely ignored and not confronted. Hence, the wedding serves as a mask, as Gospodarz accurately remarks:

[P]any, chłopcy, chłopcy, pany:
cały świat zaczarowany,
wsztko była maska podła:
chłopcy, pany, pany, chłopcy,
szable, godła, herby, kosy,
aż na głowie wstają włosy,
wszystko była podła maska
farbiona—jak do obrazka:
cały świat zaczarowany.

[G]entry, peasants, peasants, gentry—
all bewitched—it's elementary—
all a vulgar masquerade:
peasants, gentry, gentry, peasants,
sword and motto, shield and scythe—
enough to make the conscience writhe!
Nothing but a mean disguise—
a painted mask to cheat the eyes:
all enchanted—peasants, gentry! (2.29.1421-1429)

The Gospodarz states insightfully that the entire wedding party is enchanted; it is this enchantment that is replicated in the final scene.

In the final scene, the entire wedding party falls under a spell, which in essence is a perpetual continuation of the masking effect of the wedding. The spell symbolizes illusion and the loss of awareness and free will: "Ja [Chochół] muzykę zaczną sam,/ tego gram, tego gram:/ będą tańczyć cały rok" ["I {Strawman} myself will start to play—/ to play so mightily that they/ will dance for a year—not just tonight"] (3.37.1148-1150). This spell occurs because Jasiiek loses the golden horn, whose function is the antithesis to the spell. The horn symbolizes a call to awareness and action. Jasiiek loses it due to his vanity, because he stooped down to pick up his hat with peacock feathers. The Chochół chides him, saying:

Miałeś, chamie, złoty róg,
miałeś, chamie, czapkę z piór,
czapkę wicher niesie,
róg huką po lesie,
ostał ci sie ino sznur,
ostał ci sie ino sznur...
Miałeś, chamie, złoty róg...

You oaf! You had the Golden Horn!
You oaf! You had your feathered cap
which was stolen by the breeze—
The Horn resounds among the trees—
you're left with nothing but the strap!
All you're left with is the strap!...
You oaf! You had the Golden Horn... (3.37.1164-1169, 1181)

The consequence is a wedding party that falls under enchantment, which is the ultimate nullification and ignorance of the class tensions that intrinsically exist.

The wedding, then, is a veil for class conflicts that are denied instead of being confronted directly. These class tensions appear in small pieces of dialogue throughout the play and climax with the apparition of Jakub Szela's ghost. The discrepancy and tension between the szlachta and the chłopci that provoked the rebellion of 1846 still survive throughout *Wesele*; however, the wedding party's ultimate enchantment proves that these distinctions cannot be easily overcome. Despite the attempt to keep these tensions veiled, ultimately, we as readers see that the veil is actually transparent.

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